



HOUSING RIGHTS CENTER

WORKING FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY IN HOUSING

# *Housing Rights* News

Summer 2022



## IN THIS ISSUE:

2022 HOUSING RIGHTS SUMMIT RECAP  
COVID-19 PROTECTION UPDATES  
DEFENDING TENANTS' RIGHT TO A SERVICE DOG  
VETERANS' RIGHTS TO FAIR HOUSING  
FIGHTING DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION  
HOW TO REQUEST A DISABILITY-RELATED ACCOMMODATION

HOUSING RIGHTS HOTLINE: 1-800-477-5977

TTY: 1-213-201-0867

[www.housingrightscenter.org](http://www.housingrightscenter.org)



# RIGHTING WRONGS, CREATING HOPE: 23<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL HOUSING RIGHTS SUMMIT HIGHLIGHTS

At our annual summit honoring National Fair Housing Month, we explored how California communities are coming together to undo the long legacies of historic racism and discrimination. You can now watch the recording at [www.housingrightscenter.org/summit-video](http://www.housingrightscenter.org/summit-video) and enjoy the highlights below!



- \* U.S. Rep. **Adam Schiff** and L.A. County Supervisor **Holly J. Mitchell** shared their priorities for fair housing and equitable communities.
- \* **Bruce's Beach** organizer Kavon Ward, co-founder of Where Is My Land, shared the growing campaign to return land taken from Black families and help restore their lost generational wealth. We were also honored to host Jonathan Burgess, who is currently fighting to reclaim his family's historically owned land in Coloma, CA.
- \* We dove into the wave of community organizing in California's former **sundown towns**, where Mexican, Asian and Black Americans were once barred from being present after dark. Members of the Anti-Racist Committee of South Pasadena and Care First shared the journey to the City's recent resolution condemning its past laws.
- \* HRC unpacked our investigations into **voucher discrimination** in Los Angeles County, and shared exciting new work to protect the rights of **Section 8** voucher holders.
- \* Housing policy experts and legal aid attorneys shared updates on the **COVID-19 eviction crisis**, and what advocates can do to promote an equitable recovery.
- \* The **Freedom Singers** of the Los Angeles Community Action Network gave a captivating special performance highlighting the experience of being unhoused in Skid Row.

We hope you'll join us again next year. In the meantime, we'll see you in the struggle! ◀

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# COVID-19 RENT AND EVICTION PROTECTION UPDATES

## 1) COVID-19 eviction protections still apply in all Los Angeles County cities and unincorporated communities.

The Los Angeles County COVID-19 Tenant Protections give tenants a defense against evictions for reasons that are not their fault, including most owner move-ins; having unauthorized occupants or pets; and nuisance (such as noise). In most cities, these protections last until December 31, 2022. However, the same protections apply in the City of Los Angeles until the city ends its local emergency.

## 2) Many tenants experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19 can delay the date their rental payments are due. But protections vary in some cities.

Generally, in order to delay rental payments, tenants must notify their landlord in writing. A sample notice with instructions is available in English and Spanish at [www.housingrightscenter.org](http://www.housingrightscenter.org).

**City of Los Angeles:** When the City's emergency declaration is lifted, tenants will have 12 months to pay their delayed rent.

**City of Baldwin Park:** When the City's emergency declaration is lifted, tenants will have 6 months to pay their delayed rent.

**City of Pasadena:** Rent delayed before June 30, 2022 must be paid back by December 31, 2022. As of July 1, 2022, some tenants can continue to delay rental payments following County requirements (*below*).

**All other Los Angeles County cities and unincorporated communities:** Starting July 1, 2022, tenants who earn 80% of the area median income or less (see *below*) can delay rental payments until December 31, 2022. Delayed rent from this period must be paid back by December 31, 2023. ◀

PEOPLE IN HOUSEHOLD:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
HIGHEST INCOME TO DELAY RENT:	\$44,800	\$51,200	\$57,600	\$57,600	\$69,120	\$74,240	\$79,360	\$84,480

## COVID-19 TENANT RIGHTS WEBINARS

Join HRC's step-by-step guide to L.A. County COVID-19 tenant protections **every week** on Zoom and Facebook.

