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TENANT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Can a landlord refuse to rent to me because I have children?

- No. Under RI's anti-discrimination law, most landlords may not refuse to rent to you, tell you that housing is unavailable when it really is or treat you differently because you have children.

What responsibilities do I have as a tenant?

- Pay your rent on time and get a receipt.
- Talk to you landlord about any problems that develop with the apartment.
- Report any deteriorating conditions to your landlord in writing [see below]
- Do not allow illegal activities to take place at your apartment.
- Do not damage or let your visitors damage your apartment.

Does my landlord have to provide a safe, clean apartment?

- Yes. Under RI Law, you have the right to a clean, safe apartment.
 - There should be hot water, heat, electricity, a working furnace, and plumbing without leaks.
 - There should be walls, floors and ceilings that do not have holes, peeling paint or mold.
 - There should be no rats, roaches or mice.

What should I do if I have any of these problems with my apartment?

- Notify your landlord in writing about the problem and ask for repairs. Be sure to include your name, the date and keep a copy. .Send the form or letter to your landlord by certified mail and staple the receipt to a copy of the letter for your file.
- Take pictures of the problem and keep them in a safe place.
- If your landlord does not make the repairs for lead hazards you requested within 30 days, you can file a written complaint with the Housing Resources Commission.
- Call the city's code enforcement agency and ask for an inspection. Be sure to get a copy of the inspection report.
- Write down all the dates and times that you speak to your landlord about the problems.

Does my landlord have to tell me if there are lead paint hazards in my apartment?

- Before renting an apartment to you or signing a lease, the landlord must give you a booklet called *Protect Your Family from Lead in Your Home*, tell you of any known lead paint hazards on the property, and give you a copy of any lead inspection reports.
- Your landlord must also have you sign a form saying that s/he has told you about any lead hazards.

What if my apartment has chipping and peeling paint and I am afraid that it may be unsafe for my children?

- Notify your landlord of your concerns in writing and ask that your landlord make the apartment safe by getting a Certificate of Conformance or a Lead Safe Certificate.
- You may file a written complaint with the Housing Resources Commission (using the HRC Notice of Deteriorating Conditions form). (401) 222- LEAD (5323)
- You may call the RI Department of Health and request a comprehensive inspection as stated in their regulations on page 16.
- You should also call your city's code enforcement agency and ask for an inspection because chipping and peeling paint is a code violation.
- Be sure to have your child screened for lead poisoning.

Can I stop paying my rent if my landlord refuses to fix problems in my apartment?

1. If you are thinking about not paying the rent because the apartment conditions are bad, you need to be able to prove it. You should be sure that you have a copy of a code report or lead inspection report, copies of letters you sent to the landlord and pictures.
2. If you stop paying rent, your landlord might go to court to have you evicted for not paying the rent.
3. Therefore, if you don't pay the rent because the apartment conditions are bad, you must hold on to **all** the money. If you go to court, even if the judge finds that the landlord needs to fix things, the judge is also likely to tell you to pay some or all of the rent you owe.
4. Call the RI Legal Services housing hotline at 274-2652 for more specific legal advice.

Can my landlord evict me because I have complained to authorities about the conditions of my apartment or for having a lead inspection?

- No. it is illegal for a landlord to retaliate against you because you exercise your right to a clean safe apartment.
- A landlord may not evict you, harass you, or raise your rent to retaliate against you because you called code enforcement or had a lead inspection at your apartment.
- If your landlord tries to retaliate against you, contact RI Legal Services at 274-2652.
- There are extra protections against retaliation for tenants who try to enforce their rights under the lead paint law. However, explaining something like that might make tenants feel safer than complaining about There are Retaliatory Guidelines for lead related complaints. Judges can choose to use these guidelines as they see fit. Bring your inspection reports to court with you.

When can my landlord evict me?

- It is illegal for your landlord to evict you without proper notice.
- **You do not have to leave your apartment until a court tells you that you have to leave.**
- If you do not pay your rent, your landlord can bring you to court for non-payment of rent.
- If the landlord does not have a reason to evict you, the landlord must give you thirty (30) days written notice if you pay rent every month and for ten (10) days written notice if you pay rent every week (unless you have a lease).