

AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE
TO VERMONT
RENTER'S
RIGHTS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SOPHIE YANOW
WWW.SOPHIEYANOW.COM

TEXT BY VERMONT TENANTS, CVOEO

THIS GUIDE WAS MADE POSSIBLE WITH THE SUPPORT OF:

THE VERMONT ARTS COUNCIL
PAW PRINT & MAIL
THE FAIR HOUSING PROJECT OF CVOEO
JEAN MURRAY & VT LEGAL AID

HOUSING IS A BASIC NEED, BUT IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY TO FIND GOOD QUALITY, STABLE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING.



APARTMENTS
NO VACANCY



FOR RENT

ONLY 3/4 YOUR
MONTHLY INCOME!
\$\$\$ \$ \$ \$ \$!

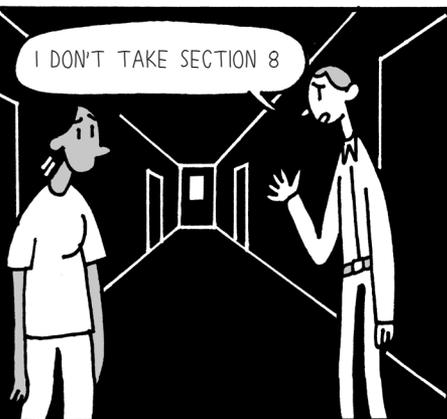
DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RACE, GENDER, RELIGION, ETC IS ILLEGAL, BUT IT MAY OCCUR IN SUBTLE WAYS DURING YOUR HOUSING SEARCH.



APARTMENT
IDEAL FOR
PROFESSIONALS

CONDO
CHRISTIAN
HOUSEHOLD

I DON'T TAKE SECTION 8





FAIR HOUSING

IT IS ILLEGAL TO DISCRIMINATE IN THE RENTAL, SALE OR FINANCING OF HOUSING FOR OF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

RACE
COLOR
NATIONAL ORIGIN
RELIGION
SEX
HAVING KIDS
DISABILITY

(THESE ARE PROTECTED
NATIONWIDE)

AGE
MARITAL STATUS
SEXUAL ORIENTATION
GENDER IDENTITY
RECEIPT OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

(THESE ARE PROTECTED IN
VERMONT)

IF YOU FEEL YOU HAVE BEEN DISCRIMINATED
AGAINST, CALL:

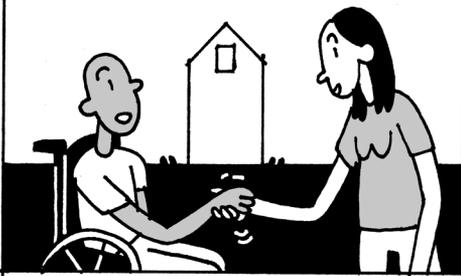
VERMONT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
1 (800) 416-2010 OR (802) 828-2480 (VOICE/TTY)

VERMONT LAW HELP
1 (800) 839-2047

VERMONT CENTER FOR
INDEPENDENT LIVING
(INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY
FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH
DISABILITIES)
1 (800) 639-1522 OR (802)
229-0501 (VOICE/TTY)

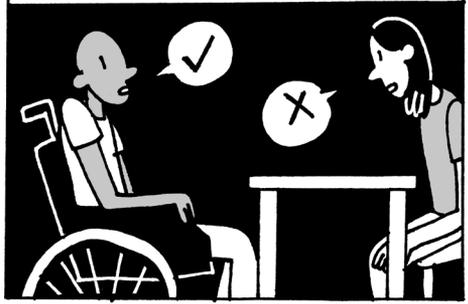


RENTAL AGREEMENTS

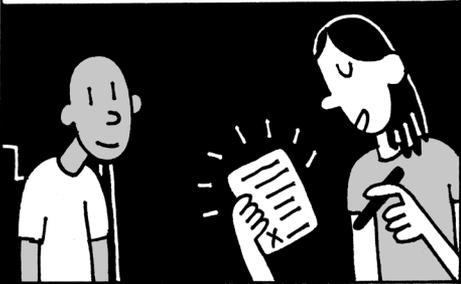


WHEN A RENTAL IS OFFERED, YOU MAY WANT A WRITTEN LEASE.

