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# LANDLORD TENANT HANDBOOK

## Introduction

This handbook was prepared to generally advise tenants of their rights and duties. However, simply knowing your rights may not be enough. You may need an attorney to help you enforce your rights. The materials presented here have been prepared from sources believed to be accurate and reliable. However, the possibility of human and/or mechanical error does exist. Also, the law does change from time to time so you should not rely on this handbook as the final word. Rather, you should contact the Legal Aid Society of Columbus, a private attorney, or one of the organizations listed herein if you have a legal problem.

Revised February 2004

## 1. Moving In

Many tenants sign a lease. If you don't, you still have most of the same rights as tenants who have leases.

If you do not have a lease, make sure the landlord gives you his name and address. Make sure you know when and where rent will be paid. Make sure you know which utilities you will pay and which the landlord will pay. If utilities are to be shared with other tenants, make sure of the portion you have to pay. Other things you should discuss with your landlord include garbage removal, snow removal and grass cutting.

If you see things in the apartment that need to be repaired right away, it is a good idea not to move in until the repairs are made. If you cannot wait, but the landlord promises to make the repairs, write your own list of all repairs that are needed and give it to the landlord. Always keep a copy of any papers you give the landlord!

Be careful if the landlord promises to pay you or to reduce your rent if you make repairs. Make sure that the amount he will pay or reduce your rent is in writing.

Ask to get all these things in writing. Anything that is written will protect you because the landlord will not be able to deny it.

Oral agreements are not recommended, but if oral agreements are made, try to have a witness who could testify later what was said. It is best if the witness is not a relative or close friend, but someone like a neighbor or a member of a tenant's union. However, if no one else is available, use the relative or friend.

If you have a lease, this is what you would like it to contain at a minimum:

- A property description or address
- Names of the tenant and the landlord and the landlord's address
- Duration of the lease
- Due date for rent and how and where rent should be paid
- Amount of rent and any "late charges" associated with late payments of rent
- Responsibilities for maintenance of the rental unit
- Notice requirements to terminate a lease
- Landlord's rules and regulations
- Tenant's rights and responsibilities

After you have read your lease, clause by clause, and you feel that you understand all the provisions, tell your landlord about any changes you think are needed. Things to look for:

- Sublease provisions
- Length of lease
- Maintenance responsibilities
- Rules and regulations
- Security deposit
- Whether utilities are included in rental payments
- Use of laundry and recreational facilities

While the majority of landlords are fair, there may be some who will take unfair advantage of a renter. Consequently, some leases may contain provisions that are generally forbidden by law. The following are some examples:

- A provision that forces you to agree to accept the blame in any future dispute with your landlord. Such a clause will usually provide that you will pay your landlords legal fees in any court action taken against you.

- A provision giving your landlord the right to retake possession of the premises without first going to court.
- A provision permitting the landlord to take unfair advantage of you, such as requesting and failing to return "security deposits" or "prepaid rent" under false pretenses or without the proper evidence.
- A provision permitting the landlord to take possession of your personal property for non payment of rent.
- A provision freeing the landlord from responsibility for negligence in causing you or your guests any injury.
- A provision permitting retaliation against you by eviction, shutting off the water, padlocking doors and turning off heat for such things as complaints to the proper authorities about housing code violations, trying to organize a tenant union, and making "Do It Yourself" repairs.
- A provision permitting the landlord to force you to continue to pay rent for a dwelling gutted by fire, tornado, or other disaster.

Note: Even though these unlawful clauses may not be binding, you may be forced to go to court to pursue your rights. It is much better to try to remove illegal clauses before signing the lease. A landlord who offers a lease containing illegal clauses and refuses to change them when asked may not be the type of landlord from whom you wish to rent.

In deciding whether to rent to you, a landlord may contact a credit reporting agency to see if other landlords have reported you as a good tenant or say whether you paid your rent and other debts. If you have trouble renting because of a credit report, contact The Legal Aid Society of Columbus at 241-2001 or 1-888-246-4420. You may have a right to challenge your credit report.

## **2. What the law says a landlord must do**

The landlord has a number of obligations the law says he must perform, even if the lease says he does not, or even if there is no written lease.

The Landlord must:

- Make the house or apartment comply with all building, housing and health codes that significantly affect health and safety.

