



**LEWIS**  
**COUNTY**  
NEW YORK

# Fair Housing Plan

Plan developed by:  
Lewis County Planning & Community Development  
Department

Adopted by the Lewis County Board of Legislators on:  
December 6, 2022



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Lewis County is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Complaints of discrimination should be made known to the Lewis County Board of Legislators.

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## Purpose

As a recipient of funding from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and implemented by the New York State Department of Homes and Renewal (HCR), Lewis County understands the importance of promoting Fair Housing in the community and is committed to meeting responsibilities outlined by New York State.

The County has developed this Fair Housing Plan to inform residents, banks, realtors, and landlords of Fair Housing provisions under Federal and State laws and to define a mechanism to assist people who may be victims of housing discrimination.

## Availability of Information

Lewis County's Fair Housing Plan recognizes that public knowledge of Fair Housing provisions is the first step in expanding equal opportunity. To increase public knowledge of Fair Housing provisions, Lewis County has/will take the following actions:

### Designation and Responsibilities of County Fair Housing Officer

By means of an official resolution, the Director of the Lewis County Planning and Community Development Department will serve as the County's Fair Housing Officer. The Fair Housing Officer will:

- Maintain Federal and State Fair Housing information in the Planning and Community Development Department including brochures issued by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the New York State Division of Human Rights.
- Record initial information regarding housing discrimination complaints on a standard form.
- Work with CNY Fair Housing to address fair housing complaints while also providing education and outreach to Lewis County communities.
- Forward copies of all complaints to and, as appropriate, consult with the Fair Housing/Equal Opportunity Division of the applicable HUD Office.
- Facilitate Lewis County Fair Housing Task Force meetings

### Provide Information

Lewis County will make available, upon request, copies of applicable Federal and State laws which contain anti-discrimination provisions, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, and Human Rights Law (Executive Law, Article 15) of the State of New York.

## Promote Fair Housing Activities and Available Resources

Lewis County will designate the month of April as Fair Housing Month and will promote said designation through a County Board of Legislators' Proclamation. Lewis County will further promote fair housing and housing resources by posting Fair Housing posters in visible locations within all publicly accessible County buildings. The Lewis County Planning and Community Development also facilitates an annual Fair Housing Training session once each year and is responsible for maintaining an up-to-date fair housing information page on the Lewis County website. All fair housing informational documents will include the Fair Housing Logo as the universal symbol to the public that our processes are aligned with FEHO.

## Discrimination Complaints

Lewis County will provide information and assistance to individuals who feel that they have been the victims of discrimination regarding housing. Resources to file a complaint can be found on the Lewis County Fair Housing website.

### Discriminatory Housing Practices

For the purpose of this Plan, a discriminatory housing practice means an act that is unlawful under sections 804, 805, 806, or 818 of the Fair Housing Act (Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, as amended). Such discriminatory housing practices include discrimination in the sale or rental of housing, discrimination in the provision of brokerage services, interference, coercion, or intimidation as defined under the Act, based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, handicap, or familial status. In addition, all housing providers are required to grant reasonable accommodation and reasonable modification requests for tenants with both mental and/or physical disabilities.

### Receiving and Reporting Complaints

The Fair Housing Officer will record information on a standard form to ensure that a complete file is established. If the complaint is indeed relative to fair housing, the Fair Housing Officer will contact CNY Fair Housing within 15 business days to coordinate the communication with the Department of HUD and/or the New York State Division of Human Rights to review the particulars of the complaint and request guidance in the formal filing of the complaint in cases where the individual decides to use this method. Copies of all complaints will also be forwarded to the Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity Division of the HUD Office in Albany, New York. If the complainant decides to take his/her case directly to Federal Court, Lewis County will consult with the County Bar Association or Law NY, or other appropriate organizations on the appropriate procedure for securing affordable legal services if the individual is of low- or moderate-income.

For more information on filing Fair Housing complaints and how the process works, please visit: [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/fair\\_housing\\_equal\\_opp/complaint-process](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/complaint-process).

# Fair Housing Partners and Organizations

## Lewis County Opportunities

Lewis County Opportunities is a non-profit community action agency that is dedicated to supporting low-income peoples and families through its partnerships with The United Way of Northern NY, Inc., and the Northern New York Community Foundation. Lewis County Opportunities is motivated to help people live safely in the local community without economic barriers that may stop them from otherwise doing so. This organization provides a variety of programs to help those in need of financial support, but more specifically, their Housing Assistance Services is designed to help income-eligible individuals and families obtain decent, safe, affordable housing. In 2021, Lewis County Opportunities' Housing Assistance Program helped 1,300 families in both Jefferson and Lewis Counties with a total of \$8,5 million in landlord subsidies. In addition, sixty-six families were assisted through the Emergency Food and Shelter program. When complaints are raised to staff, they are directed to the Fair Housing Officer; however, their staff attend annual Fair Housing Training facilitated by the Lewis County Planning and Community Development Department.

