Mobile home park sued over rule

Its 1-child policy in violation of law, Fair Housing Center says

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Cassandra Kraehnke says she didn’t pay much attention in 2009 when a rental agent at a Monroe County mobile home park refused to let her move in because she was expecting a second child.

But when Kraehnke discovered that the federal Fair Housing Act prohibits landlords from discriminating against families with children, the 29-year-old woman decided to act.

She contacted the Fair Housing Center of Southeastern Michigan, which investigated the park and confirmed its policy of rejecting rental applications from couples with more than one child.

Kraehnke and her husband, Harley Kraehnke, a driver for a Monroe car auction, sued the park in U.S. District Court in Detroit, resulting in a confidential out-of-court settlement in April.

On Tuesday, the U.S. Justice Department filed its own lawsuit against Shamrock Village Mobile Home Park, along with a proposed settlement. Under the settlement, the park’s owner, Tel-Clinton Trailer Courts, agreed to comply with the law, train its employees and create a $20,000 pool to compensate applicants who were turned away because of Shamrock’s alleged policy.

They were losing the lease on their existing mobile home and were having transportation problems. The 54-unit park near Monroe was the perfect location because it’s across from a Meijer, Kraehnke said.

Kraehnke and her husband separately moved in with different relatives until they could find a new home.

“It was hard because I had two little kids and my husband wasn’t there to help me,” Kraehnke recalled.

Today, they’re proud and happy residents of Shamrock.

Kirsch said landlords can ask prospective tenants about family size, but not about how many are adults and children.

“The idea of a pregnant woman with a 3-year-old child being turned away because she was having a second child is pretty appalling,” Kirsch said.

The Justice Department said any victims of Shamrock’s policy can file claims by calling the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Detroit at 333-226-9515.