- Make all repairs necessary to make the house or apartment livable.
- Keep in good working order all electrical, plumbing, heating and ventilation systems and all appliances supplied by the landlord.
- Supply adequate hot water and heat at all times, although the tenant may be required to pay for these services.
- Keep hallways and stairways safe and sanitary.
- Provide garbage cans (if he owns four units in the same building).
- Give the tenant at least 24 hours notice before he enters the apartment. A landlord cannot walk in whenever he wants for any reason, except for an emergency, and even if he gives notice, he must have a legitimate reason to enter.
- Begin an eviction against a tenant if he has good reason to believe the tenant is using or selling illegal drugs on the property.

### **3. What the law says a landlord cannot do.**

There are several things that landlords are prohibited by law from doing:

- A landlord cannot do anything to prevent his tenant from exercising certain rights. He cannot increase rent, decrease services, bring or even threaten to bring an eviction because a tenant has complained to him or to the city about a code violation or because a tenant participated in a tenant's union.
- A landlord also is not permitted to shut off utilities, change the locks, set out a tenant's possessions or threaten any of these acts to make a tenant move out of an apartment.
- A landlord cannot enter an apartment whenever he wants or repeatedly demand to enter.
- A landlord is not permitted to remove any property belonging to a tenant from a dwelling without proper court action or to keep the tenants property as collateral in order to force a tenant to pay rent.

Even if a tenant is behind in paying rent, a landlord has no right to do any of the things listed in this section. It is permissible and likely, however that a landlord will file an eviction action for the nonpayment of rent. If a landlord does any of the things listed in this section, the tenant should consult the Legal Aid Society of Columbus or a private attorney.

#### **4. What the law says the tenant must do.**

The most important thing that you, as a tenant, must do is pay rent every month. Even if you have a lease, your landlord usually can force you to move if you do not pay your rent on time.

If you do not have a written lease, your landlord normally can raise your rent by any amount he wants if he gives you proper notice. If you pay your rent on a monthly basis, your landlord must notify you at least 30 days in advance of the next time rent is due. For example, assume your rent is due on the first of each month. If on May 15<sup>th</sup> he tells you that your rent will be raised from \$120 to \$150, that is less than 30 days before June 1<sup>st</sup>, so the rent should not go up until July 1<sup>st</sup>. If you pay rent on a weekly basis, your landlord must give you seven days notice before raising the rent.

Make sure you get a receipt each time you

pay the rent. Do not agree to have a receipt sent to you by mail. If you pay by check or money order, keep your canceled check or your copy of the money order, which will help prove that you paid the rent. However, if you pay by money order, it is best to also try to get a receipt. If there is a dispute, and you only have your money order stub, you should begin tracing your money order as soon as possible. The stub alone may not be sufficient to show that you have paid.

Besides paying your rent on time, you have other legal obligations as a tenant. In general you must avoid damaging the apartment.

You must keep your apartment or house safe and sanitary.

You must dispose of trash and garbage in a sanitary manner.

You must keep all appliances that the landlord provides in good working order.

You must keep the electrical and plumbing fixtures clean and use them properly.

You must not damage the apartment or permit your guest or visitors to do so.

You must not disturb other tenants.

You must permit your landlord to enter your apartment if he makes a reasonable request and gives you a reasonable notice (which is presumed to be 24 hours) and enters in a reasonable manner. If you think your landlord is harassing you or making unreasonable demands for entry, contact our agency or another attorney.

You must not use or sell illegal drugs on the property or allow others to do so.

You are responsible to your landlord for any damage you cause. Your landlord can take the money out of your security deposit when you move out and he can sue for additional damages if the security deposit does not cover the damages. However, you are not responsible for normal wear and tear (for example, walls that routinely need to be repainted, or plumbing fixtures that break down because of long use.)

Your landlord can evict you if you do not perform your obligations. To evict you for some of these violations (that is, violations that materially affect health and safety), he must give you written notice of the violation. If you do not remedy the condition within 30 days, your landlord can begin an eviction action in court.

Note: A 30 day notice is not required if the

landlord is evicting you for nonpayment of rent and for some violations of a written rental agreement. He also is not required to give you a 30 day notice if you violate the requirement prohibiting the use or sale of illegal drugs.

#### **5. What a tenant can do about problems with a house or apartment.**

If a landlord does not comply with his obligations, a tenant has the right to give him notice of the problem and ask him to correct it.

