



Fair Housing Toolkit

For Rural Pennsylvania

A Resource Guide for Housing Professionals, Community Organizations, and Municipalities

November 2025





Table of Contents

Introduction to the Fair Housing Toolkit	2
Fair Housing Outreach and Education	3
Fair Housing Resources	16
Partners	19
Funding Your Fair Housing Activities	36
Additional Resources	38





Introduction

All people deserve a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home as well as the opportunity to make choices about housing without experiencing bias and discrimination. Federal and state laws and regulations related to fair housing rights ensure that all people have access to housing opportunity regardless of their race, color, ancestry, national origin, sex, familial status, religion/religious creed, age, and handicap or disability and the use, handling, or training of support or guide animals for disability. These characteristics are called protected classes and were selected because members of these groups have historically been excluded from housing opportunities, and continue to experience discrimination. Fair housing laws and regulations apply to all aspects of housing; developers, builders, rental property owners, housing service providers, real estate agents, insurance agents, financial institutions, municipalities, and others are all required to ensure the fair housing rights of Pennsylvanians are protected.

Despite the protections of federal and state laws, many people continue to experience discrimination related to housing. In fact, the National Fair Housing Alliance found that 32,231 fair housing complaints were made across the United States in 2024 and the majority (54.6%) were related to disability. These numbers reflect only the cases that were formally reported and instances of discrimination may in fact be higher.

Municipalities, community leaders, and housing professionals play a critical role in protecting fair housing rights and creating more inclusive, welcoming communities. Your involvement is essential to ensuring that fair housing laws are enforced, embedded in local policies, practices, and community culture, and widely understood by everyone in the community to prevent discrimination. These efforts create a better quality of life for all.

This toolkit was created to support housing professionals and community leaders who care about protecting fair housing rights in rural Pennsylvania. The toolkit includes:

- Practical strategies that have worked in Pennsylvania communities;
- Where to find print and online resources;
- Information about organizations that are deeply engaged in fair housing and may be helpful partners in your work; and
- Funding resources to support your fair housing outreach and education activities.

The goal of this guide is to spark new conversations, partnerships, and initiatives that strengthen fair housing protections and ensure that every person feels welcome in their community.



Introduction

The content of this toolkit was informed through focus groups and interviews that engaged many partners including:

- Bradford County
- Butler County
- Centre County
- Delaware County
- Disability Rights Pennsylvania
- Erie County
- Fair Housing Law Center
- Franklin County
- Housing Equality Center of Pennsylvania
- Indiana County
- Inglis/Self-Determination Housing of Pennsylvania
- Luzerne County
- Pennsylvania Association of County Human Services Administrators
- Pennsylvania Association of Realtors®
- Pennsylvania Housing Research Center
- Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission
- Pike County
- Potter County
- Schuylkill County
- SEDA-COG
- Tenfold
- Trehab

This resource was made possible with funding from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency through the 2025 Kathy A. Possinger Housing Policy Fellowship. The contents of this toolkit are not to be interpreted as legal advice.

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Fair Housing Outreach and Education

- Recognize Fair Housing Month
- Bring Stakeholders Together
- Convene a Task Force
- Organize Art Activities
- Host a Book Club or Movie Night
- Meet People Where They Are
- Strengthen Municipal Policies and Practices
- Invest in Fair Housing



Recognize Fair Housing Month

April is Fair Housing Month, a perfect time to bring your community together, spark conversations, and raise awareness about fair housing rights. It's an opportunity to host events, share resources, and make sure everyone knows that fair housing is a right—and where to go if that right is violated.

Fair Housing Month activities might include:

- Asking local municipalities to issue a Fair Housing Month proclamation ((In the Lehigh Valley, Lehigh and Northampton counties as well as the cities of Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton issued a joint proclamation for fair housing month. This could similarly be done in rural areas)
- Distributing a press release and public service announcement to local media
- Daily social media posts about fair housing rights and responsibilities
- Distributing up-to-date fair housing posters to local nonprofits and community spaces like libraries and schools
- Hosting a movie night or book club
- Organizing a community forum or educational event
- Using paid advertising (social media, television, billboard) to directly reach key audiences

There are resources available to support your Fair Housing Month planning:

- [National Association of Realtors® Fair Housing Month Toolkit](#)—Includes print and digital materials, a sample proclamation, and ideas for activities you can use in your community.
- [National Fair Housing Alliance Fair Housing Month Toolkit](#)—Includes posters and weekly themes to guide outreach and education all month long.

