

# Housing Rights for Victims of Domestic and Sexual Violence

## Can I be evicted for domestic or sexual violence?

No. The Philadelphia Unfair Rental Practices Ordinance makes it illegal for your landlord to evict you, raise your rent or refuse to make repairs because you are a victim of domestic violence or sexual assault. However, you can still be evicted for not paying rent.

## What should I do if I am being evicted?

Send your landlord a letter explaining that you are a victim of domestic or sexual violence and that Philadelphia law makes it illegal for him to evict you because of domestic or sexual violence. If your landlord will not listen, you can file a complaint with the Philadelphia Fair Housing Commission by calling 215.686.4670.

## Can I break my lease to escape violence?

Yes, within 90 days of a reported incident (hospital visit, call to 911, filing for a protection order, etc.), send your landlord:

- **A letter** stating that you will be moving in 30 days. See reverse side.
- **Attach at least one form of proof** such as a police report, protection from abuse order or letter from a health care professional, guidance counselor, or victims' services organization.

## Can just the abuser be evicted?

Yes, under Philadelphia law, you can ask your landlord to split the lease and evict your abuser, letting you stay. You would become responsible for paying the full rent. Your landlord does not have to agree.

## Can I be evicted for calling the police?

No, your landlord cannot evict or punish you for calling the police to protect yourself or a family member.

## What if I live in subsidized housing?

If you live in Section 8 Voucher, HUD or public housing, you are protected by the Philadelphia Unfair Rental Practices Ordinance and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). You cannot be denied admission or evicted because of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence or stalking. You also can't lose your voucher if you break your lease to escape violence.



## Early Lease Termination due to Domestic or Sexual Violence

\_\_\_\_\_ (Landlord's Name)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Landlord's Address)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Landlord's City, State and Zip Code)

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am giving you 30-day notice that I am terminating my lease early due to domestic or sexual violence, pursuant to Philadelphia Ordinance § 9-804. I will move out, remove all my belongings and return my keys by

\_\_\_\_\_ (30 days from date of letter).

Attached please find one of the following forms of documentation:

- Police report
- Protection from Abuse Order
- Letter from a healthcare professional
- Letter from guidance counselor or victims' services organization

Once I have moved out I will send you a letter requesting the return of my security deposit. Please call me at \_\_\_\_\_ (phone number) with any questions.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Your Signature)

*Send certified mail, return receipt requested.*