

Dakota County Housing Search Resources

Step 1: Preparing for your housing search

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provides a Housing Search Assistance Toolkit that to help you prepare for your housing search. The toolkit contains the worksheets on housing preferences, calling about an apartment, sample rental applications, apartment comparisons, move-in checklists and more. To access the worksheets, visit the HUD Exchange website (<https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/housingsearchtool/?housingsearchtoolaction=public:main.conducting-the-housing-search-resources>).

Before you move to the next step, it is important be aware of any concerns that potential landlords may have regarding your criminal and/or rental background.

1. To view your criminal and rental record, visit the Minnesota Courts Case Records web page (<http://www.mncourts.gov/Access-Case-Records.aspx>). This website will show everything on your record with the exception of arrests that did not result in a conviction.
2. If you have an eviction or unlawful detainer on your record, you may want to pursue an expungement to remove the record of a court case from public view. To learn more about expunging evictions, go to the LawHelpMN.org Expunging an Eviction Case fact sheet (<http://www.lawhelpmn.org/files/1765CC5E-1EC9-4FC4-65EC-957272D8A04E/attachments/FE378404-7D02-4728-80ED-E2E444BAB6C0/h-27-expunging-evictions.pdf>).

Step 2: Searching for housing

- Housing Link (<http://www.housinglink.org/>): A database that connects you with affordable housing options. It also lists subsidized housing opportunities.
- Craigslist (<http://www.craigslist.org/>) or For Rent By Owner (<http://www.forrentbyowner.com/>): Websites for rental opportunities with private landlords.
- Local newspapers (<http://www.ecmpublishers.com/web-publications>): Check out the rental classified sections of local newspapers (ThisWeek, MN Sun, Rosemount Town Pages, etc.).
- Commonbond (<http://www.commonbond.org/>): View and apply for affordable housing opportunities throughout the metro area.
- Life Style, Inc. (<http://www.lifestyleinc.net/>): The U.S. Department of Agriculture maintains a rural vacancy list and many of the properties offer project-based subsidies (where the tenant pays 30 percent of their monthly income toward rent).
- Dakota County CDA (<http://www.dakotacda.org/>): Apply to open housing waitlists (non-Section 8 / Housing Choice Voucher) like the Scattered Site Public Housing and Workforce Housing Program. Contact the Dakota County CDA at 651-675-4400.

Step 3: Navigating obstacles

Housing Link (<http://www.housinglink.org/>) offers helpful tip sheets on dealing with bad credit, handling shaky rental history, communicating your criminal background, getting assistance, answering legal questions and dealing with low income.

Step 4: Signing a lease

The Minnesota Attorney General's Office (<http://www.ag.state.mn.us/consumer/handbooks/lt/>) has developed a handbook to explain the rights and duties of landlords and tenants. It provides a detailed overview of the expectations that exist when you enter into a lease agreement, during your tenancy, and when you end your tenancy.

Step 5: Protecting your rights

Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services (SMRLS) (<http://www.smrls.org/get-help/legal-services/housing>) may be able to assist if your landlord is trying to evict you, raise your rent, shut off your utilities, is refusing to return a security deposit, or is not making necessary repairs. To determine if you are eligible for assistance, contact SMRLS at 1-888-575-2954 or visit their website.

HOME Line (<http://www.homelinemn.org/>) offers free and low-cost legal, organizing, education, and advocacy services so that Minnesota tenants can solve their own rental housing problems. To determine if you are eligible for assistance, contact HOME Line at 612-728-5767 or visit their website.