Whether you organize a community event, share information online, or simply start a conversation with colleagues, every effort helps to build fair and welcoming communities.

Bring Stakeholders Together

Events like workshops, roundtable discussions, and symposia are powerful ways to bring people together, spark new ideas, and build collective commitment to advancing fair housing. By gathering a diverse cross-section of stakeholders, you can create space for honest conversations about barriers to fair housing and opportunities to imagine innovative, community-driven solutions.

Communities across Pennsylvania have already modeled how impactful these gatherings can be. For example, Bradford County, Tenfold, and the Pennsylvania Association of Realtors® have successfully convened stakeholders to deepen understanding, share resources, and strengthen local fair housing strategies. Bradford County's full day event was funded using Community Mental Health Services Block Grant funds and open to the public.

A strong event reflects the perspectives of many voices. Consider inviting:

- People with lived experience of housing discrimination
- Housing service providers and advocates
- Housing developers and property management companies
- Rental property owners
- Real estate agents and local Board of Realtors® staff
- Financial institutions and lenders
- Real estate appraisers
- Local magistrates
- Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission staff, Advisory Council members, and Social Justice Ambassadors
- Municipal fair housing officers
- Government employees that work in human services, planning, zoning, and code enforcement
- Regional fair housing, disability rights, and legal aid organizations
- Local Center for Independent Living
- Community leaders, faith-based organizations, and neighborhood groups

Your event can take many shapes depending on community needs and capacity. Some engaging elements might be:

- **Inspiring keynote speaker(s):** Someone who can set the tone, share lived experience, or highlight policy innovations.
- **Hands-on workshops:** Practical sessions that help participants build skills or create action plans.
- Small group conversations: Opportunities for dialogue across sectors where participants can share challenges and collaborate on solutions.
- **Networking and relationship-building:** Time for informal conversation over refreshments to create connections that lead to partnerships.
- **Timing:** Hold the event at a time that is convenient to those who need the most support and encouragement to attend.

When community members, service providers, housing professionals, and decision-makers sit at the same table, they gain a deeper understanding of each other's perspectives. These gatherings not only generate new ideas but also foster trust, collaboration, and momentum for long-term change.

Convene a Task Force

Creating a dedicated task force or committee is an effective way to sustain momentum and build long-term solutions around fair housing. Unlike one-time events, a task force brings diverse stakeholders together on a regular basis for ongoing dialogue, project planning, and problem-solving.

A task force could be focused on housing issues in a particular region, including but not limited to fair housing. It could also be an offshoot of an existing group that is already meeting to coordinate work related to housing. For example, the [Housing Coalition of Cumberland County](#) has an Advocacy Action Team that advances fair housing rights and works toward reducing discrimination.

A task force provides structure for collaboration. It ensures that conversations about fair housing extend beyond meetings into coordinated action. With the right mix of voices at the table, the group can:

- Identify local barriers to fair housing and track emerging trends;
- Develop and implement community-wide strategies;
- Share resources and coordinate activities across sectors; and
- Strengthen accountability by monitoring progress over time.

A strong task force thrives on diversity and inclusivity. Consider inviting:

- Housing service providers and advocates;
- Municipal officials, fair housing officers, and public housing authorities;
- Local human relations commissions;
- Nonprofit and faith-based leaders;
- Representatives from fair housing, disability rights, and legal aid organizations;
- Developers, rental property owners, and property managers;
- Real estate professionals and financial institutions;
- Residents with lived experience of housing discrimination; and
- Educators, health professionals, and other community partners.

Successful task forces typically:

- Meet on a regular schedule (monthly or quarterly);
- Rotate leadership or co-chairing responsibilities;
- Set clear goals and action steps;
- Create subcommittees to address specific issues; and
- Celebrate milestones and share results with the wider community.

By convening a task force, communities can build stronger partnerships and sustainable solutions that advance fair housing for everyone.

A full copy of the Fair Housing Toolkit for Rural PA, as well as supporting migration dataset and report, can be obtained by completing a brief form at [this link](#).