Welcome to the next step of independence!

You have made the decision to move off campus and become an off-campus student at Texas State. Off-Campus Living with the Department of Housing and Residential Life would like to welcome you to the community and introduce ourselves as your source for information, answers to your questions and information on staying involved in various activities.

This 2018 Guide to Living Off Campus has been produced to be a resource for living off campus. You will find information about Achieving Community Together, ACT, and ACT Ally, tips on budgeting, and general leasing information on how to be a successful community neighbor.

We hope you find the information in this guide helpful and valuable during your stay at Texas State University.

The Off-Campus Living staff is here to serve you! We are located in the Department of Housing and Residential Life building at 515 N. Comanche Street. Feel free to stop by and visit with us or visit our website for more information.

Thank you for choosing the Guide to Living Off Campus as your resource for off-campus living!

Have a great year!

Department of Housing and Residential Life, Off-Campus Living
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Dear Texas State University Students,

Texas State works closely with the City of San Marcos, neighborhood associations and other community stakeholders to ensure that permanent residents and students have a good experience living in our neighborhoods and apartment complexes.

As a member of the local community of San Marcos, I want to share some “good neighbor” information with you to ensure that San Marcos is an enjoyable place to live for everyone. Off-Campus Living has provided this guide as a great resource to assist you throughout the year.

Off-Campus Living is using this guide to make you aware of city codes, ordinances, apartment and housing listings, city services and other important information so you will have this information before signing lease agreements. Whether you are planning to live in an apartment or residential house, always remember to respect your fellow neighbors and should you have any concerns about your apartment complex or neighborhood, contact your local neighborhood association, leasing office or contact Off-Campus Living at 512.245.5595 or www.reslife.txstate.edu/OffCampusLiving.

With all of us working together, we will have an excellent school year both on and off campus and remember that…

We are San Marcos, we are Texas State.

Joanne H. Smith, Ph.D.

Joanne H. Smith, Ph. D.
Vice President for Student Affairs
Welcome to San Marcos,

The San Marcos community is rich and vibrant thanks in no small part to the Texas State University students who call our city home.

The 2018 Guide to Living Off Campus will introduce you to housing options, recreation, entertainment, shopping and much more. If you are new to campus, I hope you will take time to explore San Marcos and discover the delights of a great Texas community.

San Marcos is a unique city with a beautiful spring-fed river, historic downtown and the greatest shopping in Texas at the largest outlet malls in the southwestern U.S. Our historic downtown, just a block from campus, features unique shops, great dining, eclectic art galleries, and live entertainment venues with Americana, country, rock and jazz music.

The city is filled with parks for picnicking and jogging, greenbelts for hiking, and the spring-fed San Marcos River for swimming, canoeing and kayaking. Our civic organizations and churches welcome you and invite you to participate in community life. The internationally recognized “Achieving Community Together” (ACT®) program is a collaborative effort between Texas State University, the City of San Marcos and permanent residents to foster communication and good relations among all of our citizens.

We ask you to join your San Marcos neighbors and preserve the exceptional environment of our Hill Country community. As Texas State University students, you are important contributors to the character, the well-being and the future of San Marcos.

Welcome home and have a great year!

Sincerely,

John Thomaides
Mayor of San Marcos
Off-Campus Living is located in the Department of Housing and Residential Life office. The Off-Campus Living staff is available to provide educational information to enhance your knowledge of San Marcos city laws, rental leases, and basic move in and move out guidelines. The *Guide to Living Off Campus* was designed to help educate and assist you in your off-campus housing options. Any student who does not live on the campus in university-owned housing is considered an off-campus student.

**Off-Campus Living Events**

**Residence Hall Presentations**

Every year the Off-Campus Living staff visits every residence hall on campus hosting educational presentations. We meet with students and answer questions they may have about moving off-campus. We strive to educate our students about living off-campus before they sign a lease.

