

## **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS (Q&A) ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS AS A TENANT OR APPLICANT WITH A DISABILITY**

This *QUESTION and ANSWER (Q&A) About Your Rights as a Tenant or Applicant with a Disability* document has information about your rights as a person with a disability. You can find more information in the [Rental Occupancy Policies Tenant Handbook](#) located on the “Required Policies and Forms” tab of [www.accesshousingla.org](http://www.accesshousingla.org) website. These rights apply to people applying for or living in housing that is part of the [City of Los Angeles’ Accessible Housing Program](#).

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### **NON-DISCRIMINATION**

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**QUESTION: Can my landlord treat me, my family, or guests unfairly because one of us has a mental or physical disability?**

**ANSWER:** No. Your landlord may not treat you, your family, or your guests unfairly because of a disability. People with disabilities have rights to get extra help, if needed. We talk about those rights next.

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### **REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS (ASKING FOR A CHANGE IN POLICIES)**

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**QUESTION: I have a disability. Can I ask the landlord to change a policy to give me the same opportunities as people without disabilities?**

**ANSWER:** Yes. This is called a “reasonable accommodation.” Landlords must make policy changes if it is reasonable to provide equal access. Examples of reasonable accommodations are:

1. If you cannot walk very far, you can ask for a closer parking space.
2. If you have difficulty remembering things, you can ask the landlord to remind you when the rent is due each month.

These are only two examples of possible reasonable accommodations. You can ask for other things. The landlord cannot charge you for these changes.

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Your landlord must work with you to figure out the best way to make these changes. This is called “the interactive process.”

**QUESTION: How do I ask for a reasonable accommodation?**

**ANSWER:** Ask your landlord for the change you want. You can ask in person, by email, by phone, or in writing. You can write the request yourself or use your landlord’s form. If you use your landlord’s form, you can ask for help filling it out. You need to say why you want the change and how it is connected to your disability.

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**REASONABLE MODIFICATIONS (CHANGES TO MY APARTMENT OR BUILDING)**

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**QUESTION: I need changes to my apartment or to the building because of a disability. Can I ask the landlord to make these changes?**

**ANSWER:** Yes. Your landlord is responsible for making reasonable changes to your apartment and the building if you need them because of a disability. This is called a “reasonable modification.”

Here are some examples of reasonable modifications that you can ask for:

- Add grab bars
- Add ramps
- Remove carpet
- Lower cabinets
- Add blinking doorbells
- Add blinking smoke alarms
- Add Braille signs

These are only some examples. You can ask for other things.

Landlords must pay for these changes if they are related to your disability and reasonable.

Your landlord must work with you to figure out the best way to make these changes. This is called “the interactive process.”

**QUESTION: Common areas, such as the main entrance, the laundry, or the parking lot, are not accessible to me because of my disability. Can I ask the landlord to make physical changes to these areas?**

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**ANSWER:** Yes. You can ask for a Reasonable Modification to common areas, just like you would for your apartment.

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## **ASSISTANCE ANIMALS**

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**QUESTION:** My landlord does not allow pets. I am a person with a disability. Am I allowed to keep an assistance animal?

**ANSWER:** Yes. There are two kinds of assistance animals.

1. **Service Animals:** If you have a service dog that performs tasks for you, you are automatically allowed to have the dog.
2. **Support Animals:** If you have an animal that provides you emotional or other support because of a disability, you can ask for that support animal as a reasonable accommodation.

**QUESTION:** Are there other rules about assistance animals?

**ANSWER:** Yes. There are rules and responsibilities for you and your landlord. Examples of these are:

**Your responsibilities:** You are responsible for maintaining control over your assistance animal and cleaning up after it.

**Rules for your landlord:**

1. Your landlord may not ban assistance animals because of their breed, weight, or size.
2. Your landlord cannot charge a deposit or fee for your assistance animal.

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## **APARTMENTS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (ACCESSIBLE UNITS & BUILDINGS)**

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**QUESTION: I need an apartment with features that are designed for people with disabilities. Are there apartment buildings with these apartment units?**

**ANSWER:** Yes. Some buildings have Accessible Units with lots of features. There are two kinds of accessible units:

**Mobility Units:** These units are for people who use wheelchairs or have other mobility needs that require special features, such as lower cabinets and wider turn-around spaces.

**Hearing/Vision Units:** These are for people who are Deaf, Blind, or have other hearing or vision disabilities that require features such as blinking doorbells or appliances with knobs.

**QUESTION: How do I get an Accessible Unit?**

**ANSWER:** You can apply for an Accessible Unit in two ways:

1. You can ask your current landlord to put you on a list to transfer to an Accessible Unit when one becomes available, if your building has those apartment units.
2. You can visit [www.accesshousingla.org](http://www.accesshousingla.org) website to sign up for a waiting list or a lottery for Accessible Units in other buildings. You can be on the transfer list, a regular waiting list, and the Accessible Unit waiting list at the same time.

**QUESTION: What can I do if no Accessible Units are available?**

**ANSWER:** You can ask your landlord to make Reasonable Modifications to your current apartment or the apartment you are moving into. You can also ask to be added to a transfer list to move to an apartment with some features you need, like an apartment without stairs.

