

A TENANT'S GUIDE TO RENTING



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ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

This handbook is designed to address some common problems that you may face as a tenant. It addresses a number of issues including:

1. Searching for a rental unit
2. Reviewing and signing your lease
3. Moving into your new rental unit
4. Living in your rental unit
5. Moving out

The handbook does not cover every situation that may arise during your tenancy, but it does provide guidance on a number of situations. You may always find more information by visiting www.palawhelp.org, or by visiting your local legal services office.

REMEMBER: This handbook is meant to give you general information and not to give you specific legal advice. Please use the information found in this brochure carefully since the law is constantly changing and the information may not accurately reflect any changes that occurred following the creation and publication of the brochure.

If you are faced with a legal problem, you should contact an attorney.

SEARCHING FOR A RENTAL UNIT

Searching for an apartment can be frustrating and exhausting. However, if you follow a guideline, such as listed below, your search can go smoothly.

Finding an apartment

1. Create a realistic budget. Decide what you can afford in rent, **including monthly utilities**. Don't look at any apartments out of your price range.
2. Consider commute times, your lifestyle needs and local conveniences. Some things to consider when searching for an apartment:
 - Transportation
Bus and rail routes; are they in walking distance from the rental?
 - Grocery stores
Is there a grocery or other convenience store(s) within walking distance?
 - Schools
Do you have a child attending school? What are the local schools like?
 - Activity
Are people out and about in the neighborhood? Are the properties well maintained?
HINT: If an apartment building has a large number of vacant units, chances are the building is not being managed well.
 - Neighbors
What are the neighbors like? Are they families, elderly, college students?
3. **Look for vacant rental units in a variety of sources.** Some places to look are:
 - Local Newspapers or Pennysaver
 - Websites
 - a. www.craigslist.org (Online bulletin board)
 - b. pal.phfa.org (A site for affordable housing)
 - Rental signs in areas where you might like to live
4. Use a chart to keep information about your housing search organized. You can see a sample chart in APPENDIX C
5. Call to make appointments to see the apartments. If you get an answering machine, leave a message with your name and number. Be sure to make a follow-up telephone call to the landlord if you do not hear from them within a day or two.
6. Make sure you have some references; always ask permission before you use someone as a reference.

Looking at the apartment and taking notes

Write down what features are important to you, such as parking, proximity to public transportation, security, laundry facilities and number of bedrooms and bathrooms.

Is there parking? If you have a car you'll want to know if parking is included in the rent, where it is and how safe it is.

Walk the grounds and ask neighbors what it's like to live there.

What are the policies and laws regarding pets? If a pet is already part of your family, make sure it is legal and acceptable to have pets.

Check the locks, turn on light switches, look inside closets, check water pressure and visit the laundry room.

How is the unit heated and cooled? This is of particular concern if you are responsible for paying the utilities. Do you have control over heating and/or air conditioning levels?

Be sure to find out what utilities you will be responsible for paying and the average monthly bill of those utilities.

If you are paying for utilities, find out the name of the utility company and, if possible, its phone number.

If the place is in need of repair or paint, find out what will be done before you move in. If the plaster is falling down and you have to repair it, you may find living there more expensive and annoying than you bargained for.

Check for insects and rodents. Look in corners, behind furniture and along baseboards for any evidence of critters or repellent. If there are current tenants, they may be forthcoming with such information.

Check if there are smoke detectors. Are they working? Where are they located?

Finally, go over the lease agreement with the landlord. When is the rent due? How much is the late fee? If you give a deposit, make sure it is returnable and get a receipt.

Review the notes you made as you viewed the apartment. Jot down your impressions as well. This will be your home. It is worth taking the time to plan ahead, ask questions, and weigh pros and cons before signing on the dotted line.

SIGNING THE LEASE

Congratulations! After looking at apartments and houses you have found one that you would like to live in. Now, the landlord has asked you to come to the rental office to pay a security deposit and sign the lease. This section will deal with common questions about leases.

What is a Lease

A lease is a binding legal contract for a rental property between the owner of a property and the tenant. The lease entitles the tenant(s) to receive exclusive possession of the rental unit and the owner to receive rent. A lease may be either verbal or written. If the lease is written, it should be written in plain language so that the tenant can understand the terms of the lease.