**Family Day, Bobcat Day & New Student Orientations**

During the semester, we provide outreach at Family Day, Bobcat Day and Student Orientations. We are available to assist students looking for off-campus housing at browse sessions and by providing educational presentations.

**Chat ‘N’ Chew**

On Tuesday mornings, we host a Chat ‘N’ Chew in the LBJ mall area. This is a chance to help off-campus students learn about the resources we have and to introduce them to our ACT Ally Members. All ACT Ally Members have the opportunity to be in the LBJ mall area once a semester to visit with students.

**Annual Off-Campus Housing Fair**

Every spring, we hold an Off-Campus Housing Fair, with many of the apartment complexes, apartment locators, and service providers in one location, in order to introduce their communities to the student body and provide information about them for all those looking to move off campus. This is a great opportunity to see all the options available to you and receive some free giveaways in a fun, relaxed environment. All the apartment complexes, apartment locators, and service providers are members of ACT Ally.
**Achieving Community Together (ACT) and ACT Ally**

ACT is a collaborative effort between Texas State University and the City of San Marcos to build a resilient community of students and permanent residents through teamwork, education and integrity. ACT initiatives assist stakeholders with regular communication, effective problem-solving, ongoing assessment and moving through conflict with respect.

ACT Ally Members are operating apartment communities within the San Marcos city limits that promote programs and services geared toward educating residents about civic engagement, community awareness and responsibility, city ordinances and state laws, as well as being a good neighbor. ACT Ally Apartment Complexes and Service Providers are businesses that offer products or provide services that support the rental housing industry.

[Reslife.txstate.edu/OffCampusLiving/ACT](reslife.txstate.edu/OffCampusLiving/ACT)

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<td>attorney.dos.txstate.edu</td>
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<td>centexdrc.org</td>
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<td>sanmarcostx.gov</td>
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<td><strong>Crime Stoppers</strong></td>
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<td>thetexascrimestoppers.org</td>
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| **Electric Repairs / Power Failures** | 512.393.8313 |}

| **Emergency** | 911 |
| **Garbage / Recycling / Waste** | 512.393.8026 |
| **Off-Campus Living** | 512.245.5595 |
| reslife.txstate.edu/OffCampusLiving | 515 N. Comanche St |
| **Police Non-Emergency** | 512.753.2108 |
| **Public Works / Street / Drainage** | 512.393.8036 |
| **University Police Department** | 512.245.2805 |
| police.txstate.edu | |
| **Utility Connect / Disconnect** | 512.393.8383 |
| **Water / Wastewater Repair** | 512.393.8010 |
ACT Ally—At-A-Glance

Goals of ACT Ally Program

- Promote a healthy living environment as a good neighbor to reduce common sources of conflict in a university town.
- Demonstrate fair and equitable business practices.
- Provide a communication forum among owners/managers, Texas State University and the City of San Marcos.

Member — An operating multi-family community located within the San Marcos city limits.

Affiliate — A product or service business that supports the rental housing industry. Examples are property management, locator services, furniture rental, utility bill management, insurance companies, storage, movers, etc.

2017-2018 ACT Ally Members

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Affiliate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspen San Marcos</td>
<td>Sanctuary Lofts</td>
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<td>Autumn Chase</td>
<td>Savannah Club</td>
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<td>The Avenue at San Marcos</td>
<td>The Thompson</td>
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<td>Bishop's Square</td>
<td>The Timbers Apartments</td>
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<td>Cabana Beach Apartments</td>
<td>Treehouse Apartment Homes</td>
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<td>Cottages of San Marcos</td>
<td>University Club</td>
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<td>Copper Beech Townhomes</td>
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<td>Dakota Ranch Apartments</td>
<td>The Village on Telluride</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Edge Apartments</td>
<td>Villagio Apartments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elevation on Post</td>
<td>Vistas San Marcos</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ella Lofts</td>
<td>Westfield Apartments</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Grove Apartments San Marcos</td>
<td>The Woods of San Marcos</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hillside Ranch Apartments &amp; Cottage Homes</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Junction San Marcos</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Lodge</td>
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<td>Logan Ridge</td>
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<td>The Millennium on Post</td>
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<td>The Outpost</td>
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<td>The Retreat</td>
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<td>Riverside Ranch Apartments</td>
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<td>River Oaks Villas</td>
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2017-2018 ACT Ally Affiliates

