
HOPE Works with Large DeKalb Apartment Complex to Ensure Fair Housing Rights of All

HOPE announced in June that a settlement has been reached in a federal lawsuit against University Village in DeKalb, IL for \$262,500 in damages and attorney fees. HOPE joined Regina Wallace, a resident at University Village, and [RAMP Center for Independent Living](#) in filing the suit.

The settlement arises out of a Federal lawsuit filed in August 2013, alleging housing discrimination against people with disabilities in violation of the federal [Fair Housing Act](#), the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#), and [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#). Regina Wallace, a resident of University Village with mobility impairments, uses assistive devices for mobility. She had requested but was refused an accessible apartment, then was harassed with notices of eviction and eventually forced to relocate.

Problems began when Wallace relinquished her prior apartment - based on promises that she would be provided an accessible ground floor unit - only to discover on moving day that she was being placed in a third-floor walk-up at University Village. Wallace's requests that a live-in aide be permitted to care for her in the inaccessible unit were also allegedly denied based on discriminatory reasons. Wallace was charged excessive monthly fees instead of adjusting her rent date to coincide with her monthly disability insurance payments, and vacant first-floor units were rented to others.

When Wallace continued to request accommodations and make complaints on her own and through the local Center for Independent Living, University Village began the process to evict Wallace. When Wallace attempted to find accessible housing elsewhere, University Village gave an inaccurate and false bad reference to the [DeKalb Housing Authority](#). HOPE Fair Housing Center aided Wallace in providing accurate and truthful information so that DeKalb Housing Authority reversed its decision, clearing the way for her to receive accessible housing.

HOPE worked with University Village during the settlement discussions to ensure that fair housing rights would be protected for future residents with disabilities. University Village agreed to create and implement non-discrimination policies, including procedures for processing reasonable accommodation and modification requests from residents with disabilities, as well as other affirmative relief, such as notices to tenants of fair housing policies and training for all University Village staff. University Village, HOPE, and RAMP Center for Independent Living, co-hosted a fair housing rights and responsibilities training open to all in the DeKalb area. Additionally, an undisclosed amount in monetary relief has been awarded to the complainants. [Soule, Bradtke & Lambert](#) represented the complainants in the lawsuit.

