

## About FloridaLawHelp.org

FloridaLawHelp.org is administered by Florida Legal Services, Inc. and is produced in cooperation with Pro Bono Net and the legal services organizations and government agencies throughout Florida and the United States.

This brochure is for general education only. It is not intended to be used to solve *individual problems*. If you have specific questions, see an attorney.

The Florida Bar Foundation, with Interest on Trust Accounts program funding, provides support for this service.



# FloridaLawHelp.org

To locate your local legal aid or legal services office, please visit us on the web at

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

Your local legal aid or legal services office can be located through either the “Find Local Help” or “Directory” links at the top of the page.

If you don't have access to the internet, consult your local Directory Assistance for the number of the legal aid or legal services office nearest to you.

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# FloridaLawHelp.org

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND HOUSING

Have you experienced unwanted touching, unwanted sexual advances, sexual jokes, comments or gestures in your rental housing?

Fair Housing Laws may help you.

## 1. What are my rights?

Under state and federal laws, it is illegal for landlords or their employees to discriminate against tenants because of their sex. They also cannot sexually harass tenants. These laws are known as "fair housing laws." They may protect you from sexual harassment and discrimination in housing.

## 2. What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment can be many things, such as sexual favors, unwanted sexual advances, touching or comments of a sexual nature. For example:

- The landlord tells you he'll only keep renting to you if you go on a date with him.
- A maintenance person comes to fix your sink and makes sexual jokes, comments, and gestures to you while there.
- Your property manager tells you, "I'll take \$100 off your rent—if you..."
- You experience harassing behavior directed at you because of your sex.

## 3. Who must obey the law?

Fair housing laws apply to a variety of people including landlords, property managers, maintenance people and other tenants

If the landlord or manager knew or should have known about the harassment and did not stop it, the landlord or manager could be held responsible.

## 4. What should I do if I have been sexually harassed?

If you are experiencing sexual harassment, act quickly. Tell someone about it. Write down the following:

- What happened.
- When and where it happened.
- The name of the harasser.
- The names, addresses, and phone numbers of any witnesses or any other tenants who have been harassed.

Keep any documents related to the harassment, such as:

- Notes or gifts from the harasser.
- Rent increase notices.
- Warning notices.
- Eviction notices.

## 5. Who can help me?

If you have been sexually harassed in your housing, contact a legal aid attorney or fair housing agency. They can help explain your rights and options. If you fear that the harasser may harm you or your family, call the police immediately.

## 6. Can I be evicted if I report the harassment?

It is illegal for the landlord to try to evict you or raise your rent for reporting the harassment. If you receive any type of eviction notice, call the legal aid office immediately.

## 7. What are some of my options?

If you are a victim of sexual harassment, some of your options include:

- Having legal aid contact the landlord to make the harassment stop.
- Having a fair housing agency investigate the harassment.
- Filing a complaint with government agencies.
- Suing the harasser in court.

You only have a limited time to enforce your rights, so it is important to seek help from legal aid or a fair housing agency quickly.

Housing discrimination is wrong, and it's against the law. If you think your fair housing rights have been violated, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) can help. [Report a complaint at HUD.gov today or call the Department of Housing and Urban Development at: 1-800-669-9777.](https://www.hud.gov)

[To get counseling about the harassment you experienced call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-4673.](https://www.nshh.org/) The caller's phone number is not retained, so the call is anonymous and confidential unless the caller chooses to share personally-identifying information.