

Good Practices

Rooming House Landlords

Rooming houses are an important kind of housing for people exiting homelessness, on social assistance or limited income. It is often the most affordable option, but sometimes the living conditions are less than acceptable.

As a landlord, you have a business to run. High tenant turnover is NOT good for business. Research shows that tenants stay longer in a rooming house that uses good practices. Here are some good practices, identified through our research.

🏠 The basis of all landlord-tenant relationships must be respect. *“If you treat tenants courteously and with dignity, they will be a better tenant.”* A good practice is to do something nice for the tenant everyone once in awhile. *“I offer a drive to the food bank each week and I think they appreciate that. It pays off for me.”*

🏠 Check references for all tenants, and involve existing tenants in decisions regarding new tenants is a good practice. Calling local Rooming House owners is a good way to check references. Talk to other landlords as well.

🏠 Having an on-site manager or superintendant is a “must have”. It can improve relationships inside the rooming house substantially and reduce crime, property damage, and undesirable visitors.

🏠 Post “house rules” and enforce them firmly but fairly. Make expectations clear to everyone, and follow up with those who do not respect the rules. “Deal with the rule breakers fast – one tenant can make the whole house unlivable.”

🏠 Having a tenant-to-bathroom / kitchen ratio of around 4-5:1 is a good practice, and have someone clean them daily with tenants being responsible for cleaning up after themselves.

🏠 A house that has some ‘comforts of home’, such as a table with lamp in a hallway, framed art, or common areas for people to gather such as a living room, can instill a sense of community and pride in their space.



All provinces have a Residential Tenancies Act that outlines the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords. Some legal requirements for landlords can include:

- Secure doors and locks to help keep tenants safe;
- Clean accommodation that is in good state of repair;
- All notices served in writings.

Check your provincial legislation. In NB, go to the Service NB website www.snb.ca

🏠 Safety for tenants should be a priority. Each tenant should have a working lock on their door, fire and smoke alarms should be in working order and tested regularly, hallways and fire escapes should be safe and well-maintained.

🏠 Security cameras in common areas will reduce crime. “As soon as I put cameras in, the crime in and around the building dropped.”

🏠 Being knowledgeable about community resources to help tenants with mental health problems, addictions, health problems is a good practice. “Knowing where to send them to get help can solve a problem in my rooming house.” Posting this information on a bulletin board hung in a common area is a practical idea.

🏠 Using a ‘neutral’ mediation service for problems with a tenant is a good practice, and can reduce evictions or people moving out.



The development and promotion of a Landlord’s Association, based upon an established code of ethics, is a good practice. It can lead to increased bargaining power with government, shared knowledge about tenant management, and up-to-date information about grants/loans for renovations or repairs to rooming houses.

Good practices

Rooming house landlords & tenants



A rooming house is a business, and your landlord must be able to make a return on their investment if they are going to be able to offer low rents, and safe housing.

Often times, when there are many people living together, sharing common space, difficulties arise. However, there are things that you can do to make living in a rooming house as good an experience as possible.

First and foremost, the basis all tenant-landlord relationships must be **respect**.

 As a tenant, you must **pay your rent on time**...every month. If you can set up direct payment with your bank, that would be ideal. If rents are paid on time, all the time, the landlord is better able to keep the house well-maintained and keep the rents down.

 You must **adhere to the Rooming House rules**. They are created for a reason – to keep the place safe and comfortable for *everyone*. It's important that you know the rules and follow them.

 If you have **suggestions** for ways to make the rooming house a better place to live, share them respectfully with your landlord. There may be reasons why your ideas cannot be implemented, but sometimes it's worth trying!

 A lot of conflict in rooming houses comes from the way people **take care of the shared spaces**. Tenants can play a big role in keeping the rooming house clean and safe by cleaning up after yourself when you use common facilities like the kitchen and bathroom. If everyone does their part, it will be a more comfortable place to live.

 Doing your part to **help keep the building maintained** can also make it safer for everyone. If you have handyman/woman skills, let your landlord know...maybe you can help with overall maintenance in the building. This would help to keep the building safe and a better place to live for everyone in the building.

 If you have a problem with another tenant or the landlord, try talking to them directly about it first. If this doesn't work, considering trying a **tenant-landlord mediation service**.

 Think about how your activities and behaviours might affect someone else in the building...are your visitors loud when they are coming and going? Do you think your stereo or TV might be bothering others during quiet time? Do you clean up after yourself in the kitchen and bathroom? Do you treat others in the building with respect?



Everyone in the building has a role to play in creating a safe, affordable, clean, comfortable place to live. **What role do you play?**