



**MEDINA COUNTY  
FAIR HOUSING OFFICE**

**Medina County Professional Building  
124 W. Washington Street , Suite B-4  
Medina, Ohio 44256**

330-722-9219

330-336-6657 ext. 9219

330-225-7100 ext. 9219

**TTY/TTD: 330-725-9123**

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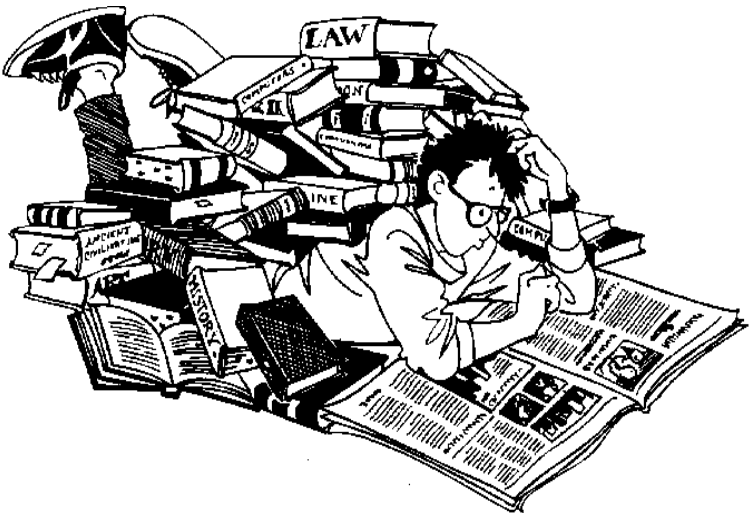
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# INTRODUCTION

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The Ohio Tenant-Landlord Act of 1974 outlines the rights and responsibilities of both tenants and landlords. It does not apply to mobile home trailer parks (see Chapter 3733, Ohio Revised Code), owner-occupied condominiums, prisons, jails, workhouses or halfway houses, hotels, motels or tourist homes, hospitals or nursing homes, farm residences on two or more acres of land, or school dormitories.

**The information in this booklet is only meant to be used as a guide or for reference purposes only. It is always advisable to seek advise from legal council.**



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# FAIR HOUSING

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The Ohio Civil Rights Act governs the enforcement of the Federal Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 which states that it is illegal to discriminate against any person because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, handicap or familiar status in the sale or rental of housing or residential lots, in advertising the sale or rental of housing, in the financing of housing, in the terms of renting property, or in the provision of real estate brokerage services.

If you suspect you have been discriminated against, you may contact any of the following agencies for assistance:

**Medina County Fair Housing Consortium**

124 W. Washington St., Suite B-4

Medina, OH 44256

330-722-9219 • 330-225-7100 • 330-336-6657

**TTY/TTD:** 330-725-9123

**Ohio Civil Rights Commission**

*CLEVELAND OFFICE*

1-888-278-7101

**U.S. Department of HUD**

1-800-581-FAIR (3247)

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## THE RENTAL AGREEMENT

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Your **LEASE** is a rental agreement or contract, it can be written, oral or implied. It is recommended that a signed lease be negotiated in order to better define your and your landlord's rights and duties under the law. Leases also protect you from indiscriminate rent increases or termination of tenancy. Without a signed lease, rent can be increased or the agreement terminated with only a seven day notice if you rent by the week or with thirty (30) day notice if renting by the month.

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## SECURITY DEPOSITS

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A **SECURITY DEPOSIT** is collected from the tenant and held by the landlord to act as an insurance policy against damages to the property or for unpaid rent. An amount equal to one month rent is a typical deposit, but any amount may be required. If the deposit is in excess of one months rent and the tenant occupies the property longer than six months, the tenant is entitled to 5% interest per year for the amount greater than one months rent. For example, if the rent is \$400 and the deposit is \$500, five percent interest is due to the tenant on the \$100 excess which amounts to \$5 per year.

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# INSPECTION

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Before signing the lease and paying any nonrefundable deposits, the tenant and landlord should **INSPECT** the property together. A detailed record of the condition of the property, including the yard if renting a house, should be made. This not only protects the tenant from being charged for damages he/she did not incur, but provides the landlord with a list of defects needing correction. If the landlord does not provide you with a detailed inspection checklist, you may obtain one from the Medina County Fair Housing Office at no charge.

