



## Florida Association of RV Parks & Campgrounds

# EVICTON PROCEDURES AND NOTICES

### **FOR GUESTS THAT HAVE CAMPED ON THE SAME SITE FOR LESS THAN SIX MONTHS**

The rules and regulations for evicting guests at a campground/RV Park, who have been there under six months, are outlined in Florida Statute Chapter 513. Florida Statute 513 does not specify what the written notice should say for RV parks to evict it just simply says notice must be in writing. However, the following language is what Florida Statute 509 requires a hotel/motel operator to use when removing / causing to be removed an undesirable guest, and since FS 509 establishes the following language for public lodging establishments, it might be worth considering if you need to give notice.

**“ You are hereby notified that this establishment no longer desires to entertain you as its guest, and you are requested to leave at once. To remain after receipt of this notice is a misdemeanor under the laws of this state.”**

According to Chapter 513, if the park operator has reason for eviction (i.e. disruption of peace, not obeying park rules, causing harm to the physical park, failure to make payment of rent, etc.) the guest/tenant must immediately leave once the eviction notice has been delivered. If the tenant does not leave when requested he/she is guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree, and it is the duty of law enforcement to assist in the tenants removal. Note: If any payment has been made by tenant in advance, you are required by law to return the unused portion of that advance payment. **SEE CHAPTER 513.13 AND 513.151 FOR DETAILS**

### **FOR GUESTS THAT HAVE CAMPED ON THE SAME SITE FOR MORE THAN SIX MONTHS**

If a guest has resided on the same site for more than six months, the campground operator must follow the rules for evictions as outlined in **Florida Statute Chapter 83 Part II, Residential Tenancies, "Florida Residential Landlord Tenant Act."** Under this statute the eviction rules are different. Notice must be given in writing of your desire for the tenant to vacate the premises and you must state why this action is being taken.

Note: There are causes for eviction where the tenant must vacate the property within 7 days of a written notice. The actions of noncompliances which are grounds for immediate eviction are outlined in Chpt. 83.56 (2), and include, but are not limited to, destruction, damage, misuse of the landlord's or other tenants' property by intentional act or a subsequent or continued unreasonable disturbance. This includes Tenants obligations, as outlined in Chpt. 83.52, to conduct himself or herself in a manner that does not unreasonably disturb the neighbors or constitute a breach of peace. In such event, the landlord may terminate the rental agreement, and the tenant shall have 7 days from the date that the notice is delivered to vacate the premises. The notice shall be adequate if it is in substantially the following form: **"You are advised that your lease is terminated effective immediately. You shall have 7 days from the delivery of this letter to vacate the premises. This action is taken because (cite the noncompliance)."**

Evictions without a specific duration (no lease or written agreement) may be handled as outlined in 83.57 (see below).

\* For details on eviction requirements and procedures see **Florida Statute Chapter 513.13 & 513.151**. For guests who have been in your campground for over 6 months, you must refer to **Florida Statute Chapter 83 Part II Residential Tenancies, "Florida Residential Landlord and Tenant Act"**.

# FLORIDA STATUTE 513

## MOBILE HOME AND RECREATIONAL VEHICLE PARKS

### SECTIONS 513.13 & 513.151

#### EVICTION REQUIREMENTS AND OPERATOR'S RIGHTS AND REMEDIES FOR TRANSIENT GUESTS

#### **513.13 Recreational vehicle parks; eviction; grounds; proceedings.—**

(1) The operator of any recreational vehicle park may remove or cause to be removed from such park, in the manner provided in this section, any transient guest of the park who, while on the premises of the park, illegally possesses or deals in a controlled substance as defined in chapter 893 or disturbs the peace and comfort of other persons; who causes harm to the physical park; or who fails to make payment of rent at the rental rate agreed upon and by the time agreed upon. The admission of a person to, or the removal of a person from, any recreational vehicle park shall not be based upon race, color, national origin, sex, physical disability, or creed.

