Environmental Sensitivities and Rental Housing: A Toolkit for Community Workers

cera
Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation
Centre pour les droits à l'égalité au logement
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**Supporting Partners:**
The Table Community Food Centre  
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**Key Contributors:**
Carly Bowie  
Alyssa Brierley  
Kathleen Cooper  
Dr. Lynn Marshall  
Beth Schilling

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The Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA) was founded in 1987 as a province-wide, not-for-profit charity dedicated to promoting human rights and ending discrimination in housing. Our public education and outreach initiatives work to intervene in cycles of discrimination that disproportionately affect low-income individuals in the housing market. Through public education, advocacy and occasional test-case litigation, CERA works to address barriers that prevent individuals from accessing and maintaining housing. Our Housing Access, Stabilization and Eviction Prevention Hotline provides individuals with information, referrals and assistance with regard to housing matters.

In addition to our casework and public education initiatives, CERA engages in community-responsive projects to support vulnerable groups in maintaining housing and realizing their human rights in housing. This includes research into housing and human rights issues and support of the enforcement of human rights by provincial, national and international commissions, agencies and organizations. CERA recognizes and advocates for the right to housing and the realization of human rights in all aspects of housing.

For more information about CERA, visit us online at www.equalityrights.org
This toolkit was developed as a resource for front-line workers to advocate for accommodation in rental housing for clients living with Environmental Sensitivities and related conditions. In particular, it was designed to support rural front-line workers in assisting their clients with invoking a landlord’s Duty to Accommodate as defined by the Ontario Human Rights Code. The information provided in this resource is legal information only; it is not legal advice and is not a substitute for legal advice. If you require legal advice, please contact a lawyer or a local community Legal Aid clinic.

The toolkit is divided into five parts, outlining a five-step process to help front-line workers in assisting clients navigate relevant human rights laws. The final section includes an educational tool that can be shared with housing providers, as well as a list of available resources including literature and supports available in Ontario. The five steps move readers through the initial request for accommodation through to an application at the human rights tribunal.

Information from this toolkit has been informed by people living with Environmental Sensitivities and related conditions in rental housing and the toolkit is therefore informed by their lived experience. CERA conducted a consultation during which we heard directly about some of the challenges and barriers that exist in accessing and maintaining safe housing for individuals in these circumstances.

What we know is that there can be no “one-size-fits-all” approach to accommodating individuals living with environmental sensitivities and related conditions because each circumstance is different and requires creative solutions. Using the mechanisms in the Human Rights Code to support accommodation requests is one approach used to modify existing units and buildings to accommodate renters.

Disclaimer: This toolkit has three different sample letters to help contextualize the language around requesting accommodations from housing providers. However, the letters are meant as a guide only. It is not a substitute for legal advice. If you need legal advice, please contact a lawyer. CERA, its funders, and the authors of this document will not be held responsible for any loss or damage caused by reliance on the sample letters.
Ontario’s Human Rights Code (the Code) was established in 1962 and has primacy over other laws in the province unless those laws specifically indicate otherwise. The Code promotes equality of opportunity and creates a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of each person in Ontario. The Code also protects every person’s right to equal treatment without discrimination and there are sixteen “prohibited grounds” of discrimination defined in the Code:

- Age
- Ancestry, colour, race
- Citizenship
- Ethnic origin
- Place of origin
- Creed (religion)
- Disability
- Family status
- Marital status

- Gender identity, gender expression
- Receipt of public assistance (housing only)
- Record of offences (employment only)
- Sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding)
- Sexual orientation

Where does the Code Apply?

The Code says that all Ontarians have the right to freedom from discrimination in five areas:

- Employment
- Services (including education and healthcare)
- Trade Unions and Vocational Associations
- Contracts
- Occupancy of Accommodation (Housing)

As a result, renters have the right to be protected from actions by housing providers that discriminate against them based on a prohibited ground of discrimination.

Definition of Disability Under the Code
a. any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,

b. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,

c. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,

d. a mental disorder, or

e. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997

This broad definition includes disabilities that are visible and invisible (non-evident) and disabilities of varying severity. The definition includes physical, sensory, developmental, learning, mental health disabilities, environmental sensitivities and addictions.