For more information on Lewis County Opportunities programs and services, visit: <https://www.lewiscountyopportunities.com/>

## Snow Belt Housing Company, Inc.

Originally a component of Lewis County Opportunities, Inc., Snow Belt Housing Company, Inc. (SBHCI) was formally incorporated in 1982 as a separate private, non-profit Rural Preservation Company. It is the mission and intent of SBHCI to facilitate access to decent, safe, and affordable housing for low- and moderate-income residents and partner with others to catalyze community revitalization throughout Lewis County.

SBHCI applies for and receives federal, state and local grant funding in order to deliver housing and community renewal activities to income eligible, county residents and also assists with planning and development of capital projects. For housing projects, Lewis County contracts with a sub-recipient, SBHCI to complete each program effectively and efficiently. SBHCI evaluates all rental applications in compliance with the Fair Housing Act (FHA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), Executive Order 1563 and the New York State Human Rights Law (NYHRL). Furthermore, SBHCI shall serve all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, familial status, or disability and without regard to actual perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status.

It is the policy of SBHCI to maintain and promote a safe environment for all persons in all programs by said company. All staff, volunteers, and contract providers are prohibited from engaging in any form of discrimination against or harassment of persons on the basis of actual or perceived race, ethnicity, immigration status, familial status, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. When complaints are

raised to staff, they are directed to the Fair Housing Officer; however, their staff benefit from the annual Fair Housing Training facilitated by the Lewis County Planning and Community Development Department. To learn more about Snow Belt Housing and the programs they offer, visit: <http://snowbelt.net/>

## Lewis County Department of Social Services

The Lewis County Department of Social Services (DSS) strives to encourage the well-being and safety of children, adults, and families through the different economic support and services they offer through their department. DSS administers an array of programs to address homelessness in Lewis County that range from preventing homelessness to the relocation of homeless persons in temporary housing. This department also offers a Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) to qualified individuals who meet the low-income requirements. When complaints are raised to staff, they are directed to the Fair Housing Officer.

For more information on the services offered by DSS, visit: <https://www.lewiscounty.org/departments/dss/dss>

## Lewis County Office for the Aging

The Lewis County Office for the Aging (LCOFA) works to promote the well-being of the older adult population in Lewis County through coordinated services that enhance their independence, dignity, and quality of life. LCOFA manages NY Connects, which is the trusted place to go for free, unbiased information about long term services and support for people of all ages or with any type of disability. NY Connects Specialists frequently link clients to rental assistance programs, information about rental rights and responsibilities, and local affordable housing resources.

LC OFA has two Certified Aging-in-Place Specialists (CAPS) who are trained to work with older adults in assessing and arranging necessary home improvements so that individuals can remain in their own homes safely as they age. These improvements reduce/prevent falls, prevent other potential injuries, and avoid unnecessary or premature institutionalization. These Specialists provide in home consultation upon request.

Staff at LCOFA work alongside the Lewis County Department of Social Services to file the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) applications from qualified individuals and families that meet the low-income eligibility criteria. When complaints are raised to staff, they are directed to the Fair Housing Officer.

To learn more about the Lewis County Office for the Aging, visit: <https://www.lewiscounty.org/office-for-the-aging>

## Northern Regional Center for Independent Living

The Northern Regional Center for Independent Living (NRCIL) advocates for vulnerable populations and provides assistance in obtaining accessibility equipment. With this mission at hand, they see their fair share of egregious housing situations and are known activists of

fair housing practices. When complaints are raised or observed by staff, they are directed to the Fair Housing Officer.

To learn more about the Northern Regional Center for Independent Living, visit: <http://www.nrcil.net/>

## CNY Fair Housing

CNY Fair Housing works to eliminate housing discrimination, promote open communities, and ensure equal access to housing opportunity for all people in Central and Northern New York. Currently, CNY Fair Housing serves the counties of Lewis, Jefferson, St. Lawrence, Herkimer, Oswego, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Tompkins, Cortland, Madison, Chenango, Oneida, Otsego, Montgomery, Schenectady, and Albany. For Lewis County specifically, they provide education, outreach, and fair housing administration where they directly assist the Fair Housing Officer is carrying out their duties. Additionally, they assisted Lewis County with the development of the 2016 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice for Lewis County. To learn more about CNY Fair Housing, visit: <https://www.cnyfairhousing.org/>

## U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

HUD's mission is to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all. HUD is working to strengthen the housing market to bolster the economy and protect consumers; meet the need for quality affordable rental homes; utilize housing as a platform for improving quality of life; build inclusive and sustainable communities free from discrimination, and transform the way HUD does business. Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing and use a TTY, may call those offices through the toll-free Federal Information Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.

To learn more about HUD, visit:

[https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/fair\\_housing\\_equal\\_opp](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp)