

Dispute Resolution Program

The Dispute Resolution Program provides mediation, conciliation, counseling, and referral services to individuals, households, and groups that have a dispute and an ongoing relationship with each other. These are usually neighbors, but they can also be business people whose shops or stalls are near each other, coworkers, members of a church, fraternal organization, or members of a community group.

Mediation provides parties with an opportunity to resolve a dispute in a neutral and confidential setting. The goal of mediation is to provide disputants with skills that enable them to resolve the conflict themselves. Sometimes it is necessary for the parties to meet in a neutral setting to work out an agreement.

The DRP provides a formal mediation that is conducted by a trained and experienced staff mediator. The mediator helps the parties to identify the nature of the conflict and to develop a legally binding agreement that describes the parties' future relationship.

Languages

Staff members are fluent in several languages and are able to accommodate clients speaking any language.

Philadelphia Fair Housing Commission

The Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations provides staff for the Philadelphia Fair Housing Commission (PFHC).

The PFHC enforces the Philadelphia Fair Housing Ordinance which addresses certain unfair rental practices in the city.

The PFHC is a neutral agency that advocates for fairness in rental property relationships.

A complaint may be filed with the PFHC if:

- 1) A tenant is being threatened with illegal eviction. Rent must be current.
- 2) A landlord is raising rent in the face of housing code violations.
- 3) Another term of lease is being violated.
- 4) To stop a landlord from retaliating against a tenant for reporting housing code violations to the Philadelphia Department of Licenses & Inspections (L&I) or in retaliation of filing a complaint with the PFHC.



Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations and Fair Housing Commission

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www.phila.gov/humanrelations

What We Do

- Enforce the Philadelphia Fair Practices Ordinance.
- Enforce the Philadelphia Fair Housing Ordinance.
- Address inter-group conflict.
- Mediate neighborhood disputes.
- Register same-sex couples as *Life Partners*.
- Address unfair rental practices.

Central Intake Unit

A client is first interviewed by a Central Intake staff member. The intake interview is a detailed and confidential process that is designed to determine if a client has a complaint that is jurisdictional with either the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations (PCHR) or the Philadelphia Fair Housing Commission. If a client's concern is not within the jurisdiction of either PCHR or the PFHC, the client is then referred to a more appropriate agency or authority.

Compliance Division

The PCHR Compliance Division enforces the Philadelphia Fair Practices Ordinance which

prohibits discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and the delivery of City services.

In **employment**, it is illegal to discriminate on the bases of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, age 40 and over, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or marital status.

In **housing**, the bases of illegal discrimination are race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, any age, physical disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, presence of children, and source of income.

In **public accommodations** and the **delivery of City services**, the bases of illegal discrimination are the same as in employment except age is not covered in public accommodations. After an individual files a complaint of alleged discrimination, procedures are followed to bring about a timely resolution of the complaint.

Step 1: Intake	Step 5: Conciliation*
Step 2: Fact Finding	Step 6: Public Hearing*
Step 3: Continued Investigation	Step 7 Appeal Optional*
Step 4: Finding of Probable Cause*	Step 8 : Complaint Closed

* When, at Step 3, the investigation has been completed and no evidence of discrimination has been found, the next 4 steps are eliminated.

Complaints investigated by the PCHR must be filed no later than 300-days after the last discriminatory act.

Community Relations Division

The PCHR Community Relations Division (CRD) deals with inter-group conflict and neighborhood disputes. Staff members provide assessment, intervention, conciliation, and follow-up services during an immediate crisis.

The CRD operates a Dispute Resolution Program (DRP) to resolve disagreements between neighbors, and works with community leaders to prevent inter-group tension incidents (violence or vandalism motivated by group hatred).

Efforts to prevent tension, mediate disputes and promote inter-group harmony include, but are not limited to:

- Working closely with local police districts and the Police Conflict Prevention and Resolution (CPR) Unit, community groups and leaders, both to remain informed about problems and to work cooperatively in the alleviation of neighborhood tensions when those problems erupt.
- Working to build lines of communication between groups.
- Educating the community regarding cultural diversity, inter-group harmony and understanding.

Mission of the Philadelphia Fair Housing Commission

Since, 1993, the City of Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations has provided staff for the **Philadelphia Fair Housing Commission**, which addresses unfair rental practices. We are a neutral agency advocating for fairness in rental property relationships.

A tenant may file a complaint with the Philadelphia Fair Housing Commission:

1. If there are existing **code violations**, and the landlord tries to change the terms or conditions of the lease such as illegal eviction or rent increase;
2. If the Landlord **retaliates** against the tenant for reporting housing code violations to the Department of Licenses and Inspections, or any other City agency;
3. If there is an occurrence of **unfair conversion** practice as applied to condos or cooperatives.

