

INTERVENTIONS TO ASSIST PERSONS WHO "COLLECT"

There is an increasing awareness that persons who "collect" items that can clutter their apartment need very careful and ongoing intervention. This is not a housekeeping problem and cannot be addressed by simply bringing in a cleaning service or clearing collected items. In fact, doing so could cause trauma and anxiety. Tenants have been found to benefit from assistance in sorting items and boxing those that the tenant agrees can be discarded. This activity must involve the tenant. Some peer support specialists have been helpful with required clean-ups.

Bed Bugs

Bed bugs are not caused by collecting, or even by unsanitary conditions. They do not carry disease and their bites, while disturbing, will not cause illness. Bed bugs travel in furniture, suitcases and throughout a building. They may hide and hibernate in walls and floors. Effective repeated extermination of every unit in a building is the only way to eliminate them. While it is the landlord's responsibility to exterminate, clutter which interferes with effective extermination can become a housing issue.



WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK THERE HAS BEEN ILLEGAL DISCRIMINATION?

**For more assistance contact
Connecticut Legal Rights
Project, Inc.
Toll Free 1-877-402-2299
TTY 860-262-5066
860-262-5030
www.clrp.org**

Connecticut Legal Rights Project, Inc., is a statewide non-profit agency which provides legal services to low income persons with mental health conditions, who reside in hospitals or the community, on matters related to their treatment, recovery, and civil rights.

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*The information in this pamphlet is based on laws in CT as of October, 2019. We hope that the information is helpful. **It is not intended as legal advice for an individual situation.** If you need further help and have not done so already, please call Connecticut Legal Rights Project or contact an attorney.*



CONNECTICUT
LEGAL
RIGHTS
PROJECT, INC.

HOUSING RIGHTS FOR PERSONS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS



#4

HOUSEKEEPING AND COLLECTING ISSUES

LEGAL REPRESENTATION FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS



Federal and state laws protect the rights of persons with mental health conditions and other disabilities to live in the housing of their choice without discrimination. This is not a preference. Fair housing laws give persons with disabilities the same opportunity to obtain or retain housing as persons who do not have a disability.

FAIR HOUSING LAWS APPLY TO MOST HOUSING

The State of Connecticut's legal protections for persons with disabilities generally apply to all housing, except an owner-occupied building with no more than two rental units; and the rental of a room or rooms in a unit where the owner lives.

NO DISCRIMINATORY LEASE PROVISIONS

Landlords are not allowed to impose additional lease provisions on tenants with disabilities such as medication compliance, confirmation that the person can live independently, or more frequent inspections.

LANDLORD'S RIGHT TO INSPECT APARTMENTS

Landlords do not have the right to inspect an apartment without cause. The landlord may,

with reasonable advance notice and agreement from the tenant, access the premises for legitimate purposes, such as making repairs. The tenant is not allowed to refuse a reasonable request, but can change the date or time to one more convenient for the tenant.



UNSANITARY VS. UNSAFE CONDITIONS

Tenants are required to keep the premises in a safe and sanitary condition that does not disrupt the other tenants or endanger their health and safety. However, this does not mean that tenants must keep the apartment absolutely clean and free from clutter.

Sometimes landlords, or even service providers, may try to impose housekeeping standards on tenants.

Tenants whose apartments are a direct threat to the safety of other tenants, because of fire hazard, and/or insects or rodents, due to clutter, poor housekeeping or other conditions, can be evicted for causing a direct threat — but that danger must be documented by experts such as the fire or public health departments. If there is no threat or hazard to safety, simply "hoarding" is not a ground for eviction.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR HISTORY OF UNSAFE CONDITIONS

A prospective tenant who has a history of unsafe conditions in prior apartments may be required to allow inspections or other interventions if an accommodation of that history is requested by the tenant.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS TO ADDRESS UNSANITARY CONDITIONS

Courts have ruled that a tenant with disabilities, such as psychiatric disabilities, that affect the tenant's motivation, concentration and organization, and contribute to the condition of the apartment, may request a reasonable accommodation for additional time to clean the apartment.

If the landlord/property manager is aware of the disability and the tenant requests more time, that must be treated as a reasonable accommodation request. A request for a reasonable accommodation can be made orally and need not use the words "reasonable accommodation." However, CLRP suggests that requests be in writing to make a record. A landlord or housing authority cannot require that a request be made only on a specific form. (See CLRP's Housing Rights Flyer #3 on Reasonable Accommodations for more information.)