



Do You Know Your Rights as a Tenant?



You have the right to a safe dwelling place

- The PA Supreme Court has ensured tenants the right to a decent place to live. In the courts, this legal guarantee is called the “Implied Warranty of Habitability.”
- Your landlord must provide and maintain safe, sanitary living space, that is up to code, with safe, functioning utilities and appliances.
- Generally, the landlord is required to make all major repairs, even in situations where it is not specified in the lease. Unless you broke it, you don't have to buy it.
- If your landlord is refusing to make a major repair, you have the right to get a code inspection from the city, withhold your rent, deduct the cost of repairs from your rent, and even break your lease, but you must follow specific steps to avoid landlord retaliation.



You have the right to due process during an eviction

Your landlord can evict you for breaking your lease, which could be for a number of reasons--but most people get evicted because they fall behind on rent.

To legally evict you, your landlord must follow the law. They cannot just lock you out, turn off your utilities, or demand that you leave. They have to serve you notice, take you to district court, and follow the court's orders.

You have options: by choosing not to comply with the eviction, attending court, and appealing the ruling, you can extend your deadline to make rent or find a new place, but you may be liable for legal fees. You have the right to be represented by a lawyer during eviction proceedings.



You have the right not to face housing discrimination

- Landlords cannot discriminate based on family size, minority status, or disability. This includes discriminatory advertising, refusal to rent or sell, setting different terms for rent or sale, or otherwise making housing unavailable for discriminatory reasons.

- LGBT people are not protected under the fair housing laws at the federal level or the state level. Many municipal governments have passed protections for LGBT people; Harrisburg has not.

- Fair housing laws prohibit sexual harassment: landlords cannot create a hostile living environment or request sexual favors in return for housing.

- In addition to ensuring equal access to housing, landlords are required to accept reasonable accommodations and modifications for tenants with disabilities.



You have the right to coordinate with other tenants

- As a tenant, you have a number of legal protections--but there is often a difference between what a law is supposed to do and what actually happens.

- Going to court is time-consuming, expensive, and confusing. Many landlords take advantage of this by breaking the law and assuming that their tenants either don't know or can't do anything about it.

- By working together with other tenants, you may be able to bypass the courts and bargain with your landlord directly, or if you do go to court you will have more time and resources and a stronger case. Either way, you are more likely to be successful if you coordinate.

The best way to assert your rights is to know them! You can find more information and resources about all these topics and more on our website. Or contact us and we will point you in the right direction!

www.harrisburgtenants.org | www.facebook.com/Greater-Harrisburg-Area-Tenants-United
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Resources for Tenants in Harrisburg, PA

Do you think your landlord is breaking the law?

Legal Services:

Mid Penn Legal - (800) 326-9177
Community Justice Project - (800) 322-7572

Landlord Tenant Grievance

Form:
bit.ly/2Agccsy

Need help with rent?

Dauphin County Relief Program - www.DauphinCountyRentRelief.org

- \$750/month available through the CARES Act (Government Covid-19 relief)
- Must prove you have experienced 30% decline in income due to the pandemic
- Go to the website listed above or call 717-238-2851 to have HELP Ministries mail the forms to you.

Need other resources?

Contact PA211 for help with groceries, medical issues, utilities, or anything else. Call 211 or text your zip code to 898-211. A live person will help connect you with what you need.

Rules of thumb for landlord-tenant disputes:

Communicate in writing. Verbal conversations are not considered evidence. Insist on written communication, such as email, text, or mail, even if your landlord doesn't want to.

Use your resources. Fighting a landlord is difficult and scary. You're more likely to win if you have as much help as possible from relief orgs, advocacy groups, tenants' rights handbooks, and other tenants who've been through similar situations. A great place to start is our website, www.harrisburgtenants.org.

Lawyer up. If you can, get a lawyer. If you can't afford one, you may be able to get free or reduced representation. Consider contacting one of the legal agencies listed above.

Why Tenant Organizing?

- Relief organizations like those listed here are indispensable in a time of crisis, but they don't solve the crisis itself--you have to pay too much for a place to live, and the person you pay has more money and power than you do.
- There is power in numbers, which is why organizing works: when tenants engage in actions together--such as cosigning letters, suing, or withholding rent--they are more likely to succeed. GHTU can help you band together with other tenants to apply pressure to your landlord and get what you want.
- Tenant organizations can achieve political wins, like a tenants' bill of rights, rent control, and eviction reform. GHTU puts political power in the hands of Harrisburg's renters, not the landlords, property managers, and developers.
- It isn't just landlords that are the problem, it's rent itself. The right of a landlord to make someone pay to live in an empty home should not be more important than someone's right to housing. Housing is a human right for all people, regardless of the kind of work they do or even their ability to work. GHTU is one step toward dismantling the current system and replacing it with one that serves our needs.

Had enough of your landlord? Take charge! Get in touch with us:
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