

## Good Starting Tips

Tell your prospective tenants up front that your property rental criteria requires that a screening agency provide a screening report on them and that you will require a **non-refundable** screening fee along with the completed application to cover the expenses involved in the screening report. If they don't want to pay for the screening, tell them you're sorry, but you can't rent to them without it. Let them know that screening safeguards tenants and the communities in which they live. Sometimes their refusal to pay the fee is a good indication they have something to hide. If you feel uncomfortable with charging a fee, consider taking the fee off the first month's rent if they are accepted. However, do not feel obligated to do so - law allows you the legal right to charge the applicant for the screening fee and more important, you have the right to protect your property and rent to a good tenant!

Don't be fooled by a prospective tenant's appearance. He or she may be standing in front of you in a military uniform or in nurse's attire, but you should still require a screening. Looks can be deceiving and some people are very good at the "first impression" game. Beyond that, it is important that all applicants abide by your property criteria on an equal and nondiscriminatory basis.

Be sure the application is completely filled out so that all the pertinent information to do a thorough screening for you is obtained. Omitted information on the application can mean the applicant isn't telling the truth. Do try not to accept the phrase "I can't remember." Let them know their application may be delayed or even denied if it is not complete.

Legibility is of great importance as well...

*If you can't read it, we probably won't be able to either.*

Be sure the application release is signed. Screening agencies must comply with federal FCRA as well as other state and local statutes and cannot pull a credit report without the consent of the applicant. Also, many property managers and employers require a signature release before they provide verification or reference information. The signed application release will provide for this consent.

Visual verification of a driver's license or photo ID is very important. First and most obvious, to identify the person you are speaking with is the person standing before you. If you can't take a copy of the license, note the driver's license number and issue date. Driver's license information can confirm identity information with regard to legal name and date of birth and the issue date can at times verify a suspected case of identification fraud.

Go over the application before sending it in for processing to make sure it legible and complete. This will alleviate the delay of application results and/or the need to call the applicant and make a second request for the initial application information.

If the applicant is denied due to poor credit or criminal records, etc., you need not provide details as to the information but instead provide the "nature" of the denial, such as "adverse credit." If the applicant was denied in whole or in part due to credit, give them the toll free number of the major credit agency where the credit information was obtained (our system provides you with this information). You need not discuss the credit report information with the applicant and it is not your responsibility to give them a copy of their credit report. The FCRA and major credit bureaus have provided processes whereby the applicant (if denied) may obtain a copy of their credit report for free from the credit reporting agency if requested prior to 60 days from denial, or, you may provide the applicant Call Eleanore's toll free number to discuss any other report issues.

The above is a good starting guide. Let us help you with additional "need to know" information and fill that vacancy with a good tenant!

*Call Eleanore Team*