



HUD NEWS

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

HUD No. 10-123

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

FOR RELEASE

Tuesday

June 15, 2010

HUD CHARGES OWNERS, MANAGERS OF WISCONSIN APARTMENT COMPLEX WITH DENYING ACCESSIBLE PARKING SPACE TO TENANT WITH DISABILITIES

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced today that it is charging the owner of a Walworth, Wisconsin apartment complex and its management company with discrimination for denying an accessible parking space to a tenant who has difficulty walking. In the charge, HUD alleges that WHPC-DWR, LLC and Cardinal Capital Management, Inc., violated the Fair Housing Act in denying the request of the tenant, who has braces on both legs.

The Fair Housing Act requires landlords to make reasonable accommodations in their rules, policies, practices, or services when needed to provide persons with disabilities an equal opportunity to use or enjoy a dwelling.

“Landlords cannot be indifferent to or deny reasonable accommodation requests of tenants with disabilities,” stated John Trasviña, HUD Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO). “Here, the denial resulted in injury. HUD will vigorously enforce legal protections that provide access for people with disabilities.”

According to HUD’s charge, the tenant had an accessible parking placard when he moved into Village Square Apartments in Walworth County and he immediately began parking in a designated “handicap accessible” space closest to the entrance. Shortly thereafter, management informed him he could not park in that space because it serves as a pick-up and drop-off area for tenants who do not drive. With HUD’s encouragement, the tenant renewed his request but management replied, “That’s how we do things.”

Unable to use the designated accessible parking space, the tenant began parking in a space far from the entrance, causing him severe pain in trips to and from his car. In one instance, after parking and beginning to walk towards his unit, he slipped and fell on ice, causing an injury that required emergency medical attention. Not wanting to face another winter without accessible parking, the tenant moved.

The HUD Charge of Discrimination will be heard by a United States Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) unless a 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 ALJ may award damages and order injunctive relief and other equitable relief to deter further discrimination. In addition, the ALJ may

impose civil penalties in order to vindicate the public interest and award attorney fees. If the matter is decided in federal court, the judge may also award punitive damages to aggrieved persons.

HUD 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).

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