

# CHA Bulletin

Published by Caribou Housing Agency for Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Participants and Landlords  
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## EVERYONE WHO APPLIES FOR HOUSING HAS THE RIGHT TO BE TREATED EQUALLY

April is National Fair Housing Act, an act that was established a mere seven days after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Originally, in 1968 the Federal Fair Housing Act only protected four classes of people. Those were: religion, national origin, race and color. Throughout the years, several amendments were made to the Act, adding more classes. Today, there seven protected classes:

Color	Disability	Familial Status
National Origin	Race	Religion
	Sex	

According to the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA), in 2019, about 28,800 housing discrimination complaints were filed; 86.75% of those in rental housing. Discrimination is not always obvious.

**Advertising:** Using phrases such as “great for a couple” or “nice quiet mature neighborhood”. Instead of describing the ideal tenant, it is best to focus on the best qualities of the rental unit.

**Screening Applicants:** Screening a potential tenant is not against the law, if the landlord follows the same policies and practices for EVERY potential tenant. While questions about prior tenancies may be asked, landlords should not ask questions such as “how many children” they have. It is better to ask how many household members may be living in the unit.

**Reasonable Accommodation:** First and fore-most it is illegal to deny housing to a person with a service animal. Disability is a protected class. Whether or not the landlord allows pets, the landlord must not use a service animal as the basis for denying housing to a prospective tenant.

**Apartment Rules:** Many landlords have “house rules” which apply to all residences of a unit. It is important that they be written using phrases like “residents or guests” instead of singling out a specific group such as children.

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Fair Housing cont.

**Reasonable Modifications:** Sometimes a potential tenant may need modifications to a unit to use it (i.e., wheelchair ramp, or grab bars in bathroom). Depending on the request landlords, may require the tenant to pay for the modification or remove them from the unit when they leave.

Do your research. At the federal level, the Fair Housing Act only protects seven classes of people. Many states have enacted laws that extend this coverage to more classes of people. In Maine, the Maine Human Rights Act (“MHRA”) has protected classes for housing. Those protected classes are race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, familial status, and receipt of public assistance (i.e., General Assistance, and rental assistance).

For more information on housing discrimination under the Fair Housing Act, look at:

[https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/fair\\_housing\\_equal\\_opp/fair\\_housing\\_act\\_overview#](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/fair_housing_act_overview#) The Fair Housing



## INSPECTION SEASON IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

In just a couple of months, Caribou Housing Authority will start setting up Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspection appointments on units that were not inspected last year (2020) and on new lease ups that have not been inspected yet. We want to make your HQS inspection process run more smoothly and eliminate unnecessary failed items. Here are some tips straight from the inspector’s tool belt!

1. Conduct inspections yourself through the year and especially a week or two prior to the scheduled inspection. This will enable you to make necessary repairs in a proactive manner.
2. During your inspection, check batteries in all smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors and replace as needed.
3. Working ground-fault circuit-interrupted (GFCI) protection must be installed for all outlets within 6’

- of any water source (i.e., kitchen/bathroom/laundry area).
4. All oil and gas furnaces and boilers must be serviced annually and a dated inspection tag must be affixed to the burner.
5. All living rooms and bedroom must have at least one window.
6. Significant deteriorated interior and exterior painted surfaces will be failed even if there is not a child under the age of 6 in the unit.
7. All bedroom and rooms used for sleeping must have an egress window which provides a minimum clear area of 5.74 square fee and meets NFPA 101 Life Safety Code.
8. Uncovered light fixtures, light fixtures without bulbs, or light fixtures hanging by wires will be marked as failed.
9. Bathrooms without an openable window, must have a working exhaust fan.
10. Caribou Housing Authority inspectors will not conduct an HQS inspection without a person 18 years of age or older present in the unit.

## ODDBALL HOLIDAYS TO CELEBRATE

April 25<sup>th</sup> – World Penguin Day  
April 30<sup>th</sup> – National Honesty Day

May 11<sup>th</sup> – Eat What You Want Day  
May 14<sup>th</sup> – Dance Like a Chicken Day  
May 31<sup>st</sup> – World No Tobacco Day



June 8<sup>th</sup> – Best Friends Day  
June 26<sup>th</sup> – Forgiveness Day

July 1<sup>st</sup> – International Joke Day  
July 10<sup>th</sup> – Teddy Bear’s Picnic Day  
July 26<sup>th</sup> – Uncle and Aunt Day

## SECURITY DEPOSIT, A CHALLENGE FOR MANY



As a tenant, you are going to face many challenges. Security deposit conflicts represents one of the most common. These conflicts often arise when property damages are left behind after you move out. You may think that you returned the property in good condition, but the landlord may think otherwise. Luckily, state law helps regulate and protect both parties.