Before you sign a lease, you should make sure that you understand all of the terms in the lease. There are some common parts to a lease with which you should be familiar with.

Security Deposit

The security deposit is money that the tenant gives to the landlord when first renting the unit. A security deposit is intended to cover damages that might be caused by the tenant during the term of the lease. It may also be kept by the landlord to cover unpaid rent. In Pennsylvania, a security deposit may be up to two months of rent in the first year. The amount of security deposit paid to the landlord should be written in the lease, and you should get a receipt for the security deposit and keep it in your records.

Term of the Lease

A written lease should specify the date on which the lease begins and the date on which the lease ends. You have the right to possession of the unit from the day the lease begins to the day that the lease ends. Be sure you know when those dates are.

Some leases provide that they shall automatically renew at the end of the lease term unless one party has given notice to the other party. Look to see the date by which you must give notice if you don't want to renew your lease. You should put that date in a calendar or other safe place to remind yourself.

Rent Due Date

Most leases specify that rent is due on the first of the month. You have an obligation to make your rent payment by the due date specified in the lease. Even if your landlord tells you that it is OK if you are a few days late, you are still bound by the terms of the lease regarding late fees and other penalties.

IMPORTANT: If you receive public benefits or employment income that is not paid until after the first of the month, you should talk to the landlord before signing your lease. You should ask that the date that rent is due be scheduled for a date after you receive your regular monthly payments. If the landlord does not agree to this modification, you should pay your rent from the last income payment you receive in the previous month. (For example, if your dates for cash assistance deposits to your account are January 10 and January 28, use the money from the January 28 payment to pay your rent for February.)

Late Fees and Rent Discounts

Many leases provide for various forms of penalties for paying rent late. Some leases give tenants a “Rent Discount” if they pay rent by a certain date, the first of the month, for instance. If the tenant does not provide their payment to the landlord by that date, then they will not receive the “discount.” Alongside these “discounts” are often late fees. Most leases will specify that if a tenant has not paid rent by a certain date, a late fee will attach to the rent. This does not mean that you have a “grace period” during which you do not owe rent. Rent is due on the date specified. It only means that the landlord will not charge you a late fee if you pay by the “late fee” date. The landlord may still move to evict you for non-payment of rent if you have not paid your rent by the date due in the lease.

Utilities

Your lease should specify who pays what utilities and/or services. A common list of utilities include:

1. Gas
2. Heat
3. Electricity
4. Water
5. Sewage
6. Trash Pickup

Your landlord may require you to pay the water or gas bill on your rental unit while keeping the bill in his name. It is important to get the monthly bill from the landlord and make payments. **If your lease states that you are required to pay the bill, it is your responsibility to get the bill from the landlord.**

Entry of the Apartment by Landlord

When you rent an apartment, you are being granted a legal interest in the unit. You should read your lease to find out how much notice your landlord must give you before entering to perform routine maintenance, show the apartment to prospective tenants, or inspect the unit. If the lease contains a provision that the landlord does not need to provide notice of entering the apartment, you might consider asking him to modify the provision. Oftentimes, leases will waive notice to enter for an emergency.

Snow Removal and Lawn Care

Does your new rental have a long walkway from the front door to the road? Who is going to have to shovel it in the winter? Who is going to cut the grass in the front or back yard of the building? Beware of leases that state that tenants will perform care and upkeep of shared areas such as hallways, lobbies, and walkways. When you live in a multi-unit building, the landlord bears the responsibility of upkeep of common areas, including walkways and yards. If you notice lease provisions where the landlord is attempting to push these duties onto tenants, you may find yourself in a building where no one is caring for the common areas.

Signing and Receiving a Copy

Do not sign a lease until you have read and understood its terms. You are legally responsible for all the provisions in a lease you have signed. Make sure you get a copy of the lease. Do not let the landlord tell you he will get a copy to you later. Keep the copy of your lease with this booklet.

MOVING INTO YOUR NEW APARTMENT

You've now signed your lease and all of your things are packed up and ready to move into your new apartment or house. Before you move anything into the unit, there are some things that you should be sure to do.