(2) The operator of any recreational vehicle park shall notify such guest that the park no longer desires to entertain the guest and shall request that such guest immediately depart from the park. Such notice shall be given in writing. If such guest has paid in advance, the park shall, at the time such notice is given, tender to the guest the unused portion of the advance payment. Any guest who remains or attempts to remain in such park after being requested to leave is guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

(3) If a guest has accumulated an outstanding account in excess of an amount equivalent to three nights' rent at a recreational vehicle park, the operator may disconnect all utilities of the recreational vehicle and notify the guest that the action is for the purpose of requiring the guest to confront the operator or permittee and arrange for the payment of the guest's account. Such arrangement must be in writing, and a copy shall be furnished to the guest. Upon entering into such agreement, the operator shall reconnect the utilities of the recreational vehicle.

(4) If any person is illegally on the premises of any recreational vehicle park, the operator of such park may call upon any law enforcement officer of this state for assistance. It is the duty of such law enforcement officer, upon the request of such operator, to place under arrest and take into custody for violation of this section any guest who violates subsection (1) or subsection (2) in the presence of the officer. If a warrant has been issued by the proper judicial officer for the arrest of any violator of subsection (1) or subsection (2), the officer shall serve the warrant, arrest the person, and take the person into custody. Upon arrest, with or without warrant, the guest is deemed to have given up any right to occupancy or to have abandoned the guest's right to occupancy of the premises of the recreational vehicle park; and the operator of the park shall employ all reasonable and proper means to care for any personal property left on the premises by such guest and shall refund any unused portion of moneys paid by such guest for the occupancy of such premises.

(5) In addition to the grounds for eviction established by law, grounds for eviction may be established in a written lease agreement between a recreational vehicle park operator or permittee and a recreational vehicle park occupant.

History.—ss. 11, 15, ch. 83-321; s. 12, ch. 84-182; s. 93, ch. 85-81; s. 132, ch. 91-224; ss. 24, 26, ch. 93-150.

#### **513.151 Recreational vehicle parks; guests in transient occupancy; operator's rights and remedies; writ of distress.—**

This section applies only to guests in transient occupancy in a recreational vehicle park.

##### **(1) OPERATOR'S RIGHT TO DISCONNECT UTILITIES.—**

(a) If an operator of a recreational vehicle park makes a reasonable determination that a guest has accumulated a large outstanding account at such park, the operator may disconnect all utilities of the recreational vehicle or tent, except that the operator must not by such actions create a sanitary nuisance. The operator may also take such other measures considered necessary for the purpose of requiring the guest to confront the operator and arrange for payment on the guest's account. Such arrangement must be in writing, and a copy shall be furnished to the guest.

(b) Once the guest has confronted the operator and made arrangement for payment on the guest's account, the operator shall reconnect the utilities of the recreational vehicle or tent, or otherwise reverse the measures taken under paragraph (a).

(2) **OPERATOR'S RIGHT TO RECOVER PREMISES.—**If the guest of a recreational vehicle park vacates the premises without notice to the operator and the operator reasonably believes the guest does not intend to satisfy the outstanding account, the operator may recover the premises by removing the recreational vehicle or tent from the site. The operator shall take all reasonable and proper means to care for the recreational vehicle or tent until a settlement or a final court judgment is obtained on the guest's outstanding account. Upon recovery of the premises, the operator shall seal, or cause to be sealed, the recreational vehicle in the presence of at least one other person who is not an agent of the operator or shall make an itemized inventory of any property belonging to the guest and store such property until a settlement or a final

court judgment is obtained on the guest's outstanding account. Such inventory shall be conducted by the operator and at least one other person who is not an agent of the operator.

(3) OPERATOR'S WRIT OF DISTRESS.—If, after there has been a disconnection of utilities pursuant to subsection (1), a guest fails to make the agreed-upon payments on the guest's account, or, notwithstanding subsection (1), if a guest vacates the premises without making payment on the guest's outstanding account, the operator may proceed to prosecute a writ of distress against the guest and the guest's property. The writ of distress must be predicated on the lien created by s. 713.77.

(a) An action under this subsection must be brought in a court of appropriate jurisdiction in the county where the property is located. If the property consists of separate articles, the value of any one of which articles is within the jurisdictional amount of a lower court but the total value of which articles, taken together, exceeds that jurisdictional amount, the plaintiff may not divide the property to give jurisdiction to the lower court so as to enable the plaintiff to bring separate actions for the property.

