

HOUSING RESOURCES



Housing Resource Manual for Armstrong County

**ARMSTRONG COUNTY
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SECURITY DEPOSITS

When you rent a house or apartment you will probably pay a security deposit to the landlord to cover possible damage done to the premises or to pay for rent that is still owed when you move.

Amount of the Deposit

During the first year of the lease, your landlord can charge no more than 2 months rent as the security deposit. After you have rented for more than a year, the landlord must return the amount equal to 1 month rent. If you have lived in a place more than 2 years and your security deposit was more than \$100, your landlord must put your deposit in an interest bearing account in a bank. Your landlord must also give written notice when he/she puts your deposit in a bank, telling you the amount put into the bank and the name and address of the bank. After you have lived there for more than 5 years, the landlord cannot raise the amount of the security deposit, even if the rent goes up.

Returning the Deposit

To get your deposit when you move, you must give the landlord written notice of your new address (by certified mail so that you have proof that he/she received the letter). When you give this notice within 30 days of the time you move the landlord must;

1. Give you a written list of any damages he/she claims you caused, and return your deposit minus the amount for the damages.
2. If the landlord does not provide you with a list of the damages within 30 days, then he/she loses the right to keep any part of the deposit and also loses the right to sue for damages.
3. If within 30 days the landlord does not return your deposit minus any damages, then you have the right to sue for double the amount owed you. The landlord must also prove you caused the damages.

It is important to remember that the landlord can refuse to return your security deposit if you did not pay your rent or broke your lease. Laws change. If you have concerns or questions about your security deposit, get legal help. Refer to the section in this Manual on Legal Assistance.

Source: "Housing Resource Guide, 1996" by Allegheny County Community Support Program. Pages 33-34

EMERGENCY SHORT TERM FUNDS

Armstrong County Community Action Agency

RD 8, Box 287
Kittanning, PA 16201
724/548-3405

Catholic Charities Neighborhood Based Services

115 Vannear Avenue
Greensburg, PA 15601
724/545-9450

Catholic Charities is mainly a referral agency. If one is a pregnant teenager, help is available to locate housing. On rare occasions, small funding requests are accepted.

Salvation Army

PO Box 335
Vandergrift, PA 15690
724/568-3115

If one has an eviction notice, the Salvation Army may be able to provide one month's rent if funding is available.

Department of Public Welfare Emergency Shelter Assistance

1280 North Water Street
Kittanning, PA 16201-0898
724/543-1651 Information
1/800/424-5235 Toll Free

Eligibility: Families or individuals must meet income, resource, and non-financial eligibility criteria. Eligibility is based on a gross annual income of \$6,192 for one person. To find the income criteria for additional people add \$2,096 for each additional person. There is no resource limit for individuals under the age of 21 or families with children under the age of 21. Individuals age 21 or older or families with children over the age of 21 must meet the resource limit for General Assistance which is \$250.00 for one person or \$1,000 for two or more people. Concerning non-financial eligibility an individual or family; must intend to remain in the state of Pennsylvania, must show good cause for unemployment, and the must have a verified social security number, identity, age, income, and liquid resources. Overall the need for Emergency Shelter must be the result of an emergency, or a circumstance creating a breakdown of individual

or family functioning in meeting basic needs and resulting in a need for immediate action to avoid destitution of or harm to the individual or minor children residing in the family unit.

Services: The assistance provides individuals under 21 or a family with a child under the age of 21 a maximum of \$300 toward permanent living quarters. It provides individuals and families over the age of 21 with a maximum of \$100 toward permanent living quarters.

To prevent eviction or foreclosure the Department of Public Assistance provides individuals under 21 and families with a child under 21 a maximum of \$400. It provides individuals and families over the age of 21 with a maximum of \$300 to prevent foreclosure and eviction. Finally when living quarters are uninhabitable, condemned as a result of a disaster, or when a family had to leave a permanent residence because of domestic violence a maximum of \$100 will be provided for temporary shelter.

