

VERMONT HOUSING PROTECTIONS

FOR SURVIVORS OF ABUSE, SEXUAL ASSAULT AND STALKING

Effective July 1, 2019, a new Vermont law establishes housing protections for survivors of abuse, sexual assault and stalking. The law applies to all Vermont rental housing and may allow survivors to change locks or terminate their lease early without penalty.

Who is covered under these protections?

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 V.S.A. 15 § 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)

What do these new protections cover?

- A survivor is protected from being discriminated against in housing, due to their victim status.
- A protected tenant may request that they be released from their lease early, without penalty, if:
 - They are in imminent fear of harm or were the victim of sexual assault that occurred on the premises within the last 6 months
 - Protected tenant gives 30 days notice
 - Protected tenant provides written notice
 - Protected tenant provides third-party documentation or self-certification of victim status
- A protected tenant may request a landlord change the locks within 48 hours if:
 - They are in imminent fear of harm or were the victim of sexual assault that occurred on the premises within the last 6 months.
 - ◆ If the landlord does not change the locks within 48 hours, the protected tenant may change the locks.
 - ◆ The protected tenant is responsible for the cost, unless otherwise agreed upon.
 - ◆ All tenants and landlord must be given a copy of new keys.

* If the perpetrator of abuse, sexual assault, or stalking is also a tenant in the dwelling unit, the protected tenant shall include with his or her request a copy of a court order that requires the perpetrator to leave the premises

- A protected tenant may request permission to install security measures on the premises. A landlord may not unreasonably refuse this request. The protected tenant is responsible for installation, operation and any damages resulting.
- An owner, landlord, or housing subsidy provider who possesses documentation or information concerning a protected tenant's status as a victim shall keep the documentation or information confidential and shall not allow or provide access to another person with few exceptions in 9 V.S.A. §4474.

Resources

- For landlords: Vermont Landlords Association <https://vtlandlord.com/> or 1-802-985-2764
- Find your local domestic or sexual violence program here: <https://vtnetwork.org/get-help/>
- Legal Help: <https://vtlawhelp.org/>