# **WHY PLAIN LANGUAGE LEASING?**

Plain language is writing designed to ensure the reader understands documents as quickly, easily, and completely as possible. It involves removing technical terms and unnecessary complexities to make documents, instructions, or communications more accessible, particularly for individuals with cognitive access needs, lower literacy levels, and English language barriers.

On the other side of the same coin, government housing funding programs, developers, and property managers often have difficulty responding to these challenges because of the volume of information they must collect about tenants in order to keep the housing project in compliance with affordable housing regulations, and uncertainty about how to meaningfully respond to the range of comprehension needs these communities experience.

If rental housing information was more accessible, a greater number of potential residents would better be able to complete housing applications, accelerate the move-in process to subsidized apartments, and advocate for their housing rights when issues arise.

# **WHAT DOCUMENTS HAVE BEEN TRANSLATED?**

| **Document Name** | **Usage and Considerations** |
| --- | --- |
| Lease Agreement | Legally binding document modifiable to include sections important to you. This includes all addendums required in the state of California for general rental housing and tax credit projects including: Megan’s Law, Bed Bug Addendum, VAWA information.  We also encourage you to include all items that would be an evictable offense within this document, rather than in a separate addendum. |
| Community Guidelines | This document can be used to set the tone that people are moving into a community to which they have a role in keeping it safe, comfortable, and a pleasant place to live.  We started from an extensive list of house rules translated into plain language, but we encourage you to edit down considerably based on the population of your housing development. Also, please keep in mind some house rules can inadvertently lead to discriminatory practices for people with disabilities and to those who’ve experienced housing insecurity, so be mindful when choosing the house rules you would implement.  We also encourage you to align with your lease as this should be a source of additional information about details within the lease including: how to pay rent, details on repairs, etc. |
| Complaint Process | Legally required document that should be displayed in a central place and reviewed upon lease signing. The Complaint Process (also known as a Grievance Procedure) document, should be clearly followed with clear timeframes that are modifiable to reflect your site. |
| Reasonable Accommodations | This legally required document is one that helps a resident request a change to housing policies or physical features to ensure equal access for individuals with disabilities. |
| CTCAC - Good Cause | We are in the process of getting this approved to be a CTCAC-accepted plain language translation of the official lease rider. For now this can be used as a plain language cover page. |
| CTCAC - Add On | We are in the process of getting this approved to be a CTCAC-accepted plain language translation of the official lease rider. For now this can be used as a plain language cover page. |

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# **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING PLAIN LANGUAGE?**

* **Enhanced Accessibility:** Plain Language ensures all residents, including those with disabilities or limited English proficiency, understand their rights, promoting accessibility, inclusivity, and informed decisions.
* **Reduced Misunderstandings:** Removing complex terminology minimizes misunderstandings and disputes, creating a more harmonious living environment.
* **Empowerment and Autonomy:** Clear and digestible language empowers all residents to ask questions, seek help, and foster autonomy and independence.
* **Equal Access to Resources:** Plain Language ensures fairness and prevents language or cognitive barriers from disadvantaged residents.
* **Strengthened Community Engagement:** Improved understanding encourages participation, creating a cohesive affordable housing community.