



# Landlord Tenant Handbook 2024 Update

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Special Legislative Commission to Study & Provide Recommendations to  
Update and Clarify the “Residential Landlord and Tenant Act,”  
October 2, , 2024

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# What is the Landlord Tenant Handbook?

**A written guide for consumers relating to the rights and duties of landlords and tenants maintained by the new Department of Housing.**

- The Landlord Tenant Handbook is a consumer guide of what the law is currently in a format that can be used and understood by both landlords and tenants.
- Outlines the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants as enumerated in the Rhode Island General Laws.
- Benefits both renters and landlords by providing one centralized location for information on the many different and complex statutes related to housing.
- RI has had a Landlord Tenant Handbook in the past, but the Department of Housing is now actively updating it on bi-annual basis.





# Recent Legislation and the Handbook

- In recent years, there have been many changes to Rhode Island's laws on housing, land-use, and other areas affecting landlords and tenants. For example:
  - Prohibition on source of income discrimination.
  - Lead hazard mitigation changes.
  - Creation of Department of Housing.
- Primary sources of law:
  - The Residential Landlord and Tenant Act (RIGL 34-18).
  - The Fair Housing Practices Act, (RIGL 34-37).
  - Lead Hazard Mitigation Act (RIGL 42-128.1).
  - Housing Maintenance and Occupancy Code (RIGL 45-24.3).
- Under law passed in 2023, the Handbook is to be updated at least every two years and must be available in English and Spanish.



# Drafting the New Handbook

**The Department of Housing worked with community organizations, attorneys, subject matter experts, and stakeholders to develop a new draft handbook.**

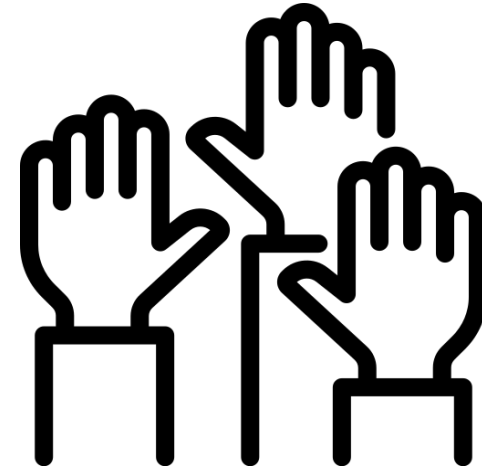
- The preliminary draft document was developed by the Rhode Island Center for Justice in collaboration with Rhode Island Legal Services (RILS), Housing Works RI, and other partners.
- First update to the Landlord Tenant Handbook since 2007.
- Goal was to provide a factual presentation of the law without editorialization that is easily accessed and understood by the public.
- New draft Handbook was posted online in December 2023.



# Public Comment

**Department posted draft handbook in December, accepted written comments by email, and held an in-person comment session**

- Comments from the public were accepted by email from January 1<sup>st</sup> to March 7<sup>th</sup>.
- An in-person public comment session was held at DOA on February 29<sup>th</sup>.
- Received feedback from:
  - RI HUD Field Office staff
  - Health Equity Zones
  - Realtors Association
  - Landlord and tenant groups
  - Members of the public



# Comment Review and Legislative Updates

- Department catalogued all the comments received via both email and in-person, then conducted an internal review.
- Legal Review
- Updates following General Assembly session
  - After the General Assembly session, staff went through the draft handbook and updated sections to reflect recently passed legislation.
  - (ex) The rental increase notice period was increased with the passage of S 2189 so that section of the handbook was updated to incorporate the new requirements.
- Following public comment and legislative updates, we went back to Center for Justice and RILS for another review.
- Then one more internal review for clarity and consistency.



# Translation

- One of the most frequent comments we received was to make the Handbook available in more languages than just English and Spanish.
- Currently working with Purchasing to translate the newly updated Handbook into the following languages:
  - Spanish
  - Portuguese
  - Mandarin
  - Cantonese
  - Haitian
  - Arabic
  - French
- After translating into these languages, the Handbook will be accessible to at least 90% of the Low English Proficiency population of Rhode Island.



# Next Steps and Future Improvements

- Website:
  - The new Landlord Tenant Handbook is available in English on the Department of Housing website.
  - Editions in other languages will be posted as they are completed.
- Printed copies:
  - While there is no requirement that hardcopies be printed, doing so has been recommended by the Center for Justice and others, and we would like to provide this resource.
- Infographics/Explainers
  - Between now and the next update, we want to work on adding simplified resources on common topics and frequently asked questions.





# Thank you!



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