



MIAMI VALLEY FAIR HOUSING CENTER NEWSLETTER

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JIM MCCARTHY, PRESIDENT/CEO

April is Fair Housing Month—Fair Housing: More Than Just Words

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recently released a Press statement on their Fair Housing Month theme, ***Fair Housing: More Than Just Words***. The article stated that the theme “reflects the Biden-Harris Administration’s commitment to advancing equity in housing.”

The article continued: “Fair Housing Month is a time to recommit to our nation’s obligation to ensure that everyone has equal access to safe, affordable housing,” said HUD Secretary Marcia L. Fudge. “Unfortunately, housing discrimination still exists, from individuals and families being denied a place to call home because of the color of their skin or where they come from, to landlords refusing to allow persons with disabilities to keep assistance animals, to individuals being denied a place to live because of who they love.”

Each April, HUD, local communities, fair housing advocates, and fair housing organizations across the country commemorate Fair Housing Month by hosting an array of activities that highlight HUD's fair housing enforcement efforts, enhance Americans’ awareness of their fair housing rights, and emphasize the importance of ending housing discrimination.

That is true locally. This year the Miami Valley Fair Housing Center (MVFHC) is partnering with the City of Dayton Human Relations Council on a HUD initiative called the Miami Valley Fair Housing Collaborative (the Collaborative) to educate the public about discrimination related to the pandemic. Several of the initiatives for 2021 Fair Housing month included an art display and educational sessions. The month began with an opening of an on-going display of five photos by artist Bernie Kleina of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s 1966-1967 Freedom Marches in Chicago. The photos are at the Edward A. Dixon Gallery located in the Talbott Tower at 118 W. First Street in Dayton. The Freedom Marches were a series of infamous, nonviolent freedom marches in all-white neighborhoods that took place during the summers of 1966 and 1967.

The Collaborative has many partners too. Two of the partners, the Dayton Chapter of the Women’s Council of Realtors and the Greater Dayton Realist Association, kicked off Fair Housing Month 2021 on April 1 with a joint meeting

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Meet Your Miami Valley Fair Housing Center Board Members

Caitlin Jacob is a planner and community organizer for CityWide Development, where she works on long-term community development projects and innovative fund development strategies through CityWide’s community development financial institution arm.

She graduated from the University of Dayton with a Bachelors in Human Rights Studies and English and has a Masters in both Public Policy and Urban Planning from the University of Michigan. After graduating from college, Caitlin worked in education and politics.

Currently, Caitlin lives in Dayton with her husband, Paul, and their cat, Peyton. She has been a Miami Valley Fair Housing Center Board Member for two years. Caitlin is passionate about working collaboratively, in community, to build a stronger and more inclusive Dayton and feels that the mission of the MVFHC is a crucial component of that work. She is grateful for the opportunity to support the Center’s efforts to ensure that all people have access to equal housing opportunities without barriers.



*Caitlin Jacob
MVFHC Board Member*

People with a criminal history still have Civil Rights

HUD and the General Counsel of the United States developed guidance in 2016 called: “Application of Fair Housing Act Standards to the Use of Criminal Records by Providers of Housing and Real Estate-Related Transactions.” One part of this guidance reminds Landlords that they cannot discriminate against anyone, including people with a criminal history, based on federally protected classes of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability or the presence of children in a household known as familial status. HUD also supports the enforcement of protected classes enacted in local fair housing laws. Ohio protects ancestry and military status. The City of Dayton protects sexual orientation, age, gender identity/expression and marital status.

This excerpt from the 2016 Guidance about examples of violating the Fair Housing Act is revealing:

“Intentional discrimination in violation of the Act may be proven based on evidence that a housing provider rejected an Hispanic applicant based on his criminal record, but admitted a non-Hispanic White applicant with a comparable criminal record. Similarly, if a housing provider has a policy of not renting to persons with certain convictions, but makes exceptions to it for Whites but not African Americans, intentional discrimination exists.”

Testing has shown that some leasing staff receiving applications for rentals coach white applicants with a criminal history on how to circumscribe their companies’ policies on criminal history but do not coach minority applicants with comparable criminal histories. This can violate Fair Housing Laws prohibiting different terms and conditions in housing based on a protected class status of the applicant. People with criminal histories who think they have been discriminated against based on a protected class status, can call the Miami Valley Fair Housing Center at 937-223-6035 to have their situation reviewed.

The Use of Criminal Records when Screening Applicants

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has a long history of urging housing providers to conduct individual assessments of applicants in order to avoid engaging in conduct that discriminates based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability and the presence of minor children in a household known as familial status. Some landlords have policies and procedures that are a “one size fits all” approach. This can have an adverse effect on vulnerable populations like people with disabilities, minorities, immigrants, and particularly, it can affect individuals with a criminal history. This is so important HUD and the General Counsel of the United States developed guidance in 2016 called: “Application of Fair Housing Act Standards to the Use of Criminal Records by Providers of Housing and Real Estate-Related Transactions”.

The guidance discusses the importance of individualized assessments. For example, when a landlord goes the extra mile and listens to someone’s story the guidance states: “individualized assessment of relevant mitigating information beyond that contained in an individual’s criminal record is likely to have a less discriminatory effect than categorical exclusions that do not take such additional information into account.” In other words, if we are to be a country of second chances, we have to act on it by listening to the story and not just looking at what is on paper.