It is important to keep in mind that the definition of disability is not static. It is constantly evolving, and the responsibility of housing providers will evolve with it.

Invisible Disabilities

Invisible disabilities may not be immediately noticeable. They can include brain injury, mental health related disabilities, chronic pain, visual or auditory disabilities, intellectual disabilities, learning and sensitivity disabilities. Some common barriers that may impact renters with invisible disabilities, such as environmental sensitivities, include the use of scented products (including paint, cleaning agents, and air fresheners) in common areas of residential complexes which when inhaled, may trigger symptoms. These renters may require the use of unscented products and scent-free laundry facilities, for example.

Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, housing providers have a legal duty to accommodate renters with disabilities. The Ontario Human Rights Commission recognizes environmental sensitivities as a disability as defined by the Code. Therefore, housing providers have a legal duty to accommodate renters with environmental sensitivities.
Environmental Sensitivities (ES) describes a chronic condition in which an individual has reactions triggered in multiple body systems by breathing in, eating, drinking, or touching relatively low levels of contaminants, at a level most people tolerate, Environmental Sensitivities are often referred to as Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS).

The source of sensitivities may not be a single item, but multiple items within a building. Common reported irritants include but are not limited to: perfumes, air fresheners, cleaning products, paint, fumes, and laundry detergent.

In addition, multiple clinicians have noted the overlap of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) and Fibromyalgia (FM), but it is as yet unclear why.

Research has revealed that people with allergies to dusts, mould, pollen and animal dander are more likely to have environmental sensitivities and vice versa.

Environmental Sensitivities can be extremely debilitating. Symptoms can include and are not limited to: neurological symptoms such as trouble concentrating and remembering, seizures, anxiety and depression, in addition to respiratory problems such as wheezing and shortness of breath, skin rashes such as eczema and hives, gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, bloating and abdominal pain, and muscle or joint pains. While some people will have mild reactions, others can become completely disabled.

When working with residents who have Environmental Sensitivities and related conditions, it is important for housing providers to realize that substances in their apartment, the building and on tradespersons and staff can trigger reactions and impact their health.
The duty to accommodate is an important part of the Code. It requires that structures, rules, policies, or practices be altered so that all people enjoy equal benefit, equal treatment, equal rights, and equal access in their housing. Common reasons that renters invoke the duty to accommodate are to facilitate their request for procedural and/or physical changes in their buildings when they live with environmental sensitivities. Housing providers are obligated to accommodate renters up to the point of undue hardship.

It is important for community workers to know when advocating for clients that disclosure of a medical diagnosis is not required. The renter can keep that information confidential when discussing possible accommodations with housing providers although a certain amount of information disclosure can be helpful in resolving a dispute. Enough information must be disclosed to the housing provider so that they can understand the renter’s restrictions and limitations and their need for accommodation. Documentation should be treated carefully by the housing provider, as it is the personal health information of the renter.

Three Principles for the Duty to Accommodate

1. **Respect for dignity** – requires consideration for self-respect, self-worth, privacy, confidentiality, comfort, autonomy and individuality. Dignity is harmed when people are marginalized, stigmatized, ignored or devalued.

2. **Individualization** - A one size fits all approach to accommodation will not work. Each person must be considered, assessed and accommodated individually, and in accordance with their individual needs.

3. **Integration and full participation** - Accommodation should prevent and remove barriers and facilitate the full and equal participation of individuals in society.
Undue Hardship

Housing providers must accommodate individuals up to the point of undue hardship.

In determining whether the point of undue hardship has been met, the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal will consider the cost of accommodation (including access to outside sources of funding) and any health and safety concerns that exist.

**Cost** – Undue hardship may be found if the cost of the accommodation is so substantial that it would alter the essential nature of the enterprise or substantially affect its viability. If this threshold is met, the housing provider is then required to find the next best solution available to accommodate the renter.

