

Where to get legal help

If you have low income and need legal assistance to deal with an eviction notice or other housing issue, call Legal Services Alabama in the following cities:

Anniston

(256) 237-3615

Toll-free (800) 884-0595

Birmingham

(205) 328-3540

Dothan

(334) 793-7932

Toll-free (800) 701-0926

Florence

(256) 767-2020

Toll-free (800) 467-3150

Huntsville

(256) 536-9645

Toll-free (888) 741-7129

Mobile

(251) 433-6560

Toll-free (800) 403-4872

Montgomery

(334) 832-4570

Toll-free (800) 844-5342

Opelika

(334) 826-6828

Toll-free (800) 331-5826

Legal Services *(continued)*

Selma

(334) 872-1355

Toll-free (800) 644-6028

Tuscaloosa

(205) 758-7503

Toll-free (888) 440-3256

If your landlord is discriminating against you because of your race, religion, disability or other factor, contact:

Central Ala. Fair Housing

(334) 263-HOME (4663)

Fair Housing Center of N. Ala.

(205) 324-0111

Mobile Fair Housing Center

(251) 479-1532

For names of lawyers in your area who are experienced in housing issues, contact:

Alabama Bar Association

Lawyer Referral Service

(334) 269-1515

This brochure is a shortened version of The Alabama Tenants' Handbook, produced by Alabama Appleseed, Arise Citizens' Policy Project, and Legal Services Alabama. Illustration by Leilab Rampa.

To get a free copy, contact: (800) 832-9060 or brenda@alarise.org. Visit www.arisecitizens.org to download a PDF version of the handbook.

A Decent Place to Live

Tenant Rights in Alabama



Alabama's Landlord-Tenant Law spells out what makes a rental dwelling livable and lists the basic rights and duties of both tenants and landlords. This pamphlet outlines the major points covered by the law.

www.arisecitizens.org/tenant.htm

What you have to do:

- Pay your rent on time.
- Take care of your place.
- Use all utilities & appliances the right way.
- Dispose of your garbage the right way.
- Do your part to keep common areas clean & safe.
- Let the landlord come into your place (usually with 2 days' written notice) to inspect it or make repairs.
- Follow the landlord's rules.
- Tell the landlord if you're going to be away for 2 weeks or longer.
- It's a good idea to keep cancelled rent checks & copies of any letters you send to the landlord.
- If you get an eviction notice for unpaid rent, you have 7 days to pay (14 days to fix most other problems).
- If you get eviction papers from the sheriff, contact a lawyer (see *other side*).

What the *landlord* has to do:

- Make sure the rental unit meets health & safety codes.
- Limit security deposit to no more than 1 month's rent & return it or give an accounting within 35 days after lease ends.
- Inform you of tenant rules before you sign the lease.
- Supply hot & cold running water.
- Provide source of heat in winter.
- Maintain electrical, plumbing, sanitary, heating, ventilating & air conditioning systems in good working order.
- Keep common areas clean & safe.
- Provide at least 2 days' written notice of intent to enter your place, except in an emergency.
- Make repairs to keep the place safe & livable. (*For problems affecting health and safety, make your request for repairs in writing. See The Alabama Tenants' Handbook for details.*)
- Let you have peaceful enjoyment of your place.

What the *landlord* can't do:

- Raise the rent during the term of your lease.
- Threaten to cut services, raise the rent, or evict you because you complain to him or to the government about a problem affecting health or safety.
- Change the locks, shut off utilities, or put your things out to make you leave. She can send you an eviction notice if you break the lease, and the court can make you leave.

What the *lease* can't do:

- Ask you to relieve the landlord of his duty to provide a livable dwelling.
- Ask you to give up your rights regarding the security deposit (*see column 2, second bullet*).
- Ask you to limit the amount the landlord has to pay in case she violates the lease.
- Ask you to pay the landlord's attorney fees or the cost of collecting rent.