

If you're 60 or over, call your local legal aid office:

Eastern CT	800-413-7796	Western CT	800-413-7797
Hartford Area	860-541-5000	Bridgeport Area	800-809-4434
Stamford Area	800-541-8909	New Haven Area	203-946-4811

If you're under 60, call SLS for help:



Statewide Legal Services  
1-800-453-3320  
860-344-0380

Search our website for help:



[www.ctlawhelp.org](http://www.ctlawhelp.org)

## HOUSING

## LEGAL SERVICES

SELF-HELP SERIES

# Are You Having Problems With Your Housing Authority or Subsidized Housing?

May 2018



### We offer free legal help in many areas, including

- welfare,
- SNAP (food stamps),
- divorce,
- child support,
- domestic violence,
- bankruptcy,
- special education,
- nursing home care,
- health insurance,
- eviction,
- foreclosure,
- and more.

*See the reverse side for more about legal services.*

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*If you're over 60, call your local legal aid office.*

**Connecticut Legal Services**

[www.ctlegal.org](http://www.ctlegal.org)

**Bridgeport**

1000 Lafayette Blvd 203-336-3851  
Suite 950

**New Britain**

16 Main Street 860-225-8678

**New London**

125 Eugene O'Neill Dr.  
Suite 120 860-447-0323

**Stamford**

20 Summer Street 203-348-9216

**Waterbury**

85 Central Avenue 203-756-8074

**Willimantic**

1125 Main Street 860-456-1761

**Greater Hartford Legal Aid**

[www.ghla.org](http://www.ghla.org)

999 Asylum Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06105  
860-541-5000

**New Haven Legal Assistance Association**

[www.nhlegal.org](http://www.nhlegal.org)

426 State Street  
New Haven, CT 06510  
203-946-4811

**Consumer Law Project for Elders**

Free legal assistance to people 60 and over throughout Connecticut who have money/debt problems.  
1-800-296-1467

**Are You Having Problems With Your Housing Authority or Subsidized Housing?**

What can I do if I have a disagreement or problem with the housing authority? ..... 3

Is there a deadline to file a complaint? ..... 4

What are my rights at a formal hearing? ..... 8

What should I do if I've been denied public or subsidized housing? ..... 9

*This booklet was produced by Connecticut Legal Services, Greater Hartford Legal Aid, New Haven Legal Assistance Association, and Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut. The information in this booklet is based on laws in Connecticut as of 5/2018. We hope that the information is helpful. It is not intended as legal advice. For advice on your situation, call Statewide Legal Services or contact a lawyer.*

**Notes**

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**What can I do if I have a disagreement or problem with the housing authority?**

If you have tried to fix the problem and you still disagree with the housing authority, you can make a complaint by using the *grievance procedure*.

**What is the grievance procedure?**

A *grievance* is like a complaint. The grievance procedure is the official way to tell the housing authority what your complaint or problem is and what you would like them to do about it. Each housing authority has its own grievance procedure.

**When can I use the grievance procedure?**

You **might** file a grievance if

- you have been denied public or subsidized housing,
- your rent has been increased unfairly,
- the housing authority has not repaired bad conditions in your apartment,
- you have been denied a transfer,
- the housing authority won't add someone to your lease,
- you were charged late fees even though you paid your rent on time, or
- your lease has been terminated (for many but not all reasons).

**Important:** Even if the housing authority hasn't made repairs to your apartment, you must keep paying your rent or you could be evicted.

You **cannot** file a grievance if you are being **evicted** for

- criminal activity that threatens other tenants or housing authority workers,
- violent or drug-related criminal activity,
- criminal activity where someone in your household was convicted of a felony, or
- having a dispute with other tenants (and not the housing authority).

If an eviction has already been started against you, you will have to go through the court eviction process. The housing authority must prove that the criminal activity happened. If you need help with eviction, see our booklet: *Evictions and Lockouts*.

**You may be able to get legal help with your eviction.** Call Statewide Legal Services at 1-800-453-3320 or apply for help online at <http://apply.slsct.org>.

### ***Is there a deadline to file a complaint?***

Yes. The deadline depends on what your problem is. You should start the grievance procedure right away because you can lose your right to use the grievance procedure if you miss the deadline. Contact your housing authority for more information.