But first things first – *what is a security deposit?* Simply put, a security deposit is a sum of money that a tenant gives to the landlord that is separate from a rent payment. Its purpose is to cushion the landlord if a tenant breaks or violates their lease agreement.

The state of Maine, like all other states in the nation, has laws structuring how landlords should handle their tenant's security deposit. The following are frequently asked questions about Maine's Security Deposit law.

- ***How much can a landlord charge for a security deposit?*** A landlord cannot require a security deposit equivalent more than the rent for 2 months for a rental dwelling.
- ***When should a landlord return a tenant's security deposit?*** Per Maine law, landlords must either return all your security deposit or send you a letter telling you why he is not giving some or all of it back. He must send this letter to your "last known address". Therefore, you should give your landlord your new address, or make sure your mail is being forwarded so that you will receive the letter.
  - If you are a tenant at will (no written lease), the landlord has 21 days after you move out to either give back the deposit or send you the letter.
  - If you have a lease, check to see what it says. If there is nothing mentioned in the lease about return of a deposit, or the lease gives more than 30 days, then the landlord has 30 days to return the deposit or send you a letter.
- ***Why would a landlord keep a security deposit?*** Security deposits are there to protect landlords in the event of lease violations by the tenants. Landlords may keep all or part of the security deposit to cover damages beyond normal wear and tear, nonpayment of rent, or nonpayment of utility charges that the tenant was required to pay.
- ***What is normal wear and tear?*** Some examples of damage and wear and tear may be:
  - Broken/missing blinds
  - Excessive wall damage
  - Broken tiles/torn linoleum
  - Excessive dirty kitchen appliances
  - Broken washer/dryer
  - Pet damage
  - Broken windows/screens
  - Tears/burns in carpet
  - Excessive dirty bathroom
  - Broken/severely damaged kitchen/bathroom cabinets
- ***What if a landlord fails to return the security deposit?***
  - 1) Contact the landlord and ask for the security deposit back.
  - 2) If the 21 or 30 days has gone by and you still don't have the deposit, send your landlord asking for the return of the deposit within 7 days. Write that if your deposit is not returned, you may bring legal action.
  - 3) If you still have not received your deposit, you may sue your landlord in Small Claims Court.

(Per Maine Statute Title 14, Chapter 710-A; Pine Tree Legal, *Rights of Tenants in Maine*)

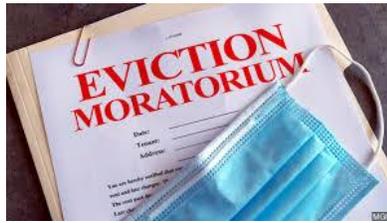
## LANDLORDS' CORNER

**Q.** *A tenant wants to move into another one of my rental unit; they can do that any time they want, right?*

A. No! The contract you signed is for the inspected unit only. If the tenant wants to move into another one of your unit, the tenant must notify Caribou Housing Authority. A new Request for Tenancy Approval form will need to be completed along with a new Housing Quality Standards Inspection on the new unit. The new unit will need a passed inspection, lease and contract before the tenant can move in. HUD will not pay on a unit that has not passed inspection.

**Q** *What happens when a tenant abandons a unit and their things? Will I still get paid from Caribou Housing Authority?*

A. You need to report a tenant who abandons their unit immediately. You will be able to keep the payment you already received for the current month. For example: You received payment on the 1<sup>st</sup>, the tenant abandons the unit on the 10<sup>th</sup> you find out on the 15<sup>th</sup> and report to CHA. Any payment you receive after the month they abandoned the unit, however, will be considered an overpayment that you would be required to pay back to CHA. To prevent any overpayment, report the abandonment of your units as soon as you are aware.



## EVICTION MORATORIUM EXTENDED TO JUNE 30, 2021

Monday, March 30, 2021, just two days before the expiration of the federal eviction moratorium was due to expire, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention extended the order through June.

