

FAQ: LOCK CHANGES AND SECURITY PROTECTIONS IN RENTAL HOUSING FOR SURVIVORS OF ABUSE, SEXUAL ASSAULT OR STALKING

A new Vermont law allows survivors of domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking you to change locks and/or install other security measures in 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 a lock change?

- Make a request to the landlord that the locks be changed within 48 hours due to an imminent fear of harm due to abuse, sexual assault or stalking or stating that you are a victim of sexual assault that occurred on the premises within the last 6 months. You may use the self-certification form found at www.vtnetwork.org/housingprotections
- If the perpetrator of abuse, sexual assault, or stalking is also a tenant in the unit, you need to include with your request a copy of a court order that requires the perpetrator to leave the premises.

What if my landlord does not change the locks within 48 hours?

If the landlord does not change locks as requested, you may change the locks.

Who pays for lock changes?

You are responsible for the cost of lock changes, unless otherwise agreed upon.

What about other security measures such as an alarm system or security cameras?

You may request permission to install security measures on the premises. A landlord may not unreasonably refuse this request. You are responsible for installation, operation and any damages resulting.

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 here: <https://vtnetwork.org/get-help/>
- Legal Help: <https://vtlawhelp.org/>
- Contact your local domestic or sexual violence programs or visit <http://www.ccvs.vermont.gov/support-for-victims/victims-compensation-program> to see if you are eligible for financial assistance for lock changes