

Housing

Resources

Baltimore Neighborhoods, Inc.

www.bni-maryland.org

Department of Housing and Urban Development

www.hud.gov

Federal Reserve

www.federalreserve.gov

Maryland Department of Disabilities

www.mdod.maryland.gov

The National Landlord Tenant Guides

www.rentlaw.com

Short-term Asset Ownership

A Place to call Home

Shelter is one of our most fundamental needs, providing security, safety, and the comfort of a place to call “home.” Whether clients choose to rent or purchase a home or need housing assistance, there are several considerations for each housing option.

Housing Assistance

Affordable apartments and houses are available through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Through Section 8, clients can choose an affordable apartment in a delegated unit (public housing), or they can find their own participating venue and use housing choice vouchers to pay part of their rent.

HUD has other programs to help low-income families, including privately owned subsidized housing, homes for sale, programs to help maintain or improve your home, and programs to help renters become homeowners.

To apply for housing assistance clients can visit their local Public Housing Authority (PHA), which can be found on the HUD website at www.hud.gov.



Although owning a home is an asset, clients must remember that they will be responsible for paying property taxes, paying homeowners insurance, and maintaining the property.

Renters Issues

The following chart details some of the basic responsibilities for Maryland tenants and landlords who enter into a leasing agreement:

Responsibilities of Tenant	Responsibilities of Landlord
Pay the security deposit and comply with leasing agreement	Security deposit must not total more than 2 times the monthly rent
Request a list of all existing property damages within 15 days of moving in	Provide list of existing damages and inspect property with tenant at their request
Comply with lease, keep property intact, pay rent timely and in full	Provide full refund of security deposit, or an itemized list of reasons for withholding security deposit within 30 days of lease ending
Pay rent in full each month or risk eviction	Provide eviction notice with ample time to vacate premises
Purchase renters insurance to cover personal property	Maintain physical dwelling, make repairs as necessary
Provide ample notice, 15 to 30 days in advance, of intent to vacate property	Provide at least one months advance written notice of termination of the lease

Short-term Asset Ownership

Rental Property

Renting has some advantages: clients pay a fixed monthly rent with no property taxes, are not responsible for the maintenance of the property or premises, and may enjoy amenities such as pools or fitness centers. Monthly rent may even include certain utilities like water, sewage, and trash.

When renting a property a lease is established, which is an agreement about the rights and responsibilities of both the tenant and the landlord. A lease can legally be oral or written, so be sure to request a written copy that is signed by both parties.

Generally, once clients enter into a lease they are subject to its terms until the lease is terminated. There are penalties for breaking a leasing agreement early; for example if a client decides to move before the lease ends, he or she may be responsible to pay rent for the duration of the lease or until the landlord finds a replacement tenant.



Clients may enjoy the advantages of renting while saving money for homeownership.

Homeownership

Many people dream of owning their own home; a home is an asset that appreciates in value and provides the owners with tax benefits. But with the rewards of homeownership come with several responsibilities.

When you own a home, you are your own landlord, so it is your duty to make necessary repairs, pay property taxes, purchase homeowners insurance, and pay a mortgage as well as other fixed expenses. If the property is part of a Homeowners Association (HOA) then HOA fees may also apply.

If a client is new to the concept of homeownership, homebuyer workshops and housing counseling are available. Clients can call 211 to find a certified housing counselor in their area.

When planning to purchase a home, clients need to determine how much they can afford by dissecting their debts and income. Next they should get pre-approved for a mortgage loan before beginning the housing search. They may even be able to invest in an Individual Development Account to start saving money for a down payment.

Clients may consider a Federal Housing Administration (FHA) loan, which usually provides lower down payments, closing costs, and financing rates.

Foreclosure

What should clients do if they own a home but are falling behind on mortgage payments? Advise them not to ignore the problem, but to contact their lender or speak with a HUD certified housing counselor immediately. A housing counselor may discuss temporary or long term solutions including: a repayment plan, reinstatement, forbearance, loan modification, loan refinance, or a sale.

Foreclosure scams lurk, they often include messages like: 'we can save your home', 'free consultation', or 'stop foreclosure now'. They promise clients that they will negotiate debts with lenders, and then take off with clients' money. Clients should read all paperwork before signing anything, and be wary of firms that ask for the title to their home. To locate a foreclosure counselor call 211.

Emergency Housing

Help is available for clients with insufficient housing. Call 211 for help with transitional or emergency housing, or contact the local department of social services for information on area homeless shelters and housing assistance.