Butler-Armstrong AIDS Alliance

112 Hillvue Drive

Butler, PA 16001

724/283-3636

724/287-2730 FAX

Contact: Rebecca E. Fullerton

This AIDS service organization provides some emergency funds to established clients with proper documentation of HIV status, income, and county of residence. These funds may pay for the first month's rent or security deposit if client is willing to take on the expenses afterwards.

Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force Emergency Funds

905 West Street 4th Floor

Pittsburgh, PA 15221-2833

412/242-2500

Eligibility: Person must be disabled due to HIV, AIDS diagnosed (T-cell count under 200), HIV positive and pregnant, HIV positive and have custody of a minor child, HIV positive with a history of mental health problems. Funds cannot be used to pay for on-going expenses, but are to assist with a one-time payment. Other financial options will have had to have been explored prior to applying.

Services: Person can apply for funding for payment of rent, payment for utilities, payment of car or health insurance, payment of security deposit, payment of eyeglasses, and other based on an individual's circumstance.

Pittsburgh Presbytery - Lazarus

801 Union Place

Pittsburgh, PA 15212
412/323-1400

Eligibility: Unemployed or underemployed persons in economic need; individual does not need to be a member of the Presbyterian Church. You can call or go to your local Presbyterian Church.

Services: Provides financial assistance with mortgage foreclosures, rental evictions, utility bills, and other financial needs of this nature. Service is based on availability of funds.

Local Churches

Local churches often have limited discretionary available to members or to those living in the local community for emergency housing and rent assistance. Call your local church to see if they may have funds available, or know of local churches or religious organizations.

PENNSYLVANIA RENT REBATE PROGRAM

Pennsylvania offers a property tax or Rent Rebate Program for individuals who are over the age of 65, age 50 (and over) and a widow or widower, or permanently disabled and over the age of 18 with an annual income of \$15,000 or less. You are still eligible if you received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), but not if you received Cash Assistance. This program is an easy way for persons who are disabled to receive free money for rent in which they have already paid. A typical grant for someone with a low income ranges from \$150 to \$200.

The Rent Rebate Program will reimburse you a certain percentage of what you paid in rent up to \$500 for one year. This form would need to be completed by December 31 of each year. To obtain an application and additional information ask your case manager, call 1-800-362-2050, or write:

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Department of Revenue
Department of Tax or Rent Rebate Program
Harrisburg, PA 17128-0503

Department of Public Welfare, Emergency Shelter Assistance, September, 1996.
United Way Helpline, Guidelines for Helpline Discretionary Fund, December, 1993.

UTILITIES

Preventing Shutoff---Your Rights

If you have complaints about utility service, if the company decides to shut off your service, or if the company refuses to give you service, Public Utility Commission (PUC) rules may protect you. Most utility companies are regulated by PUC guidelines, but not all. There are certain rules which these companies must follow. If you encounter a situation with your utility company in which you need a moderator, contact:

Public Utilities Commission - Consumer Services Bureau

P.O. Box 3265

Harrisburg, PA 17120

1/800/782-1110

1/800/782-7380 (Termination Calls Only)

There are certain regulations utility companies must follow if regulated by the PUC. A utility company **must**:

- allow you to pay your bills on a budget plan if you request it
- give a ten-day written notice before utility shutoff
- attempt to contact an adult personally 3 days before shutoff
- attempt to contact an adult personally immediately before shutoff
- be fair in a utility shutoff dispute
- continue to provide services if there is a formal complaint to the PUC
- reconnect services within 24 hours of receiving payment due for a bill (or an agreed upon partial sum) **and**
- **continue to provide services if someone in your home is seriously ill or has a medical problem that will get worse if you lose utility services**
 - With a shut-off notice, a call from a physician to the utility company stating a medical need for service will keep the utility on for 30 days. After 30 days, it can be renewed.

