

## Dear Lawrence Resident:

If you are behind on your rent or facing eviction, use this handout to protect yourself and get the help you need.

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### What can I do if I am behind on rent?

Do not move out! You have the right to stay in your home and apply for help with your rent. There are different programs to help pay the rent or mortgage, as well as utilities and moving expenses.

- Eligible tenants can get up to 15 months of rental assistance under the new federal ERAP (Emergency Rental Assistance) program. Tenants can use up to 12 months for overdue rent and use 3 months of assistance at a time for future rent.
- Eligible tenants and homeowners can also get up to \$10,000 to pay overdue or future mortgage or rent under the RAFT (Residential Assistance for Families in Transition) and ERMA (Emergency Rent and Mortgage Assistance) programs.

To apply for any of these programs, call 800-224-5124 or go to [cognitoforms.com/CommunityTeamwork1/RAFTERMAApplicationCTI](https://cognitoforms.com/CommunityTeamwork1/RAFTERMAApplicationCTI)

### What can I do if my landlord sends me an eviction “Notice to Quit”?

A Notice to Quit says you must leave your apartment by a certain date. You do not have to move out by the date on the notice. After the date on this Notice passes, if your landlord wants to evict you, they must take you to court. It is illegal for a landlord to evict you without going to court.

### What can I do if I receive a rent increase?

If you live in private, unsubsidized housing, your landlord can ask for as much rent as they want. If you receive a rent increase notice, you can try to negotiate an affordable increase. You can join with other tenants to negotiate together. If you have a lease, a landlord cannot raise the rent during your lease.

### Did my landlord send me the right form with a “Notice to Quit”?

If your landlord is evicting you for nonpayment of rent, they must send you a special form with the Notice to Quit. This form tells you about what help you can get to prevent an eviction. If your landlord did not send you this form, they cannot file an eviction case against you. Speak with a lawyer. There is contact information for free legal help on the back of this handout.

### Am I protected by the national eviction moratorium?

A national eviction moratorium stops landlords from evicting some tenants who cannot keep up with rent. It was ordered by the Center for Disease for Disease Control (CDC). If you send your landlord a CDC Declaration Letter, your landlord is not allowed to evict you until after June 30, 2021. Find out whether you are protected by the moratorium and use this form to send your landlord a CDC Declaration Letter: [apps.suffolklitlab.org/run/cdc\\_moratorium/#/1](https://apps.suffolklitlab.org/run/cdc_moratorium/#/1)

### What can I do if I receive a court eviction “Summons and Complaint”?

Do not move out! Contact a lawyer for help. You have legal rights. As soon as you get a Summons and Complaint, fill out an [Answer](#) and [Discovery](#) form.

- An Answer form tells your side of the story.
- An Answer form gives you a chance to tell a jury your side of the story.
- A Discovery form allows you to get information to prove your side of the story.

Use this easy online tool to fill out and file your court Answer and Discovery form. It is free! You can do it on your phone at [www.gbls.org/MADE](https://www.gbls.org/MADE).

Turn this page over for more information about your rights →

## **Can a landlord evict me if I have applied for rental assistance?**

If you are being evicted for nonpayment of rent and you apply for any type of rental assistance, a court must pause your eviction until the rental assistance agency approves or denies your application. This pause in your case is called a “continuance.”

## **What if I am in District Court?**

If your case is in District Court, you can transfer your case to Housing Court where you can get more help with your case. Use the Transfer form: [masslegalhelp.org/housing/lt1-booklet-5-transfer.pdf](https://masslegalhelp.org/housing/lt1-booklet-5-transfer.pdf)

## **What if I am in Housing Court?**

If you are in Housing Court, ask the court to connect you with a lawyer from the Lawyer for the Day Program. If you are eligible for free help, a lawyer can represent you in a court mediation.

## **What can I do if I am being pressured to sign an agreement?**

If your landlord offers you an agreement outside of court or if you are in court mediation, get legal help. Get legal advice before you sign any agreement with your landlord or their attorney. A landlord’s attorney represents the landlord, not you. You do not have to sign anything.

## **What if my landlord is not taking me to court but trying to force me out in other ways?**

This is illegal. You can ask a judge to order your landlord to stop doing things that are illegal - like locking you out, shutting off your utilities, refusing to make emergency repairs. To do this you can file a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO). Go to CourtFormsOnline at [massaccess.suffolkclitlab.org](https://massaccess.suffolkclitlab.org) to file out a TRO form. Call legal aid for help. You can also report your landlord to the Attorney General’s Office by calling (617) 727-8400.

# **Reach Out for Help**

## **Northeast Legal Aid**

Offers free legal help if you qualify and is available at the Lawyer for the Day Program in the Northeast Housing Court

Phone: (800) 336-2262 or 978-458-1465

Leave your name, address, and a way to reach you

Email: [LawyerForDay@nla-ma.org](mailto:LawyerForDay@nla-ma.org).

Apply online: [NortheastLegalAid.org/get-legal-help](https://NortheastLegalAid.org/get-legal-help)

## **Lawrence Community Works**

Offers a Housing Stabilization Center to help if you are fighting eviction

Phone: (978) 685-3115

Email: [info@lawrencecommunityworks.org](mailto:info@lawrencecommunityworks.org)

## **ACT Lawrence**

Offers free financial & housing counseling services

Phone: (978) 685-6274

Email: [reception@actlawrence.org](mailto:reception@actlawrence.org)

Apply online: Use the Contact Us form at the bottom of [ActLawrence.org](https://ActLawrence.org)

## **Community Teamwork, Inc.**

Provides rental assistance to pay back and future rent

Phone: (978) 459-0551, (800) 698-0551,

Email: [CovidResponseCTI@commteam.org](mailto:CovidResponseCTI@commteam.org)

Start an application online at:

[cognitofrms.com/CommunityTeamwork1/RAFTERMApplicationCTI](https://cognitofrms.com/CommunityTeamwork1/RAFTERMApplicationCTI)

## **Greater Lawrence Community Action Council**

Runs Lawrence Emergency Rental Assistance Program

Phone: (978) 620-4993

Email: [esgcovid@glcac.org](mailto:esgcovid@glcac.org)

Get applications from their website:

[glcac.org/departments/Housing-Assistance.html](https://glcac.org/departments/Housing-Assistance.html)

## **Catholic Charities**

Provides help with rent, utilities, or other expenses

Phone: (781) 593-2312

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*For more information, go to [EvictionLegalHelp.org](https://EvictionLegalHelp.org)*