



Tenant Hotline

Phone: 612-728-5767

Online: [homelinemn.org/email](https://www.homelinemn.org/email)

Rent Escrow

2025 CLE Training

November 19, 2025

2:00 - 3:30pm

What is HOME Line?

HOME Line Tenant Hotline:

612-728-5767

Toll-free: 866-866-3546

- Para Español, llame al 612-255-8870
- Af- Soomaali wac 612-255-8860
- Hais lus Hmoob, Hu 612-255-7104
- Online: *homelinemn.org/email*



Housekeeping

- This session is being recorded and will be available on HOME Line's website in a few days
- Please ask questions through the Q&A function located at the bottom of the Zoom window
- CLE credits will be applied for after this session



Rent Escrow Actions

Samuel Spaid, HOME Line

Why Do Rent Escrows Exist?

- What problem is a rent escrow trying to solve (historically)?
- Other options
 - Withholding Rent
 - Emergency Tenant Remedies Action
 - Tenant Remedies Action
- Rent Escrows are now broader



What are Rent Escrows

- A rent escrow is a court case
- Filed by a residential tenant
- For a violation of 504B.001, subd. 14
- Tried to the court
- Primary remedy is repairs
- Court has discretion to decide remedy



504B.001, subd. 14

- Code violations
- Violations of Chapter 504B
- Discrimination
- Violations of subsidized housing law
- Violations of the lease



Pre-filing and Filing

- Expired inspector's report or 14 day letter
- Affidavit of Rent Escrow
- Estimated cost of repairs
- Escrow rent (only if necessary)
- Don't be complicated or confusing
- Make sure you sue the right entity
- Ask for what you want



Court Process

- Initial Hearing (within 10-14 days)
- Trial or evidentiary hearing (no right to jury)
- Compliance hearings (optional)
- Court has a lot of discretion



Remedies

- 504B.385 and 504B.425
- Repairs, Rent Abatement, and Lease Termination
- Court has discretion
- Murphy v. AEON
- Whitman v. Highland Mgmt. Group
- Caster v. Ferry



Settlements

- Rent escrows often force the landlord to consider settlement
- Tenants who settle are more likely to receive a benefit beyond repairs (e.g. rent abatement or lease termination)



Rent Escrow Upsides

- One of the few ways to proactively go after the landlord and enforce tenant rights
- Very fast (for a court case)
- Simple (for a court case)
- Tenants almost always win (even when unrepresented against an attorney)



Rent Escrow Downsides

- Have to be current on rent
- Slow (for real life)
- Complex (for non-attorneys)
- May not be worth the work
- Retaliation



Practice Pointers

- Have good evidence
- City inspectors orders are very helpful
- Sue the right entity
- Keep the affidavit of rent escrow simple
- Ask for what you want
- Be prepared to settle
- Consider all the costs of going to court



Rent Escrow, An Organizer's Perspective

Regan Reeck, HOME Line

The Tenant/Landlord Power Imbalance

- Power imbalance
 - Tenant's rights
 - Housing as a necessity
 - Landlord's Interests
 - Monetary and as a business
- Organization as collective power building
 - Systemic issues



Why Do Group Escrows?

- Maximum Withholding of Money
- Shared Issues
- Prevent Evictions
 - Rent Strikes
 - Legal Protections
 - Retaliation Defense



Issues with Rent Escrow

- Court can be difficult to navigate
- Need to have the money to be current on your rent
- Can take time for your issue to actually be fixed
- Time commitment
- Fear of retaliation





Questions?