If you receive notice that your utilities will be shut off, act quickly to protect your rights -- it is much harder to get service turned back on after service has been shut off.

ENERGY ASSISTANCE

These agencies will help out with utility costs if you are unable to pay your electric, gas, or other energy costs. These programs have very short application periods, so keep in touch with your provider so you do not miss out on these very helpful programs.

LIHEAP I - Energy Assistance Program

Armstrong County Assistance Office
1280 North Water Street
PO Box 898
Kittanning, PA 16201
724/543-6076

The LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) provides funds to help people on low or fixed incomes to pay their fuel bills. This program operates during the heating season and is dependent on available federal funds. Both homeowners and renters are eligible.

Dollar Energy Fund

Salvation Army
PO Box 335
Vandergrift, PA 15690
724/568-3115

A fund of last resort for low income households who have already applied for LIHEAP funds. One must be a customer of People's Natural Gas, Equitable Gas, Columbia Gas, T.W. Phillips Gas & Oil, Duquesne Light, West Penn Power, PA American Water, or City of Pittsburgh Water. To access this fund, call your utility company for a local Screening agency. Before applying for Dollar Energy, one must first apply for LIHEAP I.

LIHEAP II - Crisis Prevention

Second Floor
One Smithfield Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
412/350-5869

LIHEAP II provides financial assistance for weather-related heating emergencies such as hot water heater repairs, furnace repairs, broken windows, gas or other fuel lines, and payment of utility bills. This program also operates on federal funds, so both homeowners and renters are both eligible. Before applying for LIHEAP II, one must first apply for LIHEAP I and Dollar Energy.

TELEPHONE ASSISTANCE

Bell Atlantic LifeLine Service

Bell Atlantic-Pennsylvania Inc.
Administrative Support Center
131 Seton Hill Drive
Greensburg, PA 15601
1/800/640-4155
412/921-1428

This service provides a 50% discount on the line connection charge and \$5 credit on monthly basic phone services for persons with low incomes. To be eligible, one must make less than \$7,740 yearly (\$645 per month), and live in Southwestern PA. Call for an application. This service usually takes anywhere from one to three weeks to hook up.

LifeLine also provides UTAP (Universal Telephone Assistance Program) Funds when available. These funds are government funds which can be used for low-income LifeLine subscribers who have fallen behind on past bills. Amounts awarded and availability of funds vary, so call your local telephone provider for details.

Link-Up-America

1/800/660-2215

This program helps persons with low incomes pay for the installation fee for installing telephone service. A person can receive 50% off phone installation service (in addition to LifeLine). To be eligible, one only has to make less than \$11,500 per year, and receive SSI, SSDI, food stamps, Medical Assistance, LIHEAP Funds, or general assistance.

**HOUSING RESOURCES IN THE ARMSTRONG COUNTY
DRUG AND ALCOHOL SYSTEM**

ARC Manor

200 Oak Avenue
Kittanning, PA 16201
1-800-323-1333

Residential program is available. Intensive outpatient counseling services are provided. Fees are on a sliding scale for Armstrong and Indiana County residents.

Armstrong County Community Action

Armsdale Administration Building
RD 8, Box 287
Kittanning, PA 16201
724/548-3405

To get into bridge housing, one must have come out of a drug rehabilitation program. Single men/women eligible, as well as husband/wife, 1 and 2 parent families. Applicants will go through a three-stage screening in which three individuals will interview the applicant separately. Upon completion of interviews, the three interviewers will meet to discuss whether applicant should be accepted into the program. Once in the program, must work toward goal of self-sufficiency. Must meet required responsibilities (attending Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous meetings, reporting in once per week) and not relapse or individual will be dismissed from the program.

Armstrong-Indiana Drug and Alcohol Commission

RD 2, Box 67
Shelock, PA 15774
724/354-2746

The Commission provides emergency shelter assistance as well as a variety of substance abuse treatment approaches. Fees are based on income. Substance free guidelines apply for housing and shelter services.

