



Housing Tips for People with a Past Navigation Services



Need more information? Contact our Navigation Services Team at 303-432-5130 or navigation@jcmh.org

Things to Prepare/Gather:

- A personal letter of explanation (re: evictions, criminal history, etc.)
 - State that you have a conviction, eviction, or both without getting into off-putting details.
 - Are you in compliance with DOC or probation?
 - Have you started paying back on past evictions?
 - What did you learn and how has your life changed for the better?
 - What would make you a good tenant? Ex: paying rent on time, abiding by the rules of the lease, respecting the property, respecting other tenants, etc.
 - Consider getting help writing this letter from your care coordinator or a trusted friend or family member.
- Valid Colorado driver's license or other photo ID for all applicants 18+
- Birth certificates
- Social security cards
- Proof of income (Ex: paystubs, tax returns, disability award letter, etc.)
- Letters of recommendation from previous landlords (if possible)
- Character references
 - Can be from: a current or previous employer, rehab facility, parole/probation officer, counselor, spiritual leader like a pastor or rabbi, family member, friend etc.
 - Choose people you know that can speak to the best moments in your life like times when you were trustworthy, responsible, and consistent. You want to choose people who feel secure about where you are and where you are going so that their belief in you can transfer to the landlord.
 - The character reference should state:
 - The reason for writing the reference (Ex: helping you secure housing)
 - The relationship between you and the person writing the reference and how long you have known them
 - Detailed information on your character and your positive qualities
 - Contact Information for the person writing the character reference

Things to Consider:

- **Be honest and upfront about the fact that you have a conviction**, especially if you know they are going to run a background check. If you say nothing and the landlord finds out down the road it will appear as if you were being deceptive.
- If you are 100% certain that the landlord will not run a background check, then you can simply not say anything unless they ask.

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- **Research properties that rent to people with felonies or do not have a background check.** Start with an in-depth online search, write down the names and numbers of the properties you find, and then reach out and ask if they have any openings.
- **Be flexible on location!** If 25 or 50 miles out there is a landlord that is willing to work with your situation then it may be worth considering a move if it will ensure you have safe and stable housing.
- **Consider having your record sealed or expunged.** This option may not be available to everyone depending on the circumstances surrounding your conviction, but it is definitely worth looking into!
- Don't waste your time with big property management companies if you've had a recent felony. They have very strict policies and will likely not rent to you.
- **Don't stress and don't get mad.** If you meet with a landlord and they say they will not rent to you, be kind and courteous regardless. You never know what the future holds, you may very well get a call down the road if they can't find anyone else to rent to.
- Remember that when people hear the word "felony" they might automatically think you are dangerous and/or violent. Break that stereotype by showing kindness and warmth.
- **Make a good first impression!**
 - If you are submitting an application **online**, be sure to avoid spelling or grammatical errors. Proof read everything TWICE before submitting or, better yet, ask someone you respect if they can proof read your application with you. And be sure to submit all additional documents like your letter of explanation, letters of recommendation, and character references with your application so the landlord gets them all together.
 - If you're talking on the **phone**, be prepared! Know what questions you want to ask. Speak calmly and clearly, and make sure there is no background noise near you that could distract you or the person you're talking to. Be sure to keep track of the information you find out.
 - If you're meeting **in person**, dress nicely (but don't go over the top and wear a suit or something unnaturally formal), make eye contact, and shake their hand. Again, be prepared! Ask questions about the property and pay attention to any details that they give you. Be sure to bring your application documents with you.

Websites:

- <https://helpforfelons.org/felon-friendly-apartments-housing-1/>
- <https://denver.craigslist.org/>
- <https://www.zillow.com/rental-manager/resources/community-pillar-search-filter/>
- <https://www.hud.gov/states/colorado>
- <https://www.zumper.com/>
- <https://www.roomster.com/>
- <http://www.socialserve.com/>
- <https://www.padmapper.com/>