It’s the law

A presentation of Student Legal Services
734-763-9920
The United States has a federal legal system that applies nationally to all individuals. Additionally, each state has its own laws that govern the residents of its own state. There are also local laws enforced by cities, municipalities and other governmental entities (the University of Michigan being one example). The legal system is divided into civil matters or criminal matters.
Contract disputes are the primary types of civil matters affecting students, particularly rental lease agreements, followed by sales and service contracts.

Other civil matters include consumer credit and debt, insurance claims (for example auto or health insurance), personal damage claims, personal injury claims, family law issues, and probate issues.
A signed lease is a BINDING CONTRACT.

Do not sign a lease until you have read it completely.

If you do not agree with the terms of the lease – don’t sign it.

Bring your lease to Student Legal Services to review.
Lease Provisions

- When does the lease start and end?
- What is the rent for the year? Month?
- How many people can live there?
- Can you live in the basement or the attic?
- Who pays the utility bills?
- What is the late fee?
- Joint and Several Liability (Roommates)
- Is the location acceptable?
Put it in Writing

- Make sure all agreements are in writing.
- All lease changes should be written into the lease.
- All amenities should be noted on the lease.
- Communicate with your landlord in writing and keep copies of any communications between you and your landlord.
When you move in

- Fully, and with great detail, complete the inventory checklist provided by your landlord.

- Take pictures of the property when you move in to document the conditions.
Other Considerations

Renter’s Insurance – purchase it!

Evictions – Landlords must take you to Court to evict you. You cannot be evicted without a Court Order.

Repairs/Maintenance – make requests in writing and keep copies.

Security Deposit - Contact SLS before your lease ends to discuss the process for a return of your security deposit. (for more information, go to our website)
Other General Contract Concerns

- When a student purchases a major item like a car, or contracting for a service, they need to be cautious.

- If you are buying something that has been used it will be sold “AS IS”. This means that there are no guarantees. It may break two days after you buy it. If it does, you will have no remedy under the law.

- If you have questions, ask before you buy.
If you are buying a service, be sure the person is certified or licensed.

Get references before you enter into a business deal with an individual or a company. If you are renting, you may talk to the current tenants.
If you are buying something over the internet be sure you know your seller and the terms of the sale.

If you send your money to someone you may not get the product or your money back.

The Washtenaw County Sheriff’s office lobby is a Craigslist transaction safe zone during regular business hours.
If someone sends you a cheque for more than you asked for and they tell you to cash the cheques and send them the balance, it’s a scam.

The cheque is usually fake. If you cash it, the bank will seek collection from you when the cheque is dishonored.
Misdemeanors: A misdemeanor is a crime that is punishable by less than one year in jail and fines.

You may also be ordered to do community service and report to the court’s probation department.
There are thousands of things that are illegal. They may include something as simple as being on railroad property.
Open alcohol (an open bottle of beer or a mixed alcoholic drink) is not allowed in or around any University of Michigan property. University of Michigan property includes U-M parking lots, stadiums, and certain streets.

It is allowed on private premises or at restaurants or cafes.
- Don’t carry open bottles of alcohol in your car.

- “open” means any container on which the seal is broken. This can include bottles and those RED CUPS.

- You cannot have open alcohol “in Public”
Consumption of alcohol by minors (under 21 years of age) is illegal.

It is illegal to buy alcohol for a minor.
It is illegal to drink and drive. The penalties for driving while drunk are quite severe and can include fines, volunteer service, driving restrictions and sometimes suspension of your driving license. If you injure or kill someone or are in an accident while driving under the influence of alcohol or other substances you may be charged with criminal negligence, homicide or manslaughter. If stopped by the police you must give them a sample of your breath to determine if you are intoxicated.
If you are pulled over, you may be given a “breathalyzer” test. This test can determine how much you’ve been drinking. If you have a bodily alcohol content (BAC) of 0.08 or more, you are charged with Operating While Intoxicated (OWI). If you have a BAC of .17 or more, you may be charged with OWI + or “Super Drunk”. If you have a BAC of 0.08 or less, you may be charged with Operating While Visibly Impaired (OWVI)
Public urination is a crime punishable by a fine and/or 90 days in jail. Many students are charged with this crime. Most were attending large parties or were at bars and thought they were in a place that was secluded enough that they would not be noticed.
If a guest at your party becomes drunk, make sure they get safely home. Do not allow them to drive home in an inebriated [drunk] state. If you allow them to stay at your house check on them frequently and look for signs of alcohol poisoning.