**Outside sources of funding** – in determining the financial viability of making the accommodation, the housing provider has the obligation to consider other sources of funding (e.g., March of Dimes)

**Health and safety requirements** – Undue hardship may also be found if the accommodation is likely to cause significant health and safety risks. A high probability of substantial harm will constitute undue hardship. Evidence of undue hardship must come from the housing provider and be objective and real (e.g., demonstrated using financial statements and budgets). Speculation about financial repercussions will not prove undue hardship.

It is important to note that the burden of proving undue hardship is on the housing provider, not the renter. In other words, it is not the responsibility of the renter to demonstrate that the accommodation can be accomplished without undue hardship for the housing provider.

Responsibilities of Renters in the Accommodation Process

Accommodation is meant to be a two-way process. The renter will need to provide information regarding relevant restrictions and limitations. A renter who requires accommodation should provide a written request to the
housing provider explaining the need for accommodation and how it relates to the limitations of their disability.

Once the request has been made, the renter should work with the housing provider as they discuss accommodation solutions. Communication should be ongoing as options are considered and a solution is found. A person who requires an accommodation for a medical reason may need to provide a doctor’s letter supporting their request. The housing provider must bear the cost of obtaining medical documentation in support of an accommodation request.

The Advocate’s Role in the Accommodation Process

The process of obtaining an accommodation can become particularly cumbersome when interpersonal relationships have broken down between a renter and their housing provider. When this happens, community workers and advocates can be very effective in assisting the client to get the necessary accommodation by supporting the communication between the client and housing provider. This can help facilitate communication with the housing provider, so they understand what barriers the renter is facing and the need for an accommodation in a timely manner.

This can be an emotionally difficult process for the renter seeking accommodation as they can often feel vulnerable when disclosing personal information and may face fears of stigmatization. This is especially true if they have experienced challenges in the past requesting accommodation and were faced with an unresponsive housing provider. Some may even have faced threats of eviction. It is important to note that renters cannot be evicted for invoking the Human Rights Code and requesting the accommodation they need to live in a healthy indoor environment. Advocates should be aware that housing providers must maintain confidentiality throughout the entire process.
What follows is a five-step process that can be used as a guide to direct the process of requesting accommodation. Community workers can use this process to support clients to request accommodation on the basis of disability from housing providers. Using a sample scenario, the process is contextualized for a person living with environmental sensitivities.

Please note: all circumstances are unique and although this guide will offer examples of accommodations that one may ask for, other types of accommodations not listed in this toolkit may be more appropriate for different individuals and circumstances. Because each case is unique and individuals’ needs can vary significantly, community workers serving clients are strongly encouraged to consider what is best for their clients and, with their client’s permission, to consult with a medical practitioner where possible and appropriate.
Fiona is a 49-year old woman living in a one-bedroom apartment within a multi-residential complex in Bracebridge Ontario. Since having over-exposure to mould as an adolescent, she has experienced environmental sensitivities in her adult life. After being misdiagnosed several times by various health practitioners she was recently diagnosed with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS) by a doctor at the Environmental Health Clinic at Women’s College Hospital in Toronto. Since receiving this diagnosis Fiona has been able to identify indoor environmental triggers that cause symptoms of her disability. These symptoms include but are not limited to difficulty breathing, headaches, physical pain, severe fatigue and poor concentration.

Over the last couple years, Fiona has noticed that the presence of several products has caused her symptoms to flare up, including the use by other tenants of scented laundry detergent and dryer sheets in the shared laundry facilities. The presence of these products makes it difficult for Fiona to enter the laundry room and do her laundry as fumes persist after other residents leave and residue from the products remain in the machines and transfer on to her clothing and bedding. Chemicals found in the cleaning supplies used in the common areas of the building seep into Fiona’s unit and are do not disperse because of poor ventilation.

Fiona has a right to live in home where she can feel safe and be healthy, and her housing provider has a legal duty to accommodate Fiona’s disability. What can Fiona do to enforce her rights?
A community worker’s first course of action would be to assist Fiona in writing a letter to her housing provider. It is important to put the request in writing so that there is documentation in the event that the housing provider does not respond. The letter should aim to inform Fiona’s housing provider that she has a disability that is in need of accommodation. The letter should detail the concerns about her unit and/or building that have negatively impacted her disability.