IN VERMONT, A VERBAL AGREEMENT IS LEGALLY BINDING, BUT A WRITTEN LEASE CAN BE A HELPFUL RECORD OF ALL THE AGREEMENTS.



A LEASE WILL CLARIFY THINGS LIKE HOW LONG A RENTAL LASTS, WHEN RENT IS DUE, WHO CAN LIVE IN THE UNIT, HOW MUCH IT COSTS, ETC.



IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU READ AND UNDERSTAND YOUR LEASE BEFORE YOU SIGN IT.



(CALL VT TENANTS IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT SPECIFIC PARTS OF THE LEASE: (802) 864-0099)

SOME RIGHTS ARE PROTECTED BY VERMONT LAW AND CAN'T BE GIVEN AWAY IN A LEASE:

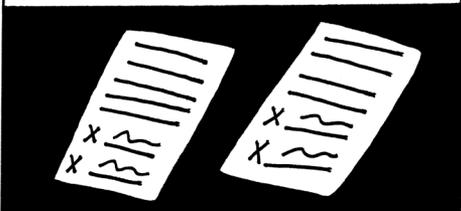
- THE RIGHT TO SAFE AND DECENT HOUSING
- PROPER NOTICE BEFORE YOUR LANDLORD ENTERS YOUR UNIT, RAISES RENT, OR ASKS YOU TO MOVE OUT
- THE RIGHT TO CONTEST EVICTIONS IN COURT
- REFUNDABLE SECURITY DEPOSITS

BUT MANY OTHER THINGS, EVEN IF NOT FAIR TO YOU, CAN BE LEGALLY ENFORCEABLE ONCE YOU SIGN, INCLUDING:

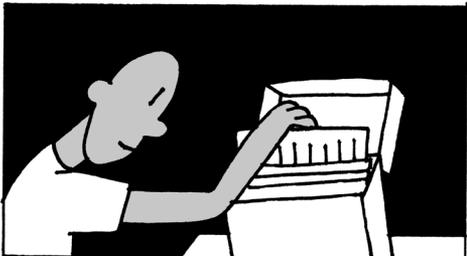
- THE DAY OF THE MONTH THAT RENT IS DUE
- WHETHER OR NOT OTHER PEOPLE CAN COME LIVE WITH YOU
- HOW MUCH NOTICE YOU HAVE TO GIVE BEFORE MOVING OUT



AFTER YOU HAVE ADDED ANY AGREED UPON CHANGES TO THE LEASE, SIGN IT, AND...



GET A COPY AND KEEP IT IN A SAFE PLACE!



THIS WILL HELP YOU BEGIN YOUR "PAPER TRAIL" -- DOCUMENTATION THAT CAN BE USED TO HELP YOU IN COURT SHOULD ANY PROBLEMS ARISE IN YOUR RENTAL.

KEEPING A GOOD WRITTEN RECORD IS A VERY IMPORTANT WAY TO PROTECT YOURSELF AS A RENTER.



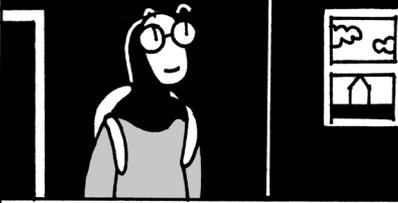
YOUR LEASE MIGHT NOT MENTION LOCAL ORDINANCES, BUT IT IS UP TO YOU TO KNOW WHAT THEY ARE.



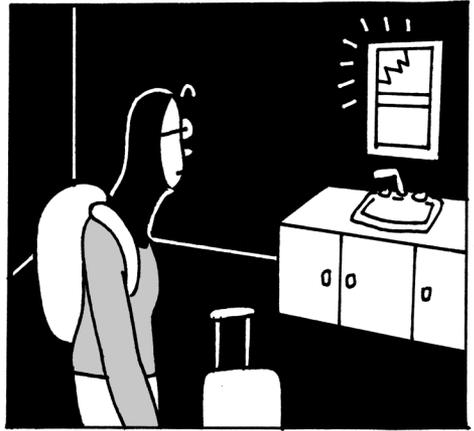
FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOUR TOWN HAS "QUIET HOURS," FIND OUT WHEN THEY BEGIN.



