

For More Information

Volunteer Lawyers Project
www.onvlp.org
471-3409

Frank H. Hiscock Legal Aid Society
351 South Warren Street, Syracuse, NY 13202
422-8191

Drop in Hours: Monday: 9:30am-11am T-TH: 1:30pm-3:30pm

Legal Service of Central NY
221 South Warren Street, Syracuse, New York
703-6500

Legal Helpline: 877-777-6152

Fair Housing Council of Central New York
327 West Fayette Street, Syracuse, NY 13202
471-0420

City of Syracuse Code Enforcement
448-8695

**Catholic Charities—Relocation Assistance for Homeless
Or Housing Vulnerable**
378-4054

**Department of Social Services
Emergency Temporary Assistance**
435-2526

Emergency Rental Assistance
Salvation Army – 479-1307
Catholic Charities – 424-1800
Onondaga County DSS – 435-2526

Catholic Charities – moving help
475-3807

Civil Court, Small Claims
Rm130, City Court, 671-2782

Tenant's Guide

Preparing For Your Landlord/Tenant Court Hearing



A Service Provided By:

Volunteer Lawyers Project

221 South Warren Street, Suite 320
Syracuse, NY 13202
315.471.3409

www.onvlp.org

I'VE BEEN SERVED EVICTION PAPERS, HOW DO I PREPARE FOR COURT?

- ❑ **Petition:** Bring the papers you were served with by your landlord: The Petition to come to court and any attachments, and any written Demand for Rent or Notice to Terminate Tenancy.
- ❑ **Lease:** Bring a copy of your lease, if you have one.
- ❑ **Proof of Payment:** Bring rent receipts, cancelled checks or copies of money orders.
- ❑ **Problems with your apartment or building:** Make a list of all your apartment/building problems—Examples: problems with heat, hot water, mold. **The more specific the better!** Bring any proof from Syracuse City Codes describing these problems.
- ❑ **Pictures:** Take pictures of problems in your apartment or building. Put the **date** the picture was taken. Even pictures on your phone are better than nothing.
- ❑ **Payments for Repairs:** Bring receipts for labor and materials for any repairs that you made.
- ❑ **Communications with your Landlord:** Bring any letters, text messages, or other documents you sent to your Landlord.
 - Make a list of the dates on which you talked with the landlord (or other building staff) about problems in your apartment/building & what you said.
HELPFUL TIP: send a follow-up letter by certified mail, return receipt requested, to your landlord about these conversations so you have proof.

HOW CAN I PROTECT MY RIGHTS AS A TENANT?

- ❑ **NEVER IGNORE LEGAL PAPERS!**
- ❑ **Read your lease!** Know what you are signing and question what you do not understand.
- ❑ Double-check the date, time, and location of your court appearance.
- ❑ In most cases you can't live rent free, even if there are Code problems. The Judge will probably say some amount of rent must be paid each month.
- ❑ **Repairs:** You must personally let your Landlord know of any safety or repair problems. In **writing** is the best.
- ❑ If you are withholding rent because the Landlord won't make necessary repairs, be sure to call Syracuse City Code Enforcement for an inspection.
- ❑ The Landlord is not required to take your security deposit as rent. Security Deposit is just for security against damage to the living area and has nothing to do with rent payments.
- ❑ Landlords are required to give each tenant a **receipt** upon payment of either cash or money order rent payments. If you are not given one, **ASK FOR IT!**
 - **Receipts:** must include (1) *date* of payment, the (2) *amount* paid, the (3) *identity* of premises (address), (4) *period of the time* for which it is being paid, & the (5) *signature and title* of the person receiving rent.