

DOJ CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION

SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN HOUSING PARTNERSHIP TOOLKIT



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Using This Toolkit

Thank you for helping us spread the word about the Department of Justice's (DOJ) initiative to combat sexual harassment in housing. The goal of this initiative is to protect individuals from harassment by landlords, property managers, maintenance workers, security guards, loan officers, and other employees and representatives of rental property owners. Your trusted voice can help the Department make a difference by educating your communities about their rights.

As part of the initiative, we are expanding our efforts nationwide by working with partners like you, to spread the word and to overcome barriers to report sexual harassment to DOJ and other enforcement agencies. This sexual harassment in housing partnership toolkit contains materials that will help you reach out to people in your community to raise awareness about this issue. The information provided will also help you respond to questions and concerns.

Fast Facts for Partners

- The Justice Department's Civil Rights Division enforces the Fair Housing Act, which prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin, and disability. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination prohibited under this law.
- In October 2017, The Department of Justice announced an initiative to combat sexual harassment in housing.
- Sexual harassment in housing includes demands for sex or sexual acts in order to buy, rent, or continue renting a home. It also includes other unwelcome sexual conduct that makes it hard to keep living in or feel comfortable in one's home.
- The Department of Justice can investigate reports of sexual harassment in housing. If there is a pattern or practice of harassment, DOJ may be able to file a lawsuit against harassers and other people who are involved with a victim's housing.
- Even if the harassment happened many years ago, DOJ may still be able to help.

Frequently Asked Questions about Sexual Harassment in Housing

As a partner with a direct link to communities who may know people who have been sexually harassed in housing, you may get questions about what the Department can do to help. Some background and information are provided below.

What is sexual harassment in housing?

Sexual harassment in housing includes demands for sex or sexual acts in order to buy, rent, or continue renting a home. It also includes other unwelcome sexual conduct that makes it hard to keep living in or feel comfortable in your home.

What are some examples of sexual harassment in housing?

The following may be examples of sexual harassment in housing:

- My landlord made a lot of comments about having sex with me. I ignored him. When I fell behind on rent, he said there was another way I could pay. I said no and he evicted me.
- The housing authority inspector wouldn't approve the apartment I wanted to rent with my voucher unless I performed a sexual act on him. I agreed in order to get my family off the street.
- The maintenance man won't fix anything in my apartment unless I have sex with him. I don't know what I'm going to do about the broken heater when it gets even colder.
- I went to look at a home to rent and the owner told me he would lower the rent if I had sex with him.
- I wanted to buy a home. When I went to look at it, the loan officer grabbed my breasts. I said no and left immediately. I never heard about the home or the loan again.
- The security guard in my apartment building has been talking about my body and sending me naked pictures. I asked him to stop. I came home one day and found him naked in my bed.
- The owner of the home I rent makes comments about my body, clothes, and the sexual acts he wants me to perform on him.

What can DOJ do to help?

The Department of Justice can investigate reports of sexual harassment in housing. If there is a pattern or practice of harassment, DOJ may be able to file a lawsuit against harassers and other people who are involved with the housing.

Frequently Asked Questions about Sexual Harassment in Housing

What if it happened years ago? Can DOJ still help?

Yes, even if the harassment happened many years ago, DOJ may still be able to help.

How should victims of sexual harassment in housing report it?

A victim can report to us by phone or email.

- Call the Sexual Harassment in Housing Initiative Line at: 1-844-380-6178
- Email us at: fairhousing@usdoj.gov
- *Victims can give as much or as little information as they'd like. If they provide a phone number, we will call them back.*

What happens when DOJ receives a report of sexual harassment in housing?

When victims contact DOJ, we will talk to them about their experiences. After that, we **may** do the following:

- Encourage them to file a complaint with the [U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development](#)
- Investigate the harasser(s)
- Decide whether to file a lawsuit
- Inform the harasser(s) that threatening or evicting people because they reported harassment is against the law
- Request a court order to protect their privacy during a lawsuit
- Gather evidence
- Attempt to negotiate and settle the lawsuit
- Argue the case at trial

For more Frequently Asked Questions on this initiative, please visit our website:

English: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/sexual-harassment-housing-initiative>

Spanish: <https://www.justice.gov/crt-espanol/iniciativa-en-contra-del-acoso-sexual-en-la-vivienda>

Sample Email Message

A well-worded email can be an effective way to communicate with many members of your community at once, to encourage advocates to spread the word and to encourage victims to come forward. You can send this sample as it is — after adding your contact information where noted — or add a personal touch to better match the interests and concerns of your community. Here are a few tips for writing your own emails:

- Write an attention-grabbing subject line, but keep it short. Email systems often cut off subject lines longer than 50 characters.
- Put the most important information first.
- Feature calls to action — the action you'd like the reader to take.
- Keep it short. People typically spend only seconds scanning an email.
- Use bold font, subheads, bullets, or other methods to clarify the message, promote the call to action, and enable the reader to quickly skim.

Sample Email Message

Subject Line: Sexual Harassment + Housing = Time for a Change

Dear [First Name],

No one should ever have to choose between housing and sexual harassment.

