



Know Your Rights - Rooms

What is a Room?

As the options for affordable housing available to homeless and low income New Yorkers have become more scarce, some clients and many staff at shelters have started to discuss rooms for rent, however it is important to be informed of the risks involved before considering moving into a room.

Rooms are most often an empty bedroom or basement in a lease holding tenant's home. Every landlord does not allow for subleases, so it is important to ask for a lease when considering a room for rent, as the arrangements being offered may not be legal and may put you in danger in the event of an emergency.

It's important to know that room finders are for profit businesses. The Coalition has received many complaints from clients that they paid money to get help finding a room, but were not ultimately placed in a room. If you give a room finding service money, be prepared that there is a possibility you may not be directed to a room and may not be able to get your money back.

What are my rights in a room?

Your rights in a room are limited. If you have stayed in the room for 30 days, you should have what is called "squatter's rights" which require the landlord or tenant to take you to court to have you evicted.

If you are provided a lease, that lease may afford you some rights which are written in the lease.

If you do not have a lease and have not stayed 30 days, the tenant could lock you out and you might not have a right to get back into the room.

What are my rights in shelter?

Go see any housing option offered by shelter staff and write down what you see.

If the primary tenant cannot provide you with a lease, let the shelter staff know in writing, that you don't believe that it is legal to rent the room and are therefore uncomfortable with the placement.

Ask to see the unit you will live in before you move in. If the landlord or shelter cannot arrange for you to see the room, write this down and ask the shelter staff to include this in your file. You do not need to accept a housing option you have never seen.

If you have other concerns about a room, come to the Crisis Intervention Program and talk to an advocate before you decide to move in. Let your case manager know you can't make a decision until you talk with an advocate.

Crisis Intervention Program- Coalition for the Homeless

129 Fulton Street

Take the 2,3,4,A, C, J or Z train to Fulton Street/Broadway/Nassau Street Stations

***We serve clients on a first come, first served basis. Arrive by 8am to sign up to see an advocate.**