REMEMBER

YOU MUST HAVE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IN YOUR POSSESSION BEFORE YOU CAN BE SEEN:

1. If there has been nonpayment due to a dispute, you must have with you proof that the money is in an Escrow Account.
2. After you report Code Violations to L & I at 215-686-2463, you will be given a Service File Number, which you must bring to the Fair Housing Commission at the time you file your complaint.
3. An address or P.O. Box for the landlord to receive notice of the complaint filed. This can be obtained at the Records Room, which is located on the 7th Floor of 34 South 11th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107.
4. Fair Housing cases cannot be accepted without you getting a **SERVICE FILE NUMBER** from the Department of Licenses and Inspections, which is located on the 11th Floor of the Municipal Services Building at 1401 John F. Kennedy Boulevard. The telephone number for L & I is 215-686-2463.
5. If you have any questions, feel free to call the Philadelphia Fair Housing Commission, 215-686-3237.

The Philadelphia Fair Housing Commission



Tenant and Landlord Responsibilities

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Welcome to the Philadelphia Fair Housing Commission

In an effort to give you the best possible service, please follow the instructions listed below:

1. Cases are only accepted by the **Philadelphia Fair Housing Commission** if you verify verbally that you are current with your rent. Bring rent receipts if you have them. Normally, proof that you paid the last three months is required at your hearing. A bank statement with the amount of rent may be accepted.
2. Furnish this office with a lease if you have one.
3. Supporting documents, photos, letters and all other secondary material are to be presented to the Fair Housing Commissioners at your hearing.
4. You will be notified by mail of the date and time of your hearing. Hearings are scheduled approximately six to eight weeks after a case is filed.
5. If, after filing, your landlord files in court for your eviction, you must bring a copy of the notice and you must attend the scheduled court hearing

Tenant Responsibilities

1. Pay your rent on time. It is important to get a receipt. If you pay in cash, pay with a money order and keep the receipt.
2. You must allow the landlord access to the property to make all necessary repairs with a 24 hours notice.
3. If proper notice is given to the landlord and the landlord does not respond, then the fastest way to report Housing Code Violations to License & Inspections is to go directly to the Department of Licenses and Inspections in the Municipal Services Building, 11th Fl., at 1401 J.F.K. Blvd. They can also be reached at 215-686-2463. Once you file your complaint, you will be given a Service File Number
4. **Withholding Your Rent:** If License & Inspections have determined your property violations to be **dangerous to human life or unfit for human habitation** and you are planning to Escrow your rent you **must** do the following:
 1. Notify your Landlord of your intended actions.
 2. Open a separate account.
 3. Make sure you send your Landlord a copy of your Escrow Account monthly.

Landlord Responsibilities

1. You must give the tenant 24-hours notice before entering the property.
2. You must have a valid rental license.
3. You are responsible for all repairs in the property. Leases automatically have an **IMPLIED WARRANTY OF HABITABILITY** that you must extend to your tenant. No matter what your agreement says, hazardous housing code violations are your responsibility and you are required to make repairs in a timely fashion.
4. The law requires that you only keep one month Security Deposit after 12-months. You must keep the Security Deposit in a simple interest bearing account. If you have collected more than one month's rent in security, you must return all but one month's rent after 12-months have passed.
5. It is recommended that you and the Tenants do an exit inspection prior to the tenant moving. You have 30-days to return all security moneys after tenant exits.
6. If you live outside of the City of Philadelphia, you must have a Philadelphia Agent.

Domestic Partnership Law in the City of Philadelphia

Bills passed by City Council on May 7, 1998 and signed by then Mayor Edward G. Rendell on May 19, 1998, created laws on domestic partnership for the City of Philadelphia. In brief they are as follows:

Bill No. 970750 amended the City's *Fair Practices Ordinance* to include a definition of *Life Partnership* being a long-term committed relationship between two unmarried individuals of the same gender. It prohibits discrimination based on marital status in employment, housing, City services, and public accommodations. In effect, the bill makes *Life Partners* of City employees eligible for benefits under the City's and municipal union's various employee benefit plans. (*Philadelphia Code Chapter 9-1100*)

Bill No. 970745 amended the City's *Retirement System Ordinance* to allow members of the Retirement System to name as beneficiaries and survivors any person designated by the employee, which could include one's *Life Partner*. (*Retirement System Ordinance and Municipal Retirement Benefit Plan Ordinance.*)

About Domestic Partnership

Over 11 states and the District of Columbia have adopted domestic partner policies as did at least 130 cities, local governments and quasi-governmental agencies. Domestic partner policies have also been adopted by over 7,414 U.S. employers. Through these policies, lesbian and gay couples are given recognition of their relationships. The policies often grant benefits and rights to same-sex couples as they would to married couples, dependents and families.

