

Landlord Booklet



Jefferson County Department of Social Services

Questions and Answers for Landlords with Tenants Applying for or
Receiving Temporary Assistance

Jefferson Co. DSS
250 Arsenal St.
Watertown NY 13601
315-785-3000

Office Hours
Monday-Friday
9:00am-5:00pm

What is Temporary Assistance?

Temporary Assistance is a NYS funded social services program intended to help cover the living expenses of needy individuals and families. Specific to landlords, tenants receiving Temporary Assistance can provide a steady and reliable stream of rent income as a result of State assistance.

What forms do I need to fill out to start renting to tenants receiving Temporary Assistance?

To start the process, a landlord needs to complete a Shelter Verification form to provide to the tenant or it may be submitted directly to Jefferson Co. DSS.

If rent is to be paid directly to the landlord, in addition to completing a Shelter Verification form, the landlord will also be required to complete a W-9 form. Due to the sensitive nature of the information found on the W-9 form, the landlord should submit the W-9 directly to Jefferson Co. DSS.

Both the Shelter Verification form and the W-9 form may be downloaded from the following web addresses:

Shelter Verification form: <http://otda.ny.gov/policy/directives/2010/INF/10-INF12-Attachment-1.pdf>

W-9 Form: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf>

Does the landlord have to fill out an additional W-9 form for every tenant on Temporary Assistance or for every year?

No, a completed W-9 form is sufficient for any number of tenants a landlord may be renting to. A new W-9 form is required if the landlord has an address change in his/her residence or a significant period of time has elapsed since last receiving rent directly from DSS.

What is meant by household composition?

Household composition is a list of all persons in the household. A household includes all related and unrelated persons residing in the applicant/recipient's house or apartment. It is important that the landlord list everyone who lives in the household when he/she completes the Shelter Verification form.

Landlords, not tenants, should complete this form.

Can the rent be sent directly to the landlord each month?

Except in mismanagement circumstances (see question 11), this is a voluntary decision entirely up to the tenant. Any person applying for or receiving Temporary Assistance has the right to request that DSS restrict the rent for his/her grant and issue it on their behalf to the landlord. Payment will be issued as a direct one-party check, payable to the landlord, and mailed to his/her address.

How does a tenant voluntarily request a restricted rent payment and how long will it take to be authorized?

The tenant must complete, sign, and date a "Request for a Voluntary Restricted Rent Payment" form and give it to their DSS Temporary Assistance worker. If the tenant is eligible, DSS will make every attempt to comply with the request within 45-60 days. For example, if a request is received by DSS on October 4, the first payment may be issued for November 1, but should be issued no later than December 1.

The "Request for a Voluntary Restricted Rent Payment" form (also known as LDSS-4580) may be picked up at Jefferson Co. DSS or downloaded from the New York State Website at:

<http://otda.ny.gov/policy/directives/2011/INF/11-INF-14-Attachment-1.pdf>

What happens if a restricted rent payment is requested and the department does not make the change for two months?

Until the restricted rent payment is authorized, the recipient will receive the rental allowance in his/her cash grant and is responsible for paying the rent.

How will the landlord be notified of the status of restricted rent payments?

Tenants always have the responsibility, as a tenant, to keep their landlord informed. DSS will send a notice to the landlord regarding restricted rent payments to which they are a party, and as to when a rent payment begins, ends, or is changed.

What other information can DSS release to landlords in regards to a tenant on Temporary Assistance (TA)?

In general, this department cannot release any information without the tenant's expressed written permission.

What happens if a direct one-party check issued to a landlord is lost or stolen?

The landlord should call Jefferson Co. DSS at 315-785-3000.

What happens if a tenant in receipt of TA has fallen behind in rent?

Mismanagement is determined when a tenant fails to pay rent or to pay it on time for two or more consecutive months. If a recipient fails to pay rent and it is documented in writing by the landlord, that recipient will be required to have the landlord paid directly by a one-party check. Once a mismanagement determination has been made, it follows the tenant to any new address. Note: That so long as a tenant pays at least his/her State set shelter allowance to the landlord on time each month, DSS may not declare financial mismanagement and place the tenant on restricted payment.

What should a landlord do if he/she observes inappropriate behavior or actions by a tenant who receives Temporary Assistance?

DSS has no legal authority to intervene in the day-to-day affairs of a tenant unless it involves child abuse or neglect. Under these circumstances, a landlord should call the Child Abuse Hotline @ **1-800-342-3720**.

Should it be an emergency or a need for further assistance, the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department is able to provide support:

Jefferson Co. Sheriff's Department

753 Waterman Dr.

Watertown NY 13601

Emergency: 911

General Information-(315) 786-2700

What if the tenant/applicant is already behind in rent and has been issued an eviction notice?

Applicants who are found eligible for Temporary Assistance may receive an allowance for rent for a time prior to the time the case was opened only under certain circumstances and if specific conditions are met. Tenants facing eviction should inquire at the time of applying to determine if they qualify.

In which cases are tenants required to have direct rent payments sent to their landlords?

If a family has been receiving Temporary Assistance for more than 60 months or an individual has been dependent on assistance for 24 months, the tenant will no longer receive the check. At this point, the landlord will start to receive direct rent payments from DSS.

Who can receive rent payments from recipients of Temporary Assistance?

While typically our landlords are those who rent out their housing facilities to tenants receiving Temporary Assistance, landlords are not strictly those who rent to someone with whom they have had no previous relationship. Parents, relatives, or caretakers to children and dependents can qualify to receive Temporary Assistance payments for providing housing.

What payments will DSS cover?

DSS is responsible for rent payments only. DSS will not cover security deposits, late payment fees, or eviction fees. The tenant is solely responsible for these payments if they exist.

Why can the rent payments be late if it is being paid directly by DSS?

DSS has a process with payments. Checks are written on Tuesday and sent on Thursday. Payments for rent are sent out from DSS on a monthly basis and will not be sent before the first of the month- no exceptions. In this case, the check's arrival is out of the tenant's control and may arrive past certain rent deadlines. Because of this, DSS will not be responsible for any late fees imposed on the tenant. This process should be taken into consideration if deciding to impose a late fee against a tenant should the check arrive past certain deadlines for rent.

Can DSS tell me who has rented to the tenant in the past?

No, DSS cannot disclose any personal information about the tenant's past history and background.

Who can I contact if I have further questions?

We understand that many cases are unique. For any additional questions or unique situations, please call JCDSS at 315-785-3000.