

# Housing Happenings

## Does Substance Use Affect Your Housing?

Have you had problems finding or keeping housing? Have you been evicted in the past? Has your landlord refused to renew your rental agreement? Alcohol or substance use/abuse are often factors in the loss or inability to keep a place to stay. If you are not sure if substance use affects your housing situation, ask yourself these questions:

- Do you pay rent and utility bills first, or are you using money for drugs or alcohol that should go toward these bills?
- Do your family, roommates or neighbors complain about your drug or alcohol use?
- Are you missing work or job interviews because of your substance use?

Other questions to determine if you might be jeopardizing your housing situation:

- Do you keep your living area safe and clean?
- Do you have people staying with you who are not on the lease? Are a lot of people coming in and out of your apartment especially late at night?
- Do neighbors complain about the amount of noise you make?
- Have the police been called to your home? If yes, how often?

### Reasons for Eviction

Not paying the rent on time is the most common reason for an eviction ("unlawful detainer"). You can also be evicted for causing a nuisance (bothering neighbors with loud noise, parties, or having too many people in and out of your apartment). Other reasons include seriously endangering the safety of other residents, their property, or the landlord's property (damaging the rental unit). Illegal activities are also grounds for eviction (making, selling, possessing, purchasing or allowing illegal drugs; illegally using or possessing firearms; keeping stolen property; or allowing prostitution or related activities). These actions are violations of your rental agreement or lease, and can lead to an eviction action. Having an eviction on your record will make it much harder to find housing. Landlords often refuse to accept tenants with an eviction, and can easily rent to someone else. Landlords want a tenant who will pay the rent on time and haven't caused problems somewhere else. If you have adequate housing, keeping it should be one of your priorities!

### Drug Treatment Facility Records

A 1998 Statute (Statute 575E of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998) introduced by Senator Rod Grams gives Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) the right to get information from drug treatment facilities about the applicants to public housing. This information is supposed to be used only to consider whether the applicant is currently engaging in the illegal use of a controlled substance, not past history. PHAs screen applicants and state in their leases that illegal drug use and other criminal activities that threaten the well being of residents are grounds for eviction. PHAs can deny you a lease because of illegal drug-related activity and alcohol abuse.

Section 8 subsidized housing cannot check treatment facility records. Anyone can apply for Section 8 subsidized housing if they are within the income limits. However, criminal background checks are often used for both tenant- and project-based Section 8 programs.