

BRENNAN CENTER'S LEGAL SERVICES E-LERT REPORTS

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Domestic Violence Settlement Requires Property Management Company to Establish New Policy Relocating Domestic Violence Victims Who Are in Danger

After Wyneneicka Blackwell was raped, beaten, and stabbed by her ex-boyfriend in her own apartment, she asked her landlord to allow her to move to a different apartment complex. The landlord, Urban Property Management, refused to let her reside in its other federally subsidized apartment complexes in Denver, Colorado. Represented by LSC-funded Colorado Legal Services, Legal Momentum, and private counsel, Blackwell filed a lawsuit in federal court against the company, and against the apartment owners, H.A. Housing LP.

The suit claims that the refusal to allow Blackwell into a different complex violates the federal Fair Housing Act and Colorado's fair housing laws. The complaint, filed in July 2005, states, "By adopting a policy of denying transfers to victims of domestic violence, Defendants engaged in a practice that has a disparate impact on women and therefore discriminated on the basis of sex"

Parties have now entered into a settlement requiring the defendants to pay Blackwell \$60,000 and to implement a domestic violence policy in at least half of their 24 federally subsidized apartment complexes. The domestic violence policy will include a procedure to allow domestic violence victims to request an emergency transfer to another Section 8 property and to ensure that they have preference on the waiting list for the new subsidized housing. Over the next 18 months, Colorado Legal Services will monitor Urban Property management's compliance with the settlement.

To read the complaint, see:

legalmomentum.org/legalmomentum/files/blackwellcomplaintstamp.pdf.

Howard Pankratz, Legal Deal a Victory for Domestic-Violence Victims, The Denver Post, March 2, 2007; also based on original reporting by Brennan Center staff.

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