Rather than having a blanket ban on all arrests, convictions, or felonies, the following is a better policy: Management reserves the right to refuse an applicant who poses a health or safety threat to other residents. Another best practice is to implement this sample policy: XYZ business conducts criminal background checks in order to make informed decisions about all applicants’ suitability for tenancy.

“Informed Decisions” can use what HUD’s 2016 guidance calls “*Relevant individualized evidence:*” such as:

- the facts or circumstances surrounding the criminal conduct;
- the age of the individual at the time of the conduct;
- evidence that the individual has maintained a good tenant history before and/or after the conviction or conduct; and
- evidence of rehabilitation efforts

These articles were prepared by John Zimmerman, Vice President of the Miami Valley Fair Housing Center with some materials from HUD’s Guidance found in this online document:

https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/HUD_OGCGUIDAPPFHASTANDCR.PDF

Miami Valley Fair Housing Collaborative

The Dayton Human Relations Council (HRC) and the Miami Valley Fair Housing Center (MVFHC) are the recipients of grants from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide education and outreach to inform the Dayton and Miami Valley community of housing discrimination and unfair housing practices that may be related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The education and outreach activities have included educational symposia, workshops, and webinars on various media platforms for the public and consumers at risk for COVID-19, conducting virtual information sessions on the intersection of fair housing and COVID-19 at Sinclair Community College in Dayton, and convening periodic fair housing information sessions on various virtual media platforms with landlords and housing industry representatives on Fair Housing issues related to COVID-19. There are plans to produce and distribute social media advertising on housing discrimination related to COVID-19.

Individuals, organizations and businesses seeking information on COVID-19 Fair Housing Issues can write John Zimmerman, Vice President of the Miami Valley Fair Housing Center, at john.zimmerman@mvfhc.com or call him at 937-223-6035. Mr. Zimmerman can assist with COVID-19 related educational issues such as scheduling an information session for a company's staff and/or adding a caller to the list of recipients that attend invitations to quarterly Collaborative meetings or the periodic 4th Tuesday Lunch and Learns. Both of these forums give attendees opportunities to hear from representatives of the agencies that assist with utility/rent assistance, eviction and foreclosure issues, health initiatives around vaccines and testing, and from those assisting victims of fair housing discrimination.

April is Fair Housing Month continued from page 1 ...

featuring Collaborative staff speaking on COVID-19, Hate Crimes, and the National Association of Realtors efforts to combat COVID-19 housing discrimination and harassment. The Collaborative continued throughout the month with many events. To schedule an information session similar to this, call John Zimmerman, MVFHC Vice President at 937-223-6035 or write him at john.zimmerman@mvfhc.com.



April 30 to May 9	Dayton Mall Home & Outdoor Living Expo
May 25	Miami Valley Fair Housing Collaborative, 4th Tuesday Lunch & Learn. See attached flyer.
June 5	Dayton Pride Celebration on Courthouse Square
June 10	Symposium for Social Workers and Property Managers: Removing Barriers for Women in Reentry 2021. Contact john.zimmerman@mvfhc.com for more information.
July 11 to July 17	Montgomery County Fair

MVFHC Mission Statement

The mission of the Miami Valley Fair Housing Center (MVFHC) is to eliminate housing discrimination and ensure equal housing opportunity for all people in our region, the State of Ohio, and nationally.

Specifically, the Miami Valley Fair Housing Center seeks to eliminate housing discrimination against all persons because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, familial status, or any other characteristic protected under state or local laws. In furthering this goal, MVFHC engages in activities designed to encourage fair housing practices through educational efforts; assists person who believe they have been victims of housing discrimination; identifies barriers to fair housing in order to help counteract and eliminate discriminatory housing practices; works with elected and government representatives to protect and improve fair housing laws; and takes all appropriate and necessary action to ensure that fair housing laws are properly and fairly enforced throughout our region, the State of Ohio, and nationally.

MVFHC Vision Statement

The Miami Valley Fair Housing Center recognizes the importance of "home" as a component of the American dream. We envision a country free of housing discrimination where every individual, group and community enjoys equal housing opportunity and access in a bias-free and open housing market. We envision a country where integrated neighborhoods are the norm, and private and public sectors guarantee civil rights in an open and barrier-free community committed to healing the history of discrimination in America.

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HUMAN
RELATIONS
COUNCIL



CITY OF DAYTON

Many people.
Many voices.
One city.

MIAMI VALLEY



FAIR HOUSING

4th Tuesday Lunch & Learn

Spend lunch with us on

**May 25, 2021
11:15 AM - 12:15 PM**

Registration for Zoom Session at:

<https://bit.ly/32ojUeB>

Topic #1: Public Health Update, Terra Williams, Director - Office of Health Promotion, Public Health - Dayton & Montgomery County

Topic #2: In this session we will pause to check in with Collaborative participants and gather some information to discover:

- COVID-related Barriers the people serving vulnerable populations in the Montgomery County/Dayton region are experiencing;
- What topics the Collaborative can focus on and
- Find out if participating partners would like to present to the Collaborative about lessons learned while assisting vulnerable persons and families during the pandemic at a future educational session.

Next Lunch and Learn 6/22/2021