

Dear Lawrence Resident:

Are you worried about eviction or paying rent? HOLD ON TO THIS LETTER - it contains important information about your rights! Help is available no matter your background or immigration status.

- *The We Are Lawrence Financial and Housing Stability Team*

## ARE YOU BEHIND ON RENT? HAVE YOU BEEN THREATENED WITH EVICTION?

 **DON'T MOVE! YOU HAVE RIGHTS, AND HELP IS AVAILABLE.**

- The RAFT program can probably help you by paying back much or all of what you owe. **Apply for RAFT** now [here](https://bit.ly/37wHwle) (<https://bit.ly/37wHwle>).
- Most people who are behind on rent should also **fill out this form** (<https://bit.ly/2FRjrdt>) for additional legal protection under the nationwide eviction moratorium.

## WHAT IF I GET AN EVICTION NOTICE?

**If you get a “notice to quit”/ “notice to vacate”/ 14 or 30 day notice from your landlord:**

- ✓ You do NOT have to move out. Call one of the groups listed below if you get a notice that says you have to leave.
- ✓ Also fill out **this form for additional legal protection** (<https://bit.ly/2FRjrdt>) under the nationwide eviction moratorium.

**If you get a summons to go to court:**


- ✓ You do NOT have to move out. You have legal rights. Call for help right away.

## FILE YOUR ANSWER, DISCOVERY AND JURY REQUEST ON TIME!

- ✓ THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU CAN DO is to fill out the “Answer” and “Discovery” forms and file them with the court before the deadline. The *Answer* is where you can tell your side of the story and explain why it would be unfair to evict you. The *Discovery* allows you to get information that might help you prove your defenses to eviction.
- ✓ Note: the deadline for these forms is usually several days or sometimes over a week before your court date. Try to get help filling out these forms from legal aid or a community group (contact info below).
- ✓ If you need to file the forms on your own or with help of a community group, social worker, etc. use this easy online tool called “**MADE**” (<https://www.gbls.org/MADE>). In most cases, you should request a jury trial on that form or you will lose that right.
- ✓ If your case is in District Court, it is important to **transfer** the case to Housing Court where more help is available. A simple form to just transfer the case out from District Court to Housing Court is [here](https://bit.ly/3jlXgK3) (<https://bit.ly/3jlXgK3>). But if possible, you should use the MADE tool to do that transfer together with your Answer and Discovery.
- ✓ If you already signed an agreement but your landlord is taking you back to court, get legal help.

For more information, go to <https://www.mass.gov/guides/court-system-response-to-covid-19>

## WHERE CAN I GET HELP WITH MY COURT CASE?

 **Northeast Legal Aid** offers free assistance for those who qualify. You can call the intake line at 1-800-336-2262 or the Lawrence housing paralegal directly at (781) 254-2831. Be sure to leave your name, address and a way to reach you. To apply for help online, click [here](https://www.northeastlegalaid.org/) or email [LawyerForDay@nla-ma.org](mailto:LawyerForDay@nla-ma.org). NLA staffs the free Lawyer for a Day Program in the Lawrence session.

**Lawrence Community Works** offers community assistance for those fighting eviction through its Housing Stabilization Center. You can call (978) 685-3115, email [info@lawrencecommunityworks.org](mailto:info@lawrencecommunityworks.org), or visit their [website](https://www.lawrencecommunityworks.org/site/).

### *What if my landlord offers me an agreement outside of court or in court mediation?*

It is important to get legal advice **before** signing an agreement with your landlord or their attorney. If you are in Housing Court, ask the court to connect you with the **Lawyer for a Day Program** to represent you in mediation.

- Instead of a final agreement, it is best to continue your case with each side agreeing to do things to try to resolve the issues so that both sides can still present their case if they end up unable to stick to the agreement.
  - ▼ Signing an *Agreement for Judgment* or any *Move-Out Agreement* is risky for tenants – insist on getting legal advice before you sign anything! If you sign an agreement that says you agree to move out by a certain date, **you may not be able to ask the court for more time if you can't find a new place in time.**
- Don't feel pressured to sign anything - you have the right to see a judge. Only a judge can evict you.

### *What if my landlord is trying to force me to leave outside of the court process?*

- This is illegal. Click [here](https://bit.ly/31yVjUy) to ask the court for a restraining order to stop your landlord. You can also report your landlord to the Attorney General's Office at (617) 727-8400 or call Legal Aid.

### *Do I qualify for additional protection under the federal Centers for Disease Control Moratorium?*

- Go to <https://suffolklitlab.org/> to see if you qualify for the federal CDC Moratorium. If you do qualify, have all household members fill out a **declaration** (<https://bit.ly/2FRjrdt>) if they have had a reduction in income and can meet the other qualifications on the form. The federal moratorium protects against eviction in certain cases through December 31, 2020.

## \$\$\$ WHERE CAN I GET FINANCIAL HELP? \$\$\$

Try to avoid having a court case filed against you by getting financial help now.

- ❖ Undocumented? Help is available, no matter your immigration status.
- ❖ **Small landlords/homeowners** are also eligible for RAFT assistance.
- ❖ **Community Teamwork, Inc. (RAFT)** (<https://www.commteam.org/>): The \$4,000 per family to help with unpaid rent has now been increased to \$10,000.
  - To qualify, you do NOT need to wait until you have a court case; just show that you are behind on rent.
  - To apply, contact CTI (978) 459-0551, (800) 698-0551, [CovidResponseCTI@commteam.org](mailto:CovidResponseCTI@commteam.org), or visit their website at [www.commteam.org](http://www.commteam.org).
  - You can also start the RAFT application online [here](https://bit.ly/37wHwle).
- ❖ **Greater Lawrence Community Action Council (GLCAC)** (<https://www.glcac.org/>): To apply for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program contact GLCAC at 978-620-4993 or [esgcovid@glcac.org](mailto:esgcovid@glcac.org)
- ❖ Other rental, utility, or financial assistance may be available from:
  - **Catholic Charities** (<https://www.ccab.org/>): (781) 593-2312
  - **We Are Lawrence** (<https://www.wearelawrence.org/>): (978) 974-7001