Move In Inspection

Upon receiving the keys to your new unit you should perform a thorough inspection. Included in this packet as APPENDIX A, is a checklist that you should use when inspecting the unit. Bring a camera with you. As you go through the unit, make notes of any problems with the unit. Take photographs of any damage to the unit. Make sure that these photographs bear a date stamp or are in some way identifiable.

Notifying the Landlord of Problems

After you perform your inspection, you should make a copy of the inspection sheet and mail it to the landlord. Include copies of your inspection photographs. We have provided a sample letter (SAMPLE LETTER 1) for you to send with your inspection sheet and photographs.

Be sure to keep a copy of your move in checklist and photographs in this folder. If you experience problems in the future regarding damage to the unit, this information may form the basis of your defense.

Obtaining Renter's Insurance

Your landlord's insurance does not cover your personal belongings. The landlord is not responsible for your possessions; **you are**. You will need to get renter's insurance to cover theft, loss, or damage of your personal belongings.

You may contact insurance agents or look on the Internet for information about obtaining renter's insurance.

LIVING IN YOUR NEW APARTMENT

Now that you have moved into your apartment and unpacked, it's time to settle down into your new home. Unfortunately, problems may arise with your new apartment or house. This section will give you some guidance on dealing with problems that arise during your tenancy.

Financial Difficulties

No one expects to lose a job or suffer a severe illness. Sadly, these events are all too common. Even if you have budgeted well and chosen an apartment that you can afford, the loss of income can make it difficult if not impossible to keep up with your bills. Here are some things to remember.

1. **Keep a roof over your head**

Your rent should be one of your top priorities when paying bills. If you fail to pay your rent, your landlord will begin court proceedings to evict you from the residence. If you have lost your income, it may be impossible to keep up with the rent payments. We have included a list of resources in Appendix D of this packet to assist you in times of need. You may be able to find rental assistance to help keep you in your unit while you resolve your financial problems.

2. **Keep your utilities on**

There are many programs to assist people with little or no income with their heating and other utility bills. Be sure to sign up for the CAP program from your gas and electric utility company. APPENDIX D contains a list of utility company customer service numbers. You should use this reference to contact your utility provider and ask them about universal services. If you have fallen behind in utility payments you may be able to arrange a payment plan with your utility company. This will allow you to keep your lights and heat on while you regain your financial footing.

Many leases require that the tenant maintain utilities in the unit for the duration of the lease. If you allow your utility service to be terminated you may face an eviction action for breach of lease terms.

3. **Keep your landlord informed**

You should keep your landlord informed of the situation that has occurred. If you are unable to pay rent, your landlord may be willing to work out a payment arrangement for back rent.

Your landlord will assume the worst if he does not receive a rent check from you.

When you have a conversation with your landlord, you should always follow up in writing. This will allow you to keep a physical record of your conversations with the landlord. A sample letter is included at the back of this packet.

Problems with the Unit

Physical problems with a rental unit may arise during your tenancy. Many problems will be beyond your control. When problems arise you should inform your landlord by telephone **AND** in writing of the problems and request that the landlord fix them immediately. Some landlords have a particular procedure tenants are to use to obtain maintenance. Be sure to follow these procedures.

We have included a sample letter for you to send to your landlord requesting that repairs be made to the unit.

Your landlord must make repairs needed to keep your home safe, sanitary and in livable condition. Only serious defects (flaws or problems) are covered under the law. For example, your landlord would have to correct a badly leaking roof, a broken furnace, plumbing that doesn't work, broken floors, dangerous wiring, or lack of water. The law holds your landlord to the guarantee (warranty) that throughout the rental period such basic facilities actually work and are safe. But your landlord is not required to provide you with a perfect dwelling. Cosmetic repairs aren't covered by the law. For example, you cannot use this law to beautify your apartment by requiring the landlord to change the color of paint.

Also, the landlord is not required to repair damages caused by the tenant. The tenant must correct or pay for these.

Three (3) Steps to Protecting Your Rights

There are three (3) steps to follow to protect yourself when asserting your rights under the implied warranty of habitability.