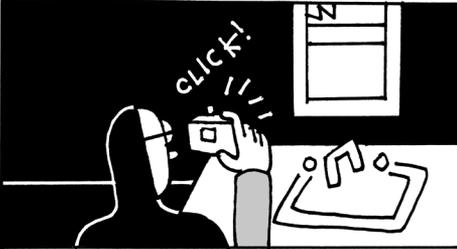
DEPOSITS



A SECURITY DEPOSIT IS MONEY YOU PAY TO YOUR LANDLORD UPON MOVE IN. THAT IS REFUNDABLE WHEN YOU MOVE OUT. (GET A RECEIPT!)



TO ENSURE YOU GET YOUR DEPOSIT BACK:



TAKE PICTURES OF THE UNIT BEFORE YOU MOVE YOUR THINGS IN.
SAVE THE PICTURES!

IN BURLINGTON AND BARRE, YOUR LANDLORD CANNOT CHARGE MORE THAN ONE MONTH'S RENT FOR A DEPOSIT (INCLUDING ANYTHING CALLED "LAST MONTH'S RENT") AND MUST RETURN YOUR DEPOSIT WITH INTEREST WHEN YOU MOVE OUT.

1 x



THE DEPOSIT IS INTENDED TO PROTECT A LANDLORD AGAINST BEING STUCK WITH EXPENSES THE TENANT WAS SUPPOSED TO PAY. THEREFORE, A LANDLORD CAN ONLY KEEP YOUR DEPOSIT (OR A PORTION OF IT) IF:

- YOU HAVE CAUSED DAMAGE BEYOND NORMAL WEAR AND TEAR
- YOU OWE RENT OR HAVE UNPAID UTILITIES
- THE LANDLORD HAS EXPENSES FOR REMOVING PROPERTY YOU LEFT IN THE APARTMENT
- YOU MOVED OUT WITHOUT PROPER NOTICE.

CLEAN YOUR APARTMENT BEFORE YOU MOVE OUT, AND REMOVE ALL OF YOUR BELONGINGS & TRASH. THEN, TAKE PICTURES!



AFTER GIVING NOTICE, BE SURE TO PROVIDE YOUR LANDLORD WITH A FORWARDING ADDRESS SO THEY CAN SEND YOUR DEPOSIT.



THEY HAVE 14 DAYS TO EITHER RETURN YOUR FULL DEPOSIT OR RETURN A LIST OF THINGS THEY ARE DEDUCTING FROM THE DEPOSIT, ALONG WITH THE REMAINING AMOUNT OWED.

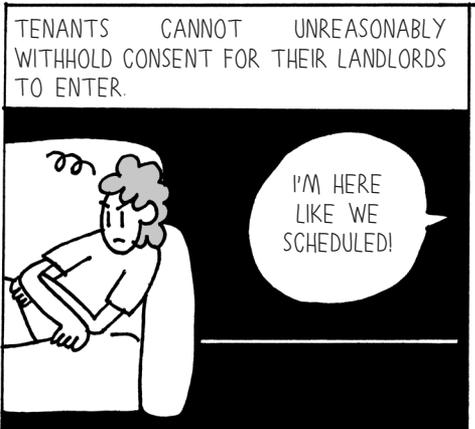
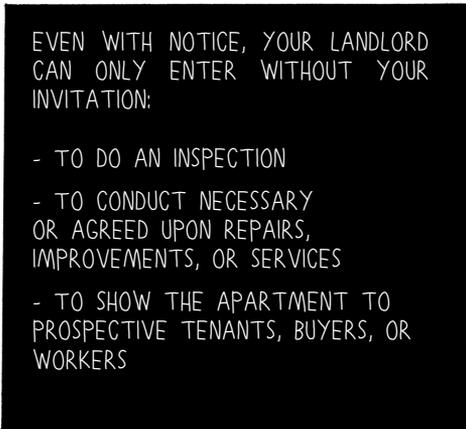
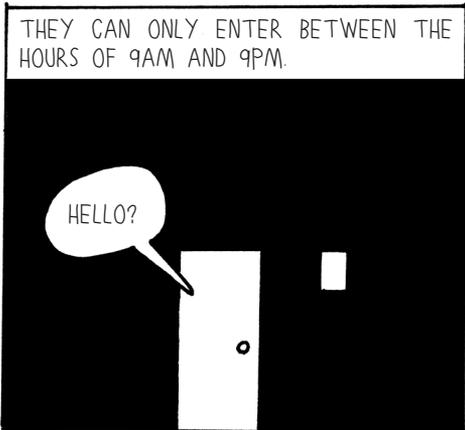
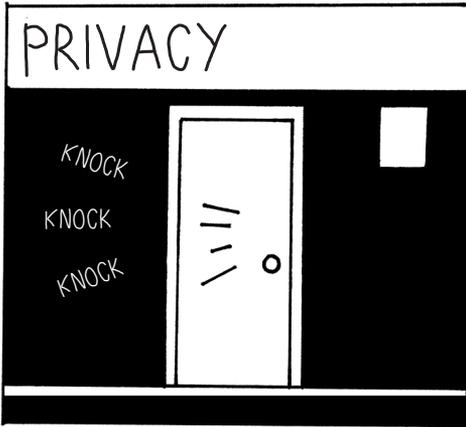


