Center for Community Engagement at Chestnut Health Systems

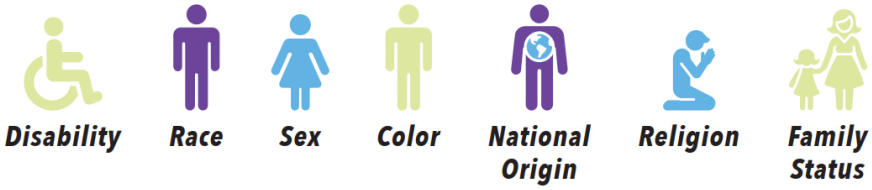
HOUSING STIGMA FACT SHEET

Recovery Housing – Stigma and Misconceptions

The Fair Housing Act (FHA) – tenants that use/have history of substance use are protected under this law from housing discrimination.

- Bans discrimination based on disability, which is defined as a "physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities."
- Federal regulations clarify that protection extends to people in recovery from alcohol and drug use.

Fair Housing Act is private property (Americans with Disabilities Act covers public spaces).



Landlords, property owners, and housing providers are prohibited from denying housing to anyone because they or a family member are in recovery.

Note: Age-related housing discrimination in Illinois is explicitly prohibited by state law. This is covered in the Illinois Human Rights Act. The FHA complaints are filed through the Illinois Department of Human Rights.

Landlords and other housing providers cannot:

- Refuse to rent or sell to a person who was once addicted to a controlled substance but is not currently using substances or a person who is experiencing mental health challenges
- Ask for more information that would be asked of any other potential tenant
- Ask about medical and behavioral health care treatment
- Apply different terms or conditions to an individual or group because they are in recovery from substance use or because they have mental health challenges

Cities, towns, zoning boards, boards of health, or others involved in city or town government cannot:

- Refuse to grant an occupancy permit to a group home or recovery house solely because it will house people in recovery
- Subject the group home or recovery house to health or fire inspections more frequently than housing for individuals or families
- Require the group home or recovery house to comply with "single room occupancy" zoning, fire, or occupancy standards

NIMBY

NIMBY stands for "not-in-my-backyard" refers to community members who oppose certain developments or services in their neighborhood. Even if community members are generally open to services/ developments elsewhere.

NIMBYism in recovery housing is often based on fear and misinformation.

Why NIMBYism Happens

Misconceptions: Many neighbors believe recovery housing will cause noise, crime, littering, traffic, parking, or safety issues.

Property Value Fears: Concerns for nearby homes will lose value.

Lack of familiarity: People unfamiliar with recovery services may assume the worst.

Stigma: Deep-seated prejudice against people with substance use disorders.

Steps to Combat NIMBY

Reduce Stigma

- Destigmatize recovery services (look at Stigma Toolkit for more resources)
- Share data/ statistics that support recovery housing outcomes
- Spread accurate knowledge about substance use disorder and recovery
- Eliminate shame towards people struggling with substance use disorders

Engage Early & Often

- Creating educational materials for wide neighborhood distribution about your recovery house's rules, standards, and expectations

Address Concerns

- Holding a neighborhood meeting to discuss concerns, alleviate fears, and build trust
- Dispels fears surrounding recovery services

Build partnerships

- Hosting a neighborhood event or open house at your recovery house to let neighbors see the place for themselves and have positive interactions with residents
- Knocking on doors personally for all immediate neighbors and introducing yourself and the new recovery house

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