Tenants have the right to form a tenant's union. This way they can all work together to help solve their problems. They can all give the landlord notice of repairs that are needed in their building, and if necessary, they can all escrow rent.

Also, a tenant has the right to notify the building, housing or health department of any violations of any city codes. A tenant has the right to request an inspection of his or her house or apartment and can make such a request by calling the Columbus City Code Enforcement at 645-8139.

Tenants should make sure they have proof of the damages so they will be able to convince a judge or jury. Pictures should be taken, and a witness should inspect the apartment. It is

better that witnesses not be related to or close friends of the tenant. However, if you have no other choice, use your friends and relatives. An inspection report can be used to prove violations of the landlord's obligations.

If you make repairs to the apartment, your landlord will not be required to pay you for the work you did unless he signed a written agreement or you can convince the Court that he made an oral promise to you. This practice is not recommended.

## **6. Depositing Rent (Escrow)**

As a tenant, the only time you do not have to pay rent to your landlord is when you pay it into escrow with the court. Before you escrow rent, make sure you do everything described in this section. Otherwise, your landlord will be able to get your money out of escrow and may be able to evict you.

If you believe your landlord has violated any of his obligations under the rental agreement or under state law, or if he has violated a building, housing, health or safety code that materially affects health and safety, for example if he has not made necessary repairs, you should give him a written notice of the violations. The notice should be specific and say exactly what the landlord has

done or has not done that violates his obligations. You should keep a copy of the notice and a copy of the envelope the notice was sent in.

If you are afraid your landlord will deny receiving notice, you should send it to him by certified mail, return receipt requested, or give it to him in person with a witness present.

If the problem has not been corrected in 30 days, you are permitted to pay your rent into Court. (For very urgent problems, such as no heat in the winter, you need wait only a reasonable time before you pay rent into Court.)

If your rent is due before the 30 days have expired, unless it is an emergency, pay your landlord. You must be current with your rent if you want to escrow rent.

On the next date the rent is due, after the 30 days have expired, you may pay your rent to the Clerk of the Municipal Court. In Franklin County, the Clerk is located on the third floor of the Municipal Court Building at 375 South High Street. Go to the escrow window. Pay the whole amount that is due on or before the day the rent is normally due to your landlord. You can continue to pay your rent to the court until the landlord's violation is corrected.

If you withhold your rent and do not deposit rent with the court you may still have defenses to an eviction action, although you are much more likely to be evicted. If you do decide to withhold rent, or if your landlord refuses your rent, you should not spend it; you should hold onto the rent and contact an attorney.

If the problem is not corrected after you pay your rent to court, you can ask the court to reduce your rent until repairs are made or to order the landlord to make the repairs. You should talk to an attorney before asking for these remedies.

You also have the right to cancel your lease if your landlord has not made repairs, but only if you have followed all of the required steps.

## **7. Moving Out: When the Tenant Wants to**

If you have a lease, you have an agreement to stay in your house or apartment until the lease expires. If you leave before the end of the lease, you may have to pay the landlord some or all of the rent due for the months you are not living there.

You should not be obligated to pay any rent for periods after you have moved out if you do one of the following:

The landlord agrees to let you sublet your apartment and the person who takes over the apartment pays the rent on time. (If he does not pay, your landlord can require you to pay for the months he misses.)

Your landlord has broken one of his obligations and you gave him 30 days notice to correct the problem and it was not corrected.

- You work out an agreement with the landlord. Make sure the agreement is in writing.
- The landlord rents your residence to someone else who pays the same or higher rent than you did or the landlord does not try to rent to someone else.

When your lease ends, you cannot always just walk out. Read your lease; it might require you to give 30 or more days notice to your landlord before you leave. If you want to stay, your landlord may want you to sign a new lease or may make you a month-to-month tenant. Then, in order to leave, you will have to give the same notice as a tenant who never had a lease.

If you do not have a written lease, all you have to do is give your landlord advance notice. If you pay your rent once a month, the

notice must be given 30 days before the next time your rent is due; if you pay once a week, the notice can be only 7 days. If you leave without giving the full notice, the landlord may be able to keep part of your security deposit as rent for the last month or part of the month.

Be sure to read the section on Security Deposits before you move.

### **8. Moving Out: When the Landlord Wants You To**

If there is no written lease involved, a landlord can end a rental agreement by simply giving a tenant notice to vacate 30 days before the date rent is due if the tenant pays rent monthly (or seven days notice if the tenant pays weekly).