You also are responsible for loud noise as a result of the party.
At the University of Michigan, there have been numerous cases of alcohol poisoning.

The signs of alcohol poisoning are clammy skin [skin feels cold and a little damp], blue lips, labored breathing, and person seems disoriented and may not respond to you. If a friend has any of these signs please call 911 immediately and an ambulance will arrive.
Domestic Violence Issues

- Any accusation and any evidence of physical abuse to your partner, whether you’re married or not, mandates immediate arrest.
- An assault is defined as any reasonable apprehension of violence (threatening language or threat of abuse). A battery is any unconsented touching. It does not require an injury.
- Violations can have sanctions that include expulsion from University housing as well as academic, legal sanctions and immigration proceedings.
- Victims of abuse can seek a court order for their protection.
Sexual harassment, as defined by the University Policies for Students handbook:

- Sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:
  
  - Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, education, living environment, or participation in a University activity;
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for or a factor in decisions affecting that individual's employment, education, living environment, or participation in a University activity; or

- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's employment or educational performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, offensive, or abusive environment for that individual's employment, education, living environment, or participation in a University activity.
“Stalking” means a willful course of conduct involving repeated or continuing harassment of another individual that would cause a reasonable person to feel terrorized, frightened, intimidated, threatened, harassed, or molested and that actually causes the victim to feel terrorized, frightened, intimidated, threatened, harassed, or molested.
“Unconsented contact” means any contact with another individual that is initiated or continued without that individual's consent or in disregard of that individual's expressed desire that the contact be avoided or discontinued. Unconsented contact includes, but is not limited to, any of the following:

- Following or appearing within the sight of that individual.
- Approaching or confronting that individual in a public place or on private property.
- Appearing at that individual's workplace or residence.
- Entering onto or remaining on property owned, leased, or occupied by that individual.
- Contacting that individual by telephone.
- Sending mail or electronic communications to that individual.
- Placing an object on, or delivering an object to, property owned, leased, or occupied by that individual.
A felony is a crime that is punishable by more than one year in prison.
For example:

- Stealing or hiding University or other library books with a value of more than $200.
- Major theft, such as theft of expensive items (computer) or possession of another person’s credit card.
- Violent crimes resulting in injury.
- Drunk driving resulting in death.
If you commit a felony, you may be charged by the State of Michigan.

You may also be sanctioned by the University of Michigan through the Office Of Student Conflict Resolution.

Your immigration status may also be affected by committing any crime.

- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
- The Department of Homeland Security
Please note that felonies and criminal activity may be reported to DHS (Department of Homeland Security) or ICE.

Please consult with an attorney and an International Student/Scholar Advisor for an explanation of the specific details of these regulations.
Your immigration status can also be affected by an "aggravated felony", which actually includes some misdemeanors, including domestic violence and some theft offenses or by two "crimes of moral turpitude arising out of separate schemes." If you are ever in a situation in which this might apply to you, it is very important to seek the advice of an immigration attorney.
Sexual Assault is a crime involving forced or coerced “sexual penetration” or “sexual contact”. The University encourages the reporting of sexual assaults to the appropriate University officials, as reporting is the only way the University can take action against the accused assailant.

Report Sexual Assaults to:
- DPS (The Department of Public Safety), 911 or use the “blue light” emergency phones on campus
- Ann Arbor Police 911
- Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center 734-764-7771
According to Michigan law children under six years of age shall not be left unattended in a car.