Step 1: Give Your Landlord Notice

Tell your landlord what the problem is and what you intend to do about it if he does not fix it within a reasonable time.

It's best to notify your landlord in writing. Write a letter telling your landlord about the problem, asking him to make the repairs as soon as possible, and stating what steps you'll take if he doesn't. (A sample checklist to use in inspecting your home for all needed repairs, and a sample notice letter are at the back of this booklet.) Make a copy of your letter. Send the original letter to your landlord by certified mail and first class mail. Keep your copy plus the receipt you'll get at the

post office when you send the letter and the return receipt card you'll get back after the landlord signs for the certified letter.

In emergencies, such as no heat in winter, when you can't take the time to write a letter, speak to the landlord about the problem. Bring a witness along, if possible. Send a follow-up letter to the landlord immediately, reminding him of your conversation and again telling him about the problem and what steps you'll take if he doesn't make the repairs in a reasonable time.

Step 2: Giving the Landlord Reasonable Time to Repair

The law gives your landlord a "reasonable time" to make the necessary repairs. What is reasonable depends on several things. The most important factor is how serious the problem is (whether it is an emergency) and its effect on the tenant's health and safety.

Emergencies such as lack of heat in the winter should be attended to quickly – for example, within 48 to 72 hours, or whatever time is reasonably necessary to prevent danger to the tenant's health and safety.

Non-Emergencies such as a broken furnace in summer could be repaired within a longer time – for example, within 30 days.

Step 3: Show That the Landlord Has Failed to Make Repairs

You must be able to prove that your landlord failed to repair within a reasonable time after being told about the problem (s). You may demonstrate that the landlord has failed to make repairs by obtaining a housing code or health department inspection, taking pictures of the defective conditions in your home, bringing to the hearing written estimates that you got from reputable repairmen for the costs of the repairs, asking members of any local housing groups or social services agencies who have seen the defective conditions in your home to testify, or having friends, neighbors, or relatives who have visited your rental home and have seen its condition testify.

Remedies for the Situation

You must follow Steps 1(notice), 2 (allow landlord a reasonable time to repair) and 3 (show landlord didn't repair). Then, depending on your own special situation, you may be able to use one or more of the following "remedies" (legal steps):

1. Withhold a Portion of Rent

You may decide to reduce the amount of rent you pay. How much you reduce your rent by will depend on how serious the defects in your home are and how much they reduce your use of the dwelling as a place to live in. You should rarely withhold the entire rent. Whatever rent is withheld should be deposited in a separate bank account.

2. Repair and Deduct

You may have the defect(s) repaired and deduct the cost from future rental payments. However, repairs must be made by a qualified person. Additionally, some leases prohibit a tenant from making repairs without the landlord's permission.

3. Recover Past Rent Paid

You may sue the landlord to recover rent that was paid when you lived in the unit while it was unfit.

4. Obtain a Court Order

You may be able to obtain a court order requiring your landlord to repair the defects, if no other step will work in your special case.

5. Move Out of the Unit

You may only use this remedy if a unit is uninhabitable as a result of the landlord failing to make repairs you may move out without any further duty to pay rent.

6. USE A COMBINATION OF THESE REMEDIES

You may choose a combination of remedies. Any one of the previous remedies, by itself may not be totally suitable for you. Your situation may enable you to use a combination of different remedies.

Each of these remedies has a risk associated with it. You should contact an attorney for legal advice relevant to your situation.

THE END OF THE LEASE AND MOVING OUT

Your lease is expiring and it is time to move out of your rental unit. There are a few things that you should be prepared to do at the end of your lease.

First, know when your move out date is. Leases will often end before the last day of the month. This could pose a problem for you if you don't have a new unit ready to move into. Be prepared to have your belongings out of the unit prior to the lease expiration.

Second, after the unit is emptied of your belongings, make sure that it is left broom clean. There should be no garbage or debris left in the unit. Look at your lease to determine if you have an obligation to have any carpets cleaned.

Third, after you make the apartment broom-clean, perform a check of the apartment. Note any damage or defects in the unit. We have provided you a "Move Out Checklist". Go room by room and mark down the condition of the room including walls, floors, ceilings, and fixtures. Photograph any problems with the unit.