If there is a written lease, the tenant can stay until the lease expires, unless the landlord claims there has been a violation of the lease or one of the tenant's obligations. At the end of the lease, providing there have been no violations, a tenant may be able to stay either by getting the landlord to agree to renew the lease or by entering into a month-to-month tenancy. Many leases provide that the tenancy is automatically renewed on a month-to-month basis unless one of the parties gives notice. If the landlord accepts your rent after the lease terminates, he will generally renew

on a month-to-month basis, but read your lease to be sure what it says.

A landlord can evict a tenant with or without a lease;

- If the tenant does not pay rent when it is due.
- If the tenant stays in the apartment after the lease has expired, without paying rent.
- If the landlord gave a 30-Day Notice to Move and the tenant stays in the apartment past the deadline. (There is an exception to this for public housing tenants.)
- If the landlord gave the tenant a notice to correct a condition in the apartment and the tenant does not correct the problem within 30 days. Note: a tenant will not get a 30 day notice or a chance to correct the problem if the problem is one involving the use or sale of illegal drugs.
- If the tenant violates a reasonable and fair term of the lease.
- If the tenant is engaged in illegal drug activity.

### **What a Landlord Must Do to Legally Evict a Tenant in Franklin County:**

First, a landlord must give the tenant a "Notice to Leave the Premises". This will tell the tenant to move out, usually in 3 days, or else an eviction action may be started. The tenant does not have to move until the court gives the landlord authority to evict the tenant.

If the tenant agrees with the reason the landlord states for wanting him to leave, he should begin looking for a new apartment. If the tenant disagrees with the landlord's reasons, he should consult an attorney.

Anytime later than 3 days (excluding weekends and holidays) after the tenant gets the notice, the landlord can go to the Municipal Court and begin an eviction lawsuit. A hearing will be scheduled two weeks after the filing of the lawsuit if the landlord requests that the tenant be served personally, three weeks if served by certified mail. In a case involving allegations of illegal use or sale of drugs the court hearing should be set 30 days after a tenant receives the court papers.

The tenant will receive from the Court a copy of a Summons in Action for Forcible Entry and

Detainer, and a Complaint, which will give the reasons for the eviction.

The court hearing must be scheduled at least seven days after the tenant receives the summons. In a case involving allegations of the use or sale of illegal drugs, the court hearing must be scheduled 30 days after the receipt of the summons. If it is scheduled sooner, the tenant should be able to get the hearing rescheduled but still should attempt to contact an attorney immediately. Continuances may be allowed, but not if the reason the eviction action was filed involves illegal drugs and the court properly scheduled the hearing on the 30<sup>th</sup> day. In Franklin County, almost all evictions are scheduled for 9:00 a.m. in Courtroom 11-A before a Magistrate.

At the hearing, the tenant and the landlord will both be able to present their case to a court magistrate. If the magistrate agrees with the landlord that there is a legal reason to evict, he will order that the tenant be evicted.

If the landlord wins the lawsuit, the tenant will have to move. In Franklin County the tenant should receive at least five days to move. The tenant's door will be red tagged by the bailiff's office. The tag will state when the tenant has to move.

If the tenant is not out within the allowed time, the landlord, accompanied by the bailiff, can legally move the tenants and their property into the street. The procedures explained here are based on the way cases are handled in Franklin County. Other counties may vary.

The tenant may be able to file objections to the magistrate's decision or appeal to a higher court, but you should contact an attorney to do that, if possible. If objections are filed, the set out may be delayed, but there is no guarantee that the set out will be delayed.

### **What You As A Tenant Should Do:**

If you agree with everything in the landlord's Complaint you should prepare to move within two, or at the most, three weeks, unless you can get the landlord to agree to let you stay or unless an attorney can help you present a defense. Try to get an agreement in writing, if possible. Otherwise, you may not be able to prove you are entitled to stay.

If you agree with the Complaint, but you think the landlord has violated some of his obligations, you might be able to prevent the eviction. You have the right to bring a counterclaim for damages the landlord has done to you. If you think you have a counterclaim, you should immediately consult

with an attorney.

If you disagree with the Complaint, you should immediately consult an attorney. There are many possible defenses to an eviction, but it is difficult for a tenant to represent himself in eviction court.

Not having the money to pay rent is not usually a legal defense.

