

# EARLY LEASE TERMINATION LAW FOR SURVIVORS OF ABUSE SEXUAL ASSAULT OR STALKING

If you are a survivor of abuse, sexual assault or stalking, a new Vermont law allows you to terminate your lease early if you need to move due to safety concerns. This law applies to all rental housing.

## Who do these protections cover?

Protected tenants include:

- Victims of abuse, or a parent, foster parent, legal guardian, or caretaker with at least partial physical custody of a victim of abuse as defined in 15 V.S.A. § 1101. Abuse means the occurrence of one or more of the following acts between household members:
  - Attempting to cause or causing physical harm
  - Placing another in fear of imminent serious physical harm
  - Abuse to children
  - Stalking
  - Sexual Assault
- Victims of Sexual assault or a parent, foster parent, legal guardian, or caretaker with at least partial physical custody of a victim of sexual assault as defined in 12 V.S.A. § 5131(5).
- Victims of Stalking or a parent, foster parent, legal guardian, or caretaker with at least partial physical custody of a victim of stalking as defined in 12 V.S.A. § 5131(6)

## How do I request an Early Lease Termination?

- You may request that you be released from your lease early, without penalty if:
  - You are in imminent fear of harm due to abuse, sexual assault or stalking or were the victim of sexual assault that occurred on the premises within the last 6 months
  - You give 30 days written notice AND
  - You provide documentation from a court, law enforcement, or other government agency, a domestic or sexual violence program, a legal, clerical, medical, or other professional from whom you or your minor or dependent, received counseling or other assistance concerning the domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking; OR a self-certification signed under the penalties of perjury. \*The landlord cannot share this information with anyone else.

## What if I need to leave immediately?

You may leave as soon as you need to. You will be responsible for the rent from 30 days that you give notice.

## Resources

If you would like to learn more about how this law could help you, please consult with a domestic/sexual violence advocate or an attorney prior to contacting your landlord.

- Statewide Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-228-7395
- Statewide Sexual Violence Hotline: 1-800-489-7273
- Find your local domestic or sexual violence program or a copy of the self-certification form at [www.vtnetwork.org](http://www.vtnetwork.org)
- Legal Help: <https://vtlawhelp.org/>