Fourth, copy your checklist and inspection photographs. Make sure you know where the landlord would like the keys left. You should leave a letter for the landlord with the keys.

Fifth, request the return of your security deposit in a letter that you leave with your keys. This letter should include a demand for the return of your security deposit. Additionally, the letter should include an address where the landlord can forward your deposit. Include a copy of your move out checklist and photographs with the letter. We have included a sample letter as Sample Letter 3

The landlord has 30 days to return your security deposit. The landlord may deduct portions of the security deposit that are necessary to make repairs to the unit caused by you, or for any unpaid rent. The landlord must provide you an itemized list of any deductions made. If the landlord fails to return your deposit with an itemized deduction list within 30 days, you may bring a civil suit in the Magisterial District Judge court for the return of the deposit.

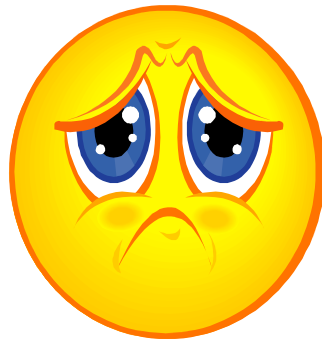
**WHY EXERCISE YOUR RIGHT TO A
DECENT RENTAL HOME?**

To improve the housing you and your family live in each day!

To receive the fair treatment you deserve as a tenant!

To encourage landlords throughout Pennsylvania to keep up their residential housing so you, they, and everyone benefits.

BAD HOUSING AFFECTS EVERYBODY!



SO DOES GOOD HOUSING!



Appendix A

MOVE IN SAMPLE CHECKLIST

MOVE IN DATE: _____

CHECKLIST COMPLETED BY: _____

Directions:

1. Put a check (✓) or a short word describing the problem in the appropriate box on the checklist for every defect in your home.
2. Review the checklist before writing your notice letter so you'll be sure to list all needed repairs in the letter.

DEFECTS	Bath-room	Kitchen	Living-Room	Bed-room 1	Bedroom 2	Bedroom 3	Dining-room	Other Rooms(Identify Them)	Common Areas (Such as hallways or stairs that you and others use)
DOOR									
CEILING									
FLOOR									
WINDOWS									
ELECTRICAL OUTLETS									
OUTLETS									
LIGHT FIXTURES									
HEATING VENTS									
BASEBOARD HEATER									
STOVE									
REFRIGERATOR									
FAUCET LEAKS									
STAIRS									
LIGHTING									
LOCKS									
FURNACE									
THERMOSTAT									
ELECTRICAL WIRING									
PEST INFESTATION									
NO HEAT									
NO HOT WATER									
NO WATER AT ALL									
PLASTER									
FLOOR TILE									
BATHTUB									
TIOLET									
SINK									
PIPES									
WALLS									

Appendix B

MOVE OUT SAMPLE CHECKLIST

MOVE OUT DATE: _____

CHECKLIST COMPLETED BY: _____

Directions:

3. Put a check (✓) or a short word describing the problem in the appropriate box on the checklist for every defect in your home.
4. Review the checklist before writing your notice letter so you'll be sure to list all needed repairs in the letter.

DEFECTS	Bathroom	Kitchen	Living-Room	Bed-room 1	Bedroom 2	Bedroom 3	Dining-room	Other Rooms (Identify Them)	Common Areas (Such as hallways or stairs that you and others use)
DOOR									
CEILING									
FLOOR									
WINDOWS									
ELECTRICAL OUTLETS									
OUTLETS									
LIGHT FIXTURES									
HEATING VENTS									
BASEBOARD HEATER									
STOVE									
REFRIGERATOR									
FAUCET LEAKS									
STAIRS									
LIGHTING									
LOCKS									
FURNACE									
THERMOSTAT									
ELECTRICAL WIRING									
PEST INFESTATION									
NO HEAT									
NO HOT WATER									
NO WATER AT ALL									
PLASTER									
FLOOR TILE									
BATHTUB									
TOILET									
SINK									
PIPES									
WALLS									

