

FACT SHEET: Protecting Victims of Sexual Harassment in Housing

On October 3, 2017, the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division, in coordination with U.S. Attorney's Offices across the country, launched its [Sexual Harassment in Housing Initiative](#). The goal of the Initiative is to address and [raise awareness](#) about sexual harassment by landlords, property managers, maintenance workers, loan officers, or other people who have control over housing.

Since launching the Initiative, the department has filed or settled 25 lawsuits alleging sexual harassment in housing and recovered over \$9.5 million for victims.

2021

- On December 14, 2021, the department settled a case against Joseph Centanni, who owned rental properties in Elizabeth, New Jersey, for \$4.5 million in monetary relief, including nearly \$4.4 million in damages.
- On December 13, 2021, the department [settled](#) a case against Chester Gordon Whitescarver and his wife, Betsy Whitescarver, who have owned and managed rental properties in and around Russellville, Kentucky, for \$220,000 in damages.
- On November 23, 2021, the department [settled](#) a case against Worcester, Massachusetts, landlord Mohan Prashad, his maintenance worker, David Besaw, and other defendants for \$65,000 in damages.
- On October 25, 2021, the department [settled](#) a case against Reese Pfeiffer and several other defendants, the owners and managers of residential properties in and around Minneapolis, for \$736,000 in damages.
- On October 1, 2021, the department [settled](#) a case against the White River Regional Housing Authority in Melbourne, Arkansas, and its former employee Duane Johnson, for \$70,000 in damages.
- On August 30, 2021, the department [settled](#) a case against Allen and Heidi Woodcock, owners and managers of rental properties in Oil City, for \$13,000 in damages.
- On August 25, 2021, the department [settled](#) a case against Gus and Penny Crank, managers and owners of a rental property in Dayton, Kentucky, for \$48,000 in damages.
- On August 11, 2021, the department [filed](#) a complaint against Peter McCarthy, who operates a group of residential sober homes through his company, Steps to Solutions Inc. This case is still in litigation.
- On August 6, 2021, the department [settled](#) a case against Filomeno Hernandez, a property manager of residential apartment buildings near MacArthur Park in Los Angeles, and other defendants, for \$100,000 in damages.

- On August 4, 2021, the department [settled](#) a case against Rosemarie Pelfrey, Omega Enterprises LLC and Pelfrey Investment Company Inc., for \$1,200,000 in damages. Walter Ray Pelfrey, sexually harassed female tenants and prospective tenants while owning or managing dozens of Oklahoma City – area rental properties. Pelfrey died in 2018.
- On July 22, 2021, the department [settled](#) a case against Toledo, Ohio landlords Anthony Hubbard, Ann Hubbard, Jeffery Hubbard, PayUp LLC and No Joke Properties Inc, for \$90,000 in damages.
- On June 3, 2021, the department [settled](#) a case against Larry Nelson, owner and manager of San Diego area rental properties, for \$235,000 in damages, and an additional \$350,000 suspended judgment.

2020

- On December 7, 2020, the department [filed](#) a complaint against Salazar dos Santos, a property manager in Chicopee, Massachusetts, and other defendants. This case is still in litigation.
- On September 29, 2020, the department [settled](#) a case against Gary T. Price, a manager of rental properties in and around Harrisonburg, Virginia, together with owners of the properties, Alberta Lowery and GTP Investment Properties, LLC, for \$330,000 in damages.
- On September 30, 2020, the department [settled](#) a case against John Klosterman and his wife, Susan Klosterman, owners of residential properties in Cincinnati, Ohio, \$175,000 in damages.
- On June 29, 2020, the department [filed](#) a complaint against Juan Goitia, the owner and manager of rental properties in Davenport, Iowa, and the owner of the properties 908 Bridge Cooperative. This case is still in litigation.
- On June 4, 2020, the department [filed](#) a complaint against Darrell Jones, Fatima Jones, and Jones Investing, LLC, the owners of rental properties in Muskegon, Michigan. This case is still in litigation.
- On January 17, 2020, the department [settled](#) a case against Thong Cao and his wife, Mai Cao, owners of residential properties he owned or operated in Wichita, Kansas, for \$155,000 in damages.

2019

- On August 8, 2019, the department [settled](#) a case against Douglas S. Waterbury and his co-defendants, owners of properties in and around Oswego, New York, for \$400,000 in damages, and \$400,000 to compensate plaintiffs in a related suit.

- On April 25, 2019, the department [settled](#) a case against Robert Hatfield, who ran a real estate business in Wilkes County, North Carolina, for \$550,000 in monetary damages.
- On February 25, 2019, the department [filed](#) a complaint against Richard Bruno, owner of properties in New London, Connecticut, and several other defendants. The case is still in litigation.

2018

- On December 20, 2018, the department filed a lawsuit against Chad David Ables, a landlord in Lexington, Tennessee. The department [filed](#) an amended complaint on April 15, 2019 after allegations that the defendant harassed several additional female tenants. This case is still in litigation.
- On July 9, 2018, the department [filed](#) a lawsuit against Randy Hames, a residential property owner and landlord in Cullman, Alabama, together with the owner of the property Hames Marina. This case is still in litigation.
- On March 19, 2018, the department [settled](#) a case against Hezekiah and Jameseva Webb, landlords in St. Louis, for \$600,000 in damages.

2017

- On October 3, 2017, the department [settled](#) a case against Frank Tjoelker, an owner and manager of rental properties in and around Grand Rapids, Michigan, for \$150,000 in damages.