## **How do I file a grievance?**

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First, call the housing authority and ask how to file a grievance.

If they tell you the grievance procedure starts with a **formal hearing**, skip to page 6.

If they tell you the procedure starts with an **informal hearing**, continue reading on the next page.

## **Letter C**

To: \_\_\_\_\_  
[Executive Director]  
\_\_\_\_\_  
[Housing Authority Address]  
\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date]

Dear Executive Director,

I request a hearing on the denial of my application for subsidized housing.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Your Name]

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Your Address]

## Letter B

To: \_\_\_\_\_  
[Executive Director]

\_\_\_\_\_

[Housing Authority Address]

\_\_\_\_\_

[Date]

Dear Executive Director,

On \_\_\_\_\_, I had an informal hearing to discuss the following problem(s): \_\_\_\_\_.

I am not satisfied with the result of the informal hearing because: \_\_\_\_\_.

I therefore request a formal grievance hearing to resolve this problem.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Your Name]

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Your Address]

## Informal Hearing

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### **1. Ask for a hearing.**

Send a letter to your housing authority that explains your problem and asks for a hearing. You can use **Letter A** at the end of this booklet as an example. Send the letter right away so you don't miss the deadline. Make a copy of your letter to keep for yourself.

- Mail the letter to the housing authority using certified mail with a return receipt requested, or
- bring it to the housing authority (and ask them to give you a stamped receipt) before the deadline.

The housing authority will send a letter with your hearing date.

**Note:** If you asked the housing authority to make a repair and they have not done so, say in your letter that you want some or all of your rent money back because the housing authority hasn't fixed the problem within a reasonable time. If your repair complaint is not resolved by the grievance procedure, contact your local code enforcement office and see our booklet: *Tenants' Rights: Repairs*.

### **2. Get ready for your hearing.**

Here is how to prepare for your hearing:

- Make an appointment to read your case file. Note anything negative in the file that the housing authority might use against you at the hearing.
- Think about who you could bring to your hearing. You are allowed to bring witnesses who can tell the housing authority more about your problem. You can also bring someone for moral support.
- Look for evidence to support what you say. You can bring papers and photographs that you think might help you at the hearing.

### 3. Go to your hearing.

Tell the housing authority about your problem and ask them to fix it. You can ask your witnesses questions and show the housing authority any papers and photographs you brought. The housing authority will tell you what they plan to do about your problem.

**Important:** If you think you have made an agreement with the housing authority, always get that agreement in writing.

### 4. Read the summary of the hearing.

After the informal hearing is complete, the housing authority will mail you a summary of what happened. Read it carefully.

**If you are happy with what the summary says,** the grievance procedure is over.

**If you are not happy with the summary or you think it is wrong,** you should ask for a formal hearing right away. The summary from your informal hearing should explain how to ask for a formal hearing and what the deadlines are. You can use **Letter B** at the end of this booklet. Make a copy of your letter to keep for yourself.

- Mail the letter to the housing authority using certified mail with a return receipt requested, or
- bring it to the housing authority (and ask them to give you a stamped receipt) before the deadline.

After you send **Letter B**, go to step 2 on the next page.

make your life better because you will be able to afford your bills. Show the housing authority how you were able to manage any other bills that you were able to pay.

**Important:** Do not forget to ask for the hearing **as soon as you get the letter** telling you that you have been turned down.

## Letter A

To: \_\_\_\_\_  
[Executive Director]

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Housing Authority Address]

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Date]

Dear Executive Director,

I am requesting a hearing for the following reasons:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Your Name]

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Your Address]

**If you were denied housing because of bad credit and the information on your credit report is wrong**, talk about this at your hearing. Say that you have taken steps to correct your credit report.

**If you were denied because of bad credit and the information on the credit report is correct**, talk about how you handle your money now in a way that makes you look good. For example, if you have a disability like bipolar disorder and you got into serious debt because you spent a lot of money when you were manic, say that you are now taking medication and are getting your finances in order.

