



How OTA Serves the District's Tenant Community

District of Columbia Office of the Tenant Advocate

The OTA has been a voice for D.C. tenants since 2006. We are an independent agency within the executive branch of the D.C. government charged with providing legal, policy advocacy, emergency housing, education, and community outreach services to District renters.

Legal Branch



Policy Branch



Education & Outreach Branch



Emergency Housing Assistance Program





Legal Branch

Provides brief legal services to thousands of tenants, and in certain cases, provides limited or full legal representation. OTA attorneys may also assist tenants in their self-representation efforts and in navigating mediation and other alternate dispute resolution forums.

Legal Branch

Tenants may call **202-719-6560** for issues such as:

- Eviction assistance
- Rent increases
- Lease-related questions
- Pests, mold, and housing code violations
- Security deposit returns
- Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act
- Enforcing tenants' rights

HOW IT WORKS

Legal Branch

Tenant calls **202-719-6560** and explains their legal issue(s) to the intake specialist.

- The tenant is assigned to either a **Case Management Specialist (CMS)** or **Attorney Advisor (AA)** in the order in which the request was received.
- The CMS and AA assignments are in order of availability – tenants will not always be assigned to the same staffer as in previous cases.
- The CMS's and AA's call the tenant to further discuss the issue(s) and provide advice or develop actions to address the issue.
- In some cases, OTA goes to court or refers the tenant to outside legal aid services.



Policy Branch

Works with governmental and community partners and entities, including the DC Council, the Mayor's office, executive agencies, the courts, tenant stakeholders, the tenant bar, advocates and others, to promote better tenant protection laws and policies in the District.



Education & Community Outreach Branch

Develops educational materials, classes, as well as virtual tutorials on issues important to District tenants and participates in community events and activities.





Education & Outreach Branch

Tenants may call **202-719-6560** to request education and outreach services such as:

- Assistance forming or sustaining a tenant association.
 - Customized classes on tenant rights.
- Request OTA attend a community event.
 - Request an OTA listening session.
 - Eviction Prevention classes.





Temporary Emergency Housing Program

Assists tenants who have been displaced by fires, floods, or government closures.

The program is **only activated** when OTA receives an alert from the **Department of Buildings (DOB), DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA), DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services Dept. (DC FEMS)** and/or the **American Red Cross.**





Temporary Emergency Housing Program

OTA provides displaced tenants with **temporary emergency housing** (hotel accommodations), **storage** for personal belongings, and **coordinates** services with other District agencies and community-based organizations.



EVICTON PREVENTION

In the **District of Columbia**, a tenant may be evicted for one of 10 specific reasons.



EVICTIION PREVENTION

The most common reasons for eviction in the District are
(1) nonpayment of rent, and (2) lease violations.

EVICTIION DIVERSION

All tenants being **evicted** for a lawful reason in the District of Columbia **must receive** a **written notice** with various requirements, including the reason for eviction.

EVICTIION PREVENTION

**A tenant who is being lawfully evicted in the
District of Columbia has the right to:**

1. A **written notice** from the landlord describing the reason for eviction;
2. An **opportunity to cure**, if a lease violation is the basis for the eviction;
3. An opportunity to **challenge the landlord's claims** in court;
4. Prevent the eviction by **paying the full amount of rent**, if the action is for nonpayment of rent.

EVICTON PREVENTION



In order to **evict a tenant in the District of Columbia**, all landlords **MUST** go through the

JUDICIAL PROCESS

EVICTION DIVERSION

If the landlord prevails and wins possession in an eviction case, the court issues a **Writ of Restitution** (legal order that permits the landlord to take possession of the rental unit back from the tenant).



In the District of Columbia all lawful evictions **MUST** be scheduled and executed in the presence of Deputy United States Marshals.

EVICTIION DIVERSION

Self-help evictions, when a landlord changes the locks or removes a tenant's belongings from the rental unit without the presence of Deputy United States Marshals are PROHIBITED.



**If you have questions or concerns about
how the OTA serves the District's tenant community,
please contact**

OTA TENANT HOTLINE: 202-719-6560

OTA website: www.ota.dc.gov

OTA social media: @OTAatDC