Haven, Inc.

(Site is confidential)
Kittanning, PA 16201
724/543-1180

Capacity for three single women. Women share kitchen, laundry and living room. Each have their own bedroom. Limit of stay is one year. Rent is based on income. A coordinator is available to women during their stay, who will help in goal setting.

Mechling-Shakley Veterans Center

R.D. #1, Box 290

Cowansville, PA 16218

724/545-9016

Eligibility: Homeless veterans (males/females) with emotional and/or substance abuse problems. This center provides community based residential treatment to homeless veterans requiring transitional rehabilitation and support. Residents are provided counseling, vocational training, life skills enhancement, educational opportunities and assistance with future housing plans when ready. Additional social services are provided as required or desired. Transportation to medical appointments, counseling and other necessary functions are provided three days per week. Transportation to Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings are provided five evenings per week. Counselors and/or shift supervisors are present 24 hours per day. Can continue to receive benefits during stay. Cost of stay is determined by income.

HOUSING RESOURCES IN THE ARMSTRONG COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM

I&A Residential Services, Inc.
1019 Philadelphia Street Suite 2
Indiana, PA 15701
724/463-7830

Must be referred by the Indiana County Guidance Center and/or the Family Counseling Center of Armstrong County. Individuals must be 18 years or older; have demonstrated over a period of time marginal social adjustment; have difficulties in social or personal adjustment associated with a psychiatric disability; and have indicated a willingness to actively participate and cooperate in the program. Fees are based upon a percentage of the consumer's income.

Supported Living Program - assists consumers in choosing affordable permanent housing in the community. Services include housing location skills training, renter skills training, life and coping skills training, assistance with locating and securing permanent affordable housing, and in-home support services designed to maintain permanent housing in the community.

Minimum Care Community Residential Rehabilitation - provides homes for independent living. Staff members visit on a regularly scheduled basis. Services include life and coping skills training, supportive counseling, assistance with financial budgeting, social skills development, vocational/educational preparation, emergency services and placement/follow-up.

Maximum Care Community Residential Rehabilitation - highly structured and provides living accommodations with 24 hour supervision. In addition to providing CRR services, the program services include assistance with personal hygiene, medication management, assistance with financial management and assistance with activities of daily living.

Hospital Diversion - within the maximum care program, designed to shorten or avoid psychiatric hospital stays.

Mechling-Shakley Veterans Center
R.D. #1, Box 290
Cowansville, PA 16218
724/545-9016

Eligibility: Homeless veterans (males/females) with emotional and/or substance abuse problems. This center provides community based residential treatment to homeless veterans requiring transitional rehabilitation and support. Residents are provided counseling, vocational training, life skills enhancement, educational opportunities and assistance with future housing plans when

ready. Additional social services are provided as required or desired. Transportation to medical appointments, counseling and other necessary functions are provided three days per week. Transportation to Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings are provided five evenings per week. Counselors and/or shift supervisors are present 24 hours per day. Can continue to receive benefits during stay. Cost of stay is determined by income.

Evergreen Homes

PO Box 471
Ford City, PA 16226
724/763-3125

Eligibility: Developmentally disabled persons in Armstrong County. Must be referred from Family Counseling Center.

Community residential: 24 hours per day, every day of the year. Alternative care to individuals who might otherwise receive institutional placement when the family can no longer meet their needs. Program is individualized to maximize skill potential. There are eleven different site locations in Armstrong County. Capacity for 53 program participants. Daily living skills are emphasized and goals are set to assist the individual in acquiring independence in cooking, shopping, making appointments, attending day program activities, banking, communication and social skills, house maintenance and any skill necessary for daily living. The hope for each individual would be to reach the point where services are no longer required and participants can move into their own home.

