

FINDING A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Finding an affordable, appropriate, and safe place to live can be a challenge. Many urban areas lack enough affordable housing to meet the demand. In many rural areas property managers hesitate to rent to people they do not know. It takes hard work and creativity to find a good place to live. Many renters make the decision to rent without thinking through what they want, what they need, and what they can afford. Often the housing search is difficult because of limited time and transportation issues as well as few affordable housing options.

Determine Your Housing Needs

Use the *Determine Your Housing Needs (Worksheet 3)* in the **Organizer** to prepare for an efficient, successful search for rental housing.

Where to Look for Information

Sources for housing information include: family or friends, newspapers, Yellow Pages, rental magazines, grocery store bulletin boards, “For Rent” signs, non-profit housing agencies, the Housing and Redevelopment Authority, places of worship, and moving sales.

Steps to Finding a Place to Live

1. Determine what is affordable (*use Worksheets 1 and 2 in the Organizer*).
2. Identify resources.
3. Determine housing needs (*use Worksheet 3 in the Organizer*).
4. Organize your information (*use the Sample Rental Application, Worksheet 4, in the Organizer*).
5. If needed, prepare a renter’s résumé (*use Worksheet 5 in the Organizer*).
6. Develop a system to compare rental units (*use Worksheet 4 in the Organizer*).

Checking Out the Unit and Property Manager

Do the following *before* renting:

INSPECT THE UNIT Is it clean and in good repair? Does the property manager agree to make repairs? Does he/she sound sincere? Does he/she listen to you and speak respectfully to other residents and neighbors? Does he/she try to rush you to decide?

ASK ABOUT POLICIES Do they sound reasonable? How are they enforced?

ASK ABOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD Does the property manager know the neighborhood? Does he/she mention membership in neighborhood groups, such as crime watch?

VISIT THE BUILDING AND NEIGHBORHOOD AT DIFFERENT TIMES
When is it noisy? Do you feel safe walking after dark? Would you feel your children are safe outside? Is parking a problem?

VISIT WITH OTHER RESIDENTS AND NEIGHBORS
Has the property manager kept promises? Has he/she maintained common areas and made promised repairs? Are there problems with crime, noise, or unsupervised children?

COMPARE UNITS Use the *Rental Survey (Worksheet 6)* in the **Organizer** to compare units you visit.