Appendix C
RENTAL SEARCH TRACKING SHEET

Date of Contact	Contact Information of Property Manager/Landlord	Address of Rental Unit	Rent \$	Deposit	Utility Costs	Date Unit Available	Action(s) Taken

APPENDIX D

LIST OF RESOURCES IN ALLEGHENY COUNTY

FOOD ASSISTANCE

- ❖ United Way HelpLine: 412-255-1155
 - Call for a referral to a food pantry
 - www.unitedwaypittsburgh.org
- ❖ Produce to People: 412-460-3663 x 727
 - Saturday morning distribution of food and produce at four locations. Site changes each week.
 - Bring boxes for the food
 - Sponsored by the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank
 - www.pittsburghfoodbank.org
- ❖ Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank: 412-460-3663 x 727
 - Distributes food the fourth Thursday of the month, 5:30pm to 7:30pm
 - Location: 1 North Linden, Duquesne, PA 15110
 - Help for the unemployed and underemployed
 - Okay to walk-in
 - Bring boxes for the food
- ❖ Angel Food Ministries” 1-877-366-3646
 - An average of \$60 worth of food for \$30; monthly distribution
 - www.angelfoodministries.org
 - You can use food stamps to pay
- ❖ Food Stamps (now called SNAP): 412-565-2146
 - Screening for food stamps
- ❖ Just Harvest: 412-431-8963
 - www.justharvest.org
- ❖ Hunger Services Network: 1-866-395-3663

FORECLOSURE AVOIDANCE COUNSELING

Call as soon as you worry that you may have a problem

- ❖ ACTION Housing: 412-281-2102
 - www.actionhousing.org
- ❖ Neighbor Works: 412-281-9773 x 100
 - www.nwwpa.org
- ❖ PA Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program: 1-800-342-2397
 - www.hemap.org/hemap/index.aspx
- ❖ Urban League of Pittsburgh: 412-277-4246
 - www.ulpgh.org

HELP FOR RENTERS

Help to prevent eviction can be difficult to find

- ❖ Urban League of Pittsburgh: 412-277-4246
 - www.ulpgh.org
 - 610 Wood Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
 - Walk in to schedule an appointment
- ❖ Community Human Services: 412-621-4706

- Assistance for homeless or near-homeless families
- ❖ Allegheny County Assistance Office: 412-565-2146
 - If you receive welfare and are having housing problems like foreclosure or eviction, be sure to ask your caseworker about emergency shelter assistance.

HEALTH CARE ASSISTANCE

- ❖ adultBASIC: 1-800-GO-BASIC
 - Covers basic healthcare needs of Pennsylvanians age 19-64 who have no health insurance and who meet eligibility requirements.
- ❖ CHIP: 1-800-986-KIDS
 - Free or low-cost health insurance to uninsured kids and teens up to age 19 who are not eligible for Medical Assistance.
 - No family makes too much money for CHIP because there is no income limit.
 - www.chipcoverspakids.com
- ❖ Catholic Charities Free Health Clinic: 412-456-6911
 - Provides medical and dental care for Pittsburgh's uninsured.
 - Call for appointment
 - www.ccpgh.org
- ❖ Community Clinics: 412-255-1155
 - There are a number of neighborhood clinics throughout the Pittsburgh area. Call United Way HelpLine for a location near you.
- ❖ Walgreens
 - Provides treatment for illnesses and injuries (not routine check-ups)
 - If you lost your job on or after March 31, 2009, have no health insurance and qualify for federal or state unemployment benefits visit www.takecarerecoveryplan.com for details.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG ASSISTANCE

Check with your local pharmacy about special generic drug programs. If you do not have prescription assistance, these programs may be able to help.

