**Responsibilities of an Advocate Organization, School or Church**

Your commitment includes basically these five things. If a situation comes up and you or a staff member becomes aware of a tenant who is living in a rental dwelling (house) or unit (apartment) that has violations and repairs need to be made, or, the tenant comes asking for help — then these are the steps to follow.

**Step One.** To begin with, advertise through an announcement in your bulletin, web page, from the pulpit, a meeting or in some way that your church, school or organization has decided to be an Advocate for tenants. And if there is a tenant living in a rental dwelling or unit he or she believes is in violation, unhealthy or unsafe — then that person can inform you and will receive assistance.

**Step Two.** Then, when a tenant comes for help ask the tenant — “Have you contacted the landlord/property owner and made a request for the repairs to be made.” If the tenant say "no" then tell him or her that needs to be done first, and if no repairs are made within three weeks by the property owner, then ask the tenant to come back and help that person fill out the Minimum Housing Complaint Form.

**Step Three.** If the tenants says "yes, I have asked the landlord/property owner to make repairs and they were not done, or done in a sloppy or inferior way,”

then it is time to offer support to the tenant and ask if he or she needs help filling out the Minimum Housing Complaint Form.

**Step Four.**After the form is filled out, offer to help that person file the complaint with the Inspection Office by offering to give directions or take the tenant to deliver the Complaint Form to the City Hall Inspection Department, or send by mail or email. The Inspection Office is located on the third floor in the City Hall Annex at 706 Maine Street (across the parking lot from City Hall and an elevator to the third floor is at the south end of the building). Their email address is: [planning@quincyil.gov](mailto:planning@quincyil.gov), Fax number is 217-221-2288, and their phone number is 217-228-4540 and ask for the Inspector.

Not all tenants need help filling out the form and delivering to the Inspection Office, but many do.

**The reason we are doing this is because most tenants are afraid** to file a Minimum Housing Complaint Form for fear of retaliation. That is why we are asking for Advocate organizations, schools and churches to offer this support. Some tenants may not have the knowledge or skills to fill out the complaint form.

When the Complaint Form is filled out, it is important that the Advocate Church, School or Organization is listed, the name and phone number of the Advocate Representative, and the Advocate Representative needs to sign the form and include his or her phone number. That is in case the City’s Inspection Department cannot reach the tenant who has filed the complaint; this if frequently the case. If that happens, the Inspection Department will call the Advocate Representative and ask if that person will help contact the tenant.

**Step Five.** This fifth step is up to the Advocate Representative to decide if he or she wishes to continue to help and offer support to the tenant. That might include offering to go to the rental property when the rental property is inspected by the City Inspector; the tenant must be present for the inspection. It might also include checking with the tenant from time to time to see how things are going.

There is nothing for the tenant to fear when a rental property is inspected; Only the inspector is with the tenant, and the Advocate Representative (if agreed on). The property owner is not present. If violations are found, the City sends a letter to the landlord/property owner listing the violations and giving them so many days to make corrections. If the tenant chooses to call in the news media, he or she must do that — not the Advocate organization, school or church or Advocate Representative.

Please feel free to call or email me with any questions.

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