(b) To obtain an order authorizing the issuance of a writ of distress upon final judgment, the plaintiff must first file with the clerk of the court a complaint reciting and showing the following information:

1. A statement of the amount of the guest's account at the recreational vehicle park.
2. A statement that the plaintiff is the operator of the recreational vehicle park in which the guest has an outstanding account. If the plaintiff's interest in such account is based on written documents, copies of such documents must be attached to the complaint.
3. A statement that the operator has made a reasonable attempt to obtain payment from the guest for an outstanding account, either by confronting the guest or by a disconnection of utilities pursuant to subsection (1), and a statement that the guest has failed to make any payment or that the guest has vacated the premises without paying the outstanding account.
4. A statement that the account is outstanding and unpaid by the guest; a statement of the services provided to the guest for which the outstanding account was accumulated; and a statement of the cause of such nonpayment according to the best knowledge, information, and belief of the plaintiff.
5. A general statement as to what property the plaintiff is requesting levy against, including the property included in the inventory conducted pursuant to subsection (2) if the operator has recovered the premises, and a statement of the authority under which the plaintiff has a lien against such property.
6. A statement, to the best of the plaintiff's knowledge, that the claimed property has not been taken for a tax, assessment, or fine pursuant to law or taken under an execution or attachment by order of any court.

(c) The officer of the court to whom a writ of distress is directed shall execute the writ of distress by serving it on the defendant and by levying on the property distrainable for services rendered, if such property is found within the area of the officer's jurisdiction. If the property is not found in that jurisdiction but is in another jurisdiction, the officer shall deliver the writ to the proper authority in the other jurisdiction. The writ shall be executed by levying on such property and delivering it to the officer of the court in which the action is pending, and the property shall be disposed of according to law, unless the officer is ordered by such court to hold the property and dispose of it according to law. If the defendant cannot be found, the levy on the property suffices as service of the writ on the defendant if the plaintiff and the officer each file a sworn statement stating that the whereabouts of the defendant are unknown.

(4) OPERATOR'S PREJUDGMENT WRIT OF DISTRESS.—

(a) A prejudgment writ of distress may issue, and the property seized may be delivered forthwith to the plaintiff, if the nature of the claim, the amount of the claim, and the grounds relied upon for the issuance of the writ clearly appear from specific facts shown by the verified petition or by a separate affidavit of the plaintiff.

(b) The prejudgment writ of distress may issue if the court finds, pursuant to paragraph (a), that the defendant has failed to make payment as agreed and that the defendant is engaging in, or is about to engage in, conduct that may place the claimed property in danger of being destroyed, being concealed, being removed from the state, being removed from the jurisdiction of the court, or being transferred to an innocent purchaser during the pendency of the action.

(c) A prejudgment writ of distress may issue only upon a signed order of a circuit judge or a county court judge. The prejudgment writ of distress must include a notice of the defendant's right to an immediate hearing before the court issuing the writ.

(d) The plaintiff must post bond in the amount of twice the estimated value of the goods subject to the writ or twice the balance of the outstanding account, whichever is the lesser amount as determined by the court, as security for the payment of damages the defendant may sustain if the writ is wrongfully obtained.

(e) The prejudgment writ issued under this subsection must command the officer to whom it may be directed to distrain the described personal property of the defendant and hold such property until final judgment is rendered.

(f) 1. The defendant may obtain release of the property seized under a prejudgment writ of distress by posting bond with a surety within 10 days after service of the writ, in the amount of 125 percent of the claimed outstanding account, for the satisfaction of any judgment that may be rendered against the defendant, conditioned upon delivery of the property if the judgment should require it.

2. As an alternative to the procedure prescribed in subparagraph 1., the defendant, by motion filed with the court within 10 days after service of the writ, may obtain the dissolution of a prejudgment writ of distress, unless the plaintiff proves the grounds upon which the writ was issued. The court shall set such motion for an immediate hearing.

(5) INVENTORY OF DISTRAINED PROPERTY.—When the officer seizes distrainable property, either under paragraph (3)(c) or paragraph (4)(e), and such property is seized on the premises of a recreational vehicle park, the officer shall inventory the property; hold those items which, upon the officer's appraisal, would satisfy the plaintiff's claim; and return the remaining items to the defendant. If the defendant cannot be found, the officer shall hold all items of property seized. The officer may release the property only pursuant to law or a court order.