THE PHILADELPHIA COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS (PCHR) was established in 1951 by the *Philadelphia Home Rule Charter* to enforce civil rights laws and deal with all matters of inter-group conflict and neighborhood disputes within the City.

The PCHR has nine Commissioners, an Executive Director, and a Staff of professional investigators and mediators who work in the Intake Unit, Compliance Division and Community Relations Division.

Discrimination is defined as different and worse treatment because of a characteristic that an individual has. In employment it is illegal to discriminate on the bases of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, age over 40, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or marital status. In housing the bases are race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, any age, physical disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, presence of children, or source of income. In public accommodations and the delivery of City services, the bases are the same as employment except age is not covered in public accommodations.

The PCHR provides a variety of other services that attempt to prevent inter-group conflict and promote intergroup harmony. One of these services is *The Dispute Resolution Program*, which provides mediation in conflicts between neighbors.

The PCHR also provides staff for the **PHILADELPHIA FAIR HOUSING COMMISSION (PFHC)**. The PFHC enforces ordinances to address unfair rental practices in the City or prevent evictions or rent increases in the face of housing code violations.

Bilingual staff members are available who are fluent in English, Russian, Spanish, Chinese, and Cambodian.

PHILADELPHIA COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS



Life Partnership Your Guide To Life Partnership Registration

Certificate of

Life Partnership

this certifies that

&

have been approved by the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations as Life Partners the of , 2002.

&

The City of Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations hereby certifies that the individuals named above have filed a Life Partnership Registration Statement.

PHILADELPHIA COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS



Domestic Partnership in Philadelphia

The City of Philadelphia is proud to have a domestic partnership policy. On May 7, 1998, City Council passed three bills that collectively created domestic partnership policy. Then Mayor Edward G. Rendell signed them into law on May 19, 1998. This marked a historical advancement in civil rights for all people.

Domestic Partnership is Life Partnership

In Philadelphia, domestic partnership is *Life Partnership* according to law. To be recognized as *Life Partners*, same gender couples must register with the City of Philadelphia through the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations.

Official Life Partnership Definition

In brief, *Life Partnership* is a long-term committed relationship between two individual adults who:

- ✓ Are of the same gender.
- ✓ Agree to share the common necessities of life.
- ✓ Agree to be responsible for each other's welfare.
- ✓ Are not related by blood.
- ✓ Are not married.
- ✓ Share at least one residence.
- ✓ Are the sole *Life Partner* of the other person.

Recognition is achieved through registration. All couples who meet the criteria may register.

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Benefits of Registration

There are a number of benefits and rights granted to all registered *Life Partners* in Philadelphia.

Newly registered partners receive a *Life Partnership Verification Statement Letter* issued by the City of Philadelphia as official proof of their registration.

An optional *Certificate of Life Partnership* is available for a fee of \$10.00.

Registration allows for the collection of important statistics on same gender relationships. It establishes and documents how many officially recognized *Life Partnerships* exist.

For employees of the City of Philadelphia, registration makes their *Life Partners* eligible for benefits under the City's and their union's various employee benefit plans (i.e. medical coverage, leave, etc.).

These employees may also designate their *Life Partner* or any other person as a beneficiary of their retirement benefits.

There is no fee for registration.

Documents Needed To Register

Life Partners will need to provide supporting documents as evidence of their relationship. Applicants must submit a notarized *Life Partnership Verification Statement* and proof of at least three of the following:

- ✓ Common ownership of property or lease.
- ✓ Common ownership of a vehicle.
- ✓ Driver's license listing a common address.
- ✓ Joint bank or credit accounts.
- ✓ Designation as a beneficiary of life insurance, retirement benefits or under a partner's will.
- ✓ Assignment of durable power of attorney or health care power of attorney.

All three forms of documentation submitted to verify your partnership **MUST BE DATED AND AT LEAST SIX MONTHS OLD.**

Make Your Partnership Count

The Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations encourages *Life Partners* to register their partnerships with the City of Philadelphia. Registration will help increase awareness and visibility of same gender relationships.

How Do We Register?

A complete *Life Partnership & Information Packet* is available that includes the following:

- ✓ Complete registration information.
- ✓ A *Life Partnership Verification Statement*
- ✓ Detailed information about rights and benefits.

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