



HUD NEWS

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – Shaun Donovan, Secretary
Office of Public Affairs, Washington, DC 20410

HUD No. 10-244
Shantae Goodloe
(202) 708-0685

<http://www.hud.gov/news/index.cfm>

FOR RELEASE

Thursday

October 21, 2010

HUD CHARGES WISCONSIN PROPERTY MANAGERS WITH DISCRIMINATING AGAINST A FAMILY BECAUSE THEY HAVE CHILDREN

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) today announced that it has charged Sharlene and Jerald Kuiper, managers of a three-bedroom duplex apartment in Outagamie County, Wisconsin, and the owner of the apartment, Kuiper Family Trust, with violating the Fair Housing Act by refusing to show an available apartment to a family with children. HUD’s charge alleges that the Kuipers falsely asserted that the unit was unavailable for viewing when it was, offered to show units only after families without children rejected them, and made discriminatory statements demonstrating a preference for renters without children.

The Fair Housing Act prohibits housing discrimination based on family status, including making statements that indicate a preference for renters without children or a limitation against families with children.

“For 22 years, the Fair Housing Act has made it illegal to refuse housing to families with children,” said John Trasviña, HUD’s Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. “Families with children are guaranteed the same rights to housing as those without children and HUD will continue to take swift enforcement action against individuals and housing providers who violate those rights.”

According to HUD’s charge, the father of three young children responded to an advertisement for the three-bedroom apartment managed by the Kuipers. When the father told Ms. Kuiper that he and his wife had children, Ms. Kuiper allegedly refused to show him the available apartment. Later, the man’s wife, interested in seeing what would happen, called Ms. Kuiper and claimed that she and her husband had no children and were interested in viewing the same apartment her husband had called about earlier. Ms. Kuiper immediately scheduled a showing and pressured her to see the unit right away.

The couple subsequently contacted the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council, a non-profit fair housing organization, which had testers contact the Kuipers and express an interest in the apartment. During the telephone tests, the Kuipers allegedly made discriminatory statements about renting to families. Ms. Kuiper allegedly told one tester, “I’m looking for the perfect renter, meaning I don’t want a lot of kids.” Mr. Kuiper allegedly told the same tester that he charges families with children higher security deposits. The Kuipers eventually rented the apartment to two men with no children.

The HUD Charge of Discrimination will be heard by a United States Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) unless any party to the Charge elects to have the case heard in federal district court. If the ALJ finds after a hearing that discrimination has occurred, the judge may award damages to aggrieved persons for the harm they were caused by the discrimination. The judge may also order injunctive and other equitable relief to deter further discrimination, as well as payment of attorney fees. In addition, the judge may impose fines in order to vindicate the public interest. If the matter is decided in federal court, the judge may also award punitive damages to aggrieved persons.

FHEO and its partners in the Fair Housing Assistance Program investigate more than 10,000 housing discrimination complaints annually. People who believe they are the victims of housing discrimination should contact HUD at 1-800-669-9777 (voice), 800-927-9275 (TTY).

###

HUD's mission is to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all. HUD is working to strengthen the housing market to bolster the economy and protect consumers; meet the need for quality affordable rental homes; utilize housing as a platform for improving quality of life; build inclusive and sustainable communities free from discrimination; and transform the way HUD does business. More information about HUD and its programs is available on the Internet at www.hud.gov and espanol.hud.gov.