The landlord may schedule routine inspections of the property during your tenancy. A minimum of 24 hour notice of the landlord's intent to enter and inspect the property must be given to the tenant.

In case of an emergency the landlord may enter the property without notice.



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## RECOVERING THE SECURITY DEPOSIT

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After moving out, the tenant has a right to a refund of the security deposit, less any damages to the unit and/or unpaid rent. The tenant is not liable for normal usage or normal wear and tear



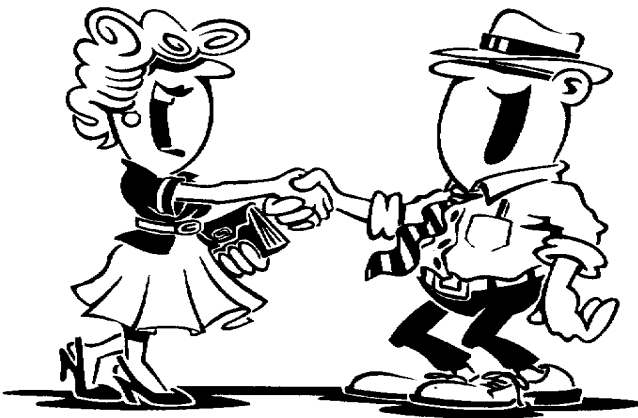
to a property. Prior to moving out, the tenant should give proper notice and include a forwarding address. (A form is included at the end of this booklet.) The landlord is required to return the balance of the security deposit within 30 days of the tenant vacating the unit. If the amount returned is not the full deposit, the landlord must provide a written itemized statement of damages and/or past due rent.

If the security deposit and statement are not returned to the tenant within 30 days, the tenant can sue in Municipal

Court for up to twice the amount of refundable security deposit the landlord should have paid, plus the tenant's legal fees. Please seek legal assistance before going to court.

**In order to assure return of the security deposit, as a tenant you should:**

- Keep rent records
- Give a minimum of 30 day notice, in writing, of intent to vacate
- Correct any damages made to the property during your tenancy
- Request the landlord to inspect the property with you. You may want to take pictures and/or have a witness with you during this inspection. Also, it is best to use the same check list when moving out as when you moved in.
- Return all keys to the landlord and provide him/her with your forwarding address.
- Make a record of the landlord's full name and business address.





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# TENANTS' RESPONSIBILITIES

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## TENANTS MUST:

- Pay their rent in full when due.
- Keep the property safe, sanitary and clean.
- Dispose of rubbish properly.
- Keep all plumbing fixtures cleaned and free flowing.
- Not damage the property nor allow guests to do so.
- Keep appliances in good working order.
- Allow the landlord to inspect or show the property with proper 24 hour notice. In case of emergency, immediate access is permitted.
- Permit the landlord or maintenance personnel to make repairs at reasonable times as needed.
- Comply with all local housing, health and safety codes.
- Use electric and plumbing fixtures properly.
- Maintain appliances supplied in good working order.
- Comply with state and/or municipal drug laws in connection with the premises and require household members and guests to do likewise

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# TENANTS' RIGHTS AND REMEDIES

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## RENT ESCROW:

If your landlord does not comply with his/her obligations as listed in the Ohio Landlord Tenant Act, you have a right to escrow your rent with the court. You, as the tenant, **DO NOT** have the right to stop paying rent. To do so voids your protection under the law. In order to escrow rent, a tenant must:

- Pay rent up to date.
- Request in writing the repairs needed.  
*(A form is included with this booklet).*
- If the landlord fails to make repairs within 30 days or within a reasonable time in case of an emergency, the tenant can file with the local municipal court:
  1. Escrow rent by depositing it with the clerk of the appropriate municipal or county court.
  2. Ask the court to direct that the repairs be made, reduce the rent, or to release some of the money for making repairs.
  3. Terminate the lease and move out. In this case, the security deposit should be returned in full.

It is recommended that a tenant seek legal assistance with escrowing of rent. **NOTE:** Rent escrow is not an available remedy if a landlord owns fewer than four rental units and a written notice of this fact was delivered to the tenant upon moving into the property.