(6) EXECUTION ON PROPERTY IN POSSESSION OF THIRD PERSON.—If the property to be distrained is in the possession of the defendant at the time of the issuance of a writ under subsection (3) or a prejudgment writ under subsection (4) and the property passes into the possession of a third person before the execution of the writ, the officer holding the writ shall execute it on the property in the possession of the third person and shall serve the writ on the defendant and the third person; and the action, with proper amendments, shall proceed against the third person.

(7) CLAIM BY THIRD PERSON TO DISTRAINED PROPERTY.—A third person claiming any property distrained pursuant to this chapter may interpose and prosecute a claim for that property in the same manner as is provided for similar cases of claim to property levied on under execution.

(8) JUDGMENT.—

(a) For plaintiff.— 1. If it appears that the account stated in the complaint is wrongfully unpaid, and the property described in such complaint is the defendant's and was held by the officer executing the prejudgment writ, the plaintiff shall have judgment for the damages sustained by the plaintiff, which judgment may include reasonable attorney's fees and costs, by taking title to the defendant's property in the officer's possession or by having the property sold as prescribed in subsection (9).

2. a. If it appears that the property was retained by, or redelivered to, the defendant on the defendant's forthcoming bond, either under subparagraph (4)(f)1. or subparagraph (4)(f)2., the plaintiff shall take judgment for the property, which judgment may include reasonable attorney's fees and costs, and against the defendant and the surety on the forthcoming bond for the value of the outstanding account; and the judgment, which may include reasonable attorney's fees and costs, shall be satisfied by the recovery and sale of the property or the amount adjudged against the defendant and the defendant's surety.

b. After the judgment is rendered, the plaintiff may seek a writ of possession for the property and execution for the plaintiff's costs or may have execution against the defendant and the defendant's surety for the amount recovered and costs. If the plaintiff elects to have a writ of possession for the property and the officer returns that the officer is unable to find the property or any part of it, the plaintiff may immediately have execution against the defendant and the defendant's surety for the whole amount recovered less the value of any property found by the officer. If the plaintiff has execution for the whole amount, the officer shall release all property taken under the writ of possession.

c. In any proceeding to ascertain the value of the property so that judgment for the value may be entered, the value of each article must be found. When a lot of goods, wares, or merchandise has been distrained, it is sufficient to ascertain the total value of the entire lot found, and it is not necessary to ascertain the value of each article of the lot.

(b) For defendant.—

1. If property has been retained by, or redelivered to, the defendant on the defendant's forthcoming bond or upon the dissolution of a prejudgment writ and the defendant prevails, the defendant shall have judgment against the plaintiff for any damages of the defendant for the taking of the property, which judgment may include reasonable attorney's fees and costs.

2. If the property has not been retained by, or redelivered to, the defendant and the defendant prevails, judgment shall be entered against the plaintiff for possession of the property, which judgment may include reasonable attorney's fees and costs.

3. The remedies provided in this paragraph do not preclude any other remedies available under the laws of this state.

(9) SALE OF DISTRAINED PROPERTY.—

(a) If the judgment is for the plaintiff, the property in whole or in part shall, at the plaintiff's option pursuant to subparagraph (8)(a)1. or subparagraph (8)(a)2., be sold and the proceeds applied to the payment of the judgment.

(b) Before any property levied on is sold, it must be advertised two times, the first advertisement being at least 10 days before the sale. All property so levied on may be sold on the premises of the recreational vehicle park or at the courthouse door.

(c) If the defendant appeals and obtains a writ of supersedeas before sale of the property, the officer executing the writ shall hold the property, and there may not be any sale or disposition of the property until final judgment is had on appeal.

(10) EXEMPTIONS FROM DISTRESS AND SALE.—The following property of a guest is exempt from distress and sale under this chapter:

(a) From final distress and sale: clothing; and items essential to the health and safety of the guest.

(b) From prejudgment writ of distress: clothing; items essential to the health and safety of the guest; and any tools of the guest's trade or profession, business papers, or other items directly related to such trade or profession.

History.—s. 13, ch. 84-182; s. 1, ch. 85-65; s. 94, ch. 85-81; s. 36, ch. 92-78; s. 25, ch. 93-150.

