



# What Are Reasonable Modification Requests in Housing Discrimination?

If you are a tenant with a disability, you may request a structural change to your unit or to the common areas in your building to allow you the opportunity to fully use and enjoy your housing. Housing providers are required by fair housing laws to provide reasonable modifications to tenants with disabilities.

## Who can request a reasonable modification?

Requests can be made by you or another person acting on your behalf, such as a family member. New York State law defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment that is diagnosable and/or prevents the exercise of a normal bodily function. Federal and local definitions of disability are different, so it may be important to consider all applicable laws. People who currently have a disability, used to have a disability, or are perceived to have a disability are all protected. Any form of communication can be used, but it is recommended that the request be in writing.

## Who decides what is “reasonable?”

Requesting a reasonable modification is meant to initiate a dialogue between you and your housing provider to discuss how the modification can be made. If granting your request would impose an undue burden on the housing provider, or fundamentally alter its operations, your request may need to be modified. The FHJC may assist you in drafting written communications to your housing provider seeking to enforce your rights.

## What are some examples of reasonable modifications?

- Building a ramp to overcome steps at the entrance to a common area
- Lowering the entry threshold of a unit
- Installing grab bars in a bathroom
- Widening the entryways into a bathroom
- Providing a flashing doorbell

## Do I have to provide documentation or verification of my disability?

If your disability is not apparent, letters from a medical professional, social worker, or other professional may be requested by your housing provider. These letters can help to explain how the modifications are necessary based on your disability. See our fact sheet *Letters from Medical Providers to Support Reasonable Modifications/Accommodations Requests* for more information.

## Who pays for reasonable modifications?

In New York City, the landlord or housing provider is almost always required to pay for the costs of installing the reasonable modifications. In New York State counties located outside of New York City, the tenant is usually responsible for the costs of installing reasonable modifications. See our fact sheet on the FHJC's *Adele Friedman Housing Accessibility Fund* for information about resources that may be available to you when making reasonable modifications requests.

## Where can I learn more?

To learn more about reasonable modification requests, or if you think you are experiencing any form of housing discrimination, contact the FHJC. We will help sort out the facts and provide information about your rights and options under fair housing laws. Our counseling and investigative services are provided for free, regardless of income.