The U.S. Department of Justice has announced an initiative to combat sexual harassment in housing, in an effort to protect individuals from harassment by landlords, property managers, maintenance workers, security guards, and other employees and representatives of rental property owners.

As part of the initiative, the Department recently expanded its effort nationwide to bring more awareness to this issue. But, it needs our help. It needs your help, too. By spreading the word, we are helping to inform victims of available resources to help put an end to sexual harassment in housing. By coming forward, you are giving a voice to the voiceless and showing others who may have had this happen to them that there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

If you or someone you know has been a victim of sexual harassment in housing, the Department of Justice wants to hear from you. Call 1-844-380-6178, or send an e-mail to fairhousing@usdoj.gov. Learn more about the initiative:

English: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/sexual-harassment-housing-initiative>

Spanish: <https://www.justice.gov/crt-espanol/iniciativa-en-contra-del-acoso-sexual-en-la-vivienda>

Sincerely,

[Your name and contact information]



Social Media for Partners

The suggested social media content contained on the following pages will help you inform your communities about our initiative and how to report sexual harassment in housing to the Department of Justice.

As a partner, we encourage you to share any of our social media posts that are relevant to your audience to help promote the Department's initiative on your social media platform(s). Don't forget to tag us in your DOJ-related posts so that we're notified when you're giving us a shout out. To get a list of our current social media platforms, visit our homepage: <https://www.justice.gov>.

When posting any of this content on your Facebook page, the U.S. Department of Justice's name will appear in a drop-down menu after you type the "@" symbol and begin to manually type in our name. Select the U.S. Department of Justice page and continue entering the rest of the post. This will tag the Department on Facebook and create a live link to the Department's Facebook page.

In addition, partners can visit the Department's Facebook page to share published posts by clicking "Share" and selecting "On a page you manage" from the drop-down menu. This action will link to the Department's Facebook page and post the selected content to the partner's Facebook page timeline. Similarly, a partner can visit the Department's Twitter account to retweet content available on the platform or post the suggested content provided on the following pages.

If you see something, say something: As a trusted voice and partner, there may be instances where you respond to comments or questions on social media about the DOJ initiative. Make it clear that you're a partner and not an official spokesperson. Please do not create social media accounts using the Department's brand to communicate with customers on behalf of the agency. As a partner, you are our eyes and ears on social media. If you see something happening or trending on social media concerning this initiative, please let us know.

DOJ Online Properties, for Reference:

- DOJ Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/DOJ/>
- DOJ Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TheJusticeDept>
- Sexual Harassment in Housing Initiative landing page (English): <https://www.justice.gov/crt/sexual-harassment-housing-initiative>
- Sexual Harassment in Housing Initiative landing page (Spanish): <https://www.justice.gov/crt-espanol/iniciativa-en-contra-del-acoso-sexual-en-la-vivienda>

Social Media for Partners

Suggested Image available for download on website:
<https://www.justice.gov/crt/sexual-harassment-housing-initiative-resources>

Facebook:

Have you or someone you know been the victim of sexual harassment in housing? The @DOJ may be able to help. Contact DOJ at 1-844-380-6178 and learn more about its initiative to protect individuals from harassment by landlords and other representatives of rental properties here: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/sexual-harassment-housing-initiative>

Sexual harassment is illegal. We're partnering with the @DOJ to spread the word about its initiative to combat sexual harassment in housing. If you or someone you know has been a victim, please call 1-866-380-6178 or email fairhousing@usdoj.gov for help. Learn more: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/sexual-harassment-housing-initiative>

You should never have to choose between housing and sexual harassment. If you or someone you know has been a victim, the @DOJ wants to help. Are you ready to let your voice be heard? Call 1-866-380-6178 or email fairhousing@usdoj.gov. Find more resources here: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/sexual-harassment-housing-initiative>

Twitter/Instagram:

@TheJusticeDept is working hard to protect individuals from harassment by landlords and other representatives of rental properties. If you or someone you know has been the victim of sexual harassment in housing, learn how you can report it: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/sexual-harassment-housing-initiative>

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Social Media for Partners

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Facebook:

If you've been the victim of sexual harassment in housing, you are NOT alone. You may think you have nowhere to go for relief, but the @DOJ wants to help. Call 1-866-380-6178 or email fairhousing@usdoj.gov to report your issue. Learn more: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/sexual-harassment-housing-initiative>

No one should be made to feel unsafe at home. We're partnering with the @DOJ to help end sexual harassment in housing. If you or someone you know has been a victim, call 1-866-380-6178 or email fairhousing@usdoj.gov to report your issue. Learn more: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/sexual-harassment-housing-initiative>

DYK that the @DOJ files lawsuits to help victims of sexual harassment in housing? Help us spread the word about DOJ's initiative to combat sexual harassment in housing. If you or someone you know has been a victim, DOJ may be able to help. Call 1-866-380-6178 or email fairhousing@usdoj.gov to report your issue. Learn more: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/sexual-harassment-housing-initiative>

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