The letter must include that a request for an accommodation is being made under the Ontario Human Rights Code. The request does not have to disclose a specific diagnosis if the client is not comfortable providing that information. What is most important is connecting the limitations of the disability to the accommodation being requested.

The letter should ensure that Fiona’s request includes clear, tangible actions that the housing provider can take to accommodate her disability. The request should be as specific as possible and include a deadline by which the housing provider should respond. Unless it’s an emergency, approximately two weeks should be provided for a response time to the housing provider. A record should be kept including a copy of the letter.

**Basics of Letter Writing**

Writing a letter detailing the concerns of the renter is often a good first step to resolving a conflict. Community workers can often help in this process by assisting the client in thinking through the issues and possible solutions. It is really important that the letter be clear in its approach.

Remember to have the client date and sign the letter. The client should also keep at least one copy of the letter for themselves. If the housing provider does not deal with the issue to the satisfaction of the renter or in accordance with the request, the letter will be important evidence if your client files an application at the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. If there is no response from the housing provider, the client and the community worker may want to follow up with a second letter advising the housing provider that not taking steps to resolve this matter in accordance with the
request may lead to filing an application with the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal.

The following are items to consider including in a letter to the housing provider:

a) Explain the facts. Be as detailed and precise as possible, with dates (or approximate dates), places, and a description of the incidents and everyone that was involved.

b) Remind the housing provider of the client’s rights, which are found in the Code.

c) Tell the housing provider what the client would like to have happen next. For example, request that the housing provider contact other renters in the building to request that they use unscented products or creating a policy in the building for use of unscented products.

d) If the request for accommodation is related to a disability, attach a medical note from the client’s doctor supporting the request.

e) Ask the housing provider to reply to the letter in writing.

f) Sign and date the letter.

**Common Requests for Accommodation**

**Please note:** This is not an exhaustive list of requests that persons living with Environmental Sensitivities and related conditions in rental housing can ask for, but rather serves as a sample of the types of accommodations that CERA has advocated for. As indicated above, individuals are strongly encouraged to think about what is appropriate for their circumstances, and to consult a medical practitioner where appropriate.

- The provision of air filters/purifiers and/or fans
- Addressing ventilation concerns Addressing ventilation concerns including requesting all tenants to avoid smoking in their units or in common areas of the building.
- Sealing the rental unit
• Transferring the renter to another unit
• Providing temporary accommodation elsewhere (for example, when renovation work, fumigation or significant cleaning is happening near the unit)
• Requiring the use of unscented cleaning products in the common areas of the building
• Requiring the use of low-VOC paints throughout the building
• The removal and replacement of certain appliances
• Requests that others in the building refrain from using air freshening spray and other scented products
• Washer and dryer in a laundry room be designated scent-free, the provision or in-suite laundry, or designated hours to access the laundry room outside of regular operating hours
• Helping tenants prepare their units for a bed bug treatment, and using alternative treatments such as steam instead of pesticides
Dear Mr. Doe,

RE: Request for accommodation on the basis of disability under the Ontario Human Rights Code

I am a resident of 1 ABC Street unit 3. I am writing to you to request accommodation on the basis of disability as defined by the Human Rights Code in Ontario.

I have a disability that is triggered by indoor environmental factors, including chemicals that are present in certain products. These chemicals are detrimental to my health and well-being. I have sensitivities to scented products such as laundry detergent and dryer sheets and, as a result, I am unable to use the shared laundry facility in this building. I also have a sensitivity to the cleaning products used in the common areas of the building, as they seep into my unit and my symptoms can last for several days.

In order to ensure that my health is protected, and that I have full and equal access to my place of residence, I am requesting that:

- Scent-free cleaning products are used in all common areas.
- A sealant such as weather stripping be placed around my door to block fumes from entering my unit, and an air purifier be placed in my unit.
- One washer and one dryer in the laundry room be designated for use only by renters using scent-free laundry products, and that we have access to it during facility closure times to avoid exposure to scented products used by other renters.

