

Your Rights Against Discrimination in Long-Stay Motels

Imagine needing to stay in a motel for a long time—maybe because your home is being repaired, you're moving for work, or you're in between housing. Everyone deserves to be treated fairly and with respect, no matter how long they stay. But what happens if a motel refuses to rent to someone because of their race, religion, or disability? Laws exist to protect people from this kind of unfair treatment.

Let's explore the laws that protect guests in long-stay motels and how they apply.

What is Discrimination?

Discrimination happens when someone is treated unfairly because of who they are. In motels, this could mean:

- A motel refusing to rent a room to someone because of their race or nationality.
- A disabled guest being denied an accessible room.
- A motel charging women higher prices than men.

These actions are illegal under different laws, depending on whether the motel is acting more like a hotel or more like a long-term residence.

Laws That Protect Guests in Motels

Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

This federal law makes it illegal for public accommodations—like hotels, motels, restaurants, and theaters—to refuse service to someone because of their:

- Race
- Color

- Religion
- National origin

This means that motels cannot deny someone a room or treat them differently because of these characteristics. However, Title II does not cover discrimination based on disability, sex, or family status.

The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

Title III of the ADA requires public places, including motels, to provide equal access to people with disabilities. This means:

- Motels must have wheelchair-accessible rooms and entrances.
- Staff should accommodate guests with service animals.
- Policies may need to be adjusted to allow disabled guests to have equal access to services.

If a motel refuses to accommodate someone with a disability, it could be violating the ADA.

The Fair Housing Act: Does It Apply to Long-Stay Motels?

The Fair Housing Act (FHA) is a federal law that protects people from housing discrimination. It makes it illegal to deny housing based on:

- Race
- Color
- Religion
- National origin
- Sex
- Disability
- Family status (e.g., having children)

But does this law apply to long-stay motels? It depends.

- If a motel is operating like a hotel, meaning guests check in and out frequently and the motel provides daily cleaning services, the FHA does not apply. Instead,

Title II and the ADA would offer protections.

- If a motel is operating more like an apartment—where guests stay for weeks or months, have long-term rental agreements, and are responsible for their own housekeeping—then the FHA might apply.

What Happens if the FHA Applies?

If a long-stay motel falls under the Fair Housing Act, it means:

- The motel cannot refuse to rent to someone based on race, religion, or other protected categories.
- The motel must provide reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities (e.g., allowing an emotional support animal even if pets are banned).
- The motel cannot treat families with children unfairly, such as charging them extra fees.

The impact of the FHA applying to a motel is stronger protections for long-term guests. This means they have more legal rights if they experience discrimination.

State Laws Provide Additional Protection

Some states have stronger laws than federal protections. For example, in Wisconsin, it is illegal for motels to discriminate based on:

- Sex
- Race
- Color
- Religion
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- National origin
- Ancestry
- Age

This means that in Wisconsin, a motel cannot refuse service based on sexual orientation or age, even though federal laws do not explicitly include those protections.

What to Do if You Face Discrimination in a Long-Stay Motel

If you or someone you know experiences discrimination at a motel, here are steps you can take:

1. Document Everything

Write down details like:

- The date and time of the incident
- What was said and done
- Any witnesses who saw what happened

2. Report It

- To the U.S. Department of Justice (for Civil Rights Act and ADA violations)
- To the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (if the Fair Housing Act applies)
- To state agencies (like the Wisconsin Equal Rights Division)

3. Seek Legal Help

A lawyer who specializes in civil rights or housing law can help you understand your rights and take legal action if needed.

Long-stay motels can be an important housing option for people who need a temporary place to live. No one should be treated unfairly because of their race, religion, disability, or family status. Understanding the difference between hotels and long-term housing matters, because it determines which laws apply.

If the Fair Housing Act applies, guests have stronger protections against discrimination. If it doesn't, other laws like Title II and the ADA still provide important rights.

Last updated on September 09, 2025.

[Long-stay motels](#) [Alternative Housing Options](#) [Discrimination & Fair Housing](#) [Renting Housing](#)

Print

Table of Contents

Our Partners

This website is supported by

LSC | America's Partner
for Equal Justice

LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

LSC's support for this website is
limited to those activities that are
consistent with LSC restrictions.

WisTAF
investing in justice for all

PDF downloaded from <https://www.wislawhelp.org/page/599/your-rights-against-discrimination-long-stay-motels>