

Massachusetts has strong tenant protections and strict requirements for landlords to pursue eviction, even when a tenant does not have an active lease. A landlord cannot seize or remove pets, lock a tenant out, or remove belongings without a judge's order.

REQUIRED STEPS FOR LANDLORDS TO EVICT A TENANT

1. Provide formal, written notice of intent to evict

A landlord may say *"you have a week to get rid of the dogs or I'm evicting you."* This can sound scary but it is not enforceable without formal written notice that tells you when and why they are ordering you out. This is called a "Notice to Quit." It may also be called a "Termination of Tenancy," "Notice to Vacate," or "Eviction Notice."

A 30-day notice is the standard for any violation that is not unpaid rent. If a tenant is behind on their rent, a 14-day notice can be issued. A tenant is **NOT REQUIRED** to leave by the listed date if they intend to fight the eviction. The "Notice" period is how long the landlord has to wait before they can go to court and receive permission for someone to be forcibly evicted.

2. Serve you with a Summons and Complaint

After the 30-day notice period expires, the landlord must have a sheriff deliver a *"Summons and Complaint."* This starts a legal process where they try to get permission to force you to leave your home. The Complaint will tell you what court your case is in and the reason for eviction. It will not list a court date.

3. File the Complaint in Court

If the landlord decides to continue with the eviction, they must file the Complaint with the court. This is a document that explains why they are taking the tenant to court and details of the cited reason for eviction.

4. Go to Court

Once the landlord files the Complaint, the court schedules a date, time, and place (at least 30 days after filing) for both tenant and landlord to attend mandatory mediation. The landlord must serve the court's notice of mediation to you using a sheriff at least 14 days before the first court date. The notice will tell you whether this is a virtual or in-person event. If you do not show up on time, you will automatically lose the case. This is called "default." Tenants must file an answer by the deadline on the court notice explaining to the court why they shouldn't be evicted.



GREATER BOSTON LEGAL SERVICES

**Massachusetts Defense for Eviction (MADE):
Self-Guided Eviction Help**

Scan QR Code or visit gbls.org/MADE

EMERGENCY PROGRAMS THAT MAY HELP

Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT)

This program provides short-term emergency funding to help you with eviction, foreclosure, loss of utilities, and other housing emergencies. Provides up to \$7,000 per 12-month period so your family can stay in your current home or move to a new one. You may use the money for rent, utilities, moving costs, and mortgage payments.

You may be eligible for RAFT if:

- You're at risk of homelessness or losing your housing (for example, you received a Notice to Quit or an eviction notice; you're behind on your mortgage; you received a utility shutoff notice; or you can't stay in your home due to health, safety, or other reasons)
- Your income is less than 50% of your city/town's Area Median Income (AMI)
- Your income is less than 60% of your city/town's AMI AND you are at risk of domestic violence
- You receive insurance through MassHealth

Emergency Assistance (EA) Family Shelter

You can apply if:

- You're a resident of Massachusetts
- Your family's gross income* is at or below 115% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines
- You're pregnant or have a child under 21

*Please note that shelters do not accept pets, only assistance animals.



Scan QR Code or visit [*applyhousinghelp.mass.gov*](https://applyhousinghelp.mass.gov) to apply for assistance on the Housing Help Hub

LOOKING FOR AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOUSING?

Visit [*www.HousingNavigatorMA.org*](https://www.HousingNavigatorMA.org), the official and most comprehensive affordable housing search engine for Massachusetts.

