

Evictions and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Many people are facing job loss, reduced hours, and other hardships during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Below are some questions and answers on how the pandemic, as well as state and federal responses, will impact Orange County landlords.

Q: Can I evict a tenant or shut off water/electricity?

A: Not right now. On March 16, North Carolina courts placed a statewide moratorium on eviction and foreclosure hearings, which will be in effect through June 1. The Sheriff may still serve eviction notices, but the legal hearing cannot proceed during the moratorium.

For federally assisted properties, there is a moratorium on eviction filings for nonpayment of rent and charging late fees under the federal CARES Act, which will be in effect through July 24.

Furthermore, the Governor issued Executive Order No. 124 prohibiting utility shut-offs, late fees, and reconnection fees until May 30.

Q: Does that mean tenants can stop paying rent?

A: No. Tenants should continue paying rent as outlined in their lease. However, many tenants may struggle to pay due to job loss or other hardship. Landlords are encouraged to offer lenience during this time. You may also encourage low-income tenants struggling to make payments or in need of other housing-related support to contact Orange County Housing Help:

Call the Housing Helpline: 919-245-2655 OR Email HousingHelp@orangecountync.gov

Mon – Fri, 2 – 4 PM and

Sun – Thurs overnights (midnight – 6 AM)

Q: Should I accept only online rent payments to minimize contact?

A: Consider the impacts that policy changes will have on tenants. Requiring electronic rent payment creates issues for tenants without online banking or computer access. Consider setting up a secure mail drop-box for tenants who are only able to pay by check or cash.

Q: How do I let tenants know about policy changes due to COVID-19?

A: Provide plenty of notice, through multiple formats, to alert tenants to any changes. Alert tenants of changes several days in advance and through multiple lines of communication (e.g., deliver notices to each unit, post at the leasing office, send emails, leave voicemail messages).

Q: What if I have tenants who don't speak English well?

A: Provide translated materials. To the best of your ability, provide any information on changed policies in English, Spanish, and any other language your tenants speak. The Orange County Human Rights and Relations Department may be able to assist you with translation:

Phone: 919-245-2487 OR Email: Human_Relations@orangecountync.gov