In hot weather, do not leave your small children in the car. Small children get overheated quickly. Several have been injured or died. Some suffocated strapped in their car seats locked in a hot car. Passers-by may call the police if they see a child left in a car.
Parents may be charged with abuse or neglect for leaving young children unattended at home or in public areas.

According to Michigan law, you have a duty to ensure that your child is properly supervised. Parents have been investigated for letting young children outdoors without adequate supervision as well as for leaving children home alone. As a general rule, it is best not to leave a child under the age of 12 home alone.
Driving Related Issues

- What to do if a police car follows you with flashing red and blue lights (police may or may not have siren on).
- Pull over to the right hand side of the road immediately and bring your car to a stop. Go off the road and on to the shoulder if you are able. Be calm. Do not panic and drive away. This will cause you more trouble. Do not get out of the car. The policeman expects you to stay in the car. Immediately get out your driving license, your car registration, and your car insurance.
- Roll down the window on the driver's side of the car.
- Put your hands on the steering wheel where the police officer can see them.
- Please do not reach for something in your pocket or make any sudden move.
- The police officer will ask for your documents and check them for expiration. Be polite and do not argue with the officer. Please feel free to ask questions, however.
- Answer the police officer's questions directly. The police officer will tell you what you are doing wrong and may give you a ticket. If this is your first offense or you have a valid reason s/he may let you off with a warning.
- Do not attempt to offer money to the police officer. It will cause you more trouble.
Please note that police have places to park (speed traps) where they can see driving irregularities such as speeding, not stopping at a stop light, etc.
Use great caution at crosswalks. A crosswalk is clearly marked area where pedestrians are allowed to cross the street.

Pedestrians have an absolute right of way. You must stop for them.

Don’t pass vehicles stopped at the crosswalk.
Be sure to stop two bus lengths away (both sides of the street) if a school bus stops. You must not pass the school bus (all Michigan school buses are yellow).
You will see a flashing red light on the school bus. Many of the tickets given out for passing school buses last year in Ann Arbor were given out to international student or scholar drivers last year. Do not pass a school bus.
Offense code index for traffic violations

If an animal runs in front of your car only pull off the road to the shoulder if the way is clear. Otherwise try to slow down and moderate the impact of hitting the animal. Squirrels, raccoons, possums and other small animals frequently run in front of your car. It is often dangerous to try to swerve and avoid them. Deer may also run in front of your car. Slow down if you can. If a deer runs in front of your car it is wise to slow and wait for another deer as they frequently cross the road in pairs.
Be sure not to run or ‘roll’ through a stop sign. Rolling through a stop sign can result in a ticket. You must come to a complete stop.
4 way stops. These traffic signals are unique to the United States. When you come to a 4 way stop you look to see if anyone is stopping on your right. If someone on your right stops at the same time you do - they have the right to proceed first. If no one else is at the stop; stop, look both ways carefully and then cross the intersection. Please check carefully - you do not want to be hit by a dangerous driver.
Making a right turn when the stoplight is red. If there is NOT a sign saying that you can only turn on a green light, you may turn right at a red stoplight. You must stop first. Then look to see if it is safe for you to turn right. If there is a person walking across the street you want to turn into you must wait for the walker to complete walking across the street. Then, if it is safe, and no cars are coming, you may turn right.
If you are driving past a police car or other emergency vehicle that has stopped on the side of the highway, you must slow down. If there is more than one lane available for you to drive in, you must move to the left and leave the lane next to the officer empty, if it is safe to do so.
While driving, you should not speak on a phone.

It is illegal to text while driving.

Reading or eating or drinking, or putting on make-up are also activities that can greatly impair your driving.

Parking tickets: Be sure not to let your parking meter expire. In Ann Arbor, parking attendants are quick to give out tickets for expired parking meters. If your driver record shows four or more unpaid parking tickets your driving license will not be renewed.