## CHAPTER 83

### PART II RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES

#### SECTIONS 83.56 – 83.68

#### EVICTIONS AND LEASE TERMINATIONS FOR GUESTS WHO HAVE BEEN AT YOUR CAMPGROUND FOR 6 MONTHS OR MORE

##### **83.56 Termination of rental agreement.**

(1) If the landlord materially fails to comply with s. 83.51(1) or material provisions of the rental agreement within 7 days after delivery of written notice by the tenant specifying the noncompliance and indicating the intention of the tenant to terminate the rental agreement by reason thereof, the tenant may terminate the rental agreement. If the failure to comply with s. 83.51(1) or material provisions of the rental agreement is due to causes beyond the control of the landlord and the landlord has made and continues to make every reasonable effort to correct the failure to comply, the rental agreement may be terminated or altered by the parties, as follows:

(a) If the landlord's failure to comply renders the dwelling unit untenable and the tenant vacates, the tenant shall not be liable for rent during the period the dwelling unit remains uninhabitable.

(b) If the landlord's failure to comply does not render the dwelling unit untenable and the tenant remains in occupancy, the rent for the period of noncompliance shall be reduced by an amount in proportion to the loss of rental value caused by the noncompliance.

(2) If the tenant materially fails to comply with s. 83.52 or material provisions of the rental agreement, other than a failure to pay rent, or reasonable rules or regulations, the landlord may:

(a) If such noncompliance is of a nature that the tenant should not be given an opportunity to cure it or if the noncompliance constitutes a subsequent or continuing noncompliance within 12 months of a written warning by the landlord of a similar violation, deliver a written notice to the tenant specifying the noncompliance and the landlord's intent to terminate the rental agreement by reason thereof. Examples of noncompliance which are of a nature that the tenant should not be given an opportunity to cure include, but are not limited to, destruction, damage, or misuse of the landlord's or other tenants' property by intentional act or a subsequent or continued unreasonable disturbance. In such event, the landlord may terminate the rental agreement, and the tenant shall have 7 days from the date that the notice is delivered to vacate the premises. The notice shall be adequate if it is in substantially the following form:

You are advised that your lease is terminated effective immediately. You shall have 7 days from the delivery of this letter to vacate the premises. This action is taken because (cite the noncompliance).

(b) If such noncompliance is of a nature that the tenant should be given an opportunity to cure it, deliver a written notice to the tenant specifying the noncompliance, including a notice that, if the noncompliance is not corrected within 7 days from the date the written notice is delivered, the landlord shall terminate the rental agreement by reason thereof. Examples of such noncompliance include, but are not limited to, activities in contravention of the lease or this act such as having or permitting unauthorized pets, guests, or vehicles; parking in an unauthorized manner or permitting such parking; or failing to keep the premises clean and sanitary. The notice shall be adequate if it is in substantially the following form:

You are hereby notified that (cite the noncompliance). Demand is hereby made that you remedy the noncompliance within 7 days of receipt of this notice or your lease shall be deemed terminated and you shall vacate the premises upon such termination. If this same conduct or conduct of a similar nature is repeated within 12 months, your tenancy is subject to termination without your being given an opportunity to cure the noncompliance.

(3) If the tenant fails to pay rent when due and the default continues for 3 days, excluding Saturday, Sunday, and legal holidays, after delivery of written demand by the landlord for payment of the rent or possession of the premises, the landlord may terminate the rental agreement. Legal holidays for the purpose of this section shall be court-observed holidays only. The 3-day notice shall contain a statement in substantially the following form:

You are hereby notified that you are indebted to me in the sum of \_\_\_\_\_ dollars for the rent and use of the premises (address of leased premises, including county), Florida, now occupied by you and that I demand payment of the rent or possession of the premises within 3 days (excluding Saturday, Sunday, and legal holidays) from the date of delivery of this notice, to wit: on or before the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 19\_\_\_\_\_.

(landlord's name, address and phone number)

(4) The delivery of the written notices required by subsections (1), (2), and (3) shall be by mailing or delivery of a true copy thereof or, if the tenant is absent from the premises, by leaving a copy thereof at the residence.