AFTER THE 14 DAY PERIOD, YOUR LANDLORD MUST RETURN THE ENTIRE DEPOSIT TO YOU.



IF A COURT FINDS YOUR LANDLORD INTENTIONALLY FAILED TO RETURN THE DEPOSIT, YOUR LANDLORD MAY OWE YOU DOUBLE THE AMOUNT OF THE ORIGINAL DEPOSIT.





RENT



ALWAYS PAY YOUR RENT IN CHECKS, OR GET A WRITTEN RECEIPT EVERY TIME YOU PAY IN CASH.

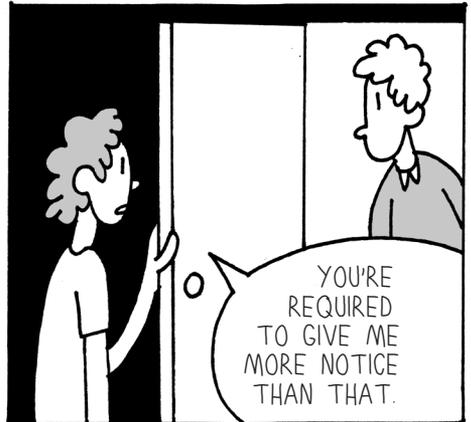
THIS HELPS CREATE A RECORD OF YOUR TIMELY RENT PAYMENTS.



RENT INCREASES



YOU ARE ENTITLED TO 60 DAYS' NOTICE BEFORE GETTING A RENT INCREASE (90 IN BURLINGTON)



YOUR LANDLORD CANNOT RAISE YOUR RENT DURING THE TERM OF THE LEASE, UNLESS THE LEASE ALLOWS FOR THAT.

REDUCING SERVICES (LIKE NO LONGER INCLUDING HEAT, GARBAGE, PLOWING, ETC.) COUNTS AS A RENT INCREASE.

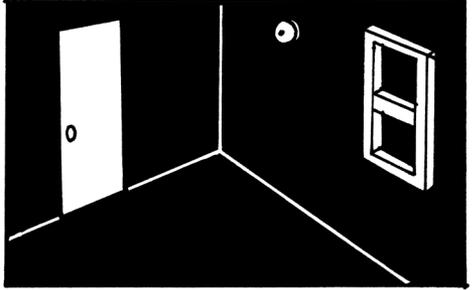


HABITABILITY

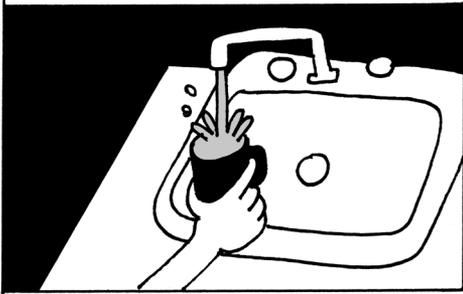
ALL RENTERS HAVE THE RIGHT TO SAFE & DECENT HOUSING. THAT RIGHT IS SOMETHING YOU CANNOT SIGN AWAY IN A LEASE.

