

TENANT RIGHTS & RESOURCES

In the City of Bellingham

The following information was compiled to assist tenants in understanding their rights and responsibilities, and the resources available to them.

Moving In

Are you paying a security or damage deposit? If so, Washington State Law (RCW 59.18.260) requires that you receive a detailed move-in checklist or written statement that documents the condition of the unit. Before moving in your belongings, you and your landlord or property manager should each walk through the unit and note any existing issues, and you should both sign the checklist. Your landlord or property manager must provide you with a copy of this list.

Your Rights & Responsibilities as a Tenant

Most of the laws that cover the renter-landlord relationship are described under the Washington Landlord Tenant Act. You can find the full legal text here:

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=59.18>

A great source of easy-to-understand information about housing laws in Washington State can be found at <https://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/issues/housing>.

Dispute Resolution Support

If you are having a conflict with a property manager, landlord, neighbor, or roommate, you can get mediation or conflict resolution support through the Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center. Visit <https://www.whatcomdrc.org/housingstability> or call 360-676-0122 ext. 115.

Domestic Violence Help

If you are experiencing abuse of any kind in your home, or if you aren't sure, you can reach the DVSA hotline any time of day or night: 1-877-715-1563. There are special protections for survivors of domestic violence which can help you leave an unsafe housing situation.

Housing Discrimination

Federal Fair Housing Law protects people from discrimination because of their race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, disability, or family status (having children or being pregnant) when obtaining or retaining housing. State and City law also protects against discrimination due to your source of income, age, or Veteran status. If you think you may have experienced discrimination because of any of these characteristics, contact the Fair Housing Center of Washington for guidance: <https://fhc.washington.org/> or (253) 274-9523.



Whatcom Landlords &
Housing Professionals

Learn more on the City's website: <https://cob.org/services/housing>

Rental Registration Program

The City of Bellingham has a Rental Registration & Safety Inspection program. Your unit should be registered and undergo periodic inspections. To learn more about the program, and check if your unit is registered, go here:

<https://cob.org/services/permits/rentals/registering-a-rental-unit>

Substandard Housing Concerns

A resident of the City of Bellingham that has health and safety concerns regarding the condition of their unit can call into the Permit Center at 360-778-8300 or submit a Code Enforcement Request: <https://cob.org/services/permits/rentals/code-enforcement-assistance>

Garbage and Recycling

Please see your lease for specific requirements regarding garbage, compost, and recycling. In addition, Whatcom County has a useful online tool to help you figure out how to properly dispose of what: <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/3296/Garbage-Recycling>.

Rent and Utility Assistance

Opportunity Council Community Resource Center

1111 Cornwall Ave., Bellingham, WA

9am-4pm, Monday-Friday

Phone: (360) 734-5121

<https://www.opppo.org/basic-needs/housing/help-with-rent/>

The Community Resource Center is the first stop when you need help with housing, bills, food, or other basic needs.

Opportunity Council Energy Assistance Program

Phone: (360) 255-2192

<https://www.opppo.org/utilities/#help-with-utility-costs>

Opportunity Council may be able to help with the cost of electricity, natural gas, propane or heating oil, wood pellets or fire logs. OC connects community members with programs that are designed to reduce the amount you need to pay.

PSE - Bill Discount Rate

<https://www.pse.com/en/account-and-billing/assistance-programs/>

Ongoing help on your monthly energy bill. Depending on your household income and household size, you can save 5% to 45% a month on your bill.

Opportunity Council Weatherization and Home Repair

Phone: (360) 734-5121 ext. 1020

<https://www.opppo.org/home-repair/>

Improvements to home energy efficiency, durability, indoor air quality and health and safety concerns. Available for both homeowners and renters with landlord permission.