### ***What if I was denied housing because of a criminal record?***

Check your criminal record to see if there are mistakes. You can get an unofficial copy of your record for free through the state of Connecticut Judicial Branch website:  
<http://www.jud2.ct.gov/crdockets/SearchByDefDisp.aspx>.

You can get an official copy of your criminal record for \$50 from the Connecticut State Police. You will have to submit your fingerprints on a special form (there is also a charge for this). This will take about two or three weeks.

You could get a pardon if your most recent conviction is

- a misdemeanor and more than 3 years ago, or
- a felony and more than 5 years ago.

### ***What if I was denied housing because of a past eviction?***

Tell the housing authority the story behind the eviction, but keep it short. If you didn't pay the rent because you couldn't afford it, say that. Explain that having subsidized housing will

## Formal Hearing

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### ***1. Ask for a hearing.***

Send a letter to your housing authority that explains your problem and asks for a hearing. You can use Letter A below. Send the letter right away so you don't miss the deadline. Make a copy of your letter to keep for yourself.

- Mail the letter to the housing authority using certified mail with a return receipt requested, or
- bring it to the housing authority (and ask them to give you a stamped receipt) before the deadline.

The housing authority will send you a letter telling you when your hearing is.

**Note:** If you asked the housing authority to make a repair and they have not done so, say in your letter that you want some or all of your rent money back because the housing authority hasn't fixed the problem within a reasonable time. If your repair complaint is not resolved by the grievance procedure, contact your local code enforcement office and see the legal aid booklet, *Tenants' Rights: Repairs*.

### ***2. Get ready for your hearing.***

Here is how to prepare for your hearing:

- If you haven't already, make an appointment to read your case file. Note anything negative in the file that the housing authority might use against you at the hearing. Write down the names of the housing authority's witnesses so that you can prepare to ask them questions.
- Think about who you can bring to your hearing. You are allowed to bring witnesses who can tell the housing authority more about your situation. You can also bring someone for moral support.

- Make a list of questions that you want to ask your witnesses and the housing authority's witnesses.
- Look for evidence to support your complaint. You can bring papers and photographs that you think might help you at the hearing.

### **3. Go to your hearing.**

Tell the housing authority about your problem and ask them to fix it. You can ask your witnesses and the housing authority's witnesses questions. You can show the housing authority any papers or photographs that you brought. They will tell you what they plan to do about the problem.

**Important:** If you think you have made an agreement with the housing authority, always get that agreement in writing.

### **4. Read the summary of the hearing.**

**If you are happy with what the summary says**, the grievance procedure is over.

**If you aren't happy with the summary**, your options are usually limited. Call Statewide Legal Services for advice at 1-800-453-3320.

### ***What are my rights at the formal hearing?***

At the hearing you have the right to

- have an attorney or any other person represent you;
- keep the hearing private or open to the public—it is your choice; and
- present evidence and witnesses, and question any of the housing authority's witnesses.

### ***What happens if I don't go to the hearing?***

It is very important that you go to your hearing. If you don't go, your hearing might be postponed or the hearing officer could decide that you've lost your right to have a hearing. If you find out that you cannot go to a hearing, call the housing authority right away and ask to have it rescheduled. If the housing authority won't change the hearing date, a friend can go to your hearing and explain why you couldn't go.

### **What should I do if I have been denied public or subsidized housing?**

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If you are denied public or subsidized housing, you will get a letter from the housing authority or the landlord that explains why you were denied. The letter will also explain how to ask for a hearing so you can appeal the denial. To appeal the denial, you must write a letter (**Letter C**) to the housing authority asking for a hearing. Send the letter right away.

**Important: If you miss the deadline, you won't get a hearing and you'll have to apply for housing again.**

Mail the letter to the housing authority or bring it to them (and ask them to give you a stamped receipt) before the deadline. Keep a copy of your letter for your own records. After you send the letter, follow the procedure described earlier in this booklet.

### ***What if I was denied housing because of bad credit?***

If you were denied housing because of bad credit, the denial letter should list the credit agency that the housing authority used to look at your credit. Contact that agency and ask them for your free credit report. If there are mistakes on the report, there are things you can do to correct them. Statewide Legal Services can tell you how. Apply online at <http://apply.slsc.org>.