**A Landlords Guide to Florida Rental Applications**

The rental application stage is one of the most important steps in the rental process, which is why every landlord should be aware of their state’s rental application laws. Here’s what you need to know about the laws surrounding Florida rental applications so you can create the best, most comprehensive rental application for your rentals in the sunshine state.

***What to Include in a Florida Rental Application***

A Florida rental application can help you gain in-depth insights on prospective tenants interested in renting out your property. As a general rule, you should include the following sections in your Florida rental application.

Applicant information: You will want to get the applicant’s phone number, email address, current residential address, driver’s license number, Social Security Number, etc.

Proof of income: You will need to ask for a proof of income, which can be requested in the form of a paycheck, W-2, or bank information.

Employment history: Get current and past employer contact information to better understand who the tenant is and how reliable they are. This is also a great way to verify an applicant’s income.

References: It’s always smart to ask your applicants for previous landlord references so you will have an idea of who you will be renting to. You can also ask for an employer reference, a credit reference, or personal references.

Conduct a background check: The tenant screening aspect of the application will include a credit, eviction history, and criminal history check. You will need to have space in the application for the tenant to give written consent to conduct a credit check before you actually conduct this report.

Co-signer application: If the prospective tenant needs to add a co-signer to their lease, you will also want said co-signer to fill out a rental application so you can ensure that they will be a responsible party for rent if need be.

***What Makes Florida Rental Applications Unique?***

If an applicant is an active service member, the landlord must respond to the application within a seven-day time frame. Failing to respond within this timeframe in Florida will result in the landlord having to accept the tenant no matter what.

***Florida Rental Application Fee Laws***

While Florida does not limit the amount a landlord can charge in rental application fees, it’s advised to stay within the normal price range to avoid deterring tenants from applying.

The average rental application fee is $30 per applicant, but Avail lets you combine all three reports (credit, criminal, and eviction) for $55 per applicant. Although tenants usually cover the application and tenant screening fees, landlords do have the option to cover this expense themselves or use the account credit they’ve earned from the Avail Referral program.

Landlords must also keep collected rental application fees in a separate account from other rental charges collected such as rent and security deposits.

***Are Application Fees Refundable in Florida?***

Landlords with Florida rental properties are not required to refund any rental application fees to prospective tenants for any reason.

***What Landlords Can’t Ask on a Florida Rental Application***

All federal Fair Housing laws protect Florida applicants and tenants from housing discrimination based on race, sex, national origin, familial status, religion, color, and disability.

However, landlords can inquire about the following aspects of a Florida rental application, including:

Age: Landlords can ask about age when it comes to age-specific communities, such as senior housing.

Religious organizations: Landlords can ask about religious organizations if the housing is run by said religious organization.

Club affiliation: Landlords can inquire about one’s private club affiliation if the housing is run by said club and the club doesn’t discriminate against new member applicants.

***Florida Laws on Tenant Background Checks***

In terms of tenant background check laws in Florida, landlords must have tenant consent in writing to check their credit history during the screening process, as dictated by the Federal Credit Reporting Act (FCRA). That being said, landlords don’t need to ask for permission to look into a tenant’s eviction or criminal history.