The Civil Rights Act of 1968 prohibited the following forms of discrimination:

1. Refusal to sell or rent a dwelling to any person because of his race, color, religion or national origin. People with disabilities and families with children were added to the list of protected classes by the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988.
2. Discrimination against a person in the terms, conditions or privilege of the sale or rental of a dwelling.
3. Advertising the sale or rental of a dwelling indicating preference of discrimination based on race, color, religion or national origin (and, as of 1988, people with disabilities and families with children).
4. Coercing, threatening, intimidating, or interfering with a person's enjoyment or exercise of housing rights based on discriminatory reasons or retaliating against a person or organization that aids or encourages the exercise or enjoyment of fair housing rights.

Who Is Protected?

Under federal law, discrimination is illegal when it is based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status or national origin. In California, it is also illegal to discriminate on the basis of ancestry, marital status, age, sexual orientation, source of income or medical condition.

California also prohibits "arbitrary" discrimination.

Treat Everyone Equally

Fair housing is the law. Property owners must treat everyone equally and should be ready to prove that they did. Ask everyone the same questions. Provide everyone with the same information. Use the same procedures and standards to qualify all applicants. Advertise the property and not the type of people who live there. Offer everyone an equal opportunity to rent all available units.

Be ready to make reasonable accommodations in your policies and to allow reasonable modifications to your property when necessary for disabled tenants and applicants. Keep in mind how broad fair housing laws are. If you have a question, seek legal help before a problem occurs.