(5) If the landlord accepts rent with actual knowledge of a noncompliance by the tenant or accepts performance by the tenant of any other provision of the rental agreement that is at variance with its provisions, or if the tenant pays rent with actual knowledge of a noncompliance by the landlord or accepts performance by the landlord of any other provision of the rental agreement that is at variance with its provisions, the landlord or tenant waives his or her right to terminate the rental agreement or to bring a civil action for that noncompliance, but not for any subsequent or continuing noncompliance. Any tenant who wishes to defend against an action by the landlord for possession of the unit for noncompliance of the rental agreement or of relevant statutes shall comply with the provisions in s. 83.60(2). The court may not set a date for mediation or trial unless the provisions of s. 83.60(2) have been met, but shall enter a default judgment for removal of the tenant with a writ of possession to issue immediately if the tenant fails to comply with s. 83.60(2). This subsection does not apply to that portion of rent subsidies received from a local, state, or national government or an agency of local, state, or national government; however, waiver will occur if an action has not been instituted within 45 days of the noncompliance.

(6) If the rental agreement is terminated, the landlord shall comply with s. 83.49(3).

#### **83.57 Termination of tenancy without specific term.**

A tenancy without a specific duration, as defined in s. 83.46(2) or (3), may be terminated by either party giving written notice in the manner provided in s. 83.56(4), as follows:

- (1) When the tenancy is from year to year, by giving not less than 60 days' notice prior to the end of any annual period;
- (2) When the tenancy is from quarter to quarter, by giving not less than 30 days' notice prior to the end of any quarterly period;
- (3) When the tenancy is from month to month, by giving not less than 15 days' notice prior to the end of any monthly period; and
- (4) When the tenancy is from week to week, by giving not less than 7 days' notice prior to the end of any weekly period.

#### **83.58 Remedies; tenant holding over.**

If the tenant holds over and continues in possession of the dwelling unit or any part thereof after the expiration of the rental agreement without the permission of the landlord, the landlord may recover possession of the dwelling unit in the manner provided for in s. 83.59 [F.S. 1973]. The landlord may also recover double the amount of rent due on the dwelling unit, or any part thereof, for the period during which the tenant refuses to surrender possession.

#### **83.59 Right of action for possession.**

(1) If the rental agreement is terminated and the tenant does not vacate the premises, the landlord may recover possession of the dwelling unit as provided in this section.

(2) A landlord, the landlord's attorney, or the landlord's agent, applying for the removal of a tenant shall file in the county court of the county where the premises are situated a complaint describing the dwelling unit and stating the facts that authorize its recovery. A landlord's agent is not permitted to take any action other than the initial filing of the complaint, unless the landlord's agent is an attorney. The landlord is entitled to the summary procedure provided in s. 51.011 [F.S. 1971], and the court shall advance the cause on the calendar.

(3) The landlord shall not recover possession of a dwelling unit except:

- (a) In an action for possession under subsection (2) or other civil action in which the issue of right of possession is determined;
- (b) When the tenant has surrendered possession of the dwelling unit to the landlord; or
- (c) When the tenant has abandoned the dwelling unit. In the absence of actual knowledge of abandonment, it shall be presumed that the tenant has abandoned the dwelling unit if he or she is absent from the premises for a period of time equal to one-half the time for periodic rental payments. However, this presumption shall not apply if the rent is current or the tenant has notified the landlord, in writing, of an intended absence.

(4) The prevailing party is entitled to have judgment for costs and execution therefor.

#### **83.595 Choice of remedies upon breach by tenant.**

(1) If the tenant breaches the lease for the dwelling unit and the landlord has obtained a writ of possession, or the tenant has surrendered possession of the dwelling unit to the landlord, or the tenant has abandoned the dwelling unit, the landlord may:

- (a) Treat the lease as terminated and retake possession for his or her own account, thereby terminating any further liability of the tenant; or
- (b) Retake possession of the dwelling unit for the account of the tenant, holding the tenant liable for the difference between rental stipulated to be paid under the lease agreement and what, in good faith, the landlord is able to recover from a reletting; or
- (c) Stand by and do nothing, holding the lessee liable for the rent as it comes due.

(2) If the landlord retakes possession of the dwelling unit for the account of the tenant, the landlord has a duty to exercise good faith in attempting to relet the premises, and any rentals received by the landlord as a

result of the reletting shall be deducted from the balance of rent due from the tenant. For purposes of this section, "good faith in attempting to relet the premises" means that the landlord shall use at least the same efforts to relet the premises as were used in the initial rental or at least the same efforts as the landlord uses in attempting to lease other similar rental units but does not require the landlord to give a preference in leasing the premises over other vacant dwelling units that the landlord owns or has the responsibility to rent.

