



## COVID-19: What Does It Mean for Tenants?

Info on COVID-19 and housing changes daily. Please come back to keep checking for updates. This info was last updated on April 15th. For more information, please call 1-800-238-1443 or visit [las.org](http://las.org).

### What do I need to know as a tenant?

- You must still pay rent
- Tenants' rights have not changed because of COVID-19
- Tenants' duties have not changed because of COVID-19
- Your landlord cannot lock you out of your place
- Your landlord cannot turn off your electricity or water
- If your landlord wants to evict you, they still must take you to court

### What if I can't pay rent?

You should try to pay your rent. Even though some landlords can't evict people right now, you still owe them rent money. If you don't pay your rent, these things could happen:

- You will eventually be evicted
- Your landlord can report that you aren't paying
- This could hurt your credit score
- Your landlord could sue you for any rent money you didn't pay
- If your landlord wins in court, they could take money out of your paychecks

### Should I agree to pay my landlord back later?

Maybe. Right now, there are no laws that say rent will be canceled or forgiven. That means you owe rent even if your landlord can't evict you right away. If your landlord is willing to give you time to pay any rent you can't afford right now, that might be a good thing.

### What if I make an agreement with my landlord now?

Make sure your landlord agrees to follow new rules as they come out. For example, if the law says you don't have to pay back rent in the future, your landlord should go by the new law.

### What if my landlord locks me out or shuts off my utilities?

**This is illegal.** A landlord cannot force a tenant to move out without using the courts. If your landlord has locked you out of your place or turned off your utilities, call Legal Aid for help.



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### Can my landlord refuse to re-sign my lease for another year?

It depends. Most landlords do not have to re-sign your lease for another year. That is still true with COVID-19.

If you live in one of these places, your landlord DOES have to re-sign your lease unless they have a good reason why they don't want you living there. Here are the places that must re-sign your lease unless they have a good reason to kick you out:

- Public housing
- Project-based Section 8 housing
- Low Income Housing Tax Credit housing
- Rural Development housing

### What if my rent price is based on my income?

If you live in public or income-based housing, you should tell your landlord immediately if you lose your job or work fewer hours. You should immediately report any loss of income to your landlord. Tell your landlord about the income drop in writing. Keep a copy of whatever you give your landlord so you can prove you gave it to them. If you live in a tax credit property, your rent may not change.

### I can't afford my rent. Is there a place I can look for more affordable housing?

These are some websites where you can look for affordable housing. These places charge you rent based on your income.

1. [The Department of Housing and Urban Development's website](#)

2. [TNHousingSearch.org](#) – Website by the TN Housing Development Agency

### What are my rights and duties as a renter?

These booklets say what rights and duties you have as a renter in Tennessee. If you live in Anderson, Blount, Bradley, Davidson, Hamilton, Knox, Madison, Maury, Montgomery, Rutherford, Sevier, Shelby, Sullivan, Sumner, Washington, Williamson or Wilson counties, read this booklet:

- [Renter's Rights \(URLTA\)](#)
- [Renter's Rights \(URLTA\) Spanish](#)
- If you live in any other Tennessee county, read this one: [Rural Renter's Rights](#)



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This booklet cannot take the place of legal advice.  
All cases are different and need individual attention.