

What is a Family?

What the code says: According to Chapter 29 – Unified Development Code of City Ordinance, the definition of *Family* is:

(1) An individual, married couple, or registered domestic partnership and the children thereof, including foster children placed in the household by a public agency, and no more than two (2) other persons related directly to the individual, married couple or registered domestic partnership by blood or marriage, occupying a single housekeeping unit on a nonprofit basis. A family may include not more than one additional person, not related to the family by blood or marriage; or

(2) a. In zoning districts R-1 and PD (when the PD development density is five (5) or less dwelling units per acre), a group of not more than three (3) persons not related by blood, marriage, or registered domestic partnership, living together by joint agreement and occupying a single housekeeping unit on a nonprofit cost-sharing basis; or the use of a dwelling unit by four (4) persons not related by blood, marriage, or registered domestic partnership, living together by joint agreement and occupying a single housekeeping unit on a nonprofit cost-sharing basis, prior to February 4, 1991, shall be allowed to continue in districts R-1 and R-1 PUD as a lawful nonconforming use.

b. In all other applicable zoning districts, a group of not more than four (4) persons not related by blood, marriage, or registered domestic partnership, living together by joint agreement and occupying a single housekeeping unit on a nonprofit cost-sharing basis.

Why it matters: When properties in the City of Columbia exceed our occupancy limits, it creates additional traffic, trash and noise and can harm quality of life for neighbors. This especially an issue when occupancy limits are exceeded in R-1 zoning districts. The City of Columbia will investigate properties suspected of over occupancy and may prosecute property owners and tenants in violation.

Breaking it down – some hypothetical examples:

An individual or married couple and their children +	No more than two people related to the individual or married couple by blood or marriage +	Not more than one additional unrelated person
Examples IN COMPLIANCE with this code:		
Mr. & Mrs. Jones and their children Bobby and Katie +	Mrs. Jones' parents +	Jennifer Doe, a friend
Mrs. Thomas and her three children +	Her aunt and uncle +	Her cousin (although related, could be counted as one other unrelated person)
Mr. and Mrs. Rogers and their son +	Mr. Rogers' brother and his son	
Examples in VIOLATION of this code:		
Mr. & Mrs. Jones and their children Bobby and Katie +	Mrs. Jones' sister and brother-in-law and their three children	
Why is this a violation? The addition of Mrs. Jones sister and her family exceeds the two related people and one additional unrelated person.		
Bob Campbell +	Bob's two brothers +	Two unrelated roommates
Why is this a violation? The total number of occupants in this example is five. One unrelated roommate would need to move out to be in compliance in any zoning district.		
John Doe +		Three unrelated roommates
Why is this a violation? It exceeds the three unrelated people allowed in R-1 zoning; it would be allowable in all other zoning districts.		
Jane Roberts +		Four unrelated roommates
Why is this a violation? Four or more unrelated people are not allowed in any zoning district. If one roommate left it would be acceptable in all zoning districts except R-1; Jane and two roommates are acceptable in R-1.		

Questions? We realize that every situation is different, especially when some occupants are related. Staff in the Office of Neighborhood Services would be happy to help interpret how this ordinance may affect you and also help you identify in which zoning district you live. Please contact us if we can assist you: 573-817-5050, neighborhood@CoMo.com, City Hall, 701 E. Broadway, 3rd Floor Service Center, Columbia, MO 65201.