

Your Rights & Duties as a Tenant:

Utility Shut Offs and Lockouts



Can my landlord change the locks or shut off my utilities?

Even if you are behind on rent or if your landlord is trying to kick you out, they cannot lock you out or shut off your utilities to get back possession of your rental unit without a court order, like an eviction order. If your landlord locks you out of your apartment without a court order, you can get a court order that allows you to back in. If you are locked out without a court order, like an eviction, and must get in to claim your property, you can enter the apartment, but it is your responsibility to leave it secure and undamaged.

If your landlord agreed to pay for the utilities and then has them shut off, you may be able to transfer the utility bills into your own name to continue the utility service. If your landlord orders a shut-off of your water services or fails to pay the water bill, you may sue your landlord to force your landlord to restore water services.

Be prepared to prove your lock out or shut off case.

- Keep all rent receipts.
- Have a copy of your lease showing who is responsible for the utilities.
- Make copies of all notices you give the landlord and the ones he or she gave you.
- Put all agreements in writing; have your landlord sign and date them.
- Witnesses are persons who can testify in court about what they saw or heard. The best witnesses are those who are not relatives and who have no financial interest in your case.

ABLE ADVOCATES
FOR BASIC LEGAL
EQUALITY, INC.



Together, we do the
community **justice.**

The work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding under an award with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The substance and findings of the work are dedicated to the public. The author and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government.