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# LANDLORDS' RESPONSIBILITIES

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## LANDLORDS MUST:

- Assure that the property complies with all building, housing and health codes which significantly affect health and safety. Most communities have housing inspectors who can inspect conditions and cite landlords for violations, condemn property unfit for habitation, and prosecute landlords who refuse to comply with housing code requirements.
- Make all necessary repairs to make and keep the property livable. Including keeping all electrical, plumbing, heating and ventilation systems in good working order.
- Supply adequate hot and cold running water and heat at all times.
- Keep all common areas in the building or on the grounds safe and sanitary.
- Give at least 24 hour notice before entering your apartment or house except in case of emergency. He/she may not abuse their right of access to inspect the property, deliver packages, or show the property to prospective tenants or buyers. Landlords may not enter without proper notice and can be held responsible for any damages or injuries caused by their trespassing.

## **Landlords cannot:**

- Shut off utilities or their services, change the locks, remove doors or windows or move your property out of the apartment or threaten to do any of these unlawful acts in an attempt to evict tenants.
- Prevent you from exercising your rights as a tenant by increasing your rent, decreasing your services, bringing or threatening to bring an eviction because you have complained to him/her or to the city about a code violation or because you participated in a tenants' union.
- Enter your apartment or house whenever he/she wants to or repeatedly demand to enter even though proper notice has been given.
- Refuse to rent to tenants because of their race, color, religion, national origin, citizenship, sex or handicap.

If a landlord does any of the above, he/she can be sued for damages and forced by court order to restore utility services, remove padlocks, return tenants' property or rent to the person discriminated against. Punitive damages can also be assessed against landlords who deliberately or maliciously violate the law.

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# LANDLORDS' RIGHTS AND REMEDIES

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A landlord can sue a tenant for money damages, terminate the lease, and/or evict tenants from the property if they fail to fulfill his/her duty as outlines in the lease agreement.

## **A landlord can evict a tenant when:**

- Tenant fails to pay rent when due.
- Tenant violates important terms of the lease,
- The lease agreement has expired.
- Tenant fails to comply with proper notice to correct health and safety violations. (Written notice must be given to the tenant stating specific violations. The tenant then has 30 days to correct the situation.)
- Tenant refuses to allow landlord reasonable access to the unit
- Tenant files a complaint against the landlord to governmental agency about housing violations which were actually caused by the tenant and/or guests.
- Landlord's compliance with housing laws would require alteration or demolition of the building which would deprive the tenant of effective use of the premises.

## **The Eviction Process:**

**Step 1** A landlord wanting to evict a tenant must notify the tenant to leave the premises three days or more before beginning any court action. The landlord must provide a written notice to the tenant, send it by registered mail or hand deliver a copy to the tenant's residence. This notice must contain the following words:

"YOU ARE BEING ASKED TO LEAVE THE PREMISES.  
IF YOU DO NOT LEAVE, AN EVICTION ACTION MAY  
BE INITIATED AGAINST YOU. IF YOU ARE IN DOUBT  
REGARDING YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS  
AS A TENANT, IT IS RECOMMEND THAT YOU SEEK  
LEGAL ASSISTANCE."

**Step 2** If the tenant does not vacate the premises then the landlord may file a complaint at Municipal Court called a "*Forcible Entry and Detainer Notice*" stating the reason for the eviction such as the lease expired or the tenant violated the law or the lease agreement.

**Step 3** The tenant receives a court summons at least five (5) days prior to the hearing.

**Step 4** The Court hearing is held and a judge decides the case.

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# SUMMARY

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Nearly everyone rents an apartment or a house at some point in their life. If this is your first time renting, or even if you are a seasoned renter, you may find you have many questions after reading this booklet. If so, you may contact the Medina County Fair Housing Office or seek legal assistance.

In summary, it is extremely important to:

- know your rights and responsibilities as a renter;
- have signed a lease with the landlord;
- do a thorough inspection prior to moving in and again when moving out; keep copies of all rent payments;
- understand and comply with all the terms of the lease  
- ask questions, get answers;
- maintain the property as if it were your own;
- give proper notice when moving out; and
- see legal assistance when necessary.