SOME EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

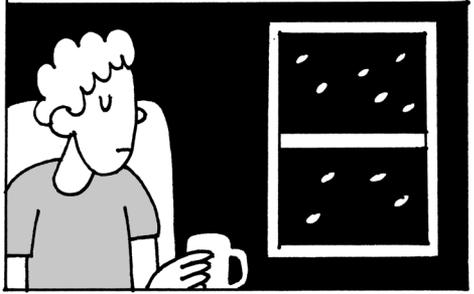
FIRE SAFETY: BEDROOM WINDOWS THAT YOU CAN ESCAPE FROM, SMOKE AND CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS



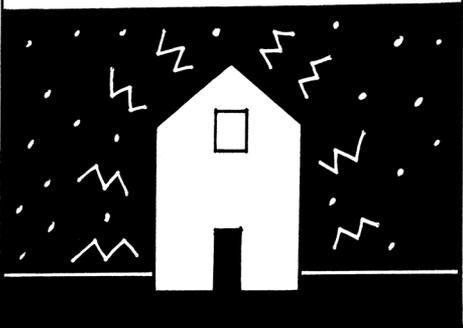
RUNNING, DRINKABLE WATER, HOT WATER, FLUSHING TOILETS, SINKS, SHOWERS OR BATHTUBS, AND SEWAGE DISPOSAL



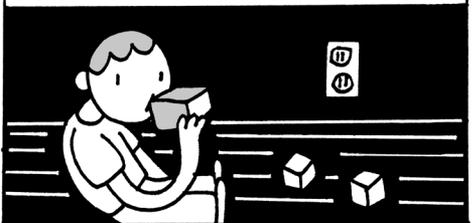
SAFE STRUCTURES, WITH DOORS AND WINDOWS THAT CLOSE, ROOFS THAT DON'T LEAK, ETC.



HEATING SYSTEMS THAT CAN HEAT TO AT LEAST 65F (18C) DURING COLD MONTHS



A HOUSE THAT IS SAFE FROM THE HAZARDS OF LEAD POISONING, WHICH IS PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS TO YOUNG KIDS' DEVELOPING BRAINS. KIDS MIGHT INGEST TOXIC DUST FROM CHIPPING PAINT.



HOUSES BUILT BEFORE 1978 PROBABLY WERE PAINTED WITH LEAD PAINT.

1872
CENTENNIAL
HOUSE

LANDLORDS IN BUILDINGS BUILT BEFORE THEN ARE REQUIRED TO DO BASIC MAINTENANCE EVERY YEAR TO ENSURE THAT PAINT IS NOT CHIPPING OR PEELING.



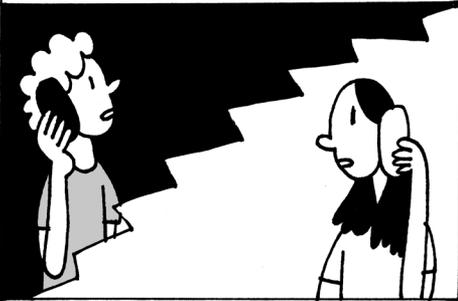
YOUR LANDLORD IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING THAT YOUR DWELLING IS SAFE TO LIVE IN.



IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE GOOD CARE OF THE UNIT AND TELL YOUR LANDLORD AS SOON AS YOU NOTICE A REPAIR IS NEEDED.



THIS IS IMPORTANT FOR YOUR SAFETY, AND ALSO FOR GETTING YOUR DEPOSIT BACK WHEN YOU MOVE OUT.



IF YOU CAUSE DAMAGE, YOUR LANDLORD CAN CHARGE YOU FOR REPAIRS, BUT THE LANDLORD IS STILL RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING THEM.



REPAIRS

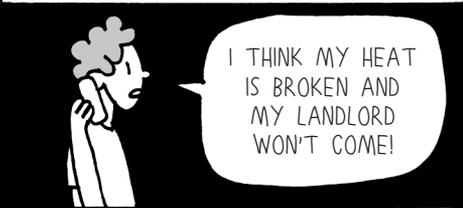


IF YOUR LANDLORD WON'T MAKE A REPAIR, PUT THE REQUEST IN WRITING

THIS CREATES A WRITTEN RECORD THAT YOU TOLD YOUR LANDLORD ABOUT THE REPAIR, AND HELPS YOU USE THE LEGAL REMEDIES AVAILABLE TO YOU.

