

Fair housing is the right to choose where we live, free from discrimination.



Together, the Virginia and federal fair housing laws prohibit discrimination in housing-related transactions (rental, sales, lending, insurance, zoning) based on the protected classes of:

**Race
Color
Religion
National Origin
Sex/Gender
Familial Status
Disability
Age 55+
Source of Funds
Military Status
Sexual Orientation
Gender Identity**

If you are interested in learning more about testing or applying to be a tester, fill out the application online:

HOMEofVA.org/BecomeaTester

Send questions to:

fairhousing@HOMEofVA.org

Information from HOME is not intended to be legal advice. Please consult an attorney for legal advice.

Alternative formats available upon request.

HOME'S MISSION:

*Ensure Equal Access to Housing
for All People*



Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia (HOME) is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation organized under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

626 East Broad Street, Suite 400
Richmond, VA 23219

804-354-0641 • VA Relay: 711
FAX 804-354-0690

www.HOMEofVA.org

Updated: 8-25-22



BECOME A TESTER

**PROMOTE FAIR HOUSING
IN YOUR COMMUNITY**



**Housing Opportunities
Made Equal of Virginia**

**Testers play an essential
role in how we combat
housing discrimination.**

What is a Tester?

Testers are a powerful tool used to uncover illegal housing discrimination and hold housing industry professionals accountable. Testing is a simulated housing transaction designed to gain evidence of potential differential treatment between people of different protected classes.

To perform a test, the testers take on various roles and profiles. They gather information, much like anyone on a housing search or when seeking a loan, and observe how a housing provider treats prospective tenants, mortgage applicants or home buyers. After each test, the tester completes a detailed account of what occurred during the test and submits to HOME.

Testing and the Civil Rights Movement

Testing was used during the **Chicago Freedom Movement** (1965–1967), led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., James Bevel, and Al Raby. This inspired the creation of HOME's first testing program and sparked the first big push for fair housing nationwide.

Courts recognize testing as legitimate

In **Havens Realty Corp. v. Coleman** [456 U.S. 363 (1982)], the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the use of testers in housing discrimination cases as an important and legitimate means of enforcing fair housing laws.

In **Richards v. Howard** [712 F.2d 319, 321 (7th Cir. 1983)], the court noted the evidence provided by testers both benefited unbiased landlords by quickly dispelling false claims of discrimination and is a major resource in society's continuing struggle to eliminate the subtle but dangerous harm of racial discrimination.

A Test Might Look Like:



Two testers contact the same available rental property with an interest in applying. Their profiles are very similar and both are equally qualified. The only difference is their race. The testers record their experiences with the housing provider and are later compared to determine if they were treated differently.

Tests can occur in the rental, sales, insurance or lending markets of a housing transaction.

A tester is not trying to trick or trap a housing provider into discriminating. They are similar to restaurant critics in that they observe and record their experiences. Testers are sometimes referred to as “secret shoppers” or “auditors.”

We Need Your Help!

What is required of testers?

Testers are part-time, as-needed employees who receive a stipend for their time starting at \$50 minimum per test depending upon the type of test conducted. Related expenses are also reimbursed with prior approval.

Following approval of their application, testers are required to participate in a training prior to conducting any tests.

Tests are arranged around the tester's schedule on an as needed basis. Testers do not need to have a private vehicle as long as they are able to get to and from needed test sites. Many tests may even be done over the phone or online without a need for transportation.

Due to the potential to be witness to a fair housing violation, testers are screened for criminal history and any conflicts of interest.

Who can be a tester?

Testers are a diverse group of dependable and socially conscientious people passionate about helping their community. People of all racial and ethnic groups, all genders, of varying ages (over 18 years old), with and without disabilities can be valuable testers.

We rely on our testers and their work to find and stop housing discrimination. Without tests and our testers, most housing discrimination goes undetected.

Submit an Application Online:

HOMEofVA.org/BecomeATester