

Invitation Only Executive Coffee Series

VAMA is proud to announce a new program series to be offered around the state over the next few months.

The first coffee had lively discussions which included:

Assistive and Service Animals. You've heard it before and you'll hear it again. Online services are selling "ESA" vests and documentation for a small fee and it may or may not even include a phone call to diagnose. Use VAMA's reasonable accommodation and modification forms every time!

<http://www.vamaonline.org/news/260316/VAMA-Releases-Fair-Housing-Reasonable-Accommodation-and-Modification-Form-Package---FREE-FOR-MEMBERS.htm>

Package delivery. A very well respected Washington D.C. area management company made the decision to suspend package acceptance services last year. The social media backlash and resulting drop in occupancy was unprecedented. Amazon is on target to become the single largest seller of clothing in U.S. by 2017 and is already the largest retailer in the world. Think about how many more packages your residents receive now than they did just 5 years ago. This is not a "problem", it is a fact of life and perhaps an opportunity. Suppliers have started companies just to handle the surge in package delivery. One example, <http://packageconciierge.com/apartments>. Everyone orders something online and most people are expanding those online purchases everyday. Residents buy everything from toilet paper to computers online and they expect their packages to be handled in a secure and efficient fashion.

Criminal Background Checks. Doug gave us a preview prior to the publication of NAAs white paper on the new HUD Guidance. See the article above for a link to the complete white paper.

Source of Income and Staff Training. While most of Virginia does not have source of income as a protected class under Fair Housing law, there are pitfalls in this area. A recent judgment against a Virginia community could be attributed to inadequate understanding by leasing staff. Staff will often try to avoid insulting people and say "we do not accept government assistance" rather than being specific and using Section 8 vouchers. If you staff uses the government assistance phrase, they are excluding residents with disability benefits, social security, VA benefits, etc... This turns being "polite" into a fair housing violation with serious financial repercussions. Explaining the nuances to all your staff is a crucial step in fair housing training.