

To begin a suit in Small Claims Court, you must go in person to the court clerk's office. A small fee will be charged to pay for the claim and handling of the mail. You do not need to bring your evidence in order to file a claim, but be prepared to tell the clerk who you want to sue, for how much, and their exact address.

For information and more publications about renting, landlords and tenants can call the **Consumer HelpLine** at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County. The **HelpLine** is answered by volunteers trained to help both tenants and landlords deal effectively with their problems. The **Consumer HelpLine**, at **272-2292**, is free and open Monday—Friday from 10 AM to 2 PM.

*Helping You
Put Knowledge
To Work*

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Settling Landlord/Tenant Disputes



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Disputes often arise between the landlord and tenant over maintenance and repairs, sanitation, and return of the security deposit. Responsible landlords and tenants will work together and resolve disputes. Unfortunately, not all disputes are easily resolved, and you may require outside assistance. Below is a list of problems and agencies that may assist you in resolving those problems.



+ Disputes Involving Repairs and Maintenance

Housing codes protect the health, safety and welfare of residents through a set of basic and uniform standards. These codes govern the facilities and condition, use, occupancy, and maintenance of residential premises, and thus work to prevent housing deterioration. The housing code may set standards for heating and plumbing systems. If you have a complaint concerning maintenance and live with the City of Ithaca, the housing code may protect you. Call **274-6508** for information.

Townships or villages may also have a housing code. Local town, or village clerks will be able to help you.

+ Disputes Involving Possible Health Hazards

In any area where a danger or hazard to public health exists because of housing conditions, the Health Department may intervene. Examples of health hazards include problems with rodents, pests and sewage disposal. Contact them at 401 Harris B. Dates Drive (**274-6688**).

NOTE: UNFORTUNATELY, YOUR PROBLEM WITH REPAIRS MAY NOT BE VIEWED BY EITHER THE BUILDING OR HEALTH INSPECTORS AS BEING SERIOUS ENOUGH TO CONSTITUTE A CODE VIOLATION. YOU MAY NEED TO SEEK CONFLICT RESOLUTION OR LEGAL ADVICE.

+ Disputes Involving the Security Deposit

The best way to resolve a dispute over the security deposit is to come to an agreement (preferably in writing) with the landlord before you move in stating the condition of the apartment and circumstances under which the deposit will be withheld. (See *Before You Sign The Bottom Line* and *Security Deposit Inventory* pamphlets in this series).

Another option for those tenants who are in dispute with their landlords is the Community Dispute Resolution Center located 120 W. State Street (**273-9347**). Trained mediators bring all parties together to discuss issues related to the conflict and to help them resolve the issue. They will deal with most areas of landlord-tenant disputes. There is no cost for this service, but donations will be accepted.

The Small Claims Court is a place where an individual can go to recover a security deposit. You do not need to be represented by a lawyer. In Ithaca, the City Court, 120 E. Clinton St., hears small claims on Wednesday mornings and one evening each month. In towns outside of the city, town justices may hear claims.