



SC Appleseed's Role in Housing Law and Policy

Lack of access to affordable housing is a widespread problem in our state, both in the rental market and the homeownership market. South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center advocates on local and statewide levels for legislation and policies that will ensure safe and adequate affordable housing for South Carolinians. In addition to participating in initiatives to address the limited affordable housing stock and rising housing costs, SC Appleseed works to ensure the enforcement of federal and state laws that can protect an individual's ability to maintain stable housing, including federal and state fair housing laws, the South Carolina Residential-Landlord Tenant Act, and the housing protections provided under the 2005 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

South Carolina Appleseed also serves as a vital educational resource for community groups, administrative agencies, governmental entities, and other non-profit organizations that want to understand how housing laws and policies can be used to improve the state of housing across South Carolina.

SC Appleseed's Achievements in Housing Reform:

Legislative Initiatives:

- Improved the rights of tenants by securing the passage of the South Carolina Residential Landlord and Tenant Act of 1986.
- Served as principal advocates for the creation of a State Housing Trust Fund to provide affordable and safe home ownership to moderate and low-income persons. The South Carolina State Housing Trust Fund was created by legislation in 1992. SC Appleseed continues to work closely with the South Carolina State Housing Finance and Development Authority, with the State Housing Trust Fund Advisory Committee, and with the for-profit and non-profit organizations that utilize the State Housing Trust Fund to create affordable housing.
- Worked with housing advocates statewide to enact the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Housing in 2001. The recommendations of that Task Force specifically addressed how to improve housing conditions and availability across the state.
- Partnered with the Affordable Housing Coalition of South Carolina and other housing advocates to create the William C. Mescher Local Housing Trust Fund Enabling Act of 2007. The Mescher Act provides local governments with the express authority to create local and regional housing trust funds with dedicated sources of funding to address the affordable housing needs in their communities. Such housing needs include the need for housing for individuals and families at or below 80% of the Area Median Income, homeless housing, and special needs housing for the

elderly and the disabled.

- Served as a member of the South Carolina Affordable Housing Study Committee from 2007 – 2009. The Study Committee was created to recommend legislative changes and the development of necessary strategies related to affordable housing in South Carolina.

Manuals and Publications:

South Carolina Appleseed has authored a number of manuals and publications to make it easier for attorneys and housing and community advocates to understand and protect the housing rights of others. Our manuals and other publications are for information only and are available on the SC Appleseed website (www.scjustice.org). They do not contain all the information you need to know about the specific legal issue covered. If you have additional questions, you should contact a lawyer about your specific situation.

- *Housing Forms Manual* (2003) – This manual is designed to help attorneys to litigate cases and advocate on behalf of low-income tenants.
- *Federal Subsidized Housing Manual* (2004) – This manual provides housing attorneys and advocates with detailed information to help them understand the federal regulations controlling the most common types of federally subsidized housing, including Public Housing, Section 8 Project-Based Voucher Housing, and the Housing Choice Voucher Program (formerly known as the Section 8 Voucher Program).
- *Housing Opportunities in South Carolina* (2006) – Written for the layperson, this publication informs both advocates and the public about temporary and permanent housing programs and resources available county by county.
- *An Advocate's Guide to the Fair Housing Act* (2007) – This manual was created as a resource to aid housing advocates in recognizing and addressing potential violations of the provisions of the federal Fair Housing Act and the South Carolina Fair Housing Law. The manual contains specific information for attorneys related to the legal remedies and enforcement tools available under the federal and state law.

Brochures:

South Carolina Appleseed has developed numerous brochures for the public on various housing laws that affect tenants and landlords. Our brochures are for information only and are available on the SC Appleseed website (www.scjustice.org). These brochures do not contain all the information you need to know about the specific legal issue covered. If you have additional questions, you should contact a lawyer about your specific situation. Our brochures include:

- *Buying A Home*
- *Getting Your Landlord to Make Repairs*
- *Know Your Rights: What The Fair Housing Act Means To You*
- *Landlord And Tenant Law In South Carolina*
- *Public Housing Community Service Requirements*

- *Rent Calculations in Public Housing*
- *Rent-To-Own Home Sales: What You Need To Know*
- *What South Carolina Law Says About The Eviction Process*
- *When Your Landlord Treats You Unfairly: Help For Victims of Discrimination or Domestic Violence*
- *Your Rights And Responsibilities In Public and Subsidized Housing*

Education and Training Efforts:

South Carolina Appleseed is dedicated to providing education on housing law and policies for administrative agencies, governmental entities, attorneys, community groups, and other organizations. Our goal is to enable others to understand the legal rights and responsibilities of tenants and homeowners. Accordingly, SC Appleseed coordinates an annual Housing Law Training for attorneys on issues that are relevant to assisting low-income individuals and participates in the South Carolina Legal Services Housing Law Taskforce. We also present information at various forums and conferences statewide. Finally, we are available for presentations to administrative agencies, governmental entities, attorneys, community groups, and other organizations as requested and as feasible. Some topics of our housing presentations include the following topics:

- The South Carolina Residential Landlord-Tenant Act
- Rights and Responsibilities of Tenants, Landlords, and Public Housing Authorities in Federally Subsidized Housing (e.g., Public Housing, Section 8 Project-Based Housing, and the Housing Choice Voucher Program)
- State and Federal Fair Housing Laws and Regulations
- Housing Law Protections for Victims of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Stalking, and/or Sexual Assault
- Issues related to USDA rental housing
- Resources for Victims of Hurricanes and Other Natural Disasters
- Legal Issues for the Homeless
- Foreclosures and Predatory Lending (Detailed information on foreclosure and predatory lending law and issues is available at www.scjustice.org under the “Consumer Law” section.)
- Other topics as requested

Collaboration and Partnership:

South Carolina Appleseed has worked diligently to forge strong relationships with other housing advocates and agencies across the state. Some of the statewide organizations and agencies we have worked with on housing issues include the following:

- Affordable Housing Coalition of South Carolina

- Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities
- South Carolina Association of Community Development Corporations
- South Carolina Council on Homelessness
- South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs
- South Carolina Homeless Coalition
- South Carolina Legal Services
- South Carolina offices of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- South Carolina offices of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- South Carolina State Housing Finance and Development Authority

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