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<th>Affiliation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Apartment Experts, On Campus</td>
<td>512.693.2999</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apartment Experts, Stadium</td>
<td>512.805.0123</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apartments &amp; More</td>
<td>512.522.6722</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apartment Pros</td>
<td>512.805.7767</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cort Furniture Rental</td>
<td>512.719.9040</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hot Spot Locating</td>
<td>512.805.7768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Bills</td>
<td>simplebills.com</td>
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Location, Location, Location

Do you want to live within walking distance to campus, or are you OK taking a shuttle? Parking on campus is limited, so most students living off campus walk, ride a bike, or ride the Texas State Bobcat Shuttle. For more information on the Texas State bus, visit shuttle.txstate.edu.

Plan for Various Expenses

- Will you have to put down a security deposit and/or application fee?
- Do you have to make a deposit to turn on your utilities?
- Will you need a moving truck and packing supplies?
- Do you need to buy furniture or other household items?
  - Bathroom rugs, shower curtain, toilet paper, plunger
  - Kitchen dishes and flatware
  - Food
  - Lamps, light bulbs
  - TV
  - Cleaning supplies

What Are Your Priorities?

In planning, you may be required to have:

- Good and established credit history.
- Monthly income of 3 times the rent or you will probably need a guarantor.

A guarantor: “a person that agrees to be responsible for another’s debt or performance under a contract, if the other fails to pay or perform.” (legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com)

Your guarantor may need:

- A good and established credit history.
- Monthly income of up to 5 times the rent, depending on the property.
### Amenities
- Is there on-site maintenance?
- Is it pet-friendly and are there extra fees?
  - Some leases define pets as fish or insects.
  - A pet deposit and monthly pet rent is required and specific guidelines must be followed.
  - Regulations are also enforced by the City of San Marcos.
- Is yard work included?
- Are utilities included?

### Budgeting is Key for Survival
- How much do you want to pay for rent?
- You should work out your budget before you start looking. This will help you figure out what you can afford and whether you need roommates to help you live the lifestyle you want.
- We suggest starting with the total monthly dollar amount you have to work with and then plugging in your budget items.
- Use the budgeting worksheet to assist you.

### Installment Plan vs. Monthly Rent

#### Installment Plan:
- Most rent for individual leases are paid in installment plans.
- The total rent is divided evenly into the total number of the contracted months.
- Each installment is due on the 1st of the month, even if you haven’t move in yet.

#### Monthly Rent:
- Most rent for conventional or traditional leases will be pro-rated by the date you moved in.
- The following month’s rent is usually due on the 1st of every month.

### Budget Worksheet

#### INCOME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Daily</th>
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<th>Semester</th>
<th>Yearly</th>
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#### FIXED EXPENSES

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#### FLEXIBLE EXPENSES

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Do You Want to Live in a House or Apartment?

**House**
- Usually more spacious.
- Usually more privacy.
- Usually has a yard.
- Utilities and cable usually not included.
- City of San Marcos has occupancy restrictions: visit [www.sanmarcostx.gov](http://www.sanmarcostx.gov) and search “occupancy restrictions.”

**Apartment**
- Amenities are included.
- Maintenance is included.
- Management is on site.
- Some utilities are usually included.
- Usually on a bus route or close to campus.
- Community environment.
- By the bed leases available.

