



# Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
MONDAY, JANUARY 10, 2011  
[WWW.JUSTICE.GOV](http://WWW.JUSTICE.GOV)

CRT  
(202) 514-2007  
TDD (202) 514-1888

## **JUSTICE DEPARTMENT SETTLES FAIR HOUSING LAWSUIT AGAINST TOWN OF GARNER, NORTH CAROLINA**

WASHINGTON – The Justice Department announced today that it has settled its suit against the town of Garner, N.C., and the town’s Board of Adjustment alleging that they violated the Fair Housing Act when refused to allow up to eight men recovering from drug and alcohol addictions to live together as a reasonable accommodation.

Oxford House Inc., the non-profit organization that chartered the home, sponsors the development of self-governing houses in which recovering addicts support each other’s determination to remain sober. The case began when Garner refused to consider requests by Oxford House to increase the number of residents in the home from six to eight. Oxford House filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which referred the matter to the Justice Department. After conducting an independent investigation, the Justice Department filed suit in May 2009, and Oxford House subsequently intervened. In June 2010, the district court denied the defendants’ motion to dismiss the lawsuit, ruling that Oxford House had taken the legal steps necessary to have Garner consider its request for a reasonable accommodation.

“The Fair Housing Act requires equal access to housing for persons with disabilities,” said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. “The Justice Department will continue to ensure the right of people with disabilities to live in housing appropriate for their needs.”

“This settlement demonstrates the high priority that our office gives to enforcement of all federal civil rights statutes, including the Fair Housing Act,” stated George E.B. Holding, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

Under the terms of the settlement, which must still be approved by the U.S. District Court in Raleigh, N.C., the defendants will pay \$105,000 in monetary damages to Oxford House and \$9,000 to the government as a civil penalty. The settlement requires the town to grant the reasonable accommodation requested by Oxford House to submit periodic reports to the government, and to train town officials on the requirements of the Fair Housing Act. In December 2010, in connection with the parties’ proposed settlement, the town amended its zoning code to establish a procedure for addressing future requests for reasonable accommodations.

Fighting illegal housing discrimination is a top priority of the Justice Department. The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin and disability.

More information about the Civil Rights Division and the laws it enforces is available at [www.justice.gov/crt](http://www.justice.gov/crt). Persons who believe they have experienced or witnessed unlawful housing discrimination may call the Housing Discrimination Tip Line at 1-800-896-7743, e-mail the Justice Department at [fairhousing@usdoj.gov](mailto:fairhousing@usdoj.gov) or contact HUD at 1-800-669-9777. More information about the Fair Housing Act can also be found at [www.justice.gov/crt/housing](http://www.justice.gov/crt/housing) or [www.hud.gov/fairhousing](http://www.hud.gov/fairhousing).

###