

FAQs for Tenants and Landlords

Answers For Tenants

Q: Can I be evicted right now?

A: No. A landlord needs a valid court order to authorize an eviction, residential or commercial. Right now, state courts are only handling emergency matters until at least April 17th, which means that any new or existing eviction proceedings are on hold.

Q: Am I still obligated to pay rent?

A: Generally, yes. You still have to comply with your lease agreement. Check the language of your lease to see if it speaks to payment obligations under these types of unforeseen situations. We will also publicize new resources as they become available.

Q: My landlord is trying to kick me out, what do I do?

A: Landlords may try to perform “self-help evictions” without court approval by taking actions such as changing locks or throwing out tenant possessions. In most cases, these evictions are illegal.

If you are a residential tenant in private housing (that is, not Section 8 or public housing), you can call the Center for Justice at 401-491-1101 or local law enforcement.

If you are a residential tenant in Section 8 or public housing, you can call Rhode Island Legal Services at 401-274-2652 (Providence office) or 401-846-2264 (Newport office) or local law enforcement.

Answers For Landlords

Q: My tenant tells me they don't have to pay rent right now. Is that true?

A: Tenants still have to comply with their lease agreement. Check the specific language of the lease to see if there are any provisions about payment obligations under these types of unforeseen situations.

Realistically, we know many tenants are in a tight spot and may have to delay payments. However, that does not necessarily mean that they are excused from payments altogether.

Q: Can I kick out a tenant who doesn't pay their April rent?

A: No. You need a valid court order to evict someone. While you will have legal options once state courts re-open, in the meantime it's illegal to take actions such as changing locks, throwing out possessions, or turning off utilities.

Q: I'm worried that I won't make my mortgage payment. What do I do?

A: If you're worried how you're going to make your mortgage payment, reach out to your lender directly as soon as possible.

Most already have payment accommodation tools, and the Department of Business Regulation has also asked banks to offer as much flexibility as possible to affected customers. For example, your bank may allow you to defer or re-schedule your next mortgage payment.