**FRIDAYS**  
2:00 PM  
English

**THURSDAYS**  
6:00 PM  
Spanish

**Facing eviction during COVID-19?**

**Get free or low-cost help at [www.stayhousedla.org](http://www.stayhousedla.org)**

**Stay Housed**  
**L.A. County**



# HOUSING RIGHTS CENTER DEFENDS RIGHT TO SERVICE DOG FOR VETERAN WITH P.T.S.D.

The Housing Rights Center (HRC) has filed a lawsuit on behalf of a disabled veteran who was unjustly denied permission to adopt a service dog. HRC brings this complaint against Lian and Hanson Boyd, who own and manage several apartment complexes across the South Bay area of Los Angeles County.

Noah Mascarenas is a U.S. military veteran and longtime Torrance resident who was diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In 2019, he was prescribed a service dog trained to help manage his physical and emotional symptoms. But despite his documented need for assistance, and in violation of his rights as a person with a disability, his landlords denied this simple request that would have allowed Mr. Mascarenas to continue living safely and comfortably in his home of 18 years. Instead, they began pressuring him to move out and raised his security deposit by \$1,000 in retaliation.

“Denial of assistance animals is one of the most frequent fair

housing complaints we receive every year at the Housing Rights Center,” said Chancela Al-Mansour, Executive Director at HRC. “Landlords should consider every request for accommodations seriously and in good faith, or they

**The Fair Housing Act makes it clear that tenants with mental and/or physical disabilities are entitled to accommodations that can be granted without unreasonable burden.**

could find themselves in violation of federal law.”

“It’s one thing to have a no-pets policy, but refusing to make exceptions for assistance animals is unlawful and frankly cruel,” said Elana Eden, HRC’s Director of Media, Outreach & Education.

“Disability discrimination is widespread and insidious, and can make life immeasurably harder for tenants who may just need a simple accommodation to live independently.”

Disability has been a protected category under the Fair Housing Act since 1988. The law makes clear that tenants with mental and/or physical disabilities are entitled to accommodations, or changes to policies, that can be granted without unreasonable burden. Landlords may not refuse to rent to tenants because they may need a disability-related accommodation, nor may they penalize or retaliate against tenants for requesting accommodations. As of 2019, California law also provides protection against discrimination for veterans and active military.

If you believe you have experienced discrimination based on disability or any other protected class under federal or California law, please contact the Housing Rights Center at **1-800-477-5977 (TTY: 1-213-201-0867)** or **[info@housingrightscenter.org](mailto:info@housingrightscenter.org)**. ◀

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*Report housing discrimination in your community.*

## Housing Rights Hotline

Toll Free: 1-800-477-5977  
TTY: 1-213-201-0867



Email: [info@housingrightscenter.org](mailto:info@housingrightscenter.org)  
Appointments: [www.housingrightscenter.org/help](http://www.housingrightscenter.org/help)

# HOUSING RIGHTS FOR MILITARY AND VETERANS

## In California, veterans and active military are protected from housing discrimination.

The California Fair Employment & Housing Act makes it illegal for housing providers to consider the military or veteran status of current or potential tenants.

Under California Civil Code §12920, someone's military or veteran status cannot be a reason to refuse their rental application or deny them access to a homeless shelter. These protections apply to both active military and veterans, as well as their spouses and children.

Disability, either mental or physical, and use of VASH vouchers or other public assistance are also protected from housing discrimination under California law.

**If you have experienced discrimination because of your military or veteran status, contact the Housing Rights Center today.**



### EXAMPLES OF DISCRIMINATION

- A landlord rejects your rental application because you are active military
- A property manager denies your request for a disability accommodation because you are a veteran
- Homeless shelter staff assumes that you have a disability because you served in the military
- Your property manager harasses you because you are a woman who served in the military

### MILITARY/VETERAN STATUS INCLUDES....

- U.S. Armed Forces
- U.S. Armed Forces Reserve
- U.S. National Guard
- California National Guard

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# Disability accommodations IN HOUSING

People with disabilities are entitled to request certain accommodations or modifications in their rental homes.

