



National Alliance to
End Sexual Violence



HOW TO FILE A VAWA COMPLAINT:

Information on the NEW Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) 2022 COMPLAINT PROCESS

VAWA is a federal law that helps all survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. In 2022, VAWA expanded protections for survivors eligible for or participating in federally assisted housing programs. A federally assisted housing program is any housing program that receives federal funding. There is a list [here](#). VAWA 2022 created for the first time a path for survivors to get help when their VAWA rights are violated.

Effective October 1, 2022, Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) will investigate complaints for VAWA violations. [FHEO Notice 2023-01](#) explains that these complaints will be investigated using HUD's existing Fair Housing Act complaint process. Here are some common questions regarding the new complaint process.

1. How can filing a VAWA 2022 complaint help?

- It could potentially stop an eviction.
- It could help you to secure housing.
- It could force the housing provider to change their policies.
- It could require the housing provider to receive education and training on VAWA 2022.

2. What are some examples of VAWA violations?

- My property owner threatens me with eviction after I am sexually assaulted on the premises.
- The property manager shares information with other residents about my

request for VAWA help.

- A transitional housing provider denies me housing because I was evicted for being a survivor of domestic violence.
- My property owner denies my request for an emergency transfer, claiming that “we don’t do transfers here.”
- A housing provider rejects my application for housing due to a low credit score, even after explaining that it was due to domestic violence.
- I ask to transfer to a safer home because I was sexually assaulted on the premises. The property manager says I can only transfer if I have a police report and court order.
- I ask to remove my partner from the lease because they assaulted me. The property manager says I have to first get a divorce.
- I call the police for help. The landlord tells me that the local government is ordering him to evict me because I called the police.

For more information on VAWA housing rights, please check out [HUD’s new resource page](#).

3. When do I need to file the VAWA complaint by?

- You can file a VAWA complaint for actions that occurred on or after October 1, 2022.
- File the complaint within **one year** of the VAWA violation.
- If there is a violation that began prior to one year and the violation is continuing, FHEO will also accept the complaint.
- If a complaint is filed more than one year after the violation occurred (and the violation is not continuing), FHEO may, but is not required to, investigate.

4. Who can file the complaint?

- A survivor could file the complaint.
- Organizations who have invested time and resources to investigate the VAWA violations may file a complaint.
- A group trying to protect its members or clients from VAWA violations may file a complaint. This could include a local domestic violence or sexual assault program whose clients and/or housing programs are harmed by the VAWA violations.

5. How can I file a complaint?

- Online using [FHEO’s complaint form](#) (available in English and Spanish)
- Email to your [local FHEO office](#) (forms available in English, Arabic, Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese)
- Phone 1-800-669-9777 or TTY: 1-800-877-8339 or call your HUD [regional office](#) and someone can help you fill out the complaint

- Mail to [regional FHEO office](#) (forms available in English, Arabic, Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese)

6. The complaint form is confusing. Can others help me complete the form?

- HUD is in the process of updating the complaint form to include VAWA specific information. The current complaint form may be confusing for a survivor attempting to fill it out.
- Survivor advocates can help you fill out the complaint form.
- A lawyer does not need to complete or submit the form, but could also help you answer the questions.

7. On the complaint form, how do I answer the questions:

<p>“Why do you believe someone discriminated against you, someone you live with, or someone you sought to live with?” and asks what unlawful reason there is for the discrimination.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can select “Other” and simply note “VAWA violation” or “discrimination due to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.” • If there are also other forms of discrimination, such as race, color, religion, national origin, family status, disability, or sex (including gender identity or sexual orientation) discrimination, you can also select those reasons.
<p>“Who discriminated against you?”</p>	<p>You can name, if you know,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the covered housing provider OR • landlord, OR • the name of their housing development or project. <p>HUD may be able to help you determine who actually owns or manages a VAWA covered property.</p>
<p>“Where did the discrimination happen?”</p>	<p>You can report where the violation occurred to the best of your knowledge.</p> <p>If for example, the covered housing provider denied your housing application due to the violence, provide the covered housing provider’s address.</p> <p>If an eviction was filed against you, provide the address of property management or your address.</p>

<p>“When did the discrimination happen” and provide the most recent date?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of a most recent date would be the day you received notice of the filing of an eviction case in violation of VAWA. • You should also check the box if the discrimination is ongoing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An example of ongoing discrimination would be when the provider is not maintaining your confidentiality under VAWA. The provider continues to share your information with others.
<p>“What happened?”</p>	<p>This is a chance to explain how your VAWA rights (and other civil rights) were violated.</p> <p>Briefly describe the incident that led to the violations. For example, the property manager threatened to evict you unless you provided them with a police report.</p> <p>Note if there are any witnesses. Witnesses could be, for example, a survivor advocate who spoke with the covered housing provider. The survivor advocate may have confirmed that the covered housing provider would only accept a police report.</p> <p>Let FHEO know if there is any documentation. Documentation could include emails, a termination notice, eviction court papers, or denial of an emergency transfer request. You can give them copies of documents later.</p>

8. What will FHEO do with this complaint?

- FHEO will first determine if it can accept the complaint.
- FHEO may schedule a time to interview you or others about the complaint.
- If there is reason to believe VAWA has been violated, FHEO will assess whether prompt action is needed. Prompt action could mean preventing your eviction. Prompt action may mean filing a case in federal court,

with help from the Department of Justice.

- Make clear on the complaint intake form if you are being denied housing or being threatened with eviction or the loss of your voucher.
- Ask who you can follow up with at FHEO for additional information and updates.
- FHEO can investigate your complaint and potentially other VAWA (and civil rights) violations by the housing provider. For example, you may claim that the housing provider evicted you for being a survivor. FHEO could investigate your case and evaluate if the housing provider is not complying with other VAWA protections.
- FHEO has certain time frames for review of your complaint. It often seeks more time to investigate.

9. **Where can I find more information?** You can visit [new landing page on HUD's website](#), which centralizes information on VAWA and the housing rights of survivors. You can also review [FHEO Notice 2023-01](#).

For additional questions, please contact Kate Walz, National Housing Law Project, kwalz@nhlp.org, Debbie Fox, National Network to End Domestic Violence, dfox@nnev.org, or Laela Kashan, National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, laela@endsexualviolence.org.

If you are currently experience domestic or sexual violence please reach out to the following 24/7 hotlines for support:

1-800-799-SAFE National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-656-4673 National Sexual Assault Hotline

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