

Fair Housing Broker Guide

How to make a public statement:

Principles:

1. Address the problem, not people
2. List actions you will be taking
3. Be honest
4. Avoid partisanship
5. Avoid blame

Examples:

We at Company XYZ want to help and support positive change. We understand that our own actions, even if unintentional, may have contributed to the social inequality. The Association of Realtors has championed Fair Housing for many years, and we want to be a positive influence. In order to promote a more equal market where everyone is treated fairly, we pledge to:

1. Educate ourselves on positive behavior
2. Invite all agents to follow fair housing best practices
3. Listen more, so that we can understand where we can make a difference.

We at Company ABC are making changes to our business to better serve all of our neighbors and clients. We stand with all of you to ensure equal treatment and overcome our implicit bias. The Association of Realtors has a long history of promoting Fair Housing laws. In order to improve equality, we will:

1. Put in place protocols for how to provide clients with equal treatment
2. Train our agents on how to manage our mindset so that interpersonal interactions are respectful and successful.
3. Create scripts to navigate conversations with clients to avoid implicit bias

How to Respond on Social Media

If your brokerage or your agents are accused of improper behavior, respond respectfully.

Principles:

1. Use “I” language. Only talk about yourself and your business.
2. Do not justify behavior.
3. Listen and validate.

Examples:

1. A social media user tags your business with the message “HIJ Brokerage treated me very poorly, and I’m sure it’s just because of how I look.”
 - a. Response: “Thank you for letting us know how you feel. We are sorry that our interaction was not handled well on our side. We would like to resolve any issue you had. Please reach out to us by phone or in person, so that we can learn more about what went wrong, and better understand the situation that you found yourself in.”
2. A social media post says “Don’t ever work with EFG Brokerage, and especially with agent B, they wouldn’t give me the time of day as soon as they heard my name.”
 - a. Response: “Thank you for bringing this to our attention, we aim to treat everyone well and equally, and obviously we did not perform up to our standards. Please contact us so that we can find out where we went wrong, and hopefully get you the service that you need, and deserve.
3. You agent posts on social media “I can’t believe GROUP QRS is being so whiny. It’s not like we meant to hurt anyone, they should get over themselves.”
 - a. Response: Meet with the agent privately and learn about what they are feeling. Help them to look at the situation with an intent to understand GROUP QRS, and the message that they are trying to convey, without judging their method of communication. If appropriate, recommend they apologize on their post, or delete it.

How to help agents who encounter discrimination:

1. If another agent is involved, speak to offending agent directly, and express how their actions made your agent feel. Focus on building positive relationships, and avoid blame.
2. If an agent sees another agent behaving or speaking inappropriately, encourage agents to call each other out, in a polite, respectful way.
 - a. “Hey, I think what you said could be taken as offensive or in poor taste, try saying something like this instead”
 - b. “I think what you meant and what you said may have been out of sync here, because what you said implies that they are not as good as everyone else. Would you consider using language like this?”

How to train agents on this topic:

1. Allow them to express their opinions in a respectful environment. Every one of us can benefit from articulating what we believe, especially when we think there is injustice. Open communication is the way to begin.
2. Use materials provided by NAR and your local associations:
 - a. NAR 1 hour "Bias Override: Overcoming Barriers to Fair Housing"
<https://www.nar.realtor/videos/bias-override-overcoming-barriers-to-fair-housing>
 - b. NAR Designation Course at Home with Diversity will be taught at NWAOR on August 25th.
3. Encourage agents to be in a learning mindset. We need to be open to change.
4. Review the [Realtor Code of Ethics](#), Duties to the Public, Article 10.

