

## Property Protection Starts with The Crime-Free Addendum

It's 1:00 am, the phone rings, you recognize the number as your old neighbor Rob, who now lives next door to your tenants since you turned your former home into a rental property. He tells you that SWAT just kicked in the front door of your property and is dragging the tenant and about 20 other people out onto the front lawn in handcuffs. You ask out loud to no one in particular, "Could I have prevented this?" Although tenants can and will do just about anything in your property, utilizing a Crime-Free Addendum in every lease can help deter this type of damaging behavior right from the start.

Why is it so vitally important for owners, landlords and property managers to use this well-established Crime Free management tool to keep criminal activity away from your properties?

First, I will discuss what those tools are and then why they are so vitally important.

### **I. The Crime Free Tool:**

Owners, landlords and property managers need to use the basic crime free language in your rental criteria, in your lease and as a separate addendum. Overkill? Hardly! This language immeasurably aids you in being highly successful in easily avoiding a plethora of costly pitfalls. It is an essential and critical safeguard to deter criminal activity, thereby saving you money, time, and significant headaches. The great thing is it is so simple to implement.

The following basic Crime Free language should be presented to your prospective tenant as part of the rental criteria, prior to entering into a lease and at the earliest possible convenience in the relationship:

"Tenant shall ensure that Tenant, Tenant's occupants, Tenant's guests, and Tenant's invitees shall not engage in, perpetrate, permit, encourage, intend to facilitate, or actually facilitate, any criminal activity of any kind, on, near or off of the premises. If Tenant fails to ensure that no criminal activity occurs, whether or not Tenant knew of such criminal activity, any such criminal activity is a material violation of the lease subjecting the Tenant and occupants to immediate termination and eviction. If there is a separate crime free addendum, the full language of the crime free addendum to the lease shall be controlling."

### **II. Why is it so important for you to use the Crime Free language?**

**A.** When you introduce the Crime Free language to the prospective Tenant early in the relationship, the prospect quickly learns that crime will not work at the property.

**B.** It helps ensure immediate, appropriate, and comprehensive communication about expectations. The Tenant understands early on that management is keenly aware of the issue and takes a proactive, educated approach to what they are doing.

**C.** Prospective Tenants who are planning on being involved in criminal activity in your unit, or think crime may be an issue for them, will simply find another place to live, thereby saving you time, money, and heartache.

**D.** It is a proven and established deterrent to criminal activity that has effectively been working for 32 years.

**E.** If you ever have to go before a court because of criminal activity, the language of the Crime Free language is fatally damning to the Tenant. It is clear and unambiguous that if the Tenant, Tenant's Occupant, Guest, or Invitee is involved in criminal activity in, on, near or off of the premises, the entire household can be evicted by a preponderance of evidence. It provides zero wiggle room for a Tenant when it comes to criminal activity and provides a quicker remedy in many jurisdictions.

**F.** You may also qualify for insurance discounts when you show you implement crime-free principles in your leasing. You need to ask your insurance company what discounts are available to you when you implement the use of the crime-free language.

Working in concert with Officer Tim Zehring of the Mesa, Arizona Police Department, I wrote the original private sector crime free language in 1992. It has been used ever since with incredible results nationwide and internationally by Owners, Landlords and Property Managers.

Please check with your attorney in your local jurisdiction whether or not you are legally permitted to use the crime free language prior to a Tenant qualifying for the lease based on other non-crime related criteria. Using best practices like this, maybe next time the phone rings with a call from your old neighbor they'll be telling you about your amazing new tenant.

*Denny Dobbins is Legal Counsel for Rent Perfect and a private investigator. Subscribe to the weekly Rent Perfect Podcast (available on YouTube, Spotify, and Apple Podcasts) to stay up to date on the latest industry news and for expert tips on how to manage your properties.*