

Fair Housing in Action: Professionalism, Opportunity, and the REALTOR® Standard

Meeting Number:	FAIRHSG042026
Category:	Fair Housing / Professional Development
Materials Needed:	Handouts Included with Meeting
Estimated Time:	25 – 30 Minutes
PowerPoint Available:	Yes

Meeting Objective:

Help agents understand how fair housing impacts everyday business decisions and reinforce the REALTOR® commitment to serving all clients consistently and ethically.

Introduction – Setting the Stage

"Your true worth is determined by how much more you give in value than what you take in payment." — The Go-Giver

April is Fair Housing Month, and this meeting is designed to help agents understand how fair housing principles are woven into everyday business decisions. This is not about fear of violations — it is about building a business strategy rooted in consistency, trust, and professionalism.

Opening Discussion

Ask the group: "What situations in our business create the greatest fair housing risk?"

Allow 3–5 minutes for discussion. Listen for themes around showings, client assumptions, marketing language, and neighborhood steering.

Context: NAR Fair Housing Audit

Elizabeth Mendenhall participated in NAR's fair housing audit pilot program. Over six months, testers contacted agents without their knowledge to evaluate consistency in service. The audit was voluntary and designed as a learning opportunity — not punitive. The results helped identify where systems could be improved to serve all clients better.

Meeting Notes

Write down themes from the opening discussion.

How did agents react to the audit concept?

Note any local fair housing concerns raised.

Step #1 – Consistency in Service

The person who talks the most is not the one who wins the listing. It is the person who communicates care, concern, and consistency. Fair housing starts with treating every client the same, regardless of background.

Key Teaching Points

- Consistency means the same process for every client, every time
- Examples of inconsistency: showing fewer homes to some clients, steering toward certain neighborhoods, assuming financial qualifications
- Standard procedures needed across: buyer consultations, showings, offers, and negotiations
- Does your process look the same for a first-time buyer as it does for a million-dollar buyer?

Discussion Questions

1. Can you think of a time when a client's background might have unconsciously influenced how you served them?
2. If you wrote down your process for working with every client, would it look the same regardless of who walks through the door?

Activity: Process Check

Have each agent write down their standard process for working with a buyer or seller. Compare notes in small groups. Are there gaps or inconsistencies? Discuss for 5–10 minutes, then share findings with the larger group.

Meeting Notes

What gaps did agents identify in their processes?

Which areas showed the most inconsistency?

Ideas for standardizing service:

Step #2 – Language and Advertising

What we say — in listings, on social media, and in conversations — plays a huge role in fair housing compliance. The words we choose either build trust or create risk.

Key Teaching Points

- MLS descriptions, social media posts, and AI-generated ad copy all carry fair housing risk
- HUD guidance: describe the property, not the people who might live there
- Example: "Great neighborhood for families" could be seen as steering based on familial status
- Robert Collier's principle: "Don't just describe the home, create a vision" — but always stay within fair housing guidelines
- When you tell a client, "I have a strict policy of equal treatment to ensure you get the best deal without legal complications" — you position yourself as a high-integrity consultant

Trust Quote

"Trust is the glue of life. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships." — Stephen Covey

Discussion Questions

3. Review your most recent listing description. Does it describe the property or the people who might live there?
4. How do you handle AI-generated marketing copy? Do you review it for fair housing compliance before posting?
5. What phrases might seem harmless but could signal a preference for or against a protected class?

Meeting Notes

Common problematic phrases identified:

How are agents reviewing AI-generated content?

Best practices shared by the group:

Step #3 – Business Strategy vs. Compliance

Fair housing is not just about avoiding fines. It is a business strategy that helps you reach more clients, build stronger trust, and grow your market share. Shift from a defensive compliance mindset to an offensive strategy mindset.

The Mindset Shift

Compliance Mindset	Strategy Mindset
"I just want to avoid a fine"	"I want to capture more market share"
Laws are a set of don'ts	"How can I help others?"
Documentation is a chore	Documentation is evidence of professional value
"Avoid the wrong words"	"Use words to reach every right buyer"

Key Statistic: If your marketing only speaks to one demographic, you are effectively leaving 30–40% of potential buyers and sellers on the table.

The Sam Walton Story

John shares a personal story: Early in his career, he traveled to Bentonville, Arkansas to present a contract to Walmart's real estate division. At the Holiday Inn restaurant, he dropped a penny. An older man behind him picked it up and handed it back, saying "There you go, young man." The cashier told him it was Sam Walton. The lesson: you never know who is on the other side of the phone call or the table. Treat everyone the same.

Discussion Questions

- Does your marketing speak to only one demographic? How could you broaden your reach?
- How would shifting from "avoiding fines" to "capturing more market share" change your daily business decisions?

Meeting Notes

Where are agents stuck in compliance-only thinking?

Marketing ideas to broaden reach:

Reactions to the Sam Walton story:

Closing – Reflection & Action

Three Key Takeaways • Be Consistent: Standard procedures for every client, every time • Conversations Matter: Social media, ad copy, and client interactions all carry weight • Strategy Over Compliance: Fair housing is a business growth tool, not just a rulebook NAR Resources • Fairhaven — Interactive online fair housing simulation • Implicit Bias Training — Understand unconscious influences on your service • At Home With Diversity — Certification course from NAR Visit nar.realtor for more fair housing resources and training opportunities. Reflection Ask each agent to choose one takeaway from today's meeting and create a concrete action plan for the next 30 days. Fair housing is not just for April — it is a year-round commitment. Closing Quote <i>"Trust is the glue of life. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships." — Stephen Covey</i> This meeting was co-created by John Mayfield and Elizabeth Mendenhall with the assistance of AI. (2026)	Meeting Notes Which takeaway resonated most with the group? Action commitments shared: Follow-up items for next meeting:
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Meeting Handouts

Distribute the following pages to agents at the start of the meeting.

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Handout 1-A: Agent Discussion Guide

Use this guide during today's meeting. Write your answers and share with your group.

Section 1: Consistency Check

Write down your standard process for working with a new buyer or seller client:

Question: If you compared your process for a first-time buyer versus a luxury buyer, what differences would you find?

Section 2: Language Review

Think about your most recent listing description. Write one phrase you used:

Question: Does that phrase describe the property or the people who might live there?

Question: How do you currently review AI-generated marketing copy for fair housing compliance?

Section 3: Strategy Shift

Complete the chart below — how would you shift each item from compliance to strategy?

My Compliance Habit	My Strategy Goal

Handout 1-B: Fair Housing Quick Reference & Action Plan

The 7 Protected Classes Under the Fair Housing Act

Race	Color	National Origin	Religion	Sex	Familial Status	Disability
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Note: Many states and localities add additional protected classes. Check your local laws.

Language Quick Reference

DO — Describe the Property	DON'T — Describe the People
"Spacious 3BR with large backyard"	"Perfect for a young family"
"Close to public transit and shops"	"Great ethnic restaurants nearby"
"Open floor plan, modern finishes"	"Ideal for professionals"
"Quiet street, mature trees"	"Safe neighborhood"

Your 30-Day Fair Housing Action Plan

- ☐ **Week 1:** Review all current listings for fair housing language compliance
- ☐ **Week 2:** Document your standard client service process — is it the same for every client?
- ☐ **Week 3:** Review marketing materials — do they speak to diverse demographics?
- ☐ **Week 4:** Complete one NAR fair housing resource (Fairhaven, Implicit Bias, or At Home With Diversity)

NAR Fair Housing Resources: [nar.realtor](https://www.nar.realtor)