



## **Unable to Pay Rent Because of the COVID-19 Pandemic? Here's What You Need To Do:**

**If you are unable to pay rent because of circumstances related to the COVID-19 Pandemic, you may have a defense if your landlord attempts to evict you.** Many city and county governments have created a defense for tenants whose landlords attempt to evict them for not paying rent during the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to raise this defense effectively, however, you need to provide evidence that the pandemic has made it difficult to pay your rent. You also must notify your landlord immediately that you will be unable to pay rent due to the pandemic. Here are the steps you should take to ensure you receive the protection you deserve:

- 1. Compile as much proof as you can that COVID-19 impacts your ability to pay rent.** If your employer sends you a letter or email notifying you that you will lose hours or lose your job because of the pandemic, keep a copy. Also collect the following documents and keep them somewhere safe where you can easily find them later:
  - Paystubs showing reduced hours;
  - Doctor's letter stating that you or someone close to you has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
  - Invoices for any medical care needed;
  - Receipts for any supplies bought specifically in order to respond to the virus, such as medication or facemasks;
  - Receipts for all necessities, such as groceries and transportation, purchased while the emergency order is in place;
  - Bank statements;
  - All communications from your employer, including letters, emails, text messages, messages on alternative messaging platforms like Slack or Signal, and voicemails;
  - All communications from your landlord, including letters, emails, text messages, messages on alternative messaging platforms like Slack or Signal, and voicemails.

If you are self-employed or work as an independent contractor (including Uber and Lyft drivers), documenting the impact of COVID-19 on your job is likely more difficult. Compiling the following documents will be useful in raising this defense:

- Any communications with clients in which the client has cancelled your services while the emergency order was in place. This includes letters, emails, text messages, messages on alternative messaging platforms like Slack or Signal, and voicemails;
- Past bank statements showing that you earned more money before the pandemic than you have earned after the pandemic;

- Printouts from mobile payment services such as Venmo, Cash App, and Zelle, showing that you earned more money for work before the pandemic than you have earned after the pandemic;
  - Monthly “Summary of Earnings” statements from companies you contract for, such as Uber or Lyft.
2. **Contact your landlord.** Let your landlord know in writing that it may be difficult for you to pay your rent due to the pandemic. It is required under many state and local laws that you inform your landlord for this defense to apply. In your letter, state “I cannot pay rent due to circumstances related to the COVID-19 Pandemic and am covered under state and local law”. Don’t forget to date and sign the letter and save a copy. Also be sure to save any response from your landlord, including letters, emails, text messages, messages on alternative messaging platforms like Slack or Signal, and voicemails from your landlord. Inner City Law Center has written a sample letter that you can use in order to notify your landlord. The sample is available on our [website](#).
3. **Speak with an attorney.** There are attorneys who will help some tenants for little or no cost. If you anticipate complications with your housing due to the pandemic, reach out to one of the following organizations. If you receive a notice from your landlord to pay rent or quit the premises, reach out to an attorney immediately.
- **Inner City Law Center:**
    - Current Inner City Law Center clients should dial our main line at (213) 891-2880, dial the extension of the attorney or paralegal who is helping you with your case, and leave a voice message.
    - Potential new clients who are facing possible eviction at the Stanley Mosk Courthouse at 111 N. Hill Street should email [evictions@innercitylaw.org](mailto:evictions@innercitylaw.org). We will make every effort to reply to your email within two business days.
  - **Eviction Defense Network:** Potential clients should email [askanattorney@edn.la](mailto:askanattorney@edn.la) or text or call (213) 537-5473.
  - **Shriver Project:** Potential clients whose case is at the Stanley Mosk Courthouse can call the Shriver Hotline at (818) 485-0576 or email [ShriverSHpublic@nsls.org](mailto:ShriverSHpublic@nsls.org)
  - **Neighborhood Legal Services Los Angeles:** Current Neighborhood Legal Services clients should contact the staff member who has been helping you. Potential new clients should contact the Neighborhood Legal Services General Help Line at 1-800-433-6251. The help line is open between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
  - **Public Counsel:** Current Public Counsel clients should contact the staff member who has been helping you. Potential new clients should call Public Counsel at 213-385-2977, ext. 100, and leave a voicemail. On the voicemail, the potential client should explain the exact legal issue that the client is facing and leave contact information. The call will then be routed to the Public Counsel project

most suited to provide the services needed.

- **Bet Tzedek:** Current Bet Tzedek clients should contact the staff member who has been helping you. Potential new clients should call the Bet Tzedek intake line at 323-939-0506.
- **Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles:** Current LAFLA clients should contact the staff member who has been helping you. Potential new clients should call the LAFLA help line at 1-800-399-4529. This line will be open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., or from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. for online intake only. A potential new client can also apply for services online at <https://lafla.org/get-help/>.