

Neighbor Disputes or Harassment Issues

It is common for someone to disagree with or be annoyed by their neighbors, but sometimes these annoyances rise to a higher level and interfere with your daily life. Certain actions by your neighbors may make you feel scared, unsafe, or unable to participate in your normal daily activities. This fact sheet is designed to give some examples of neighbor issues that people with disabilities may experience and give suggestions for how to deal with them.

The information provided on this fact sheet is not intended to constitute legal advice.

Process for Discussing Concerns

1 Talk to your neighbor about your concerns (if it feels safe to do so)

1. Start with reaching out to your neighbor to address your concern.
2. Focus on the problem and how it impacts you, "I'm having a hard time sleeping because the music is so loud."
3. Give them a chance to respond and fix the situation.

If this fails to resolve your concerns, go to the next step.

2 Gather documentation.

1. Keep track of incidents. Use a notebook to document dates, times, issues.
2. Collect physical evidence if there is any, such as emails, items left in yard, photos, or video concerns.
3. Talk to others who may have witnessed this behavior.

If this fails to resolve your concerns, go to the next step.

3 Write a letter to your neighbor.

1. Write a letter to the neighbor explaining your concerns and asking them to stop the behavior.
2. Focus on the problem and how it impacts you.
3. Keep a copy of the letter in your records, along with the documentation of the behavior. Be sure to date the letter and send it via USPS mail.

If this fails to resolve your concerns, go to the next step.

4 Talk to Authorities about your concerns.

1. Contact landlord about your concerns. Focus on the problem.
2. Contact your municipality for any ordinances addressing your concern. Bring your concern to city officials or police to enforce or to address ordinance issues.
3. Allow time for authorities to respond.

Legal Actions Options

Criminal

If there is a crime being committed, you can report it to law enforcement.

Crimes are defined in Wisconsin's criminal statutes.

Law Enforcement and Prosecutors determine if there was a crime and if it meets the legal requirements needed to be charged.

Protective Order

You may be able to file a **restraining order**, which is a court-issued order for an individual to not do a certain action.

- **You don't need an attorney to file an order**, but you can consult with one.
- Restraining orders can be hard to get. **You will have to give proof and documentation to the court official.** Without proof, the order will not be granted. This means that you will need to be prepared to talk about your experiences and how it made you feel.
- Most people who file a restraining order don't understand that the other person will be there. The other person has the right to know about your request for an order. **They can be at the hearing and tell their side of the story.**

Civil

You may be able to file a civil lawsuit against the neighbor.

You do not need an attorney to file a civil lawsuit. It is a good idea to hire one or consult with one, if you would like to.

Civil lawsuits are very difficult and time-consuming.

Resources

- **Frequently Asked Questions about Mediating Neighbor Disputes, Nolo:** www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/do-you-really-need-professional-mediator-work-out-problems-with-neighbor.html
- **Tips for talking with your neighbor, People's Law School:** www.peopleslawschool.ca/tips-for-talking-with-neighbour/
- **Wisconsin Circuit Court Forms, Wisconsin Court System:** www.wicourts.gov/forms1/circuit/ccform.jsp?FormName=&FormNumber=&beg_date=&end_date=&StatuteCite=&Category=20&SubCat=Harassment%20Restraining%20Orders/Injunctions
- **Introducing Evidence Video, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin:** www.endabusewi.org/introducing-evidence-video/
- **I Need a Lawyer: Lawyer Referral and Information Service, State Bar of Wisconsin:** www.wisbar.org/forPublic/INeedaLawyer/Pages/LRIS.aspx
- **Wisconsin Stalking and Harassment Laws Information Sheet, Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault:** www.wcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Stalking-and-Harassment_Infosheet2019.pdf
- **Know the Laws – By State, WomensLaw.org:** www.womenslaw.org/laws/wi
- **Tenant Resource Center:** www.tenantresourcecenter.org

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