

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION (from the West Virginia Assistive Technology Newsletter)

The Fair Housing Act provides many ways to make sure people have an equal chance for housing. The issue is often physical access to housing for people with disabilities. But sometimes the policies of the housing facility are the problem, not the steps.

A change to a rule, policy, practice or service is called a reasonable accommodation. This is something that, if changed, would allow a person with a disability to have an equal chance to use and enjoy the housing. If it is not changed when requested, it may be because of discrimination.

There must be a connection between the requested accommodation and the individual's disability to be considered "reasonable." For example, a housing provider has a policy of not assigning parking spaces. A resident with a problem walking asks for an assigned space close to her door. The provider must grant this request.

Another example is a housing provider with a "no pets" policy. A tenant who is deaf asks to keep his dog as an assistance animal to let him know when someone knocks at the door or the telephone rings. This request must be granted.

A housing provider can deny a request if the request was not made by or on behalf of a person with a disability. They can also deny the request if there is no disability related need for the accommodation or would impose a financial and administrative burden on the housing provider or would change the provider's operations.

If you have requested a reasonable accommodation and been denied, talk with the WV Housing Advocate. You may be a victim of discrimination. The WV Housing Advocate can be reached at 304-296-6091 or at www.wvfairhousing.org