

QUICK TIPS IN HOUSING SEARCH AND LEASING

Housing Search

Preparation - Be Practical

- Explore a rental within your budget. Work on a budget of income and expenses to determine maximum rental cost able to afford.
- View the rental to see whether the rental would pass Housing Quality standards.
- Identify areas you prefer to live and who will be able to provide support.
- Prioritize your preferred rental need and minimum features. (Ground floor, elevator, ramps, bathroom set up, kitchen, mail box)
- Eliminate expenses that are not required (Cable, Netflix, phone, internet). The less I spend, the more I save.
- Determine your time line of when you want to secure a rental. (Short term-6 months to a year or long term-several years)

Security Deposit

- Save money by setting aside a specific amount each month to prepare to pay for your security deposit. The security deposit is generally the entire month's rent plus the first month's rent.
- Explore with relatives/friends for assistance with security deposit.
- Contact agencies who may be able to assist with financial assistance (Salvation Army, Helping Hands Hawaii, Catholic Charities, etc.)

Actively Searching for Rentals

- Check newspapers, Midweek, Rental magazines for available rentals on a regular basis.
- Visit the rental inventory at the Section 8 offices (City and County offices, or Public Housing Authority offices)
- Access Internet sites including Craigslist, Trulia.com, Hotpads.com, Apartments.com, etc.
- Obtain, complete and submit rental applications to add your name to potential wait lists. Keep track of all the applications submitted and update these applications when there is a change in your situation or at least annually. This will help the housing agencies get in contact with you when your name is high on the wait list.
- Attempt to view the unit within 48 hours of your contact or when the rental is seen on the website to increase your chances of securing the unit.

Preparing for the Interview

- Use good etiquette when talking on the phone, mail, text, or email.
- Be pleasant and polite when talking to the housing agencies or landlords.
- Update your voice message. (example: You have reached_____. Please leave your name, number and a brief message and I will get back to you as soon as possible. Thank you for calling.
- Answer your calls when you have time to talk (not when you are busy with another matter).

- Gather all the required housing documents (photo identification, social security card, social security award letter, bank statements, etc) so that you are ready for the appointment when you are contacted.
- Write down questions to ask during the interview. (What is the rent? What is included in the rent, when is rent due, how are payments made? etc.)

Interview Etiquette

- Be prepared and organized – gather and bring all the requested documents to the interview.
- Think about the impression you are making during the appointment?
 - Dress to impress.
 - Take a job interview approach to the interview
 - Don't smoke, chew gum, or eat during the interview.
 - Make eye contact and smile.
 - Be respectful.
 - If you have young children, talk to them about being respectful and have something to keep them busy while you are talking.
- Ask important questions
 - Owners name and contact information
 - Address of property
 - What is included in rent (water, sewer, electricity, stove, refrigerator, etc.)
 - Are there special restrictions (pets, waterbed, smoking, etc.)
 - Are guests allowed.
 - Provide honest answers about your income, number of people in your household, past landlord references, credit history, etc.)
 - Review information about the rental and jot down questions to ask the landlord at the end of the meeting.

Lease Agreement

Know about your responsibilities and expectations

- Ask how much is the rent?
- What is included in the rent? (water, sewer, electricity, cable, telephone, etc.)
- Is there a refrigerator and stove in the rental?
- How long is the lease?
- How is payments made? To whom?
- When is the rent due? Is there a grace period, what are the late fees and consequences?
- Review and understand the house rules/policies, especially for children, visitors, overnight guests, pets, decorating.
- What is the tenant and landlord's obligations?
- Under what situations should I call the landlord?
- What happens if a house rule is broken on the lease?
- Attend all initial, routine, and post inspections.

How to Be a Good Tenant

- Pay your rent on time. Be aware of the deadline to pay your rent.
- Promptly pay your utilities on time.
- Use energy efficient products to save you and your landlord money.
- Know your house rules.
- Follow your house rules.
- Guest/visitors (not listed on lease) needs to be approved by resident manager.
- Be aware of the parking rules and where to park.

Caring for the Unit

- Keep the inside of your home clean, clutter-free, safe, and sanitary.
- Keep outside of your unit or property clutter-free and clean.
- Take out trash at least on a weekly basis.
- Dispose of all old food in garbage disposal or in plastic bags in trash area.
- Use containers to seal, cereal, flour, sugar, rice to prevent cockroaches and ants.
- Frequently clean counter tops in kitchen and bathroom areas.
- Frequently sweep, vacuum or mop floors in the home
- Store cookware, dishes and glasses in cabinets to eliminate clutter.
- Wash dishes after meals to prevent insects.
- Check fire extinguishers and smoke alarms on a regular basis.

Be a Good Neighbor

- Know guests/visitors rules.
- Let guests/visitors know about the house rules and be responsible to follow the rules.
- **Contact resident manager in emergency situations including:**
 - Broken water pipes.
 - No drinking water.
 - No electricity.
 - Burners on stove not working.
 - Refrigerator not working.
 - Running water cannot shut off.
 - Clogged toilet.
 - Kitchen sink backing up.
 - Water leaking onto floor from ceiling.
 - Locked out.
 - Fire – CALL 911
- Have a positive relationship with resident manager and/or landlord.
- Have a positive relationship with neighbors.
- Minimize noises, guests, traffic.
- Know the resident manager and neighbors by name.
- Treat others with respect.
- Attend resident association meetings if available to know the current events.
- Avoid excessive accumulation of items in the inside and outside of the rental and property