

DFEH News Brief

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ORANGE COUNTY APARTMENT COMPLEX PAYS \$618,000 TO SETTLE HOUSING DISCRIMINATION CLASS ACTION

ELK GROVE, CA -- The California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) today announced the \$618,000 out-of-court settlement of a housing discrimination lawsuit filed in Orange County Superior Court against a large Stanton, CA, apartment complex.

The owners and managers of Plaza Court Apartments located at 11440 Court Street, Stanton, were accused of discriminating against tenants with children by imposing overly restrictive "House Rules and Regulations" at the complex. The DFEH alleged that the rules, which included prohibiting children from being in the pool after 6:00 p.m. and playing outside alone – ever - unlawfully restricted the manner in which children could use the common areas of the apartment complex. The complaint further alleged that the management told parents they would be fined and then asked to leave if children were seen playing alone outside their apartments.

"The Fair Employment & Housing Act (FEHA) guarantees Californians equality in all aspects of housing," said Governor Schwarzenegger's Secretary of State & Consumer Services, Rosario Marin. "This latest case evidences the department's commitment to ensuring that families with children are afforded full and equal use and enjoyment of housing accommodations in California."

Before filing a complaint with the DFEH, the Fair Housing Council of Orange County (FHCOC) investigated numerous complaints filed by families against Plaza Court Apartments and found evidence of familial status discrimination. After conducting its own investigation, the DFEH filed suit against Plaza Court Apartments on behalf of FHCOC and nine families with children who had lived in fear of being evicted for violating the complex's alleged discriminatory rules.

The nine families and FHCOC joined the department's suit resulting in a class-action complaint of alleged unfair business practices, fraud, breach of contract, and negligence in addition to the discrimination charges.

The out-of-court settlement also requires the owners to revise the complex's rules to ensure compliance with fair housing laws, develop a written policy prohibiting familial status discrimination, inform all tenants of the new rules, and ensure each resident and staff member has detailed information on whom to report suspected discrimination. In addition, the owners are required to provide annual fair housing training sessions for a five-year period following the court's approval of the settlement. In settling the case, the owners of the apartment complex did not admit liability.

"California remains the nation's leader in the fight to end housing discrimination," DFEH Director Phyllis Cheng said. "This case is yet another example of the vital role the FEHA plays in educating owners and managers about housing discrimination and safeguarding fundamental rights."

The mission of the DFEH is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations and from hate violence. For more information, visit our Web site at www.dfeh.ca.gov.

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