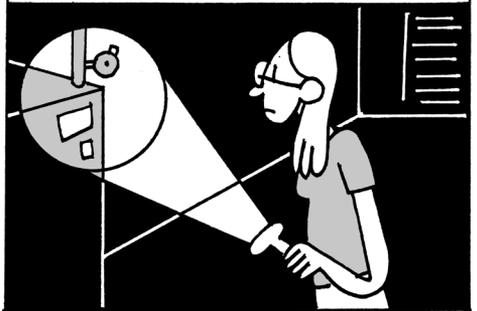


IF IT'S A SERIOUS HEALTH OR SAFETY VIOLATION, CALL YOUR LOCAL TOWN HEALTH OFFICER.



CALL VT TENANTS IF YOU NEED HELP FIGURING OUT WHO YOUR TOWN HEALTH OFFICER IS.

THEY WILL COME DO AN INSPECTION, AND CAN ISSUE A NOTICE TO YOUR LANDLORD TO FIX THE PROBLEM.



GET A COPY OF THE INSPECTOR'S REPORT. YOU ARE LEGALLY ENTITLED TO ONE, AND IT IS IMPORTANT FOR YOUR RECORDS.



THE LAW PROTECTS YOU IF YOUR LANDLORD TRIES TO EVICT YOU, RAISE YOUR RENT, OR HARASS YOU IN SOME WAY FOR CALLING THE INSPECTOR.



IF YOUR LANDLORD DOES NOT MAKE A MAJOR REPAIR IN A REASONABLE AMOUNT OF TIME, YOU MAY HAVE THE RIGHT TO...



BREAK YOUR LEASE AND MOVE OUT



SUE YOUR LANDLORD FOR DAMAGES



FIX THE ISSUE YOURSELF & DEDUCT THE COST OF THE REPAIR FROM YOUR RENT



...OR WITHHOLD RENT UNTIL IT IS FIXED.



EACH OF THESE REMEDIES IS ONLY AVAILABLE IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES, SO CALL VERMONT TENANTS BEFORE YOU TRY ANY OF THEM!

VT TENANTS

802-864-0099 OR

1-800-287-7971

VTTENANTS.ORG

MOVING OUT

YOU SHOULD USUALLY GET 14-120 DAYS' NOTICE IN WRITING WHEN THE LANDLORD WANTS YOU TO MOVE OUT.

DEPENDING ON THE REASON, WHERE YOU LIVE, AND HOW LONG YOU'VE LIVED IN THE APARTMENT. CALL US FOR HELP FIGURING OUT WHAT IT IS IN YOUR CASE.

YOU MUST GIVE NOTICE BEFORE YOU MOVE OUT: AT LEAST ONE FULL RENTAL PERIOD (2 IN BURLINGTON), UNLESS YOUR LEASE LISTS A DIFFERENT NOTICE PERIOD.

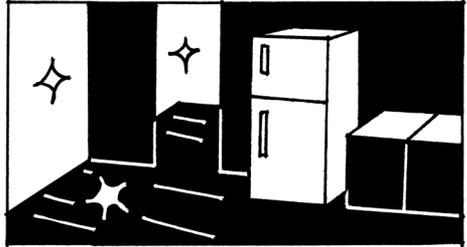


I WANT TO MOVE IN A MONTH.

IF YOU CHOOSE TO MOVE OUT EARLY, YOU CAN BE FORCED TO PAY RENT ON THE UNIT UNTIL THE LEASE IS UP, THE NOTICE PERIOD IS OVER OR THE APARTMENT IS FILLED.



WHEN MOVING OUT, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMOVE ALL YOUR BELONGINGS & TRASH, AND LEAVE THE APARTMENT CLEAN, IN ORDER TO HAVE YOUR DEPOSIT RETURNED.



TAKE PICTURES OF THE UNIT AFTER YOU MOVE SO THAT YOU HAVE A RECORD OF THE CONDITION YOU LEFT IT IN!



DON'T FORGET TO LEAVE A FORWARDING ADDRESS SO YOUR LANDLORD CAN MAIL YOU YOUR DEPOSIT!



EVICCTIONS

A WRITTEN NOTICE ENDING YOUR TENANCY IS THE FIRST LEGALLY REQUIRED STEP IN THE EVICTION PROCESS.

I NEED TO MOVE MY MOM IN.