Please respond to this request by January 15, 2019. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Fiona Banks
Step 2 – Obtaining Medical Evidence

The inability to obtain a correct medical diagnosis was identified in CERA’s consultation for people with lived experience of environmental sensitivities as one of the biggest barriers in the accommodation process. Clients often report being misdiagnosed several times before receiving the diagnosis of environmental sensitivities or multiple chemical sensitivities.

For this reason, CERA worked with the Environmental Health Clinic to help build the bridge between medical documentation and the Ontario Human Rights Code. The following resource is used by the Environmental Health Clinic to determine general symptoms for the case criteria for Multiple Chemical Sensitivities.

Below is a resource that clients can bring to their doctors to assist them in obtaining a medical diagnosis. The Checklist for Doctors and The Doctors Letter Template can be given to your clients to assist them in getting the medical evidence they may need within the accommodation process. Housing providers are allowed to request this information and must bear the costs associated with obtaining this documentation.
Environmental Sensitivities/Multiple Chemical Sensitivity Case Criteria Checklist\textsuperscript{1}

- Symptoms are reproducible with [repeated chemical] exposure.
- The condition is chronic.
- Low levels of exposure [lower than previously or commonly tolerated] result in manifestation of the symptom.
- The symptoms improve or resolve when the incitants are removed.
- Responses occur to multiple chemically unrelated substances.
- [Added in 1999]: Symptoms involve multiple organ systems.

The most common symptoms discriminating patients attending Environmental Practices vs General Practices in a Case-Control Study\textsuperscript{2}

- Having a stronger sense of smell than others.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Feeling dull or groggy.
- Feeling spacy.


Sample Letter: Requesting Medical Documentation

Date
Name of Doctor
Address of Doctor
Dear Doctor,

RE: Name of Renter, Date of Birth of Renter

I am writing in relation to a request for accommodation for my disability that I have made to my housing provider under the Ontario Human Rights Code. I require medical documentation from you to support this request. I kindly request that you provide a letter that addresses the following issues:

1. Please confirm that you are my treating physician.

2. Please confirm that I suffer from some physical or mental health conditions for which I am receiving treatment.

3. Please confirm the impairments and restrictions that I experience as a result of these medical conditions.

4. Please confirm, if possible, what accommodations may be provided by the housing provider to meet my needs.

I kindly request that you provide me with the requested report by [date]

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Signature Renter’s name
Step 3 – Keep a Detailed Log

Keep a log of dates and times when symptoms have been triggered in the building and note the cause, if this information is known. Keep written records of all interactions and communications with the housing provider (all letters, notes, emails or text messages, in-person conversations).

**TIPS:** Encourage and/or support clients to take notes during a conversation or soon after in order to have more information to refer to later. The dates and times of the incident(s) can be useful evidence if there is a disagreement between a renter and housing provider. Often using a calendar is a helpful way to record this information. Remember that email and text communications can be helpful because they create a dated record of conversations.

Applying this record-keeping approach is important in establishing a chronology of events and details. This information can be used as evidence if this process ends up at the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. If debilitating symptoms make note-taking difficult, most cellphones have a voice recording app. Permission must be sought for recording a conversation, including over the phone, but this can be a helpful record-keeping alternative.
Step 4 – Create an Accommodation Plan

The goal of assisting clients going through the accommodation process as outlined by The Ontario Human Rights Code is for the renter – either on their own or with support of a community worker – to create an accommodation plan with a housing provider that will be implemented in the building and or unit. The following information details how the process of developing a plan should generally happen.

**Housing Provider Responds**

Fiona’s housing provider responded to her letter on January 15, 2019 requesting the opportunity to further discuss the accommodation she requested in her letter of January 1, 2019. Fiona may choose at that point to respond to her housing provider in writing and/or set up a meeting between the housing provider, herself and, if needed, a support person/community worker to discuss an accommodation plan. It is the responsibility of both parties to be open to reasonable suggestions and to discuss and agree to possible solutions in “good faith.”

**Housing Provider is Unresponsive**

If the housing provider does not respond by the deadline provided in Fiona’s first letter, she could follow up in writing to remind the housing provider of her outstanding request and their legal duty to respond. The sample letter on the next page has been included for reference.
January 20, 2018

Dear Mr. Doe,

On January 1, 2018 I sent you a letter regarding your legal duty to accommodate my disability of Environmental Sensitivities/Multiple Chemical Sensitivity ("MCS") under Ontario's Human Rights Code. I requested a response to this letter by January 15, 2018. To date, I have received no response from you regarding my accommodation request.

