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IDHR Releases Public Safety and Fair Housing Guidebook with UIC Law School Fair Housing Legal Support Center and Clinic

The guidebook helps local governments, public officials, housing providers, and others explore best practices

CHICAGO – Today the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) released the “[Fair Housing Implications of Nuisance and Crime-Free Ordinances: A Guide for Units of Local Governments](#)” in partnership with the UIC Law School Fair Housing Legal Support Center and Clinic.

The guidebook provides historical context to nuisance and crime-free ordinances and describes how these policies, when overly broad, can produce results that unduly penalize housing providers and tenants, and can run afoul of state and federal fair housing laws. Overbroad ordinances often require housing providers to impose adverse actions on tenants—including denying housing, evictions, fines, or issuing other penalties—whenever law enforcement is involved regardless of the reason.

“Safe and fair housing is a human right,” said **IDHR Director Jim Bennett**. “Not only do these ordinances restrict a landlord’s ability to lease their property to the community at-large, but they also make it harder for domestic violence survivors, people living with a disability, and families impacted by the justice system to obtain and enjoy a home. At IDHR, we are committed to protecting housing providers and tenants alike from unlawful discrimination.”

We must all work together to create and protect safe and fair housing for all people in Illinois. Local governments and public officials should ensure that public safety policies do not discriminate against or deter individuals from seeking police services. Ensuring both public safety and fair housing can be difficult, and requires thoughtful consideration of the impacts of policies, practices, and laws.

“Crime-free and nuisance housing ordinances raise civil rights concerns based on their impact on domestic violence survivors, individuals with disabilities, persons with arrest records and others. This guidebook provides important information and resources, including how to contact my office’s Civil Rights Bureau with complaints regarding ordinances or practices that may run afoul of civil rights laws,” said **Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul**. “My office worked with IDHR on this guidebook to help local governments ensure they meet their civil rights obligations and inform tenants and landlords about their protections under the law.”

Local governments and public officials are encouraged to use this guidebook to familiarize themselves with the fair housing implications of enacting nuisance and crime-free ordinances as well as other practices that penalize housing providers and tenants for alleged criminal activity.

"We commend IDHR for partnering with our Fair Housing Legal Support Center and Clinic to publish this guidebook," said **UIC Professor Michael Seng**. "The guidebook will help local governments, housing providers, existing tenants, housing applicants, and communities maintain public safety and establish healthy living environments that comply with the fair housing laws."

"The guidebook contains critical information that explains the delicate balance between furthering public safety and protecting Illinoisans' access to fair and affordable housing" said **UIC Professor Allison K. Bethel**. "The information we researched provides housing stakeholders a collaborative framework that protects peoples' civil rights."

Overly broad ordinances can also put housing providers at risk of violating federal, state, and local fair housing laws that prohibit discrimination in private and public residential housing based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), disability, and familial status, among other protected factors. IDHR and the UIC Law School Fair Housing Legal Support Center and Clinic developed this guidebook to promote a greater understanding of the landscape of nuisance and crime-free ordinances and their potential conflict with constitutional and civil rights, and adverse impact on marginalized individuals and families who need access to fair and affordable housing the most.

This guidebook was made possible through funding obtained from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and is available on [IDHR's website](#).

Local public officials in need of technical assistance concerning fair housing ordinances may contact IDHR's Attorney of the Day Line by calling (312) 814-6242 or by visiting dhr.illinois.gov.

Any Illinoisan who believes they have been a victim of housing-based discrimination may file a charge with IDHR or HUD within one year of the violation, or in federal or state court within two years of the violation. To file a charge with IDHR, call (312) 814-6200 or visit dhr.illinois.gov/filing-a-charge.

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About the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR)

The Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) enforces the [Illinois Human Rights Act](#), which prohibits discrimination in connection with employment opportunities, housing and real estate transactions, access to financial credit, and the availability of public services and public accommodations.

To learn more, download our [media kit](#) and follow IDHR on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

About the UIC Law School Fair Housing Legal Support Center and Clinic

The UIC Law School Fair Housing Legal Support Center and Clinic is dedicated to providing legal assistance and educating the public about fair housing law in order to eliminate discriminatory housing practices.

For more information, visit law.uic.edu/experiential-education/clinics/fairhousing and follow us on [Facebook](#).