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Suit cites bedroom rules at complex

BY DAVID MCKAY
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Carmel Oliver wanted a home to share with her two kids.

But she says an Ypsilanti apartment complex said no, because her 8-month-old daughter, Carmeisha Skinner, would have shared a bedroom with her 6-year-old brother, Joshua Young.

Oliver said she was told children of different sexes could not share a bedroom in the apartment she wanted in January.

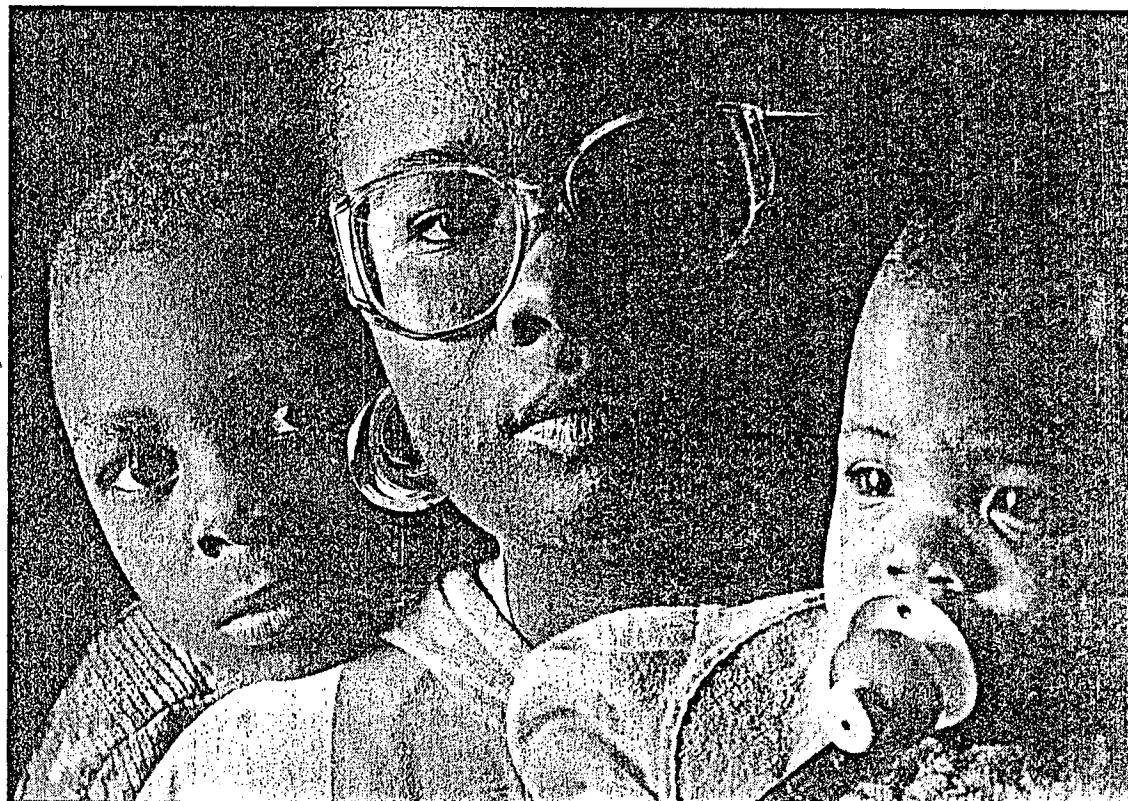
"I felt like they were closing the door in my face," she said. "I was hurt."

Thursday, she sued Cobble Creek Apartments, claiming sex and age discrimination.

Richard Lupu, manager of the Steven Drive complex, confirmed the bedroom rule. "That's a criteria in our policy, yes."

As for suit, "We heard something about it. We have no further comment at this time."

Oliver's case began with the Ann Arbor-based Fair Housing Center of Washtenaw County, which investigated, then arranged for an attorney who filed her federal lawsuit in Ann Arbor.



CRAIG FUJII/Detroit Free Press

Carmel Oliver, shown with her son Joshua and daughter Carmeisha, said she was told the children could not share a room at an Ypsilanti apartment complex because they were of opposite sexes. "I felt like they were closing the door in my face," she said. "I was hurt."

Pam Kisch, executive director of the private and nonprofit housing center, said what complex managers quoted as a housing regulation violates the federal Fair Housing Act's protections on the basis of family and sexual status. The center also found a policy that keeps a child from rooming with a parent, she said.

The case is a first for the center, which was not aware before of such policies anywhere. "We just haven't gotten complaints from people."

In Washtenaw County, Linda La-Quaglia, a floating manager for Village Green, said the policy there is: "It's two persons per bedroom; don't care who you are, what you are, when you are."

Village Green in Ann Arbor operates 520 of its parent company's 20,000 units throughout Michigan, Ohio and Indiana.

Asked if the company would restrict brother-sister rooming, La-

Quaglia said, "No, it's against the law."

Amber Apartments, which has 450 units in six complexes in Oakland County, also has no such policy, an employee said.

After the suit's filing, Oliver said, "I feel better now, knowing something will be done about it."

Her attorney is Steve Dane, of Toledo. The case is assigned to U.S. District Judge Patrick J. Duggan, in Detroit.

LEGAL HELP

If you have been illegally discriminated against in housing, you can get help in Southeast Michigan from:

- The Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit, 963-1274.
- The Fair Housing Center of Washtenaw County, 994-3426.