**83.60 Defenses to action for rent or possession; procedure.**

(1) In an action by the landlord for possession of a dwelling unit based upon nonpayment of rent or in an action by the landlord under s. 83.55 seeking to recover unpaid rent, the tenant may defend upon the ground of a material noncompliance with s. 83.51(1) [F.S. 1973], or may raise any other defense, whether legal or equitable, that he or she may have, including the defense of retaliatory conduct in accordance with s. 83.64. The defense of a material noncompliance with s. 83.51(1) [F.S. 1973] may be raised by the tenant if 7 days have elapsed after the delivery of written notice by the tenant to the landlord, specifying the noncompliance and indicating the intention of the tenant not to pay rent by reason thereof. Such notice by the tenant may be given to the landlord, the landlord's representative as designated pursuant to s. 83.50(1), a resident manager, or the person or entity who collects the rent on behalf of the landlord. A material noncompliance with s. 83.51(1) [F.S. 1973] by the landlord is a complete defense to an action for possession based upon nonpayment of rent, and, upon hearing, the court or the jury, as the case may be, shall determine the amount, if any, by which the rent is to be reduced to reflect the diminution in value of the dwelling unit during the period of noncompliance with s. 83.51(1) [F.S. 1973]. After consideration of all other relevant issues, the court shall enter appropriate judgment.

(2) In an action by the landlord for possession of a dwelling unit, if the tenant interposes any defense other than payment, the tenant shall pay into the registry of the court the accrued rent as alleged in the complaint or as determined by the court and the rent which accrues during the pendency of the proceeding, when due. The clerk shall notify the tenant of such requirement in the summons. Failure of the tenant to pay the rent into the registry of the court or to file a motion to determine the amount of rent to be paid into the registry within 5 days, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays, after the date of service of process constitutes an absolute waiver of the tenant's defenses other than payment, and the landlord is entitled to an immediate default judgment for removal of the tenant with a writ of possession to issue without further notice or hearing thereon. In the event a motion to determine rent is filed, documentation in support of the allegation that the rent as alleged in the complaint is in error is required. Public housing tenants or tenants receiving rent subsidies shall be required to deposit only that portion of the full rent for which the tenant is responsible pursuant to federal, state, or local program in which they are participating.

**83.61 Disbursement of funds in registry of court; prompt final hearing.**

When the tenant has deposited funds into the registry of the court in accordance with the provisions of s. 83.60(2) and the landlord is in actual danger of loss of the premises or other personal hardship resulting from the loss of rental income from the premises, the landlord may apply to the court for disbursement of all or part of the funds or for prompt final hearing. The court shall advance the cause on the calendar. The court, after preliminary hearing, may award all or any portion of the funds on deposit to the landlord or may proceed immediately to a final resolution of the cause.

**83.62 Restoration of possession to landlord.**

(1) In an action for possession, after entry of judgment in favor of the landlord, the clerk shall issue a writ to the sheriff describing the premises and commanding the sheriff to put the landlord in possession after 24 hours' notice conspicuously posted on the premises.

(2) At the time the sheriff executes the writ of possession, the landlord or the landlord's agent may remove any personal property found on the premises to or near the property line. Subsequent to executing the writ of possession, the landlord may request the sheriff to stand by to keep the peace while the landlord changes the locks and removes the personal property from the premises. When such a request is made, the sheriff may charge a reasonable hourly rate, and the person requesting the sheriff to stand by to keep the peace shall be responsible for paying the reasonable hourly rate set by the sheriff. Neither the sheriff nor the landlord or the landlord's agent shall be liable to the tenant or any other party for the loss, destruction, or damage to the property after it has been removed.

**83.625 Power to award possession and enter money judgment.**

In an action by the landlord for possession of a dwelling unit based upon nonpayment of rent, if the court finds the rent is due, owing, and unpaid and by reason thereof the landlord is entitled to possession of the premises, the court, in addition to awarding possession of the premises to the landlord, shall direct, in an amount which is within its jurisdictional limitations, the entry of a money judgment with costs in favor of the landlord and against the tenant for the amount of money found due, owing, and unpaid by the tenant to the landlord. However, no money judgment shall be entered unless service of process has been effected by personal service or, where authorized by law, by certified or registered mail, return receipt, or in any other manner prescribed by law or the rules of the court; and no money judgment may be entered except in



compliance with the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure. The prevailing party in the action may also be awarded attorney's fees and costs.