**HRC can help make requests on your behalf.**

Parking  
space

Service/  
support  
animal

Wheelchair  
ramp

Grab  
bars

## **POLICY Accommodations**

Live-in  
caregiver

Change  
rent  
due date

Remove  
carpet

## **STRUCTURAL Modifications**

\* In some cases, tenants may be responsible for the cost of modifications. Contact us to learn more.

Switch  
units

Lower  
countertops

Repair  
elevator

\* Tenants who are vulnerable to COVID-19 can request to delay maintenance, inspections, and other non-urgent home entry.

Contact the Housing Rights Center for help making reasonable accommodation or modification requests.



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# DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION IN LOS ANGELES: HOUSING RIGHTS CENTER & MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY SERVICES RESOLVE A CASE



The owner and property manager of an apartment in the Brentwood neighborhood of Los Angeles have agreed to resolve a lawsuit involving claims of discrimination filed by the Housing Rights Center (HRC) and Mental Health Advocacy Services (MHAS) on behalf of a tenant with mental health disabilities who needs an assistance animal.

The defendants agreed to adopt policies and practices that will enhance equal opportunities in housing for persons with disabilities, including adopting a written policy addressing reasonable accommodation and modification requests and attending comprehensive fair housing training.

The plaintiff brought suit in federal court in the fall of 2020 for discrimination on the basis of disability. After the plaintiff experienced debilitating symptoms of multiple severe disabilities, her doctor prescribed an assistance animal to aid in the mitigation of her symptoms, maintain her independence of

living, and support her continued use and enjoyment of her housing. The plaintiff, and HRC on her behalf, made several requests to the owner and property manager of the apartment building to allow her to have the assistance animal as a reasonable accommodation of her disability.

Rodney Leggett, Staff Attorney at HRC, commented, "It is unacceptable and illegal for housing providers to discriminate against tenants with mental health disabilities. Landlords have a legal and moral responsibility to engage in a good faith interactive process to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to housing opportunities."

Naomi Sultan, Supervising Attorney at MHAS, stated, "It is well established that landlords must provide reasonable accommodations for people with mental health disabilities who need emotional support animals. Refusing to permit emotional support animals and retaliating against tenants who request them is an illegal and unsustainable

business practice."

Ultimately, HRC and MHAS negotiated on the plaintiff's behalf with the defendants for a successful resolution. The defendants agreed to pay the plaintiff \$120,000 for damages, litigation costs, and attorneys' fees. The defendants have also agreed to adopt a written policy addressing reasonable accommodation and modification requests, comprehensive fair housing training focused on providing equal access to persons who have disabilities, to place and maintain English and Spanish versions of the HUD fair housing poster at the apartment building, and to ensure that all advertisements for rentals comply with HUD's fair housing advertisement guidelines.

The plaintiff was represented by Rodney Leggett, Zachary Frederick, and Javier Beltran of HRC, the nation's largest nonprofit civil rights organization dedicated to securing and promoting fair housing; and Naomi Sultan and Ilana Lohr-Schmidt of MHAS. ◀

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## PROPERTY OWNERS & MANAGERS

# FAIR HOUSING CERTIFICATION TRAINING

LAST FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH 10 AM - 1 PM ZOOM

Learn federal and California fair housing laws, including:

- Avoiding unlawful discriminatory practices
- Screening tenants lawfully
- Best practices for non-discriminatory advertisements and policies
- Handling disability-related accommodation requests
- ...and more!

Participants receive a certificate of completion, HRC's Fair Housing handbook, and educational materials and reference guides.

### PRICING AND REGISTRATION:

**[www.housingrightscenter.org/certification](http://www.housingrightscenter.org/certification)**

Questions about this event? Contact us:  
outreach@housingrightscenter.org  
(800) 477-5977 ext. 1018

