



Department of Housing and Community Development
Rental Accommodations Division
Housing Resource Center
1800 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20020 | (202) 442-9505

Rental Accommodation Registration Guideline

This is a general guide for the process of (1) obtaining a basic business license for a housing provider (commonly called a landlord) to operate and (2) register rental housing.

Rental Housing Act of 1985. The Rental Housing Act of 1985 (Act) (D.C. Official Code 2001 ed., as amended, § 42-3501.01 *et seq.*) and regulations (title 14, chapters 3900-4300) regulate rental housing in the District of Columbia. The Act includes the Rent Stabilization Program (commonly called “rent control”). The Act requires that all rental housing must be licensed by the Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection (DLCP), inspected for housing code compliance by the Department of Buildings (DOB), and registered with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Rental Accommodations Division (RAD).

Under the Act, there are two types of rental housing:

- A “**market rate**” rental accommodation means that the lease agreement controls the relationship between a housing provider and tenant and states all the terms for a tenant to occupy the rental accommodation such as the amount of the rent and how often the housing provider may increase the rent; or
- A “**rent-stabilized**” rental accommodation means that in addition to the lease agreement which states the terms for a tenant to occupy the rental accommodation, a housing provider can increase the rent only once year and may increase the rent at a rate according to the Act unless the housing provider receives special approval from RAD to increase the amount of rent under certain circumstances.

Registration Requirement. **All** rental housing must be licensed to operate by DLCP and must be registered with RAD. If a housing provider does not register their rental accommodation, then that property is legally and *automatically* rent-stabilized until the housing provider complies with registration requirements. A housing provider may not legally adjust the rent until the rental accommodation is registered and in substantial compliance with the housing conditions code.

STEP 1: Request a Housing Conditions Code Inspection

Department of Buildings (DOB)
(202) 671-3500 | dob.dc.gov
1100 4th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024

Request a basic business license rental housing inspection and complete the online application at dcra.kustomer.help/contact/basic-business-license-inspection-request-Sy2W3FjGu.

It will take approximately 7 business days to schedule and receive an inspection result.

STEP 2–Request a Clean Hands Certification

D.C. Office of Tax and Revenue
(202) 727-4829 | mytax.dc.gov
1101 4th Street, S.W., Suite W-270
Washington, D.C. 20024

“Clean Hands” means that individuals and businesses are denied city goods or services (such as licenses, permits, grants, contracts) if there is a debt owed to the District of Columbia of more than \$100 for fees, fines, taxes, or penalties, or failure to file required District Tax Returns.

Apply for a Clean Hands Certificate (Form FR-500) online at mytax.dc.gov > Business > Request a Certificate of Clean Hands or you may apply in person. For more information see <https://mytax.dc.gov/WebFiles/faq/faq.html>.

You will need your taxpayer identification number and a scanned copy of a valid government-issued identification.

You should receive your Clean Hands Certificate within 3 business days.

STEP 3–Apply for a Basic Business License

Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection (DLCP)
(202) 671-4500 | dlcp.dc.gov
1100 4th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024

Apply for a basic business license from DLCP’s Business Licensing Division. You can apply online at dlcp.dc.gov/service/get-business-license or apply in person at the DLCP Business Center at 1100 4th Street, S.W., 2nd Floor. You will pay a basic business license fee and rental unit registration fee (\$43 per rental unit) when you apply for your license. Both fees are collected by DLCP.

If the rental accommodation consists of 2 or more rental units, apply for a certificate of occupancy.

After the property passes inspection and the license application is approved, DLCP will email you the basic business license or you may download a copy from DLCP’s online portal.

STEP 4–Register the Rental Accommodation

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(202) 442-9505 | dhcd.dc.gov

Download a RAD Form 1 Registration or Claim for Exemption at dhcd.dc.gov/rentcontrol and follow the accompanying instructions. Complete and sign RAD Form 1.

You must submit supporting documentation with the RAD Form 1:

- a copy of a valid basic business license;
- a copy of a valid certificate of occupancy if the rental accommodation has 2 or more rental units;
- proof of ownership (preferably in the form of a recorded copy of your deed); and
- if you are claiming an exemption from rent stabilization (for example because the property is government-subsidized or constructed after 1980, additional documentation will be required.

You may file your registration application and supporting documentation with RAD by one of three methods:

- By mail to RAD;
- By hand delivery to the Housing Resource Center at the corner of Good Hope Road, S.E. and Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, S.E. (hours of operation are Monday–Friday, 8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.); or
- By email to dhcd.rad@dc.gov (if emailing, submissions must be in a portable document file (PDF) format).

Payment at registration is not required because the rental unit registration fee is collected by DLCP when the housing provider obtains a basic business license.

RAD will assign either a registration number or an exemption number and date stamp the registration application.

Within 15 days of the document date stamp, you must serve each tenant with a copy of the date stamped registration application. You must keep a copy of the date stamped registration application for your records.