### **83.63 Casualty damage.**

If the premises are damaged or destroyed other than by the wrongful or negligent acts of the tenant so that the enjoyment of the premises is substantially impaired, the tenant may terminate the rental agreement and immediately vacate the premises. The tenant may vacate the part of the premises rendered unusable by the casualty, in which case the tenant's liability for rent shall be reduced by the fair rental value of that part of the premises damaged or destroyed. If the rental agreement is terminated, the landlord shall comply with s. 83.49(3) [F.S. 1973].

### **83.64 Retaliatory conduct.**

(1) It is unlawful for a landlord to discriminatorily increase a tenant's rent or decrease services to a tenant, or to bring or threaten to bring an action for possession or other civil action, primarily because the landlord is retaliating against the tenant. In order for the tenant to raise the defense of retaliatory conduct, the tenant must have acted in good faith. Examples of conduct for which the landlord may not retaliate include, but are not limited to, situations where:

(a) The tenant has complained to a governmental agency charged with responsibility for enforcement of a building, housing, or health code of a suspected violation applicable to the premises;

(b) The tenant has organized, encouraged, or participated in a tenants' organization; or

(c) The tenant has complained to the landlord pursuant to s. 83.56(1).

(2) Evidence of retaliatory conduct may be raised by the tenant as a defense in any action brought against him or her for possession.

(3) In any event, this section does not apply if the landlord proves that the eviction is for good cause. Examples of good cause include, but are not limited to, good faith actions for nonpayment of rent, violation of the rental agreement or of reasonable rules, or violation of the terms of this chapter.

(4) "Discrimination" under this section means that a tenant is being treated differently as to the rent charged, the services rendered, or the action being taken by the landlord, which shall be a prerequisite to a finding of retaliatory conduct.

### **83.67 Prohibited practices.**

(1) No landlord of any dwelling unit governed by this part shall cause, directly or indirectly, the termination or interruption of any utility service furnished the tenant, including, but not limited to, water, heat, light, electricity, gas, elevator, garbage collection, or refrigeration, whether or not the utility service is under the control of, or payment is made by, the landlord.

(2) No landlord of any dwelling unit governed by this part shall prevent the tenant from gaining reasonable access to the dwelling unit by any means, including, but not limited to, changing the locks or using any bootlock or similar device.

(3) No landlord of any dwelling unit governed by this part shall remove the outside doors, locks, roof, walls, or windows of the unit except for purposes of maintenance, repair, or replacement; nor shall the landlord remove the tenant's personal property from the dwelling unit unless said action is taken after surrender, abandonment, or a lawful eviction. If provided in a written agreement separate from the rental agreement, upon surrender or abandonment by the tenant, the landlord shall not be liable or responsible for storage or disposition of the tenant's personal property. For the purposes of this section, abandonment shall not be presumed unless the tenant is absent from the premises for a period of at least 15 days.

(4) A landlord who violates the provisions of this section shall be liable to the tenant for actual and consequential damages or 3 months' rent, whichever is greater, and costs, including attorney's fees. Subsequent or repeated violations which are not contemporaneous with the initial violation shall be subject to separate awards of damages.

(5) A violation of this section shall constitute irreparable harm for the purposes of injunctive relief.

(6) The remedies provided by this section are not exclusive and shall not preclude the tenant from pursuing any other remedy at law or equity which the tenant may have.

### **83.681 Orders to enjoin violations of this part.**

(1) A landlord who gives notice to a tenant of the landlord's intent to terminate the tenant's lease pursuant to s. 83.56(2)(a), due to the tenant's intentional destruction, damage, or misuse of the landlord's property may petition the county/circuit court for an injunction prohibiting the tenant from continuing to violate any of the provisions of that part.

(2) The court shall grant the relief requested pursuant to subsection (1) in conformity with the principles that govern the granting of injunctive relief from threatened loss or damage in other civil cases.

(3) Evidence of a tenant's intentional destruction, damage, or misuse of the landlord's property in an amount greater than twice the value of money deposited with the landlord pursuant to s. 83.49 or \$300, whichever is greater, shall constitute irreparable harm for the purposes of injunctive relief.