



**HOUSING RIGHTS CENTER**

WORKING FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY IN HOUSING

November 2020

# Housing Rights **NEWS**

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**HOUSING RIGHTS HOTLINE: 1-800-477-5977**

[www.housingrightscenter.org](http://www.housingrightscenter.org)



# HOUSING RIGHTS NEWS

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WORKSHOPS & WEBINARS  
CASE CLOSED: COVID-19 RECOVERY  
LEGAL AID: MOTHER & DAUGHTER  
STAY HOUSED LA COUNTY

1 (800) 477-5977

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**Facing eviction during  
COVID-19?**

**Get free or low-cost help at  
[www.stayhousedla.org](http://www.stayhousedla.org)**

  
**Stay  
Housed  
L.A. County**

# MESSAGE FROM HRC'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Chancela Al-Mansour, Executive Director



The past several months have been challenging for all of us. The deadly impact of drastic health disparities unfolding during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ongoing struggle to end racial violence and injustice, have highlighted how far our nation has to go in achieving racial justice and equality for Black and other historically oppressed people. And with thousands of households facing eviction due to the devastating impacts of the pandemic, we are also seeing clearly how deeply intertwined housing is with public health and the wellbeing of our society.

The Housing Rights Center has responded to this challenging time by introducing more public programs than ever to meet the changing needs of Los Angeles and Ventura County residents. Our **free weekly workshops** unpack everything tenants and landlords need to know about housing during the pandemic (see p. 3), and our trained Housing Counselors are now available for one-on-one **consultations by appointment** in addition to providing information through our regular hotline (p. 4). We've also tackled the direct impacts of COVID-19 by providing **reasonable accommodation requests** for high-risk populations (p. 5), to enable tenants to stay safely at home and avoid contracting COVID-19 through unnecessary visitations (p. 3-4). Now, we are launching a HUD-funded outreach program on sexual harassment and other forms

of sex-based discrimination, an increasingly urgent issue given the need to remain safe at home.

In addition to our bread and butter of fair housing assistance, I'm excited to announce that HRC now offers eviction prevention and eviction defense services. Through a contract with the County of Los Angeles, a new unit of HRC attorneys is handling Unlawful Detainer cases referred through the **Stay Housed LA County** initiative (p. 6). Stay Housed LA is a coalition of legal service providers working to make legal aid, education, and other vital services as easy to access as possible. Tenants who receive notices or Unlawful Detainers are urged to get help immediately by visiting [www.stayhousedla.org](http://www.stayhousedla.org).

Throughout the pandemic, HRC has administered no fewer than four rental assistance programs for residents of Los Angeles County. To date, HRC has matched thousands of households with rental assistance in the City of Los Angeles and throughout Los Angeles County through funding from the CARES Act and the California Community Foundation. Tenants and landlords seeking rental assistance can find their local programs through 211 or CareLink.

The dedication and commitment of HRC's staff during this time has shown me that we are truly all in this together. I believe that right now, it's more important than ever to connect with one another as we fight to advance equality and justice in our communities. To that end, I look forward to seeing you all—be it in person or through the screen—at our **Housing Rights Summit** in April 2021. ◀

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# GUIDE TO COVID-19 EVICTION PROTECTIONS

## Tenant, Homeowner, and Small Landlord Relief and Stabilization Act (California AB 3088)

If you have not paid rent for any month between March 1, 2020 and August 31, 2020:

- Give your landlord a signed “Declaration of COVID-19 Related Financial Distress,” available at [www.landlordtenant.dre.ca.gov](http://www.landlordtenant.dre.ca.gov).
- If you earn less than \$100,000 per year (\$198,000 if you and your spouse file taxes jointly), you don’t have to supply any documentation on your finances.

If you cannot pay rent between September 1, 2020 and January 31, 2021:

- Pay 25% of your rent for these five months, if possible. This will ensure that you cannot be evicted for not paying the remaining 75% on time.

If you receive a pay-or-quit notice:

- You have 15 days to respond with a signed “Declaration of COVID-19 Related Financial Distress.” This will stop the eviction.
- The notice must come with a blank copy of the Declaration for you to sign and return.

If you receive an eviction notice for another reason:

- The notice must state a valid reason for eviction.
- The landlord may not collect any rent that was unpaid since March 1, 2020.

If you receive a “no-fault” eviction notice:

- You are entitled to relocation assistance equal to one month’s rent.

