



A Community Partner,  
Helping People to Help Themselves

# TheScoop

Serving Families in Walla Walla and Columbia Counties

May 2006

## Walla Walla Housing Authority

501 Cayuse Street  
Walla Walla WA 99362  
509-527-4542 \* Fax 509-527-4574  
Hearing-impaired, use relay service  
wwha@wallawallaha.org  
www.wallawallaha.org

## REFERENCES FROM LANDLORDS – HOW TO VERIFY THEM

(reprinted from "How to Thoroughly Evaluate The Prospective Tenant's Credit")

One of the objectives of the screening process is to make a reasonable guess at how the prospect may pay his rent in the future, a thing, which obviously cannot be known. However, a relevant inquiry is certainly how he has paid his rent in the past. The rental obligation is unique. Thorough verification of the tenant's references will yield more information about your future landlord-tenant relationship than almost anything else.

Eviction from one's residence is very different from something even as catastrophic as repossession of a car. If the prospect has demonstrated an inability to fulfill the obligations upon which his place of abode depend, then it is likely that the prospect is either so economically unstable that he cannot do it, or so irresponsible that he is willing to play with fire. Still many landlords do not check landlord references or if they do fast will only ask general questions, e.g., "Did he pay the rent?" instead of "Did he pay the rent promptly and in full?"

A good rule of thumb is to insist that the applicant disclose the name and address of at least the last two landlords, and go back at least three years. This may yield three or four landlords, or, it may yield only two, one of which goes back five or six years. Either way, the landlord needs at least two former landlords to speak to, and to go back far enough to establish a pattern of behavior.

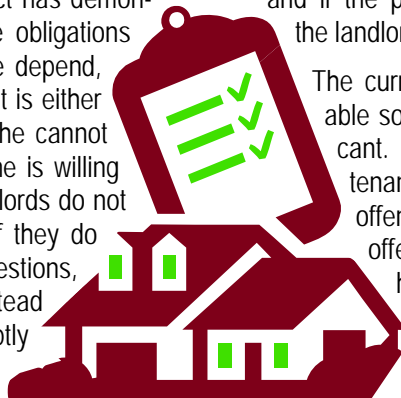
The landlord wants to know the following about the applicant:

1. Did he habitually pay the rent on time
2. Did he abide by the house rules and non-monetary agreements made with the landlord?
3. Did he get along with his neighbors?
4. When did he move in and when did he move out and why?
3. Did he give the landlord adequate advance

notice he was moving?

4. When he moved, did he leave the unit in good condition?
5. If he applied today, would the landlord accept him?

It is not a bad idea to script these questions so as to avoid forgetting to ask any of them, as they are all important, and the answers can be written on the sheet of paper next to the questions, the document dated and initialed, and maintained with the application. Naturally, some responses may suggest extemporaneous further inquiry, and if the previous landlord is cooperative, the landlord should definitely follow up.



The current landlord may not be a reliable source of information on the applicant. If the applicant is an excellent tenant, the current landlord may be offended that he wants to move and offer a lukewarm reference in the hope that the resident will remain. If the applicant is a disaster, then the current landlord may give a neutral or even a spectacular reference to get rid of him. Yes, landlords occasionally lie. This is the reason it is necessary to follow the two for three rule, at least two landlords going back at least three years. On the other hand, attempting to develop a history going back decades is probably not going to be productive, as most businesses do not keep records that far back and most people will simply not remember your applicant.

The verification of references from previous landlords must be taken in the context of the overall information available on the prospect. Only by a thorough screening, which will include an evaluation of financial condition, employment, and eviction history, can a true picture be obtained. But if the landlord reference verification is omitted, or done sloppily, a key part of the picture will definitely be missing.

**AUTOMATIC  
Housing Assistance  
Payment Deposits  
are deposited by the 5th  
of each month**

### Rental Assistance Division

#### Jason Hahn

Rental Assistance Manager  
527-4606

Families participating in  
TBRA, or Welfare to Work

#### Nina Hill

Rental Specialist  
Participant last names A-K  
527-4607

#### David Mitchell

Rental Specialist  
Participant last names L-Z  
522-7813

#### David Story

Housing Inspector  
526-6277

#### Eve Ortiz

Eligibility Coordinator  
527-4608

#### Gaby Aguilar

Information Coordinator  
527-4542 extension 100

### Office Closures

May 29th  
Memorial Day  
observed





## Landlord Fair 2006

With 9 exhibitors and 6 information-packed workshops, the 2006 Landlord Fair was a SUCCESS!

The following exhibitors participated:

- Area Crime Watch
- Banner Bank
- The Information Source
- Walla Walla Police Department
- Walla Walla Housing Authority
- Baker Boyer Bank
- Blue Mountain Action Council
- U.S. Dept of Housing & Urban Development
- Windermere, Property Management

\$375.00 in net proceeds from the 2006 Landlord Fair were deposited in the WWA's revolving loan fund for security deposit assistance to eligible families of the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Workshop topics included:

- "Fair Housing & Predatory Lending", presented by Arlene Patton, HUD-Spokane Area Field Office Director
- "The Eviction Process", presented by local attorney John Lohrmann
- "Tenant Screening", presented by Marlene Robbins of The Information Source
- "Cleanup After a Meth Lab", presented by David Eaton, Director of Environmental Programs, Walla Walla County-City Health Department
- "Warning Signs of Drug Activity", presented by the Walla Walla Police Department
- "The Landlords' Role", presented by Jason Hahn, Rental Assistance Manager, Walla Walla Housing Authority

Area Crime Watch prepared free hot dogs and Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company donated the free soda fountain machine for the event.

Thank you to the collaborative efforts of all our partners for making this another successful Landlord Fair. If you would like to share ideas or be a part of the planning committee, contact Rosanna at 522-7815 or by email at [rosannam@wallawallaha.org](mailto:rosannam@wallawallaha.org).



### Walla Walla Housing Authority

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Vice Chair

Jill Zagelow  
Commissioner

Jude Noland  
Commissioner

Kathryn Farrell Guizar  
Commissioner

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Dominick Elia  
Ex-Officio

Renée Rooker  
Executive Director

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The Scoop is written, edited, and published by the Walla Walla Housing Authority Staff