I am writing to request an immediate response to my accommodation request of January 1, 2017. For your convenience, I have enclosed a copy of the original request as well as the supporting documentation from my physician that was provided with my letter.

If ABC Property Management fails to respond to this request, I am aware of my rights and may choose to proceed with an application at Ontario’s Human Rights Tribunal. I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

Fiona Banks
If after requesting an accommodation for disability, the housing provider has either not responded or has refused to enter into an accommodation plan, your client may wish to file an application with the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. To make a claim with the Tribunal, your client must complete an application. The client has one year from the date of the last incident of discrimination or failure to accommodate to file an application.

**How to File a Human Rights Application**

a) Help your client collect the information and evidence they need for their application (i.e. any correspondence with their housing provider, medical evidence, photographs, etc.).

b) Help the client fill out an application. To get an application form, they can contact the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal directly or download a copy from their website:

1-866-598-0322  
TTY: 1-866-607-1240  

c) Once their application is complete, they can send it to the Human Rights Tribunal by mail, email or fax.

Mail: Registrar - Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, 655 Bay St. 14th Floor Toronto, ON M7A 2A3  
Email: HRTO.Registrar@ontario.ca

**Steps Following a Human Rights Application**

Once the application has been filed, if both the renter and the housing provider agree, there will be an opportunity to mediate at the Tribunal to try to settle the issue without a hearing. The renter will need to prepare for mediation and the hearing by gathering all of the evidence and seeking
legal advice. The renter should be prepared for a lengthy process, as it can take over a year before a case is resolved.

**Please note:** There is very little existing case law from the Tribunal about environmental sensitivities in the housing context, therefore there will be little guidance on the interpretation of the law, and few examples to which the renter can point.

**How the Human Rights System Works**

Ontario's human rights system is made up of three separate agencies:

**The Human Rights Legal Support Centre** gives free legal help to people who have experienced discrimination under the Ontario Human Rights Code and are considering filing an application at the Tribunal. Their contact information is:

Tel: 416-597-4900  
Toll Free: 1-866-625-5179  
Consider visiting the website before calling: [www.hrlsc.on.ca](http://www.hrlsc.on.ca)

**The Human Rights Tribunal** is where human rights applications are filed and decided.

**The Ontario Human Rights Commission** works to promote, protect, and advance human rights through research, education, and policy development.
The information sheet below is a tool that renters, and community workers can use to educate housing providers on their legal obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code for accommodations on the basis of disability. Your clients may wish to include this information in the initial request for accommodation.

The purpose of the Code is to “provide for equal rights and opportunities without discrimination” and to “create a climate of mutual respect for the dignity and worth of each person.” The Code’s provisions concerning housing state:

s. 2(1) – Every person has a right to equal treatment with respect to the occupancy of accommodation, without discrimination because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, disability, receipt of public assistance, gender identity or gender expression.

What this means is that everyone in Ontario is entitled to equality in housing free from discrimination in the terms and conditions of a tenancy and the tenancy application process. The Ontario Human Rights Code is applicable to public and private housing, as well as to cooperatives and condominiums.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission’s “Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate” set out the definition of disability, as well as obligations in relation to the duty to accommodate and the process involved in such accommodation. The policy is available at: www.ohrc.on.ca.

Disability is defined very broadly and includes:

- Any degree of physical disability, including intermittent disabilities, such as epilepsy;
- Any form of mental disability; and
- Invisible disabilities, such as chronic pain or chemical or environmental sensitivities.
If an individual has a disability and requests accommodation, a housing provider has a duty to accommodate the individual in a manner that:

- Most respects the dignity of the individual;
- Meets individual needs;
- Best promotes integration and full participation; and
- Ensures confidentiality.

