



Domestic Violence

LANDLORD COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

Seven Essential Steps to Comply with the New Tenant Safety Law

Beginning July 1, 2026, Rhode Island law provides important housing protections for tenants who are victims of abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking. The law establishes a tenant's right to terminate a residential lease early under certain circumstances, requires landlords to protect the confidentiality of victim documentation, prohibits housing discrimination based on the exercise of these rights, and outlines specific responsibilities related to lock changes and tenant safety. The following steps will help landlords understand their obligations and ensure compliance with the new law.

1 DETERMINE WHETHER THE LAW APPLIES

- ☐ Confirm the property is subject to RI's Residential Landlord and Tenant Act.
- ☐ Determine whether the request involves:
 - Early lease termination, or
 - A request to change the locks

Note: Certain occupancies are exempt from the Act, including some transient occupancies such as hotels, motels and certain short-term rentals subject to the state hotel tax.

2 OBTAIN REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

The landlord may request written verification of the tenant's eligibility. The tenant needs only provide one form of acceptable documentation. Acceptable documentation includes:

- ☐ A valid protective order
- ☐ Proof that the tenant has applied for a protective order
- ☐ Verification of a report made to law enforcement
- ☐ Written verification from a qualified professional, including a law enforcement official, attorney, health care provider, social worker, therapist or qualified victim advocate



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PROTECT CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

- ☐ Keep all documentation strictly confidential.
- ☐ Do not disclose information about the tenant or household member except with written consent or as otherwise required by law.
- ☐ Store documentation securely.

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IF A TENANT REQUESTS EARLY LEASE TERMINATION

- ☐ Review the tenant's written notice and supporting documentation.
- ☐ Confirm the tenant will vacate within 30 days unless another date is mutually agreed upon.
- ☐ Charge rent only through the later of:
 - Termination date; or
 - Date the tenant vacates the premises
- ☐ Do not charge an early termination fee or hold the tenant responsible for future rent after the lawful termination date.
- ☐ Return the security deposit and any prepaid rent in accordance with RI law, less any lawful deductions permitted under the lease and RI law.

PRACTICE TIP:

Consider consulting legal counsel before deducting for damage caused by an alleged perpetrator or damage connected to a domestic violence incident.

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IF A TENANT REQUESTS A LOCK CHANGE

- ☐ Review the tenant's request and any supporting documentation.
- ☐ Make a good faith effort to change the locks or authorize the tenant to change them within two business days.
- ☐ If the landlord changes the locks, provide the tenant with a key within the same two-business-day period.
- ☐ A reasonable lock change fee may be charged.
- ☐ If the landlord does not change the locks within two business days, the tenant may change them and must provide the landlord with a key within two business days.



6 IF THE ALLEGED PERPETRATOR LIVES IN THE UNIT

- ☐ Review any protective order or court order provided by the tenant.
- ☐ A landlord may deny a key to the alleged perpetrator only in the circumstances authorized by the statute.
- ☐ Consult legal counsel if questions arise regarding remaining tenants, co-tenants or occupancy rights.

7 AVOID PROHIBITED CONDUCT

DO NOT:

- ☐ Charge an early termination fee.
- ☐ Hold the tenant responsible for future rent after the lawful termination date.
- ☐ Disclose confidential documentation.
- ☐ Refuse to rent to a future applicant solely because they previously exercised rights under this law.

POTENTIAL LIABILITY

Failure to comply with the lock change provisions may result in liability for:

- Two months' rent
- Court costs
- Reasonable attorney's fees

The statute also provides protections for landlords who act in good faith.

BEST PRACTICE

Document all communications, notices, lock changes, refunds and other actions taken to demonstrate compliance with the law.

For more information, please contact the

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