

For Immediate Release

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Tenant and Landlord Communication is Key During the COVID-19 Pandemic

As advocates, we are advising renters struggling with making their monthly rent payments to be careful what they sign, and calling for landlords to exercise patience and compassion in working with tenants who may need to defer payments during the weeks ahead.

We are grateful for the state's efforts in allowing those who are facing layoffs or furloughs due to the coronavirus to defer rental payments for those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a crucial step in allowing residents to focus on social distancing and remaining healthy. Although the moratorium has provided relief for many renters, the order is not specific in how landlords and tenants negotiate terms of deferment.

We commend landlords and management companies who have provided flexibility and empathy to tenants. This public health crisis affects all Utahns. It is imperative that as tenants work with landlords, they are aware of the terms as well as potential drawbacks of signing a lease addendum.

Many renters are in a state of crisis and panic, however these drafted agreements are voluntary, and should be negotiated and revised before signing. The adaptability of Governor Herbert's Executive Order is practical, and does not require specific lease addendums or deferral applications. If you or a loved one is suffering from health issues or loss of wages due to COVID-19, we recommend consistent correspondence with your landlord as well as keeping detailed documentation of your changing circumstances.

First and foremost, we encourage tenants to write landlords a letter, explaining your situation and attach proof of lost wages or increased costs (childcare, healthcare, etc.). Renters should remain willing and eager to come to an agreement on how to make later rent payments. Unless you have already received unemployment benefits and/or the federal stimulus check, be careful about payment schedule agreements. Ultimately, you have until May 15th to figure out a plan that works for you and your landlord. Send information in an email and follow up with a phone call with your landlord to confirm they have received it.

We are concerned with agreements several landlords and management companies have drafted that may, in effect, hurt tenants more than help them once the Governor's May 15 deadline expires. If you have already signed an addendum or agreement and are concerned about payment schedules or what the new documentation means for you, reach out to the [Utah State Bar](#) about your options or [Utah Community Action](#) for mediation within Salt Lake County.

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