

 <p>NORTHEAST LEGAL AID</p>  <p>LSC America's Partner for Equal Justice LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION</p>	<p><b>Northeast Lawyer For a Day Project</b> <i>A Project of Northeast Legal Aid With Support From The Northeast Justice Center And Private Bar Volunteers</i> <b>978-458-1465</b></p>	 <p>NJ C Northeast Justice Center</p>
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### **Your Housing Rights During the Coronavirus COVID-19 Outbreak**

- 1. Eviction Moratorium:** On April 20<sup>th</sup>, Massachusetts passed an emergency law to stop most evictions. Only evictions involving threat to the health or safety of others may proceed. The moratorium is in effect until August 18<sup>th</sup> or until 45 days after the Governor lifts the state of emergency, whichever comes first. For more information, please go to <https://www.masslegalhelp.org/covid-19/housing>.
- 2. Postponed court dates:** Most case deadlines (such as your “Answer” date if you are a tenant) and trials are on hold. Court hearings will only be held for emergencies, where there is a risk to health or safety. You should receive notice of any new court date by mail. If you don’t, you can look up your case online at [www.masscourts.org](http://www.masscourts.org) or call the Housing Court at **978-689-7833**. There is also a Court HelpLine you can call: **833-912-6878**.
- 3. Access to court:** You can call the court, but except for emergencies, the courthouses are closed to the public. Emergency matters will be addressed by telephone or video conference. Such matters include applications for restraining orders for a lockout, condemnation, no heat, no water and/or no utilities, safety violations, or access for emergency repairs.
- 4. What if I am or have been served with an eviction complaint?** Your landlord cannot send you an eviction notice or file a new case in court unless there is a health or safety risk to others. If you are, or have already been, served with a court complaint, help is available. **Even if your court date is postponed, it is important to file and give your landlord your timely Answer and Discovery and Jury Trial Request to protect your rights as a tenant.** If the “Answer Date” on the Eviction Complaint is between March 16<sup>th</sup> and June 1<sup>st</sup>, it is extended automatically until at least June 1<sup>st</sup>. Call the numbers below to get assistance. We can also email or mail the forms to you, or you can complete them online at <https://www.gbls.org/MADE>.
- 5. Self-help evictions are prohibited.** Unless the Court has issued an order in an eviction it determines to be “essential,” then you cannot be moved out. “Self-help” evictions (other than by court order) or “lock-outs” are illegal, and you can file an emergency motion to stop them. The Housing Court or Legal Aid can help you with the paperwork.
- 6. Mediation assistance is available - get advice before signing an agreement.** Courts cannot enter judgments, including agreements for judgment, **except in “essential evictions.”** The Lawyer for a Day Program (see numbers below) may be able to represent you. With the risks of homelessness during a public health crisis, if you are a tenant, **get advice before talking to your landlord’s attorney, signing any Agreement or agreeing to move out. It will likely be very difficult to find a new apartment during this crisis.** Ask about available rental assistance if you are unable to pay your rent. If you are disabled, you can request help from the Court’s Tenancy Preservation Program.

Legal Aid and volunteer lawyers are available to help elders and low-income parties who don’t have lawyers, either by telephone or e-mail, with any of the above. If you need help, call for an intake/assistance:

**Lawrence/Haverhill area: Myrta Cupeles, Tel. 781-254-2831**

**Lowell area: Eden Chorm, Tel. 781-254-1265**

**Lynn area: Lorraine Medrano, Tel. 781-244-1403**

**For cases in the Salem Session, contact the Essex Cty. Bar Assoc. at 978-500-5790 or [housingldp@essexcountybar.net](mailto:housingldp@essexcountybar.net).**

For more information, all Court Standing Orders can be found here: <https://bit.ly/39CHtlj>