GOVERNMENT HOUSING AND OTHER HOUSING

Armstrong County Housing Authority

350 South Jefferson
Kittanning, PA 16201
724/548-7671
724/545-6406 FAX

INCOME LIMITS for Armstrong County Housing Authority:

Family Size	Public Housing	Section 8
1	\$19,300	\$12,100
2	\$22,100	\$13,800
3	\$24,850	\$15,500
4	\$27,600	\$17,250
5	\$29,800	\$18,650
6	\$32,000	\$20,000

The Armstrong County Housing Authority follows all HUD guidelines for government housing.

Public Housing

Public housing is government subsidized rental housing where the government pays part of the rent, while the resident pays the other part. The housing authorities get their money directly from the government, and offer it to low-income persons. To be *eligible*, one must be below established income limits.

To apply for housing, you must first set up an appointment with the local authorities. There they will ask for proof of income, birth certificates, expenses, bank statements, proof of disability, and other such things to prove your eligibility for public housing.

If accepted into the program, you will then be placed on a waiting list.

Section 8

Section 8 housing allows the recipient to choose privately owned housing and use a certificate or voucher to help with rent and utilities. A certificate limits the maximum rent of an apartment you might live in, but the resident pays the same as if they were in conventional housing. A voucher is a set dollar amount which one may use towards rent and utilities.

Conventional

Lists vary for each agency, and from program to program. You may be given a choice between

conventional and Section 8 housing. Conventional housing is owned by the authority and is usually either large high rises or privately subsidized (private owners who accept government funds) apartments or houses. The resident pays 30% of their adjusted income towards rent and utilities, while the government pays the rest.

When choosing a housing option, if you are given a choice, each has its advantages and disadvantages. Talk with your housing authority or case manager if you have questions or need advice.

Personal Care Homes

PCHs are establishments which provide shelter, food, and personal assistance or supervision 24 hours a day. These facilities house mainly elderly adults but do not exclude based on age. PCHs are for those who do not require the services of a long-term care facility, but may need some help in matters such as bathing, dressing, diet, financial management, and medication assistance.

The following criteria are *excluding* factors for PCHs. If an individual answers yes to any of the following questions, he/she should not be admitted to a PCH and should consider a nursing home:

If the individual is totally and permanently confined to bed...

If the individual requires and IV for fluids or for feedings...

If the individual has severe or multiple bed sores...

If the individual requires restraints...

If a medical assessment determines that the individual needs a higher level of care.

PCHs cannot discriminate on the basis of HIV disability. The Governor's Action Center Toll Free Line at 1-800-932-0784 will help to resolve any grievances.

Consult your local Yellow Page directory for personal care facilities in your area.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Supportive Housing provides housing in conjunction with supportive services for homeless persons. The housing is transitional housing, permanent housing for homeless persons with disabilities, or is a part of an innovative project for meeting the immediate and long-term needs of homeless persons.

Department of Housing and Urban Development defines homeless as: 1) An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and 2) An individual or family who has a primary nighttime residence that is: i) A supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill); ii) An institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or iii) A public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings. 3) This term does not include any individual imprisoned or otherwise detained under an Act of the Congress or a State law.

Armstrong County Community Action Agency

RD 8, Box 287
Kittanning, PA 16201
724/548-3405

This agency provides a spectrum of services to low income county residents. Community Action Agency has bridge housing available for homeless individuals and families that provides housing for 5-6 persons. A scattered site transitional housing program serves up to 18 individuals. Housing assistance and counseling are available as well as case management and child care services.

Haven, Inc.

PO Box 983
Kittanning, PA 16201
724/543-1180

Provides four units of transitional housing for women and children who have experienced domestic violence.

Mechling-Shakley Veterans Center

R.D. #1, Box 290
Cowansville, PA 16218
724/545-9016

This facility provides permanent supportive housing for male veterans. Sixty seven beds are available at the facility.