A housing provider may only be discharged of its duty to accommodate if it can establish that it would be an undue hardship to provide the accommodation. The housing provider must show that accommodation would be so costly as to affect the very survival of the organization or change its essential nature and that no outside sources of funding are available to assist, or that health and safety risks outweigh any benefit of accommodation. Renters whose accommodation requests are not responded to by their housing provider can file a case at the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal.
Resources

If you are reading this digitally, below you will find links to relevant articles and organizations that can provide further support and information about environmental sensitivities. If you are reading this in print, you can Google these articles and organizations using their titles or visit CERA’s website.

Resources to Support Renters with Disabilities

- **Creating a Healthy Multi-Unit Housing, A Resource Guide**
- **Disability and The Duty to Accommodate**
- **Environmental Sensitivities and Housing (Includes a list of resources)**
- **Housing as a Medical Necessity**
- **Testimonials of People Living with Environmental Sensitivities**
- **Trying to Find Environmentally Safe Housing**
- **Unlocking the AODA: A Guide for Housing Providers**
- **Environmental Health Clinic** Women’s College Hospital
- **Ontario Community Legal Clinics** Legal Aid Ontario
- **Policy On Human Rights and Rental Housing** Ontario Human Rights Commission
- **The Ontario Human Rights Code** Ontario Human Rights Commission
- **Policy On Ableism and Discrimination Based on Disability**
- **Ontario Human Rights Commission**
- **Policy Position on Medical Documentation** Ontario Human Rights Commission

Multiple Chemical Sensitivity

- **CERA – Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation**
- **Policy on Environmental Sensitivities**
- **Scent-free Policy for the Workplace**
  [http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/scent_free.html](http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/scent_free.html)
- **Scarborough ME-FM-MCS Support Group - contact** me-fm-mcs.emails@bell.net
- **Personal Care Products** [http://www.ewg.org/skindeep/top-tips-for-safer-products/#.W5poY7mWy70](http://www.ewg.org/skindeep/top-tips-for-safer-products/#.W5poY7mWy70)
• Cleaning products  
  https://www.ewg.org/guides/cleaners/content/cleaners_and_health#.W5pomLmWy71  
• www.ewg.org – resource to help guide safer food and product choices  
• Online Support Group  https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/MCS-CanadianSources/info  
• Guide to Less Toxic Products  http://lesstoxicguide.ca  
• Smoke – Free Housing Ontario  https://smokefreehousingon.ca/  
• Action CIND  www.actioncind.org  
• MCS Support Facebook  https://www.facebook.com/Multiple-Chemical-Sensitivity-Support-and-Info-171502276293744/  

**Chronic Fatigue Syndrome**  

• CFIDS and Fibromyalgia self-help  http://www.cfidselfhelp.org/  
• National ME/CFS Action Network  http://mefmaction.com  Search under “support”  
• Action CIND  www.actioncind.org  
• MEAO –  www.meao.ca  Search under ‘support’

**Fibromyalgia**  

• CFIDS and Fibromyalgia self-help  http://www.cfidselfhelp.org/  
• Fibro Guide  http://fibroguide.med.umich.edu/fibroguide.html  
• Action CIND  www.actioncind.org  
• Toronto Academic Pain Medicine Institute  
  http://tapmipain.ca/  
  http://tapmipain.ca/patient/about-chronic-pain/fibromyalgia.html  
• Toronto Fibromyalgia Support Group  
  https://www.torontofibrosupport.com  they have a link “Ontario Support Groups”

**Other Resources**

**The Human Rights Legal Support Centre**  
Tel: 416-597-4900
Toll Free: 1-866-625-5179
TTY: 416-597-4903
TTY Toll Free: 1-866 612-8627
www.hrisc.on.ca

The Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario
General Inquiries can be made by:
Tel: 416-326-1312
Toll-free: 1-866-598-0322
TTY: 416-326-2027
TTY toll-free: 1-866-607-1240
Email: hrto.tdpo@ontario.ca
Web: http://www.sjto.gov.on.ca/hrto

The Ontario Human Rights Commission
Information Line: 416-326-9511
TTY: 416-314-0503
Web: http://www.ohrc.on.ca/
Email: info@ohrc.on.ca

Community Legal Clinics
Find your local community legal clinic online at:
www.legalaid.on.ca/en/contract/