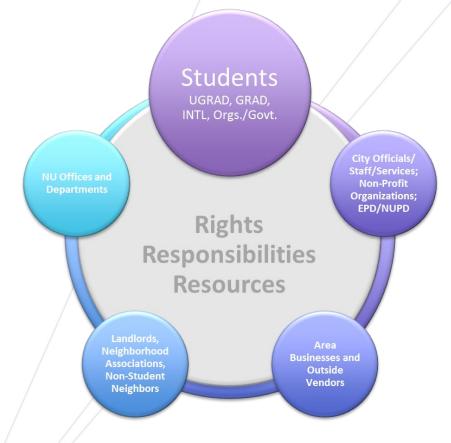
# Securing Housing Off-Campus For International Students

Northwestern OFF-CAMPUS LIFE

## The Off-Campus Life Office

We serve as the first point of contact for students moving and living off-campus.



When to Start Searching & Where to Live **OVERVIEW OF HOUSING** 

## When to Start Searching

- As soon as you need a place, start looking!
- Most graduate students start looking for housing in April through July
- Most leases are signed in July through September
- After submitting an application, ask the landlord when you can expect to receive a decision

#### Where to Live

Most graduate students who take classes in Chicago live in the Loop, North Chicago, Far North Chicago or Evanston

 Learn more about Chicago neighborhoods with this <u>interactive</u> <u>map</u>

Popular Evanston neighborhoods for NU students are west and south of campus

Students often live within a few blocks of the CTA or Metra train lines

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#### **On-Campus Housing**

There are no University owned on-campus rental properties on the Chicago campus

<u>On-campus graduate student housing options</u> in Evanston fill up very quickly and is only available for full-time enrolled graduate students & post-doctoral candidates.

For more information regarding the application process, you can contact (847) 467-4663 or <u>housing@northwestern.edu</u>.

#### Location & Transportation

- It is important to think about location before committing to a lease
  - Things to consider: distance to classes, nearby public transportation, proximity to grocery stores/laundromat, & neighborhood safety
- Transportation Options
  - Bicycles, Walking, <u>University Shuttles</u>, <u>CTA trains</u> and buses, <u>Metra trains</u>, & Cars (may require <u>on-</u> <u>campus parking pass</u>)

# Think About Your Budget

- Consider the following expenses:
  - Rent and deposit amount
  - Monthly utilities
  - Furnishing your apartment
  - Food expenses
  - Do you have pets? Pet fees/deposits
  - Renters insurance
- Utilize our <u>monthly budget spreadsheet</u>!
- Financial Aid:
  - Talk with your financial aid advisor about any changes
  - More information at: <u>https://www.northwestern.edu/admissions/financial-aid-offices.html</u>

#### Amenities and Utilities

- Amenities & Utilities will vary with each lease contract, depending on the landlord/apartment building.
- Amenities that may be included: in-unit or in-building laundry, kitchen appliances, parking, Internet, cable TV, etc.
- Utilities that may be included: water, electricity, heat, garbage pick-up, gas

Authentic Information & Reliable Housing Options

#### **FINDING HOUSING & ROOMMATES**

#### Places4Students

- Northwestern University partners with <u>Places4Students.com</u>. It's free to you!
  - Rental Property listings
  - Roommate Finder
  - Student Sublets
- If you need a shorter term, check the "Sublet" and "Short-Term Rental" tabs

#### Finding Reliable Housing (Even If You Aren't Currently in the Area)

- Before visiting, contact landlords by phone/email with any questions about properties you're considering.
- Recommendation: view housing options in-person!
  - Plan ahead to make appointments to visit potential properties as soon as you arrive.
  - If this is not possible, arrange a video call tour of the property (e.g., Zoom).

Lease Options, Amenities & Utilities, & Fees

#### HOUSING & LEASE DETAILS \*\*READ YOUR LEASE!\*\*

#### **Understanding Your Lease**

# What is the *single most important thing* you can do before signing your lease?



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### Your Lease: Key Questions

- What's the term?
- How can you leave the lease early? Are there penalties to do so?
- Is it a joint or individual lease?
- How and when do you pay rent?
- How do you request repairs, or pest control?
- Whether and how can you sublet?
- What rules has the landlord established for your use of the property?
- How does the lease compare to <u>model leases</u>?

## **Application & Lease Fees**

- Many landlords require tenants to pay application and move-in fees (or security deposit), in addition to the first month's rent, before signing the lease agreement.
- If you have to pay non-refundable fees, those are typically charged in place of a refundable security deposit.
- A security deposit can be no larger than one and a half times your rent payment

Social Security Number, Credit, Co-Signers, & Conflicts

#### **ADDITIONAL LEASE ISSUES**

#### Social Security Number (SSN) for International Students

- Your application may be turned down without an SSN or ITIN
- You will be able to obtain an SSN eventually if you have an on-campus job.
- Some landlords will accept a valid passport, Form I-20, or Form DS-2019 as proof of being an international student studying at Northwestern

# **Credit History Review**

- Landlords may ask for a Social Security number in order to conduct a credit check as part of the application.
- Poor credit history?
  - Find someone (often a family member) willing to co-sign your lease, or be a guarantor on it.
- What if you don't have an SSN?
  - If you have an on-campus internship/assistantship, obtain a letter from your academic department with the terms of your position and its pay
  - Obtain a letter of sponsorship or other proof of income (e.g., bank statements) to demonstrate your ability to pay.
  - Provide contact information (email) from previous landlords

# When Things Go Wrong

- Apartment living doesn't always go exactly perfect.
- Have an issue with your neighborhood/neighbors?
  - Try 3-1-1 Services to find local options and resources
  - Evanston: https://www.cityofevanston.org/how-to/311
  - Chicago: <u>https://311.chicago.gov/s/?language=en\_US</u>
- Have a landlord conflict?
  - Metropolitan Tenants Organization
  - Law Center for Better Housing
- Have a roommate conflict?
  - University Ombudsperson

# **Connect With OCL**

- Visit us at Scott Hall, Lower Level
- Visit us online!

- https://www.northwestern.edu/offcampus/

- Contact us to schedule a one-on-one appointment – in-person or Zoom.
  - Email: offcampuslife@northwestern.edu

– Phone: 847-491-8430

#### Questions?



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