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## ACCESSIBILITY BARRIERS

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**QUESTION: The elevator in my building breaks down all the time. Sometimes it takes weeks to fix it. What can I do?**

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**ANSWER:** Your landlord must keep elevators in working order. If the repair cannot be done immediately, you may ask the landlord for a reasonable accommodation. If you cannot use stairs, you can ask the Property to pay for you to stay somewhere else until the elevator is fixed. If the elevator is not fixed right away, you may get help through the City or other places. See the section below on complaints and grievances. Please seek help quickly if this is a problem.

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## **NO RETALIATION AGAINST TENANTS OR APPLICANTS**

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**QUESTION:** If I ask for a Reasonable Accommodation or Reasonable Modification, I worry that the landlord will do something bad to me or that they will evict me or not rent to me. Can they do that?

**ANSWER:** No. Landlords are not allowed to retaliate against you, harass you, refuse to rent to you, or evict you for asking for your legal rights. They also cannot report your immigration status to anyone.

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## **COMMUNICATION BETWEEN LANDLORDS AND THEIR TENANTS AND APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITIES (AUXILIARY AIDS & SERVICES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION)**

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**QUESTION:** Is there anything I can do if my disability makes it hard for me and the landlord to understand each other?

**ANSWER:** Yes. You can ask the landlord to use services to improve communication. The law calls these “auxiliary aids and services.” Landlords must provide these services promptly and at no cost to you.

Examples of auxiliary aids and services include documents being made available in larger print, audio, or Braille formats; using the California Relay Service; providing a sign-language interpreter; or using text or email instead of phone calls.

## SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT MY DISABILITY

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### **QUESTION: What can a landlord ask about my disability?**

**ANSWER:** Landlords can ask what accessibility features you need and how they are connected to your disability. If you ask for a Reasonable Accommodation or Reasonable Modification, landlords can ask you how the accommodation or modification relates to your disability.

Under some circumstances, they can ask for more information from you or someone reliable who knows you. They can never ask for your medical records or your medical diagnosis.

If your landlord is asking for something that you do not think you have to give them, you can ask why they need the information. If you disagree, you can file a grievance. The ways to file a grievance are listed at the end of this document.

### **QUESTION: I want information about my disability to be private. Does my landlord have to follow any rules to keep it private?**

**ANSWER:** Yes. Your landlord is required to keep your requests and information about your disability confidential. This information about your disability must be kept in locked files separate from general applicant or tenant files. The landlord can share it only in very limited circumstances where legally required. They can never share it with other tenants, applicants, or the public.

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## LANGUAGE ACCESS

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### **QUESTION: I do not speak English well. Can I ask to have forms and policies translated into my language?**

**ANSWER:** Yes. Your landlord must provide documents in your language if you ask for translations. The landlord cannot charge for the translations.

The Tenant Handbook is already available in languages other than English. [[Handbook \(Spanish\)](#)]

## COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

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**QUESTION:** What can I do if I believe my landlord is discriminating or not obeying these rules?

**ANSWER:** The first step is usually to discuss the issue with your landlord. If your landlord does not fix the problem, there are many things you can do. You can do these things in any order or at the same time. Some of those things are listed below.

**YOUR LANDLORD CANNOT EVICT YOU, RAISE YOUR RENT, OR TAKE OTHER STEPS AGAINST YOU BECAUSE YOU COMPLAIN OR ASK FOR THINGS.**

**Things you can do if you think your landlord is doing something wrong:**

- 1) You can file a complaint (called a “grievance”) with your landlord and have a meeting with them to try to fix the problem. Ask your landlord for their Grievance Policy explaining how to do this.
- 2) You can file a complaint about your landlord with the City of Los Angeles’ Accessible Housing Program:

**City of Los Angeles’ Accessible Housing**

Website: [www.accesshousingla.org](http://www.accesshousingla.org)

Website (Complaints): [www.lahousing.lacity.org/AAHR/ComCon/Tab/RenderTab?tabName=Grievance](http://www.lahousing.lacity.org/AAHR/ComCon/Tab/RenderTab?tabName=Grievance)

Phone (Voice): (213) 808-8550

- 3) You can file a complaint with state and federal agencies that investigate discrimination in housing:

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

Website (General): [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov)

Website (Complaints): [www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/fair\\_housing\\_equal\\_opp/online-complaint](http://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/online-complaint)

Phone (Voice): (800) 669-9777

Phone (TTY): (800) 877-8339

[AChP Question and Answer About Your Rights as a Tenant or Applicant with a Disability](#)



**California Civil Rights Department** (Previously called the Department of Fair Employment and Housing)

Website (General) : [calcivilrights.ca.gov/housing/](https://calcivilrights.ca.gov/housing/)

Website (Complaints): [calcivilrights.ca.gov/ComplaintProcess/](https://calcivilrights.ca.gov/ComplaintProcess/)

Phone (Voice): (800) 884-1684

Phone (TTY): (800) 700-2320

- 4) You can contact non-profit groups and lawyers that help tenants and applicants for free. There are lists of these resources in the Tenant Handbook and on LAHD's website at <https://lahousing.lacity.org/AAHR/ComCon/Tab/RenderTab?tabName=Resources>