If you have deferred ANY rent, you must repay it on time:

- Check with your city to find the deadline to repay your deferred rent.
- No deferred rent is due before March 1, 2021.
- Tenants who do not repay their rent can be taken to small claims court to recover the debt.

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS FREE WEEKLY WORKSHOPS



**MONDAYS 1 PM  
FACEBOOK**

### *LIVE Housing Rights Q&A*

Real questions from real people, answered live on Facebook every week. (All questions are anonymized.)

**TUESDAYS 2 PM  
ZOOM**

### *Housing Rights Workshop (English)*

Learn how you are protected from discrimination in housing.

**JUEVES 2 PM  
ZOOM**

### *Taller de Derechos de Vivienda (Español)*

Learn how you are protected from discrimination in housing.

**FRIDAYS 2 PM  
ZOOM**

### *COVID-19 Updates for Tenants and Landlords*

Get updates on the newest laws for tenants and landlords during the COVID-19 emergency. Learn what to do if you can't pay your rent, you received an eviction notice, or you owe rent from previous months and you need time to pay it back.

## FAMILY HOUSING, DISABILITY RIGHTS AND MORE: CATCH UP ON HRC'S SPECIAL WEBINARS

Missed a live workshop? You can still learn your housing rights! View our past presentations at [www.housingrightscenter.org](http://www.housingrightscenter.org). Here are a few special topics you might want to see.

### 1: SEPTEMBER: HOUSING RIGHTS FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

Have you ever been told you couldn't rent with children, or would have to pay a higher rent? State and federal Fair Housing laws prohibit unfair or differential treatment based on familial status. Our September special webinar covered these protections for families and expectant parents.



### 2: AUGUST: DISABILITY RIGHTS & REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

If something in your home is endangering your health or safety, you may be able to request an accommodation or modification on the basis of disability. HRC's August special webinar featured Disability Rights California to share resources and advocacy for disabled tenants.



### 3: EVERY WEEK: UPDATES ON COVID-19 TENANT PROTECTIONS

Can't pay your rent? Got an eviction notice? Confused about the different "eviction moratoriums" you're always hearing about in the news? Every week, the Housing Rights Center shares the latest updates on COVID-19 housing issues and unpacks what they mean for you.



Looking for affordable housing?

## PROJECT PLACE

RENTAL LISTINGS - SEPTEMBER 2020

PUBLISHED BY THE HOUSING RIGHTS CENTER

[www.housingrightscenter.org/rental-listing](http://www.housingrightscenter.org/rental-listing)

# HRC ASSISTS TERMINALLY ILL WOMAN & ELDERLY MOTHER

SCOTT CHANG, DIRECTOR OF LITIGATION

Rosemary” was an 83-year-old woman who served as the primary caretaker for her 38-year-old daughter, “Margaret,” who had a terminal illness. Rosemary first came to the Housing Rights for help when she received an eviction notice from her landlords. The family was current on their rent, and they were good tenants. Even so, they had received a *no-fault notice* to terminate their tenancy within 60 days.

A *no-fault* termination is when owners evict tenants for a reason that is not based on anything the tenant did wrong—for example, because of major construction or the owner’s family member moving in.

At the time, Margaret was in hospice care near her home. She was near the end of her life, and required 24-hour care from her mother and a team of nurses. Neither Margaret nor Rosemary was able to work, and they lived on a fixed income from government assistance. In this situation, finding a new place to live on such short notice was extremely difficult, and they especially struggled to find somewhere close to Margaret’s hospice facility and medical team.

One of HRC’s trained Case Analysts, Srinitha Dasari, made a *reasonable accommodation*

*request* on the family’s behalf for the owners to rescind the eviction notice. Under federal and state fair housing laws, landlords are required to grant these requests in most cases. But Rosemary’s landlords refused, saying they wanted the family out so they could work on superficial upgrades to the apartment. Then, the landlords escalated the notice and filed an unlawful detainer against the family—taking them to court for eviction.

Fortunately, HRC Staff Attorney Azadeh Hosseinian was able to represent the family in court for the unlawful detainer. As part of her defense, Hosseinian noted that the landlords’ refusal to grant the reasonable accommodation request was a form of illegal discrimination against people with disabilities.

Ultimately, HRC’s Litigation Department negotiated with the landlords for a successful resolution. The owners agreed to give Rosemary and Margaret about five more months to move out, and to give those five months rent-free—saving the family about \$15,000 during a critical time. Instead of worrying about being evicted, Rosemary and Margaret were able to spend more precious time together, safely at home. ◀

Get your questions answered by a trained housing counselor—now available by appointment.