EMERGENCY SHELTER SITES

Armstrong County Community Action

RD 8, Box 287
Kittanning, PA 16201
724/548-3405

Emergency shelter is provided through emergency funds for local hotels. This assistance is usually limited to 2-3 days.

Haven, Inc.

PO Box 983
Kittanning, PA 16201
724/543-1180

Thirty day maximum stay for women and children who are victims of domestic violence.

Salvation Army

205 S Jefferson Street
Kittanning, PA 16201
724/543-6622

Salvation Army

PO Box 335
Vandergrift, PA
724/568-3115

In an emergency situation (domestic violence, fire), may be able to provide a hotel room for night or two.

SINGLE ROOM OCCUPACY

HOUSING FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS

These facilities are able to meet the needs of people living with AIDS (PLWA) in a supportive environment. Space in each of these facilities is limited, so call for information on applications and status of available rooms.

Presbyterian SeniorCare

1215 Hulton Road
Oakmont, PA 15139
412/826-6098
412/826-6074 FAX

Negley Commons is a 25-unit apartment building designed for persons with physical disabilities 18 years of age or older. Individuals or couples are admitted to the residence as long as one person meets the disability requirements. All tenants must make less than \$13,350, or less than \$15,300 for a tenant and his or her partner. Certified income eligible residents then pay 30% of their adjusted income towards rent and utilities. This site is handicapped accessible, and has specially designed features for persons living with disabilities. Supportive services for people living with HIV are also provided.

Page Place is a 25-unit building with the same guidelines, rules, and eligibility requirements as Negley Commons. Located on Page street in the North Side of Pittsburgh, this residence will provide housing for persons living with HIV and AIDS who currently reside north of Pittsburgh.

Towne Place serves persons with mental health disabilities. Admittance criteria are very strict. This facility contains 15 apartments.

HOUSING REFERRAL/SUPPORT SERVICES

Armstrong County Community Agency

Armsdale Administration Building

R.D. 8 Box 287

Kittanning, PA 16201

724/548-3405

724/548-3413 FAX

Contact: Anna Shaffer

This agency provides rent and utility assistance on a graduated scale for up to one year maximum if the client has sufficient income to sustain the housing after this time. There is a waiting list for bridge housing and clients must be below 150% of the poverty level.

Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force

905 West Street, 4th Floor

Pittsburgh, PA 15221

412/242-2500

PATF provides support, referrals and services to people living with HIV or AIDS, and to their partners, families, and friends. Case Managers meet with individuals in the office or community to assess their need for various services, including housing, medical care, transportation, medication, home care, state or federal benefits, emotional support, and mental health or drug/alcohol treatment. Appropriate referrals are made and assistance with paperwork is provided, along with follow-up to ensure that services are obtained and needs are met. PATF also has current Housing lists on site.

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

Salvation Army

205 S Jefferson Street
Kittanning, PA 16201
724/543-6622

Clothing is available, free. Call ahead, no regular hours.

Salvation Army Thrift Store

Midtown Plaza
North Apollo, PA 15673
724/478-3776

Small appliance;s, clothing, furniture available at low cost. Hours are Monday through Saturday 9am to 8pm.

Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force - Emergency Funds

905 West Street, 4th Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15221
412/242-2500

Funds cannot be used to pay for on-going expenses. Emergency funds are to assist with a one-time payment and could be used, for example, in obtaining appliances or furniture. Other financial options will have had to have been explored prior to applying.

EVICTION

How You Can Be Evicted

1. You can be evicted if you don't pay your rent. If you were justified in not paying your rent because the place was unfit to live, you may not get evicted.
2. You can get evicted if you did not honor a written or oral agreement or lease.
3. You can get evicted if your lease is up.

You cannot be evicted due to a mental or physical disability (including HIV), your race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex or because you are blind and use a guide dog. You cannot be evicted because you complained about your bad housing condition.

