

FINDING A GOOD and AFFORDABLE PLACE TO LIVE

FAIR HOUSING HIGHLIGHT #26

I'm staying with friends for now but I need to get my own place. All the apartments seem so expensive and I only make \$10/hr. Why can't I find something affordable?

Housing costs have risen dramatically in the last few years, especially in Montgomery County - one of the most expensive rental markets in the state. This means a scarcity of affordable rental housing for lower income people. ***So start your search early!*** If you wait, you may feel desperate and be forced into a situation where you end up paying more than you can manage and don't have time to check out various apartments, compare costs, or talk to other tenants about how they like living there.

I have been looking at the classifieds every day - what else can I do?

DO NOT RELY SOLELY ON RENTALS YOU FIND IN THE NEWSPAPERS. These represent only a fraction of all available vacancies at any given time. The majority of vacancies are never advertised in the paper – more often than not, landlords just put a sign outside, or fill it from a waiting list. And newspaper advertisements are seen by many eyes looking for housing, so BESIDES looking in the newspaper, you may also try:

- **Word of Mouth**: Telling friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers that you are looking for a place to rent - they may know someone who is moving.
- **Homesekers List**: A weekly list of affordable rentals in Montgomery County taken from newspaper classified can be found at www.fairhousingrights.org.
- **Local Apartment Guides**: Take a look - but they tend to list more expensive units.
- **Online Classifieds**: Craig's List and others
- **Posted Signs**: Often a landlord will just put a sign outside the property: "Apt for Rent" with a telephone # . It pays to drive around an area and look.
- **Local Realtors**: Sometimes they have properties for rent as well as for sale. Sometimes they find tenants for smaller local landlords.

What is the best way to ask a landlord about an available unit?

First– be prepared to ask a lot of questions! Write up a list of questions such as "What is the rent and security deposit?" "Is there an application fee, credit check, or late fees?" "Are utilities included?" Ask about the average cost of utilities that YOU have to pay for—this could vary widely!

Questions? Call the Fair Housing Rights Center in Southeastern Pennsylvania at 215-576-7711 or visit us online at www.fairhousingrights.org.