

## **HUD Enhances its 800 Number Fair Housing Complaint Line**

*Improvements Allow HUD to Accommodate More Calls Than Ever Before*

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**National Association For Home Builders**

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The Department of Housing and Urban Development announced that an increase in calls coming into its toll-free fair housing complaint line, 800-669-9777, shows that recent enhancements made to the system have helped achieve the agency's goal of enabling more individuals to report housing discrimination to its Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO).

About 13,000 calls a month now come into the hotline, up 8% over previous months. Chief among the enhancements that have contributed to the increase was the inclusion of 64 recently created area codes in the hotline's automated program, which refers callers to intake specialists at HUD's regional offices based on area-code recognition. The last few years have seen the addition of more than 100 new area codes for businesses and residences throughout the nation.

In anticipation of the increased call volume, HUD also added two more phone lines to its hotline, making it easier for callers to connect quickly with a live person in one of HUD's regional offices.

The addition of new area codes and extra phone lines helped contribute to the 21% increase in discrimination complaints HUD has received this fiscal year, which ends September 30th.

"We are excited about the new changes to our phone system," said Kim Kendrick, HUD's assistant secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. "Anything we can do to enhance our customer service assures our callers that we are here to serve them better and helps us continue our mission to ensure equal access to housing for every resident of this nation."

Another benefit of the changes is that they enable HUD to analyze call data better. For example, "If we discover we are receiving more calls of discrimination from a particular city, we can step up our enforcement efforts in that area," said Kendrick. "The system is allowing us to utilize our resources better."

Similarly, if HUD receives few complaints from some areas of the country, the Department can explore whether its education-and-outreach efforts in those communities are adequate. The system allows HUD also to monitor how the public responds to targeted initiatives.

For all calls coming into the discrimination hotline, HUD can track the city and state the call is coming from, as well as the time of day of the call and the duration of the call. This information helps hotline phone representatives to be more responsive to callers.

In addition to calling HUD's toll-free Fair Housing complaint number at 800-669-9777, individuals who believe they have experienced discrimination can also file a complaint by using HUD's online form at [www.hud.gov/fairhousing](http://www.hud.gov/fairhousing).

Housing discrimination charges heard before an administrative law judge carry a maximum civil penalty of \$11,000 for a first offense, in addition to actual damages for each complainant, injunctive or other equitable relief, and attorney's fees. Sanctions can be more severe if a respondent has a history of housing discrimination. Parties also have the right to elect to have their cases heard in federal district court.

FHEO and its partners in the Fair Housing Initiatives Program and the Fair Housing Assistance Program investigate approximately 9,000 housing discrimination complaints annually. People who believe they are the victims of housing discrimination should contact HUD at 800-669-9777 (voice) 800-927-9275 (TTY). Additional information is available at [www.hud.gov/fairhousing](http://www.hud.gov/fairhousing).