Eviction Procedure

The landlord can only evict you by going to court. It is against the law to evict by padlocking your door, changing the locks, shutting off the utilities, using force or any other eviction method.

1. First, the landlord or another adult must deliver to you personally or post where you can see it, a notice telling you to move within a certain time period. If you are being evicted because you did not pay your rent, then you must be given 30 days notice if it occurs between September 1 and March 31. You only need to be given 15 days if the eviction occurs between April 1 and August 31. If you are being evicted for other reasons, then you must be given a 30 day notice. If your lease is for a year or more, then you must be given 3 months notice to leave. Your lease can state a shorter or longer time period to move, or for no written notice at all. Read your lease before you sign.
2. Second, if you don't move within the stated time, then the landlord will go to court to evict you. You have the right to appear at the hearing and to also bring witnesses.
3. If you lose at the hearing but feel you have a good defense, then you can appeal to a higher court. If you do appeal, you can delay your eviction if you post bond or pay your rent in court. You must notify the court right away if you want to appeal and you should have legal help. If you do not appeal, then you have 30 days after the hearing to move. If you have not moved, then you will be evicted by a constable or sheriff.

Source: "Housing Resource Guide, 1996" By Allegheny County Community Support Program, Pages 31-32.

Laurel Legal Services
206 South Water Street
Kittanning, PA 16201
724/548-7674

This organization will assist low-income individuals who have been denied SSI or unemployment benefits, who have been sued for custody, or who have been sued because they have not paid their rent. They will also provide assistance with a Protection From Abuse order, regardless of income. Their eligibility guidelines are the same as Neighborhood Legal Services. Your monthly income cannot exceed \$778. For families, the allowable income increases \$267 for each person. The figure is doubled for cases involving spousal abuse. They do not handle criminal cases or wills.

DISCRIMINATION

Laws exist at the state and federal level that make HIV or AIDS related discrimination illegal. Discrimination can involve refusing someone housing, employment, health care, or a service because you are HIV+ or because they assume that you are HIV+. Unless someone is providing you with medical care or services or you are applying for state and federal benefits, no one needs to know your HIV status. For example, when/if you are applying for subsidized housing or renting an apartment, the landlord may ask the nature of your disability. *This is none of their business. You have no obligation to reveal your HIV status.*

STATE:

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Act makes it unlawful to refuse someone housing, employment, or public accommodations based on race, color, sex, religion, ancestry, national origin, or handicap (mental and/or physical). For the purposes of this act, HIV+ status is considered a disability. In other words, you cannot be denied housing (including Personal Care Homes) due to having HIV Disease or perceived to be living with HIV. You must file a complaint within 180 days.

If you believe you have experienced discrimination, call:

Human Relations Commission of Western Pennsylvania
11th Floor State
300 Liberty Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
412/565-5395

FEDERAL:

The Fair Housing Amendments Act prevents the refusal of housing to people with handicaps (HIV) or a history of a disability (mental health problems). The Fair Housing Act is enforced by the Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity office:

Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity
U.S. Courthouse
700 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
412/644-6965

For help in determining if discrimination occurred, and where best to file, contact either of the agencies listed below:

Disabilities Law Project

1708 Law and Finance Building
429 Fourth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
412/391-5225

This program provides free legal services to people with physical and mental disabilities.

Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force - Legal Committee

905 West Street, 4th Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15221
412/242-2500

PATF has a legal committee comprised of area attorneys who volunteer their services to people living with HIV in Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington, or Westmoreland county. Individuals are eligible for free service if they receive one or more of the following:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| A) cash assistance from Welfare | C) food stamps |
| B) Medicaid (ACCESS) | D) SSI |

or if their monthly income does not exceed \$778 for one person. If the income is higher, medical expenses paid out of pocket can be deducted to help the individual qualify.

Note: All initial contacts with an attorney are free. Subsequent service will be provided free of charge if the client's income is below \$778, or on a sliding scale if their monthly income exceeds this amount.