

Tenant Rights

Things to Know

*Tenants in PA don't have many rights, but they do have some.**

Safe and Healthy Housing

- Tenants have a right to a **decent place to live** also called the “implied warranty of habitability.”
- If a problem exists that impacts the tenant’s ability to live in the home, and the landlord fails to correct it within a reasonable time, the tenant has the right to (1) withhold rent until the problem is fixed, (2) make necessary repairs and deduct the cost from the rent or (3) terminate the lease and move.
- Cosmetic repairs and damage caused by the tenant are not covered.

Security Deposit

- Landlords must return deposits within **30 days** of lease termination.
- Failure to return deposits **forfeits** the right to withhold or sue for damages.
- If the tenant provides a forwarding address and the landlord fails to return the deposit, the tenant can sue for **double the deposit plus interest**.

Privacy

- Tenants have the **right to possess the premises** without unreasonable interference from landlords.
- Landlords can access rental units for limited reasons like inspection or maintenance but **must provide notice**.

Rent Increase


- Rent cannot be raised **mid-lease** without tenant agreement.
- It's illegal to raise rent for a discriminatory reason or in **retaliation** for exercising the right to fair housing.

Utility Shut-Offs

- Landlords must notify tenants **at least 30 days** in advance of the non-payment of the utility bill.
- Retaliatory actions by landlords for exercising utility-related rights are **illegal**, with tenants entitled to damages.

Reasonable Accommodations & Modifications

- People with disabilities may request **reasonable changes** to housing rules, policies, or physical structures to give the tenant an equal opportunity to use and enjoy the housing.
- Common examples include:
 - Installing a ramp at the tenant's expense
 - Assigning an accessible parking space
 - Permitting a tenant to transfer to a ground-floor unit
 - Adjusting a rent payment schedule for a tenant who receives disability-related income assistance
 - Adding a grab bar to a tenant’s bathroom
 - Permitting an assistance animal in a “no pets” building

 ***Tenants in public and subsidized housing have more rights. See**
<https://www.palawhelp.org/issues/housing-and-shelter/public-housing-and-subsidized-housing>

This guide provides an overview of information. It should not be used for specific legal advice.

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Where to go for legal advice and other support

This information is correct as of March 2024.

1 Neighborhood Legal Services

- Services: legal representation (if lockout or eviction filing) or advice
- Populations: adults 18+, low-income individuals and families
- Contact: 412-255-6700
- Link: <https://nlsa.us/request-legal-help/>



Neighborhood Legal Services
Website QR Code

2 Just Mediation Pittsburgh

- Services: housing mediation, virtual support
- Populations: adults 18+, home owners or renters
- Contact: 412-228-0730
- Link: <https://www.justmediationpgh.org/what-we-do>



Just Mediation Pittsburgh
Website QR Code

3 PA Utility Law Project

- Services: legal assistance for utilities
- Populations: low-income individuals and families
- Requires participation of the landlord
- Contact: 844-645-2500
- Link: <https://www.rhls.org/utilities/pulp/>



PA Utility Law Project
Website QR Code

4 Disability Rights Pennsylvania

- Services: help for disability-related problems in housing
- Populations: people with disabilities
- Contact: 800-692-7443
- Link: <https://www.disabilityrightspa.org/get-help/>



Disability Rights Pennsylvania
Website QR Code

This guide was put together by the participants, project staff, advocates, and steering committee of the Advocacy and Organizing Training research project. The project is run through Equitable and Just Greater Pittsburgh and the University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work and was funded through and AmeriCorps National Service and Civic Engagement Research Project grant.

For more info, visit: www.ejgp.org/advocacy-and-organizing-training



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