Be sure not to park in a no parking zone. Your car may be towed. Usually it is necessary to pay around $200 to retrieve your car.
Learn the regulations. Not knowing how to maintain your legal status can be hazardous to your legal health.

University and Immigration policies are different.

Many departments are unaware of the immigration regulations.

When in doubt, contact the International Center or an attorney for assistance.
Be sure to pay your library fines. You will not get a transcript unless U-M library fines are paid and you may not be allowed to register for the next term. It's also important to pay any fines from the Ann Arbor Public Library to protect your credit rating in this country.
- Be sure not to smoke on University property. The University of Michigan is a smoke free campus.

- Ringing a building fire alarm for a joke or other non-emergency is illegal and can have serious consequences. Pulling a false alarm forces all individuals to be evacuated from the building. A few undergraduate students are sanctioned every year for doing this and some have been expelled.

- Don’t let your parking meter expire. Ann Arbor parking meter attendants are quick to give out tickets even if your meter is only a few minutes expired.

- Do be careful in shopping malls. Shops open out into the central area of the mall. If you come out of the shop holding an item from the shop, you may be arrested for shoplifting.
-Throwing trash (littering) can result in a civil fine or criminal charge.

- Don’t leave your bicycle unlocked. If you buy an expensive bicycle you may want to keep it inside your apartment at night. Use a strong bicycle lock like a U lock. There are a few places on campus where it is illegal to park and lock your bike and you may be fined. (walkway bridge by Central Campus Recreation Building is an example).
If you are from India, please be sure to dial 011 before dialing the country code 91 and the beginning of a city code 1. Dialing 911 will automatically call the police, fire department and an ambulance who will all arrive within 4 to 10 minutes.
Don’t walk alone at night even in Ann Arbor. Call Safewalk: 734-763-9255

Don’t leave your apartment or residence hall door or car doors unlocked. Larceny, the unlawful taking, carrying, leading or riding away of property of another person, is the most common crime on campus.

Write down serial numbers of valuable items. The international center offers another workshop "Getting around Ann Arbor & Personal Safety" where they cover how to register personal items.

Be careful using ATM (cash) machines at night. It is safer to use money machines in businesses that are open 24 hours a day, for example Kroger grocery stores. ATM machines are often not well light or well protected. Many pharmacies have in-store ATM machines. Many banks also have drive up ATM machines.
Be careful and thoughtful about giving out your name, address or social security number. Identity Theft has become an industry. A great deal of information may be accessed about you if someone has access to your name, date of birth and social security number. Read the information at UM"s identity theft page for more information about how to protect yourself against identity theft.
Online Complaint Form
Submit a report to our Fraud Center electronically 1-800-876-7060
9a.m.-5p.m. Eastern Time, Monday-Friday

Call Center Info

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Digital Copyright Violations

- Downloading, uploading, or streaming files (file sharing) of copyright protected works is illegal under US Copyright Law.
- Having Peer to Peer (P2P) software and engaging in filing sharing may expose you to copyright violations.
- US copyright law provides for a minimum of $750 in civil damages per copyright violation.
- Recently, members of the UM campus community have been receiving pre-litigation settlement offers for alleged copyright violations stemming from P2P file sharing.
Avoid liability by not using any P2P software or apps. If you do use such software for legitimate reasons, make sure you thoroughly understand how to operate and change default settings. Do not use on campus. Do not allow the P2P to share music or video files you already own. Limit sharing only to files that: (1) are in the public domain; (2) for which you have permission to share; and/or (3) are made available under pro-sharing licenses, such as the Creative Commons license or other open media licenses.
Finally,

- This presentation is not intended to be a substitute for legal advice. All legal matters are fact dependent. If you have a legal problem please contact Student Legal services at 734-763-9920. You may also drop by our office, 715 N. University, Suite 202, to set up an appointment.

- The service is available to all enrolled students here on the Ann Arbor campus.

- Student Legal Services is an office of the Division Of Student Life [find us on the web](#)