THE UNRUH CIVIL RIGHTS ACT PROVIDES PROTECTION FROM DISCRIMINATION BY ALL BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS IN CALIFORNIA

The Unruh Civil Rights Act requires “[f]ull and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, privileges or services in all business establishments.” This includes, but is not limited to, the following places:

- Hotels and motels
- Nonprofit organizations that have a business purpose or are a public accommodation
- Restaurants
- Theaters
- Hospitals
- Barber shops and beauty salons
- Housing accommodations – including rental housing and shared-economy housing
- Public agencies
- Retail establishments

SENIOR HOUSING

The Unruh Civil Rights Act contains provisions regulating the establishment of specialized housing designed to meet the physical and/or social needs of senior citizens.

Housing that meets these requirements is exempt from the familial status and age provisions of the Fair Employment and Housing Act and may, therefore, legally exclude households with children. Similar provisions are provided for senior citizen mobile home parks under federal fair housing laws.
EXEMPLARY UNRUH ACT VIOLATIONS

The following examples represent potential violations of the Unruh Civil Rights Act. Other situations may also qualify as Unruh Act violations depending on the specific circumstances:

- A hotel charges a $100 service fee only to guests of a certain racial group but not to other guests of the hotel.
- A doctor refuses to treat a patient who has been diagnosed as HIV positive.
- A same-sex couple is denied a table at a restaurant even though there are vacant tables available and other customers are seated immediately.
- A visually impaired individual is told their service animal is not allowed in a store.
- Charging men and women different prices for comparable services, such as clothing alterations, haircuts, dry cleaning, or drinks at a restaurant or bar.
- Promoting a business with “ladies night” discounts on admission and services.

WHAT DFEH DOES

The Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) enforces this law by:

1. Investigating harassment and discrimination complaints;
2. Assisting involved parties to voluntarily resolve complaints;
3. Prosecuting violations of the law; and
4. Educating Californians about the Unruh Act by providing written materials and participating in seminars and conferences.

If you think you have been a victim of housing discrimination based on a protected class, file a complaint. A DFEH complaint must be filed within one year from the date the last act of discrimination.

If you have a disability that requires a reasonable accommodation, the DFEH can assist you by scribing your intake by phone or, for individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing or have speech disabilities, through the California Relay Service (711), or you can contact us below.

TO FILE A COMPLAINT

Department of Fair Employment and Housing
defh.ca.gov
Toll Free: 800.884.1684
TTY: 800.700.2320