

Important
Information
Please Read
Carefully

Dakota County Community Development Agency Rental Assistance Participant Newsletter

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651-675-4550



March 2011

Information and Referral Specialist

You may have noticed the last time you were at the CDA's office there is an additional staff member located in the lobby area. Sarah Hubbard, our Information and Referral Specialist is now available to provide housing resource information to individuals or families who may not qualify for the CDA's programs or are seeking *immediate* housing.

In addition to housing resources, Sarah can assist in a variety of areas including; how to apply for county assistance, making referrals to local service providers such as food shelves, crisis organizations or legal aid organizations or offering help in completing CDA forms/applications. If you are in need of some resource assistance, stop by her desk or give her a call at 651-675-4406.

Verification of Child Support

Individuals receiving child support in Minnesota can now get up-to-date payment information online. At the time of your annual recertification or when you report changes related to child support, you will need to know your MCI number or PIN number. This number will give you access to the information the CDA is required to obtain about your child support income.

If you do not have a MCI or PIN number, please call your Child Support Specialist. Your number will be mailed to you within a few business days of your request. Please bring the number with you to any scheduled appointments you have at the CDA. This will help to expedite the verification of your child support.

Fair Housing Q&A

Q: I have asked my landlord permission to keep a dog to help me cope with symptoms of depression. Can my landlord charge a deposit and a monthly fee for this request?

A: No. A landlord cannot charge a fee for this requested accommodation.

Q: My ex-boyfriend beat me up in my apartment. I live on the ground floor, and it would be easy for him to break into my apartment. I would like to move to a place where he does not know where I live, but I still have 6 months left on my lease. What can I do?

A: Minnesota Statute Sec. 504B.206 allows tenants to break their lease early if they are victims of domestic violence. In order to get out of your lease early, you need to have either an Order for Protection (OFP) or a criminal No Contact Order against the ex-boyfriend. The courthouse can provide the paperwork to file an OFP. A landlord can ask you to pay one month's rent after you leave. You may be able to work out an agreement with the landlord to allow the security deposit or any amount that was prepaid "last month's rent" to be used for this purpose.

TIPS From The Housing Inspector

Report Needed Repairs to Landlord

To help ensure that inspections have a higher chance of passing inspection, tenants need to report any damages, no matter how small, to their landlord.

These items include cracked or loose outlets, rips in screens, or faucets that leak when turned on. These items may not cause problems in every day operation, but can lead to a failed inspection.

Many landlords report that they had not been informed by their tenants that items were broken and if they had been notified, they would have fixed them right away. Most of these items would only take a matter of minutes to repair and would save a lot of time in failed inspections and re-inspections.

If you report items for repair to your landlord promptly, chances of your unit passing inspection on the first time are much greater.

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is produced whenever any fuel such as gas, oil or kerosene, wood or charcoal is burned. It can rapidly accumulate even in areas that might appear well ventilated.

You can't smell or see carbon monoxide. Low levels of CO can cause shortness of breath, mild nausea, and mild headaches. Moderate levels of CO can cause severe headaches, dizziness, mental confusion, nausea and fainting and high levels can kill a person in minutes.

Every single family dwelling unit and every unit of a multifamily dwelling **must** have an approved and operational carbon monoxide detector/alarm installed within 10 feet of each room lawfully used for sleeping purposes. This is not only a requirement of Housing Quality Standards for the Housing Choice Voucher Program, but is a state law as well.

*There are exemptions for certain multi-family dwellings that have an approved and operational 24 hour central monitored carbon monoxide alarms installed between 5 and 25 feet of carbon monoxide producing central fixtures and equipment. For additional information regarding carbon monoxide and the law visit www.health.state.mn.us

FREE INCOME TAX PREP

Volunteers across the state can help you prepare your federal and state tax returns. If you're a senior citizen, disabled citizen, or an individual with an income of \$35,000 or less (\$45,000 for families) you are eligible for assistance.

Most volunteer tax preparation sites are open from February 1 through April 15. To find the site nearest you, contact the Minnesota Department of Revenue at (651) 296-3781 or visit www.taxes.state.mn.us.

Make sure you bring all of the necessary documents that will be needed to process your taxes.



Questions?

This Rental Assistance Participant Newsletter is published by the Housing Assistance Department of the Dakota County Community Development Agency. **If you have any questions, please contact your Housing Specialist at the Dakota County CDA at (651) 675-4550.**