

**2021 Fair Housing Forum AGENDA: Rights for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, July 16, 2021 at 11AM via Zoom in conjunction with CSG**

- **Meeting ID: 570 784 9373**

**1. Introductions**

1. Affirmatively furthering fair housing

**2. What Housing looks like in Columbia County (Excluding Bloomsburg, Berwick, and Centralia)**

1. Approximately 18,000 homes in CC
  - a. 6-8,000 rental units
    - i. 1,000 subsidized units
    - ii. 11 units secured for individuals w/ intellectual and developmental disabilities

**3. Renter's Rights and what it Means to You**

1. The federal [Fair Housing Act](#) and the Fair Housing Amendments Act (42 U.S. Code §§ [3601-3619](#), [3631](#)) forbids discrimination of tenants or prospective tenants because of a disability or the disability of a person associated with them. The law protects the following people:
  - a. A person with a mental or physical disability that substantially limits a person's ability to perform one or more major life activities; or
  - b. A person that has a record of the disability; or
  - c. A person that is considered by others as having the disability
2. One's disability cannot be used in...
  - a. Deciding whether to rent an apartment to a potential tenant
  - b. Setting particular rules for individual tenants
  - c. Advertising that the apartment is only available to certain people.\*other factors are race, gender, religion, etc.
3. A Landlord May Not Ask Discriminatory Questions...
  - a. If there is not an accommodation request, the Fair Housing Acts prohibit the landlord from asking whether the applicant has a disability or about the severity of the impairment. Landlords must treat disabled applicants and tenants in the same way as those without a disability: They cannot request medical records, nor guide a tenant to a specific unit.
  - b. HOWEVER, a landlord may ask all prospective tenants, including disabled applicants, about whether:
    - i. The applicant can meet tenancy requirements
    - ii. The applicant abuses or is addicted to an illegal controlled substance;
    - iii. The applicant qualifies for a rental unit available only to people with a disability or a certain type of disability; or
    - iv. The applicant qualifies for a rental unit that is offered on a priority basis to people with a disability or with a certain type of disability.
4. Landlords are required to make reasonable accommodations

- a. Reasonable Accommodation—something done to accommodate a disabled person that does not jeopardize safety or pose an undue hardship for the party undertaking the action.
- 5. The right to make modifications
  - a. If reasonable, disabled tenants may modify a rental unit to make it safe and comfortable to live in. If the modification will create an inappropriate living condition for the next tenant, the landlord may agree to the modification upon the condition that the tenant restore the unit to its original condition prior to leaving. In this circumstance, the landlord may require the tenant to put money in an interest-bearing escrow account.
  - b. All modifications are subject to approval with the landlord. The landlord may ask for a description of the proposed modification and any necessary building permits. Common modifications include wheelchair ramps, lowered countertops, and special door handles.

#### **4. Challenges**

- a) Discrimination
  - a. Highest occurrence of reporting for Fair Housing violations
- b) Affordability
  - a. Average Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is just under \$9,000 annually
  - b. Average rent in Columbia County for a 1 bedroom apartment is \$704-800
- c) Accessibility
  - a. Units that tend to offer the required accessibility are more expensive.
- d) Availability
  - a. Harder to find apartments that have been modified to fit their needs
- 5. Modifications for aging in place
  - a) Improving the home life of our elderly and disabled so that they can safely age in their homes
    - a. Services would include but not limited to: widening doorways for wheel chairs, bathroom modifications, kitchen modifications, handrails, and ramps
- 6. Upcoming Projects with CSG
  - a) Mulberry mills
    - a. Needs assessment- feedback on gaps for housing needs
    - b. Willingness to relocate
  - b) Bloom heights
- 7. Current projects
  - a) West street church

#### **8. Open Discussion**