- ❖ Family Wise Prescription Discount Cards: 412-255-1155
 - www.familywise.org
- ❖ Needymeds.org
- ❖ Partnership for Prescription Assistance: 1-888-477-2669
 - www.pparx.org

CHILD CARE

- ❖ YWCA Child Care Partnerships: 1-800-392-3131
 - Administers the subsidy program for child care.
 - Eligibility guidelines apply. Parents must be working or going to school and working.
 - www.ywcapgh.org/ccis.asp

JOB HELP

- ❖ PA CareerLink: 412-552-7100
 - Allegheny County/Pittsburgh CareerLink
Regional Enterprise Center
425 Sixth Street, 22nd Floor

Pittsburgh, PA 15222
www.careerlinkpittsburgh.com

- ❖ PA CareerLink Allegheny East: 412-436-2225
 - Allegheny County East
2040 Ardmore Boulevard
Pittsburgh, pA 15221
- ❖ PA CareerLink Allegheny West: 412-809-3500
 - Route 60 & Park Manor Drive
Robinson Plaza Two, Suit 410
Pittsburgh, PA 15205
- ❖ Jewish Family and Children's Services
Career Development Center: 412-422-5627

JOB RETRAINING

- ❖ Community College of Allegheny County: 412-788-7351
 - Career Transition Program for Dislocated Workers
 - Dislocated workers may take classes at CCAC toward the successful completion of one of the approved certificate programs for free tuition and fees only (no more than 36 credits within a 24-month period)
 - Call for details
 - www.ccac.edu/default.aspx?id=151465

TRANSPORTATION

- ❖ Community Auto: 724-*443-8400
 - Sells used cars at a low cost to individuals in need of affordable, safe, and reliable transportation in order to obtain and maintain employment.
 - Income guidelines apply.
 - www.nhco.org/auto.htm
- ❖ Travelers Aid: 412-281-0751
 - Helps employees needing assistance in getting to work and job seekers in need of transportation to training programs, interviews or employment services.
 - Call for information
 - www.travelersaidpgh.org
- ❖ Ways to Work Program of Family Services of Western PA: 1-866-965-5929
 - Car loans for working parents who cannot get a bank loan
 - Loans are paid back over two years.

UTILITY COMPANY CUSTOMER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Talk to your utility company about your situation. Ask about Universal Services.

- ❖ Columbia Gas: 1-800-537-7431
- ❖ Dominion Peoples: 1-800-400-9276
- ❖ Duquesne Light: 1-888-393-7600
- ❖ Equitable Gas: 1-877-577-8735
- ❖ Pennsylvania American Water: 1-888-282-6816

SAMPLE LETTER 1

Move In Inspection Letter

DATE

LANDLORD NAME

LANDLORD ADDRESS

Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms. LANDLORD NAME:

I am writing to inform you of the following visual inspection of my new apartment/house located at [**APARTMENT/HOUSE ADDRESS**]. Attached to this letter you will find a checklist of all problems and defects with the unit that I identified upon moving into the unit.

Please correct these problems as soon as possible.

I have also included a set of photographs of any defects in the unit that were present at the beginning of my lease term.

Additionally, I have identified these additional problems with the unit:

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

(signed)

Tenant Name
Tenant Address

SAMPLE LETTER 2

Notice Letter to Landlord

DATE

LANDLORD NAME

LANDLORD ADDRESS

Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms. LANDLORD NAME:

I am your tenant at (tenant's address), Pennsylvania. I am writing to notify you of repairs that are needed in my home, the specific problems which must be repaired include: [Fill in your own problems below. The following are only examples.]

1. No hot water
2. Leak in living room ceiling.
3. No heat.
4. Broken lock on front door.
5. (List others.)

These conditions are serious and make my home unfit.

I would appreciate it if you would make these repairs as soon as possible. If these conditions are not corrected within a reasonable time, I intend to exercise my legal rights, including (here tell the landlord which steps described in this booklet you'll take, such as moving out, reducing the rent you pay, or repairing yourself and deducting the cost of repairs from your rent.)

Sincerely,

(signed)

Tenant Name
Tenant Address

SAMPLE LETTER 3

Move Out Letter/Return of Security Deposit

DATE

LANDLORD NAME

LANDLORD ADDRESS

Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms. LANDLORD NAME:

I am writing to inform you that I have vacated the unit at [**APARTMENT/HOUSE ADDRESS**]. I have performed a visual inspection of the unit upon vacating. A copy of this inspection and any photographs are included with this letter.

I am requesting the return of my security deposit. You may forward the deposit to:

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

(signed)

Tenant Name
Tenant Address