



STATE OF MARYLAND  
REAL ESTATE COMMISSION

## Understanding Whom Real Estate Agents Represent

Before you decide to sell or buy or rent a home you need to consider the following information:

### Agents Who Represent the Seller

**Seller's Agent:** A seller's agent works for the real estate company that lists and markets the property for the sellers, or landlords, and exclusively represents the sellers or landlords. That means that he or she may assist the buyer or tenant in purchasing or renting the property, but his or her duty of loyalty is only to the sellers or landlords. The seller pays the seller's agent's fees as specified in a written listing agreement.

**Cooperating Agent:** A cooperating agent works for a real estate company different from the company for which the seller's agent works. The cooperating agent can assist a buyer or tenant in purchasing or renting a property, but his or her duty of loyalty is only to the sellers or landlords. The cooperating agent's fee is paid by the sellers or landlords through the seller's agent's company.

### Agents Who Represent the Buyer

**Presumed Buyer's Agent (no written agreement):** When a person goes to a real estate agent for assistance in finding a home to buy or rent, the agent is presumed to be representing the buyer and can show the buyer properties that are *not* listed by the agent's real estate company. A presumed buyer's agent may *not* make or prepare an offer or negotiate a sale for the buyer. The buyer does *not* have an obligation to pay anything to the presumed agent.

If for any reason the buyer does not want the agent to represent him or her as a presumed agent, either *initially* or *at any time*, the buyer can decline or terminate a presumed agency relationship simply by saying so.

**Buyer's Agent (by written agreement):** A buyer or tenant may enter into a written contract with a real estate agent which provides that the agent will represent the buyer or tenant in locating a property to buy or rent. The agent is then known as the buyer's agent. That agent assists the buyer in evaluating properties and preparing offers, and negotiates in the best interests of the buyer or tenant. The agent's fee is paid according to the written agreement between the agent and the buyer or tenant. If you as a buyer or tenant wish to have an agent represent you exclusively, you must enter into a written buyer agency agreement.

### Dual Agents

The possibility of **dual agency** arises when the buyer's agent and the seller's agent both work for the same real estate company, and the buyer is interested in property listed by that company. The real estate company, or broker, is called the "dual agent". Dual agents do not act exclusively in the interests of either the seller or buyer, or landlord or tenant, and therefore cannot give undivided loyalty to either party. There may be a conflict of interest because the interests of the seller and buyer may be different or adverse.

**If both seller and buyer, or landlord and tenant, agree to dual agency** by signing a Consent For Dual Agency form, then the real estate company (the "dual agent") will assign one agent to represent the seller or landlord (the seller's "intra-company agent") and another agent to represent the buyer or tenant (the buyer's "intra-company agent"). Intra-company agents may provide the same services to their clients as exclusive seller's or buyer's agents, including advising their clients as to price and negotiation strategy, provided the clients have both consented to be represented by dual agency.

