

Apartment Security: **Criminals Want Housing Too**

Rental housing crime studies have repeatedly shown that moderate to high-crime problems can usually be traced back to a small percentage of residents. Those causing the crime problems are often the acquaintances, ex-spouses or boyfriends of a legal resident who decided without permission to move in with a legal resident.

The most effective way to head off this problem is to practice resident screening and enforce clearly defined and articulated community rules that are emphasized during the lease application process.

The resident needs to know that their tenancy may be in jeopardy if they bring in an unauthorized (and unscreened) occupant.

The importance of proper resident screening can be verified across the country, because calls to the police fluctuate proportionally according to the level of tenant screening, consistency of rule enforcement and management turnover.

What should be required to properly screen a tenant?

- Proof of Identity
- Proof of Employment
- Credit Check
- Rental History
- Criminal Background Check
- All Non-Dependent Occupants should be included on the Lease and subject to the same qualifications
- All Children should be identified on the lease
- Maximum Occupancy Limits included on the Lease

“Know Your Residents” **How do you deal with the Unauthorized Occupant?**

- **Establish Written Community Rules**
- **Add New Occupants/Roommates to the Lease if They Pass the Screening**
- **Regularly Audit Units for Unauthorized Occupants**
- **Photograph Each Resident for Lease File Identification**
- **Assign Coded Parking Spaces and Record Vehicle Information**
- **Require Parking Permit Decals on Cars and Motorcycles**
- **Require Overnight Guests to Park in Designated Guest Spaces Only and Get Vehicle Information**
- **Train Staff to be Alert for Illegal Occupants, New Vehicles and New Children**
- **Periodically Inspect Units with Proper Notification**
- **Always Follow Up a Verbal Occupancy Warning with a Letter**
- **Serve Non-Compliance Notices for Every Rule Violation and Be Consistent**
- **Evict Residents Who Violate Community Rules and House Illegal Occupants**
- **Be Fair, Firm, Consistent and Always Document-Document-Document**

In this day and age, resident screening is more than just establishing the ability to pay rent. If you have a higher percentage of unauthorized occupants; and you don't enforce your occupancy rules and you have lowered your screening standards, you run the risk of trouble down the road.

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