Sometimes in his eviction lawsuit a landlord will also ask the court to order that you pay rent that the landlord says you owe. Read the Complaint and any attached papers carefully. Is the landlord asking the court to order you to pay him money in addition to making you move out? If he is, you must submit an answer to your landlord and to the court within 28 days after you receive the summons. This is in addition to going to court on the date listed in the summons. You should consult an attorney on this also.

You have the right to a jury trial in eviction cases, but you need to ask for a jury three days before your case is scheduled for a hearing. You should consult an attorney before asking for a jury to see if a jury is a good idea in your case.

**If You Are Evicted:**

If you do not go to Court, or if you go to Court and lose your case, you will have to move out of your apartment, usually within five days. A bailiff from the court will first put a red tag on your door. If you do not move, the landlord could have you and your property moved onto the street, as long as such move is supervised by a deputy sheriff or court bailiff.

## **9. Security Deposits**

A landlord is permitted to request a security deposit of any size he wants. If the tenant stays in the unit for at least six months, the landlord must pay interest on any part of the deposit that exceeds one month's rent. The landlord may keep the deposit when the tenant moves out for any unpaid rent or for damages beyond normal wear and tear done to the apartment.

Even before you move in, you can prepare to get your security deposit back. Inspect the apartment with someone who can be your witness and, if possible, with your landlord too. Make a written list of the defects, give a copy to your landlord and ask him for a written statement that he will correct them. Make sure you list all defects. Take pictures.

When a tenant moves out he should make sure the apartment is clean, remove all

property, clean the oven and refrigerator, and leave the apartment in the condition a new tenant could be expected to move in. Normal wear and tear (for example, peeling paint, or plumbing or appliances that break down from regular use) is not the tenant's responsibility. Anything damaged by the tenant or misused is the tenant's responsibility.

Upon moving out, the tenant should go through the apartment again with a witness (if possible, with the same one as before) and, if possible, with the landlord. Make another list of damages. Take pictures.

The tenant should return the keys to the landlord and give him an address in writing to which the landlord can send the security deposit.

Within 30 days, the landlord is required to return the deposit or send a written statement explaining in detail why the deposit (or any part of it) is not returned.

### **As a Tenant You have the Right to Sue Your Landlord for Return of the Security Deposit**

If you are not satisfied with the amount that the landlord returns, or if he does not send anything, you have the right to sue him. But remember, if any rent was due when you

moved, the landlord has the right to deduct that amount from the deposit.

You do not necessarily need an attorney to sue your landlord, especially if you sue in Small Claims Court. An attorney may be able to collect attorney fees from your landlord if you win the case.

The amount of money you sue for depends on how much you think was improperly kept by the landlord. You may be entitled to sue for double the amount wrongfully withheld from your security deposit if you left a written forwarding address when you moved.

To win the case, you will need evidence to convince the Small Claims Court magistrate.

You should be prepared with:

1. A receipt showing the deposit was paid.
2. Receipts for all your rent payments to show no rent was owed.
3. A copy of your notice to your landlord with your new address.
4. Witnesses to testify and pictures to show of the apartment at the time you moved in and at the time you moved out.

## **10. Who Can Help**

### **Lawyers**

You usually will not need a lawyer unless you go to Court. A lawyer can give you advice about your rights.

If you do not have a lawyer, you can call the Columbus Bar Association Referral Program at 221-0754. (They will refer you to an attorney.)

If you do not have a lot of money, you may qualify for free legal assistance from The Legal Aid Society of Columbus. Call us at 241-2001 or (888) 246-4420. You may also qualify for free legal assistance through the Columbus Bar Association Lawyers for Justice Program by calling their Lawyer Referral Service at 221-0754.

### **Social Service Agencies**

The Columbus Urban League at 257-6300 may be able to advise you about your rights and answer questions about your problems with your landlord or tenant. You should also contact the Urban League if you think you

have been discriminated against.

### Prevention, Retention & Contingency Program (PRC)

The Franklin County Jobs and Family Services Department may be able to help you stay in your apartment or help you move into a new apartment by providing money for rent and/or a security deposit. Talk to your caseworker to see if you are eligible to receive PRC money.

### Building Inspector or Health Department

As a tenant you can call the Columbus City Code Enforcement at 645-8139 if you live in the Columbus city limits to inspect your apartment whenever you think repairs should be made. An inspection report could be good evidence to present in court. You could have even better evidence if the inspector comes to court with you. If you live outside of Columbus there may be a local inspector or you might try the Franklin County Health Department at 462-3160.

