

Telephone Guide

Calling About an Apartment

Directions

This worksheet is designed to help you determine whether an apartment would be appropriate for you and, if applicable, your family. The questions about screening are important because many landlords charge an application fee to screen for criminal history, credit history, and rental history. If you know in advance the “tolerance level” of the landlord (that is, whether the landlord will rent to people in your situation), you can decide if it would be worth paying the fee and applying for the apartment.

Tips to Help You With The Call

- If possible, call from a quiet place so you can hear the landlord. It is also better if the landlord doesn't hear a lot of noise (like people yelling) in the background.
- Make sure to review the list of questions below so you are prepared when you call the landlord.
- Know when you can move.
- Write down the name of the person you talked to, his or her phone number, and the date you made the call in case you need to call back to ask more questions or to reschedule an appointment.
- Since you may have to contact several landlords to find an apartment, use the “Housing Search Tracking Worksheet” to help you remember when you have scheduled an appointment to look at an apartment, where you have submitted applications, and when and with whom you need to follow up about an apartment.
- Ask a supportive friend or caseworker to view apartments with you and meet with landlords.
- Before signing anything, make sure you understand what you are signing or bring the lease to a friend/caseworker to review.

Telephone Script

“Hello, my name is _____. I'm looking for a (1,2,3,4,5) bedroom apartment for (this month, next month, two months from now). Do you have any available units?”

If the landlord does not have any available units: “Do you have any other properties with a vacancy?”

If the landlord does have a vacancy, ask the following questions. Be sure to write down the answers. If the landlord has two or more apartments, write down the answers for each unit.

Table One: Questions about the Apartment

	Apartment 1	Apartment 2
<i>Write in the date and time that you called</i>		
What is the address of the property?		
What date is the unit available?		
Do you charge an application fee? <i>If he/she says yes: How much?</i>		
What is the monthly rent?		
How much is the security deposit?		
What utilities would I pay?		
Do you know approximately how much utilities for that unit cost each month?		
How many people are allowed to live in the unit?		
What is the minimum lease you require (how many months)? <i>If yes, Is the rent price different for each lease term?</i>		
Do you require me to have a certain income to rent the unit? <i>If yes, how much?</i>		
Are there laundry facilities on-site? <i>If no, is there a Laundromat nearby?</i>		
Is the apartment near the bus line?		
Are there any move in specials or incentives?		
<i>If you've had credit problems:</i> Do you work with people who have had credit problems in the past?		
<i>If you have been evicted:</i> Do you work with people who have evictions that can be explained?		
<i>If you have a criminal history:</i> Do you work with people who have a criminal history if they've worked to improve their life?		
<i>If you have a disability:</i> Can you accommodate people with disabilities?		
<i>If you have pets:</i> What are your rules about pets?		

The landlord may ask you to explain the circumstances if you have bad credit, a criminal history, or prior evictions. They may want to know dates, places, and if you owe any money. The best response is to be truthful, take responsibility for your mistakes, and talk about what you are doing to make sure it never happens again. You may want to write some notes about your circumstances below to make sure you are prepared to answer the landlord's questions.

Here are the things that might show a landlord how you are improving your life:

- Employed for ____months/years
- Going to school (or job training)
- Working with a credit counselor
- Paying off money you owe
- Established a savings account
- Taking classes on budgeting your money
- Completed treatment and sober
- Working with a social worker
- Ended a bad relationship
- Taking classes about being a better tenant

If the landlord is willing to work with people in your situation:

Is it possible to set up a time to see the apartment? When? _____

Can you give me directions from (where you are living/staying)? _____

Can I have your name again, in case I need to call you back? _____

And what is the best number to reach you at? _____

Be sure to thank him or her before hanging up.

Table Two: Follow-Up		
	Apartment 1	Apartment 2
Apartment address		
Date and time of appointment		
Did you fill out an application? <i>If yes, when will the landlord be contacting you with a decision?</i>		
Did you get the apartment? <i>If yes, when is the move-in date?</i> <i>If no, what was the reason provided?</i>		