## WHAT LANDLORDS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT VAWA

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) outlines some landlord responsibilities. The rule does not prohibit owners from terminating assistance or evicting a tenant if a landlord can demonstrate an actual or imminent threat to other tenants or those employed at or providing services to the property (See 24 CFR 5.2005(d)(3)). Eviction or termination of assistance should only be used by a landlord when there are no other actions or remedies to reduce or eliminate the threat. The following actions may be considered to reduce or eliminate an “actual and imminent” threat:

- Barring the perpetrator from the property
- Changing the victim’s locks
- Installing basic security features (better lighting or alarms)
- Encouraging the victim to seek an emergency move
- Allowing an early lease termination • Allowing the victim temporary absence from the assisted unit
- Helping the victim access available services and support and/or directing him or her to Caribou Housing Authority for assistance.

In screening potential tenants, landlord cannot discriminate based on any past or current VAWA claim that a victim may have filed. For participants, it may allow Caribou Housing Authority to offer assistance or otherwise provide service referrals to the victim.



**24 Hour Hotline**  
**1-800-439-2323**

### How can the 24-hour hotline help me?

Whether you are experiencing abuse and violence or you know someone

Calling Hope and Justice Project's hotline gives you access to a range of free services including:

Confidential support with a trained advocate

Someone to help you talk through what happened

Develop a safety plan with advocate

Advocate will help you without judgement & offer you options so you can decide what's best for YOU

Advocate will provide local resources that can assist with your next step toward healing & recovery

COVID-19 has changed many things, but  
**WE ARE STILL HERE** to help & listen



## PORTABILITY: MOVING WITH CONTINUED VOUCHER ASSISTANCE

One of the many benefits to the Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8) is the ability to move with housing assistance. It is important to know what you can and cannot do when it comes to moving in this program.

**Moving to Another Jurisdiction**, aka Portability Housing Choice Voucher Portability allows you to move to a unit outside the city

limits of Caribou and take your voucher with you. You are eligible for Portability if you either lived within the jurisdiction of Caribou when you first applied for a voucher or you have lived in your current unit on the HCV program longer than 12 months. If you are eligible, you can move anywhere in the country where an HCV program exists. However, you should know that every housing agency has its own set of rules. For example: → Differing Payment standards (how much rent is allowed for a unit) → Bedroom size may change I

**Instructions: Portability Move Out Process** You will need to:

1. Complete a "Notice to Vacate" at least 30- days prior and no more than 60 days prior to moving from your current unit.
2. Complete a "Portability Request Form" including the Housing Authority contact information you would like to move to.
3. Your Housing Specialist will provide the portability paperwork and have you sign the portability voucher.
4. Your Housing Specialist will send all required paperwork to the receiving Housing Authority.
5. You will need to contact the receiving Housing Authority to schedule an appointment.

## SPRINGTIME & YARD CLEAN UP!

If you want to burn any brush this spring or have a campfire in your backyard, you need a burn permit. For a \$10.00 fee per calendar year, stop by the Caribou Fire Department, 121 High Street, to pick yours up today.

Any person who is found to be burning without a permit, could be charged with a Class E Crime.

**Fires MUST be attended at all times!** For any fires that get out of control, the permittee may be liable for suppression cost up to \$10,000, in addition to any damages caused to life or property.

Don't take the chance - get your burn permit today.



# Caribou Fire Department



## Open Burning Information



- Any and all open burning (Including, Campfires, Brush, Leaves, Agriculture) **Requires a burn permit.**
- Permits can be revoked at any time due to fire danger levels.
- **NO** barrel burning allowed in Caribou



**ALWAYS HAVE MEANS OF EXTINGUISHING FIRES THAT MAY GET OUT OF HAND.**



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## **DID YOU REMEMBER TO REPORT YOUR CHANGES?**

To be able to assist participants in an efficient and timely manner, the Housing Agency requires that participants report **ALL** changes to their household:

The following updates must be reported in writing:

- Request to add a new household member
- Household member moved out
- New household income
- Increase/decrease in household income

Any/all changes must be reported to the Caribou Housing Agency **within 10 days** of the change/addition. Failure to report the change within a timely manner could result in a breach in your Family Obligations, and possible termination of your Section 8 Voucher assistance.

For more information, contact the Caribou Housing Authority.

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