



QUALIFICATIONS FOR MYSTERY SHOPPERS

The following are some of the key points to consider when recruiting and selecting individuals to serve as “mystery shoppers” in fair housing investigations or when deciding whether or not to become a fair housing “mystery shoppers.”

1. Mystery shoppers of **both sexes** are needed in **all races, ethnic identities and ages**. Many complaints received by the Center for Fair Housing (CFH) involve allegations of disability discrimination, so a number of individuals with disabilities are useful. Additionally, racial discrimination against black home-seekers between the ages of 25-45, so a number of Black/White test teams in that age bracket are very useful. But often there is also a need for Hispanic, Asian and, senior citizens and other types of testers.
2. Mystery shoppers are **actors** and need to be able to feel comfortable **playing the role of a home-seeker**.
3. Mystery shoppers need to be **flexible**, able to adjust to changing situations and still perform their assigned role as home-seeker.
4. Mystery shoppers are **trained** in mystery shopping procedures by experienced fair housing investigation coordinators, and follow specific mystery shopper assignments for each test.
5. Mystery shoppers need to be **objective** observers of events. Mystery shoppers do not try to “find” discrimination. Mystery shoppers instead pose as home-seekers and make accurate observations of what transpires during their assignment.
6. Mystery shoppers must be **accurate recorders** of events. Mystery shoppers will be expected to make an accurate, complete written record of their assignment on a CFH Report Form. Mystery shoppers need to be able to write legibly and coherently.
7. Mystery shoppers make **credible witnesses** in court. Preference should be given to those individuals whose past background, current standing in the community and ability to convey a message of truthfulness and competence will be recognized and respected by members of a jury. Therefore, mystery shoppers **must not have** prior felony convictions or convictions of crimes involving fraud or perjury.
8. Mystery shoppers must be **reliable** individuals who can be counted on to complete their agreed-upon assignments at the proper time and in the proper manner. Each mystery shopper is part of a “mystery shopper team.” A breakdown by one member of the team could invalidate the assignment.
9. Mystery shoppers must be willing to maintain **strict confidentiality** about their role as a tester. Normally, only your spouse/companion/immediate family need to know you are or are planning to become a “Mystery shopper.”
10. Mystery shoppers may be called upon to **serve as witnesses** in administrative hearings, depositions or court trials.
11. Mystery shoppers must keep the Investigations Coordinator informed of any changes in address, phone number, employment or family status.