Questions about rent increases, security deposits, evictions, repairs, harassment, or any other housing issues?

The Housing Rights Center’s team of trained Housing Counselors are standing by to inform you about landlord-tenant law and fair housing rights.

Email [outreach@housingrightscenter.org](mailto:outreach@housingrightscenter.org) to make an appointment for a one-on-one, confidential phone call or Zoom call. Open hours are:

**11 AM - 2 PM**

**WEDNESDAYS**

Español disponible

**THURSDAYS**

Español disponible

**FRIDAYS**

有中文版

Need help?



## Housing Rights Hotline

Toll Free: 1-800-477-5977

TTY: 1-213-201-0867

Email: [info@housingrightscenter.org](mailto:info@housingrightscenter.org)

Appointments: [outreach@housingrightscenter.org](mailto:outreach@housingrightscenter.org)

# HRC HELPS TENANT RECOVER SAFELY AT HOME FROM COVID-19 AFTER EVICTION NOTICE

LEONA ROLLINS, DIRECTOR OF INVESTIGATIONS

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many people have been unable to work—especially those who have gotten sick—and have feared losing their housing as a result. The Housing Rights Center recently assisted one such person in Los Angeles, who was diagnosed with COVID-19, and successfully helped her stay safely in her home while she recovered.

The complainant, “Ava,” was an African American woman with mental disabilities who lived with her husband and family in unincorporated South Los Angeles. The family received housing choice vouchers (Section 8), and their household

income was dependent on this governmental assistance.

Before she contacted HRC, Ava had already entered into a stipulation agreement with her landlord to vacate her home at the end of the month. But before that day came, Ava tested positive for COVID-19.

She went to the hospital, and after a brief stay there, she was released the recommendation that she self-quarantine for a minimum of two weeks. During her recommended self-quarantine and the “Safer

at Home” orders from public health officials, Ava was unable to go to work. Her search for new housing slowed down; she was unable to find a place that could accommodate her illness and her disabilities. If Ava were to vacate her home by the end of the month as planned, she and her family would have no place to go while she was sick with COVID-19. So Ava turned to

she could have enough time to vacate while healthy.

Thomas also explained to the attorney that landlords are required to grant reasonable accommodation requests if they are not overly burdensome, and provided them with information on the Fair Housing Act (FHA) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Department of Justice

(DOJ)’s Joint Statements on Reasonable Accommodations.

Within 24 hours, Thomas received an email from the landlord’s attorney stating that the landlord would abide by the fair housing laws and grant the complainant’s reasonable accommodation

request. This served as written confirmation that the complainant’s reasonable accommodation request was granted—a success!

Thomas and HRC were elated to share this news with Ava. Now, she can focus on her health and overall wellbeing, knowing that her housing is stable and secure. ◀

**Did you know** that tenants with disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations and modifications in their homes?

Common requests include installing wheelchair ramps, allowing service animals, and delaying landlord entry during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Contact the Housing Rights Center** for help making reasonable accommodation or modification requests.

HRC for assistance.

After receiving Ava’s complaint, one of HRC’s trained Case Analysts, Bradley Thomas, contacted her landlord via their attorney and made a *reasonable accommodation request* on her behalf. A reasonable accommodation is a change to a rule or policy that allows a tenant with a disability to have the same access to housing as a tenant without a disability. In Ava’s case, Thomas requested that the termination date be extended so that

*Note: All complaints to HRC are confidential. HRC has changed the names of the complainants featured in this newsletter, as well as some details of their stories, in order to protect their anonymity.*

# ANNOUNCING STAY HOUSED L.A. COUNTY: EVICTION DEFENSE IS A CLICK AWAY

The Housing Rights Center is proud to join leading legal services and tenant rights organizations in launching Stay Housed L.A. County, an easy online resource for tenants facing eviction during the global pandemic.

It's crucial for tenants who receive unlawful detainers or other notices to get legal assistance immediately. Now, they can visit [www.stayhousedLA.org](http://www.stayhousedLA.org) to be matched with free or low-cost legal services and community groups.

The Stay Housed L.A. coalition also continues to work to achieve a codified right to counsel, which would guarantee all Los Angeles tenants legal representation in case of an eviction.

**Visit [www.stayhousedLA.org](http://www.stayhousedLA.org) as soon as you get an eviction notice.**



Stay Housed LA has the resources you need to know your rights and the legal assistance to back them up.