

Landlord / Tenant

Landlord/Tenant law in the District of Columbia is extremely reliant upon procedural rules and substantive regulations. The regulations and reputation of DC landlord/tenant practice is that it is “very tenant friendly.” Therefore, it’s important to know the process so that if you are subleasing your home, you can protect your assets and have a hassle-free experience.

Homeowners with a Separate Unit

DC regulations require a homeowner who is renting a separate unit to obtain a business license and a separate certificate of occupancy for the unit. Failure to follow these regulations could make seeking judicial relief more complicated. If you are subleasing your property, it is wise to have a personalized lease agreement, and an understanding of regulations relating to rent increases, modifications and termination.

Renting a Room in Your Home

You do not need a business license if you are renting a room in your home, but you should take precautions as if you were leasing your property. A renter should always conduct a credit check on potential tenants. Even if you are renting a spare bedroom, you should have a lease crafted that specifies the agreements regarding the entire property. While verbal agreements are enforceable, written agreements are precautionary and more easily prove the prior arrangement. In addition, knowing your rights and responsibilities is vital to making sure that your living situation is secure during the lease and once it concludes.

Subleasing

Subleasing can be complicated. The sublettor must determine if their lease permits this arrangement; likewise, the person subleasing should ascertain if the sublettor is violating their lease. Obtaining a written sublease agreement will help to alleviate possible future disputes.

Evictions

Once a person inhabits your home, DC law DOES NOT allow you to evict that person without following a judicial process. You cannot throw a person’s belongings into the street. You cannot change the locks. You must evict the person within the parameters of DC law.

Understanding your rights and responsibilities as a landlord or tenant is important.
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