



## Civil Rights Department

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### **Southern California Assisted Living Company to Change Policies on Accommodating Deaf Residents Following Civil Rights Complaint**

*Mediated settlement with state Civil Rights Department to improve access to ASL interpretation for people with disabilities*

**SACRAMENTO** – The California Civil Rights Department (CRD) today announced a mediated settlement with 30 assisted living facilities operated by Oakmont Management Group (OMG) over alleged failures to provide American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation. The settlement is the result of testing by the Fair Housing Federation of Southern California that identified numerous alleged instances of staff at different facilities across the state unlawfully rejecting requests to accommodate ASL interpretation. In addition to monetary compensation, the mediated settlement will result in improved access to ASL interpretation for people with disabilities at properties operated by OMG.

“Everyone — regardless of disability — is entitled to equal access to housing and to live out their years in peace and comfort,” **said CRD Director Kevin Kish**. “Whether it’s through our department or with the support of nonprofits, fair housing testing is a key component of our state’s toolbox for detecting and fixing discriminatory practices. This settlement is a reminder that discrimination can occur at any phase of life. It’s on all of us to work together to prevent it. I’m grateful to the Fair Housing Federation of Southern California for their persistence in support of our state’s civil rights protections.”

#### **Fair Housing Testing Identifies Alleged Discriminatory Practices**

Earlier this year, CRD received civil rights complaints from the Fair Housing Federation of Southern California against 30 different assisted living facilities operated by OMG, a company headquartered in Irvine. The complainants alleged that staff at facilities throughout California effectively denied housing access to testers requesting ongoing ASL interpretation assistance for a fictional deaf relative by failing to properly engage in the reasonable accommodation process. Under state and federal law, nonprofit fair housing organizations may be authorized to carry out testing — including by posing as another individual or requesting assistance for a fictional person in need of disability accommodations — to help proactively identify and eliminate discriminatory housing practices.

#### **State Investigation Leads to Voluntary Agreement**

After conducting an initial investigation into the alleged violations, CRD provided the involved entities an opportunity to [voluntarily resolve the matter through free, trauma-informed mediation services](#)

offered by the department. Each year, CRD's mediators help resolve hundreds of complaints, resulting in policy change and millions of dollars in direct relief to impacted Californians.

As part of the settlement, OMG has agreed to:

- Modify its policies to ensure the housing rights of deaf applicants and residents are protected at their facilities.
- Ensure all staff are trained on the updated policy and understand how to respond to accommodation requests.
- Post materials in accessible common areas in their facilities on how to report discrimination.
- Pay \$110,000 to the Fair Housing Federation of Southern California, which identified the alleged violations.

### **State Takes Action on Disability Discrimination**

CRD remains committed to combatting disability discrimination in California wherever it occurs. Earlier this year, the department announced another [\\$110,000 mediated settlement](#) with five Southern California assisted living facilities over alleged failures to accommodate ASL interpretation. In May, CRD helped reach a [\\$230,000 mediated settlement](#) for a former social work student over the alleged denial of a mental health accommodation for an internship program. Last year, the department [secured a \\$375,000 settlement](#) with a local government over allegations of an employee being unlawfully reprimanded and denied reasonable accommodations and work opportunities as a result of a request for a disability accommodation. CRD also recently [expanded its "Civil Rights 101" webinar series](#) to include monthly trainings focused specifically on helping Californians understand and address disability discrimination.

If you or someone you know has been the victim of discrimination, CRD may be able to assist you through its [complaint process](#). The department also [provides general information and factsheets online](#) about civil rights protections for members of the public, including with respect to [housing discrimination](#) against people with disabilities.

The settlement announced today was mediated by Attorney IV Mediator Angela E. Oh. It was investigated by Gloria Morales with CRD's Enforcement Division.

A copy of the settlement is available [here](#). The list of cities and properties across California with alleged violations covered under the settlement is available [here](#).

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*The California Civil Rights Department (CRD) is the state agency charged with enforcing California's civil rights laws. CRD's mission is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state-funded programs and activities, and from hate violence and human trafficking. For more information, visit [calcivilrights.ca.gov](http://calcivilrights.ca.gov).*

