

## Housing Discrimination

It is against the law in Massachusetts to turn someone down for an apartment because of that person's:

- Race/Ancestry;
- National Origin;
- Religion;
- Disability;
- Children or Marital Status;
- Sex or Gender Identity;
- Sexual Orientation;
- Age;
- Veteran Status;
- Source of Income;
- Housing Subsidies or Rental Assistance.

### Worcester Fair Housing Project

For more information, or if you think you have been discriminated against, contact the Housing Discrimination Intake Worker.

#### Office of Human Rights & Disabilities

Room 101 City Hall, 455 Main Street  
Tel: (508) 799-8486

Email:  
[humanrights@worchesterma.gov](mailto:humanrights@worchesterma.gov)

#### Community Legal Aid

405 Main Street, 4th Floor  
Worcester, MA 01608  
508-752-3718/855-CLA-LEGAL  
TTY: 508-755-3260



## THINGS TO KNOW

- **Before you move in** the landlord can only charge you for the first & last month, security deposit & a key.
- Upon receiving the last month & security deposit **the landlord should give you a receipt** for each payment.
- Your landlord should also give you a receipt every month for your rent. Blank receipt forms can be printed from: <http://www.masslegalhelp.org/legal-tactics>.
- A landlord can start the eviction process if rent is one day late. Note: your landlord cannot charge you interest or a penalty for late rent until 30 days after the rent is due.
- You cannot be locked out or thrown out of your apartment without a judge's order.
- For **bad conditions**, (like mice, bedbugs, or lack of heat) call Worcester Inspectional Services, (508) 799-1198 (free for tenants).

### **Remember to . . .**

Keep good records of rent payments, complaints, contacts with your landlord, attempts at repair, correspondence, & other important events & documents relating to your tenancy. These will help you resolve disputes with your landlord in court and out.

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## Tenants' Rights and Responsibilities

*A Project of  
Community Legal Aid  
and the  
City of Worcester*



*Interpreters and translated materials available*

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



- **Can my landlord raise my rent?** If you have a lease, your landlord cannot increase your rent until the lease is up. If you do not have a lease, your landlord can increase your rent with a written notice of at least 30 days.
- **I told my landlord about repairs my apartment needs and they won't make those repairs. What are my options?** Call your local Board of Health (sometimes called "Inspectional Services") and ask for an inspection. If it is an emergency, like you have no heat in the winter, go to Housing Court and ask for an emergency hearing. ***You should do these things before thinking about withholding your rent or using your rent money for repairs. Failure to pay your rent in full can lead to your landlord starting an eviction case.*** It is the role of Inspectional Services and the Housing Court to help force your landlord to make repairs if he or she won't agree to do so on their own.
- **Can my landlord come into my apartment without my permission?** A landlord ***must*** give you reasonable notice (usually 24 hours but sometimes less in an emergency) before he or she can enter your apartment to inspect, make repairs or show the apartment to a possible new tenant.

- **My landlord wants to evict me. What is going to happen and what should I do?** Before your landlord can evict you, they have to go to court and get a judge's approval. Before a court case can be started, your landlord has to give you written notice. You have the right to 14-days' notice if your landlord is claiming you haven't paid rent and generally 1-month's notice for other issues.
- **I was interested in an apartment but the landlord wouldn't rent to me because I have children. Is that allowed?** Most of the time, no. Under most circumstances it is illegal for a landlord to refuse to rent to someone because there are children in the household. If there is lead paint in the apartment, the landlord has the responsibility to delead for tenants with children under age 6.

- **I applied for public housing but was denied because I have an old criminal record. What can I do?** You have the right to explain your circumstances and present information showing that you have been rehabilitated and explaining why you would be a good tenant. You can also provide letters of support and other helpful information.
- **What if I need a change to my landlord's rules or a physical change to my apartment because of a disability?** Your landlord is required to make changes that are related to your disability, are reasonable, and do not impose an undue burden on the landlord. If you need a physical change to the apartment, you may be required to pay for it, unless your building contains 10 or more apartments or you live in public or subsidized housing.
- **What if I can't afford my rent?** Apply for public or subsidized housing or for a housing voucher (like Section 8). In these kinds of housing, how much you pay in rent is based on what you can afford. But be aware: getting to the top of the waitlist can take a ***long*** time!