The more you understand about your obligations and rights,  
the more rewarding the experience will be

# REQUEST FOR REFUND OF SECURITY DEPOSIT

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

TO: \_\_\_\_\_

Name

Address

City

State

Zip

FROM: \_\_\_\_\_

Name

Address

City

State

Zip

Dear Landlord:

Please return my/our security deposit of \$

\_\_\_\_\_  
Addressed moved from

\_\_\_\_\_, Ohio \_\_\_\_\_  
City Zip Code

You should send my/our security deposit, together with an itemized statement of any deductions from it, to the address provided above, within thirty (30) days from the delivery of this letter.

Sincerely,

Your former tenant(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature



# NOTICE OF TERMINATION OF RENTAL AGREEMENT

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

TO: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name

Address

City State Zip

FROM: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name

Address

City State Zip

Dear Landlord:

Pursuant to our rental agreement and Ohio law, you are hereby notified that I/we intend to terminate our rental agreement over the residential premises at:

Street Address City State Zip

effective \_\_\_\_\_.  
Date

Please make arrangements for a mutually convenient time and date for a final inspection of the condition of said premises, return of keys, and for providing information regarding any security deposit for said premises.

Sincerely,  
Your Tenant(s)

Signature

Signature

## NOTICE OF LANDLORD'S BREACH OF OBLIGATION

THIS NOTICE IS TO INFORM YOU THAT, AS THE OWNER/  
OPERATOR OF THE DWELLING UNIT LOCATED AT:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address City State Zip

YOU HAVE BREACHED YOUR OBLIGATION UNDER THE  
OHIO REVISED CODE AND OUR RENTAL AGREEMENT. THE  
FOLLOWING CONDITIONS MUST BE CORRECTED:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

IF THE NECESSARY STEPS ARE NOT TAKEN TO CORRECT THE  
ABOVE CONDITIONS BY \_\_\_\_\_, 20 \_\_\_\_,  
I THE TENANT AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS, WILL DEPOSIT MY  
RENT MONEY WITH THE CLERK OF MUNICIPAL COURT  
UNTIL THE CONDITIONS ARE CORRECTED. THE OHIO  
REVISED CODE AUTHORIZES SUCH ACTION BY TENANTS  
WHEN AN OWNER/OPERATOR OF A DWELLING UNIT DOES  
NOT MEET THE OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE OHIO REVISED  
CODE. THESE OBLIGATIONS INCLUDE COMPLIANCE WITH  
THE HOUSING AND HEALTH CODES WHICH MATERIALLY  
AFFECT HEALTH AND SAFETY AND MAINTENANCE OF ALL  
FACILITIES AND SERVICE WHICH WERE PROVIDED AT THE  
RENTED PREMISES WHEN I TOOK THE DWELLING UNIT.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Tenant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Mailed

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## ASSISTANCE

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### **MEDINA COUNTY FAIR HOUSING CONSORTIUM**

124 W. Washington Street, Suite B-4

Medina, OH 44256

330-722-9219 • 330-225-7100 • 330-336-6657

**TTY/TTD:** 330-725-9123

### **OHIO CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION**

*CLEVELAND OFFICE*

1-888-278-7101

### **MEDINA COMMUNITY LEGAL AIDE**

330-723-5380

### **MEDINA COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION**

*Attorney referral for nominal fee*

330-725-9794

### **COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING IN OHIO**

888-485-7999

### **MEDINA MUNICIPAL COURT**

330-723-7313

### **WADSWORTH MUNICIPAL COURT**

330-335-1596

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*Funding from the  
Community Development Block Grant for Fair Housing*

# ***HELP***

*If you need legal assistance, you may call:*

**Medina County Community Legal Aide**

1-800-998-9454

**Medina County Bar Association**

330-725-9794

**Ohio Civil Rights Commission**

**Cleveland Regional Office**

1-888-278-7101

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*For assistance with fair housing laws, please call:*

**Medina County Fair Housing Office at:**

330-722-9219

**U.S. Department of HUD**

1-800-581-FAIR (3247)

**Fair Housing Information Clearinghouse**

1-800-290-1617