### Tenant Unions

If your apartment building has a tenant's union, you might contact them. If your apartment does not have a tenant's union,

you might try to organize one. The Legal Aid Society of Columbus is often able to provide assistance to low income non-profit housing groups.

#### Housing Clinic

The Legal Aid Society of Columbus holds a clinic that gives free information to tenants. Unlike other services provided by us, there are no financial eligibility requirements to attend. The clinic is held on Monday at 11:00 a.m. at our offices.

#### Security Deposit Clinic

There is a clinic on how to sue for your security deposit on the 1st and 3rd Monday of every month at 3:00 p.m. at The Legal Aid Society of Columbus. No appointment is needed.

#### OSU Student Housing Legal Clinic

Ohio State University provides legal information, advice and representation in some cases for anyone enrolled as an OSU student that has a housing problem. They are located at 1739 North High Street, Ohio Union Room 345, and you may call at 247-5853, fax (614) 247-5851.

## **11. A Note on Public Housing Programs**

Tenants who live at any Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) project, who rent through the Section 8 program, or who live in other government subsidized housing have all the same rights as other tenants and additional rights, too.

If you rent from CMHA, they cannot evict a tenant unless they have good cause. That means CMHA may not simply give you 30 days to move. They must have a good reason. This is only true if you live in a CMHA project, not if you rent through the Section 8 program.

Tenants in public housing who rent directly from the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) also have a grievance procedure that permits them to challenge actions by the Housing Authority. Grievances can be filed regarding most problems: bad maintenance, improper charges for damages not your fault, even to challenge an attempt to evict you.

If you receive a notice to leave your residence from CMHA, you should request a grievance hearing. You should contact your management office or the central office. If possible, your request for a grievance should be in writing and you should keep a copy of

your request. You should also contact the Legal Aid Society of Columbus. You will not be given a grievance hearing if the reason for eviction is criminal or drug activity.

## **12. A Note on Fair Housing**

The law says you cannot be denied housing by a landlord on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, sex, national origin, handicap, or because children are members of your family. To help you recognize efforts to deny you housing opportunities, you should watch for the following:

- You are told the unit you wish to rent is not available when it really is.
- You are offered different rental terms or conditions than someone else.
- You are being directed to rent in a particular neighborhood in order to keep people of a particular race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or handicap from obtaining a unit in certain neighborhoods or facilities.

If you believe you have experienced discrimination you can call the Ohio Civil Rights Commission at 466-2785; or call the Columbus Urban League at 257-6300.

In Columbus, there is a city ordinance forbidding discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in housing. Probably only the city can enforce this ordinance, but you should contact the Columbus Urban League at 257-6300 if you think you have been discriminated against.

There are also provisions against age discrimination in public housing. If you live in CMHA housing and think you have been discriminated against because of your age, call the Legal Aid Society of Columbus at 241-2001 or 1-888-246-4420.

### **13. Mobile Home Residents**

If you rent space from a mobile home park operator for your mobile home, your rights are similar but not identical to the rights of tenants who rent apartments. You also have rights in addition to the rights other tenants have, especially if you own your own mobile home. You should contact the Legal Aid Society of Columbus or a private attorney if you have questions about your rights. The Ohio State Legal Services Association, phone number 221-7201 or (800) 589-5888, has produced a pamphlet on the rights of Mobile Home Park Residents. This pamphlet is also available from our agency.

#### **14. Numbers to Remember**

Columbus Bar Association Lawyer Referral  
Service (Lawyer for Justice Program)  
221-0754

Columbus City Code Enforcement  
645-8139

Columbus Urban League  
257-6300

Franklin County Health Department  
462-3160

The Legal Aid Society of Columbus  
241-2001 or (888) 246-4420

Ohio Civil Rights Commission  
466-2785

Ohio State Legal Services Association  
221-7201 or (800) 589-5888

Small Claims Court  
645-7381

OSU Student Housing Legal Clinic  
247-5853

The Legal Aid Society of Columbus is a private, non-profit corporation consisting of attorneys and support staff who provide free legal assistance in civil cases to eligible low-income individuals. Cases handled generally involve family law, landlord tenant, consumer debt, and public benefit problems. Our agency does not handle criminal cases.

**NOTES**