IF YOU BELIEVE YOU ARE BEING ASKED TO MOVE FOR AN ILLEGAL REASON SUCH AS DISCRIMINATION, RETALIATION FOR ASKING FOR REPAIRS, OR IF YOU HAVE NOT BEEN GIVEN LEGAL NOTICE, YOU MAY CHOOSE TO FIGHT THE REQUEST TO MOVE OUT.

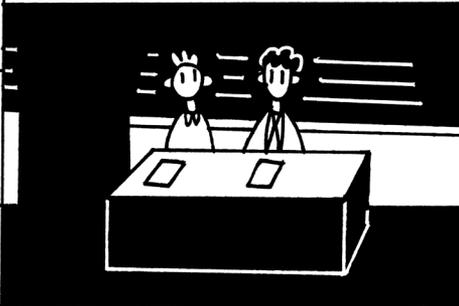
BUT THE APARTMENT IS STILL UNSAFE.



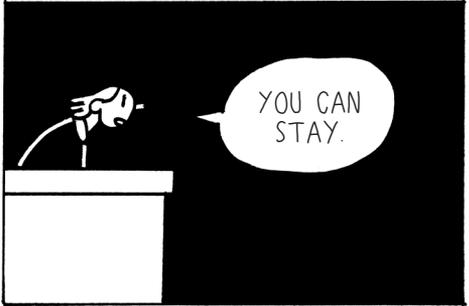
SHE'LL MANAGE.

IN THIS CASE, YOUR LANDLORD MUST TAKE YOU TO COURT IN A FORMAL EVICTION PROCEEDING.

EVICCTIONS ARE A VERY SPECIFIC COURT PROCESS, AND ULTIMATELY A JUDGE MAKES THE FINAL DECISION.



YOU CAN STAY.

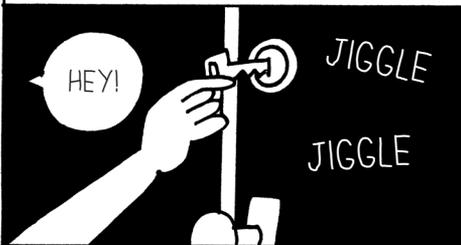


IT IS ILLEGAL FOR A LANDLORD TO TRY TO EVICT YOU BY TURNING OFF YOUR UTILITIES, CHANGING THE LOCKS, TOSSING OUT YOUR STUFF, OR OTHERWISE BLOCKING YOUR USE OF THE UNIT.

EVICCTIONS CAN BE EXPENSIVE, AND ANY KIND OF BAD REFERENCE FROM A LANDLORD CAN MAKE FINDING A RENTAL DIFFICULT IN THE FUTURE. MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A STRONG CASE BEFORE GOING TO COURT.

HEY!

JIGGLE
JIGGLE



OH BOY.



CALL A LAWYER IF YOU EVER GET AN EVICTION NOTICE! LEGAL AID'S HOTLINE NUMBER IS 1-800-889-2047.

RESOURCES

RENTER HOTLINES:

VT TENANTS
(802) 864-0099 OR TOLL-FREE 1-800-287-7971
VTTENANTS.ORG

VERMONT LAW HELP
1-800-889-2047
VTLAWHELP.ORG

FAIR HOUSING COMPLAINT LINE:

VERMONT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
1-800-416-2010 OR (802) 828-2480 (VOICE/TTY)
HRC.VERMONT.GOV/HOW-TO-FILE

FAIR HOUSING GROUP TRAINING:

CV0EO FAIR HOUSING PROJECT
802-864-3334 EXT. 106
CV0EO.ORG/FHP

FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES:

VERMONT CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING
1-800-639-1522
(802) 229-0501 (VOICE/TTY)

RELATED LAWS AND CODE:

VERMONT STATE STATUTES: TITLE 9: COMMERCE AND TRADE
CHAPTER 137: RESIDENTIAL RENTAL AGREEMENTS
LEGISLATURE.VERMONT.GOV/STATUTES/CHAPTER/09/137

VERMONT RENTAL HOUSING HEALTH CODE
WWW.HEALTHVERMONT.GOV/REGS/RENTAL_HOUSING_CODE.PDF

FIRE AND BUILDING SAFETY CODE
FIRESAFETY.VERMONT.GOV



CHAMPLAIN VALLEY OFFICE
OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Bridging gaps, building futures.