

Continued from interior panel

You should tell the clerk that you want to start an HP action against your landlord. The clerk will give you some papers to fill out and will ask you to pay a \$35.00 filing fee for an index number. If you are unable to pay that amount, you can file as a “poor person.” The clerk will give you a “poor person’s” order to fill out and will tell you to go to a judge in the building to have it signed. Then you take the signed order back to the clerk to get a free index number.

Each Housing Court has a table staffed by legal advocates where you can ask questions and get assistance. The Legal Aid Society has paralegals in each courthouse every weekday morning, and each courthouse also has a “pro se” clerk who assists clients who do not have attorneys. You may also contact the following numbers and get the location of your neighborhood legal services office where you may get further assistance.

- Legal Aid Society .....(212) 577-3300
- Legal Services of New York City.....(212) 431-7200

### Housing Info-Lines

If you have questions, the following numbers may be helpful. You may also reach the City’s information and referral line by dialing 311.

- Borough Rent Office (DHCR)
  - Central (and Rent Infoline) .....(718) 739-6400
  - Bronx.....(718) 563-5678
  - Brooklyn .....(718) 722-4778
  - Lower Manhattan
    - 110th Street and below .....(212) 480-6700
  - Upper Manhattan
    - 110th Street and above .....(212) 961-3000
- Community Housing Improvement Program .....(212) 838-7442
- Fair Housing Hotline .....(212) 306-7588
- Low Income Housing .....(212) 306-3000

### Websites for Tenants and Landlords

- NYC Information Home Page:  
[www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/mac/html/real.html](http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/mac/html/real.html)
- New York City Public Advocate:  
[www.pubadvocate.nyc.gov](http://www.pubadvocate.nyc.gov)

See also **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: EVICTION PREVENTION AND EMERGENCY SHELTER**

For in-depth information, contact The Children’s Aid Society at (212) 358-8930 to get a complete set of **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS** brochures and other legal advocacy publications in both English and Spanish. You may also log onto [www.childrensaidsociety.org](http://www.childrensaidsociety.org).



For over 150 years, The Children’s Aid Society has been assisting New York City’s children and their families without regard to race, religion, nationality or socio-economic status. Children’s Aid helps children in every aspect of their lives from infancy through adolescence, providing guidance and resources to ensure a child’s current well-being and future potential. With over 100 programs and 40 locations in New York that touch the lives of more than 150,000 children every year, Children’s Aid is one of the country’s largest and most innovative child and family social service agencies.

[www.childrensaidsociety.org](http://www.childrensaidsociety.org)

THE CHILDREN’S AID SOCIETY  
KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

tenant  
awareness  
and  
organizing



When you sign a lease with your landlord, you are entitled to a clean, safe, and properly maintained apartment and building. If your landlord is not living up to his part of the bargain, you have the right to seek relief.

### Both tenants and landlords have responsibilities.

As a tenant you are responsible for paying your rent on time, following the rules of your lease, and respecting the landlord's property.

Your landlord is responsible for providing:

- Adequate heat
- Cold and hot water at a constant temperature of at least 120°
- Decent living conditions

### How should I address complaints?

If you have any problems with your apartment, you should contact the building owner. If you do not know who owns your building, you may go to:

- Housing Preservation and Development, (HPD) Office of Code Enforcement, 39 Broadway, 9th Floor, Manhattan. You should go in person and ask to see the Multiple Dwelling Registration Card (MDR) for your building. If you need assistance, one of the clerks will assist you.
- The City Register Office, 31 Chambers Street, Manhattan. At this office, you can ask to see a copy of the deed for your building. The deed should have the information you need in order to contact the landlord.

After you obtain the address of your building owner, you should write a letter describing conditions in the building. We recommend that you send the letter by certified mail and keep a copy for your files.

In the letter, you should:

- Be very detailed when describing your problems

- List building-wide conditions separately from conditions in your apartment
- Let your landlord know what needs to be done and by when
- Give the landlord a deadline by which he or she must respond to your requests

### What should I do if my landlord does not respond to my letter or refuses to make the necessary repairs?

One way to force your landlord to make repairs is to withhold your rent. *However, you must still put the rent money aside every month because you may have to pay the back rent after the repairs are completed. If a judge orders you to pay the back rent and you do not have it, you can be evicted.*

If your landlord still refuses to make repairs, you can start a Housing Part (HP) action. HP actions are lawsuits filed by a tenant or group of tenants against landlords to force them to repair bad conditions and provide essential services.

### How do I begin an HP action?

- Send your landlord a letter like the one discussed above, or organize the tenants in your building and send a letter as a group, if possible.
- Call the HPD Code Enforcement Unit at (212) 960-4800 and ask them to send an inspector to your apartment to record the violations. It may take several calls to get the appointment set up. When the inspector comes to your home, have a list ready and point out all of the areas that need repair. Make sure that the inspector writes everything down and request a copy of the inspection report.
- For heat and water violations, keep a record of the days that you do not have enough heat and/or hot water. You must record *indoor and outdoor temperatures at least three times a day*, every day that the heat is not provided.



The law requires that your landlord maintain the following temperatures from October 31 to May 31:

| Time           | Outdoor Temperature | Required Inside Room Temperature |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| 6 a.m.–10 p.m. | Below 55°           | 68° or above                     |
| 10 p.m.–6 a.m. | Below 40°           | 55° or above                     |

### What do I need to know about Housing Court?

When you have completed everything listed above, go to the Clerk's Office in your borough's Housing Court. The Court opens at 9:30 a.m., the Clerk's Office at 9:00 a.m. The addresses and phone numbers of each borough's court is listed in the box below:

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Manhattan | 111 Centre Street<br>(212) 791-6000           |
| Bronx     | 851 Grand Concourse<br>(718) 590-3570         |
| Brooklyn  | 141 Livingston Street<br>(718) 643-7528, 7529 |
| Queens    | 120-55 Queens Boulevard<br>(718) 520-3623     |

Continued on following panel