---

**Single Family Zoning in San Marcos**

This defines family as any number of individuals living as a single housekeeping unit who are related by blood, legal adoption, marriage or conservatorship. In these areas, only one family plus one unrelated individual may occupy the dwelling.

For example, if you and your two best friends rent a home together, you may be in violation of the ordinance, subjecting you to an eviction and/or a hefty fine. Be aware that violations of this ordinance are strictly enforced in the San Marcos Community. Courts are permitted to accept as proof of the violation that the same three or more vehicles with registrations to persons having different surnames and addresses were parked overnight at the dwelling unit a majority of nights in any 21 day period. Fines are also extremely high—up to $900 for the first offense, and each day may be considered a separate offense. If you have a question about whether or not your unit may be in this district, check with the City of San Marcos Planning Department at 512.393.8230 or visit [San Marcos](http://sanmarcostx.gov) and search “unrelated persons occupancy.”
The Lease

Research the Properties
Use Your Resources
- Ask friends or classmates.
- Read CURRENT reviews online.
- Go visit the properties.

Don’t Be in a Hurry to Sign
- Look now, but don’t sign immediately.
- Know your move in and move out dates.
- Don’t sign multiple leases at different complexes or on campus.
- Don’t sign an “As-Is” Apartment Lease.
  - Follow the apartment’s move-in days. This will allow enough time for maintenance repairs and for it to be cleaned.

Move-In Ready Apartment
- Be cautious if you are considering signing a lease on a complex that is not completely built.
- You will want to make sure a property is move-in ready for the day you want and before school starts.

Model Apartment vs. Regular Apartment
- Model apartments may have never been lived in and may not show normal wear and tear.
- Model apartments may have different furniture, light fixtures, faucets, and/or appliances than regular apartments.
- Model apartments may be in a different area of the complex (closer to the office/front of the complex) than a regular apartment.

Attorney for Students
The Attorney for Students (AFS) provides free legal advice to currently enrolled Texas State students. Before you sign a lease, make sure to review it thoroughly with the AFS. Anything you discuss with the Attorney for Students office is confidential and protected by the attorney-client privilege.

Look at Security Devices
- Your residence must have:
  - Window latches on each window.
  - A keyless deadbolt and door viewer on each exterior door.
  - A lock, latch, or security bar on sliding doors.
Release of Resident

Unless there is a special provisions clause, or you fall under the military clause, you will not be released from your lease until the end of its term.

A sublease is an agreement in which you rent your apartment to another person with the property owner’s permission. You will still be responsible for rent and damages. You are not entitled to receive your security deposit back until your lease term ends. Be sure to read your lease carefully. Many properties forbid subleasing.

A relet is a change to the lease to add the new tenant and delete the previous tenant. The original tenant will still be responsible for paying the rent until a new tenant is found. Once a new tenant is found, the original tenant often pays a reletting fee, which is usually 85 percent of one month’s rent.

Signing a Lease

Your Lease is a Legal-Binding Contract.

Keep a copy of everything:

- Lease
- Security Deposit Receipt
- Special Agreements / Deals
- Maintenance Communication
- Move-In Condition Form

Traditional or Conventional Lease

- One lease for the entire apartment, which everyone over the age of 18 must sign.
- Only one guarantor.
- Responsible for finding your own roommates.
- If one roommate leaves, the others must pick up the rent costs, or find a new roommate.

Individual or By the Bed Lease

- Each roommate signs their own lease.
- Every person has their own guarantor.
- Roommate matching is available at several locations.
- If a person leaves, the management company will find a new roommate and the current roommates are not responsible for their rent.
Before You Unpack

- Take pictures and videos of the apartment and email it to yourself so it will be date stamped.

- If the lease states management is responsible for pest control, make sure the place has been exterminated recently.

- Be detailed and specific when completing your apartment condition form.

- Return your apartment condition form within 48 hours of moving in. Make sure to keep a copy for your files.

Report all maintenance requests separately

- Always keep a copy.

- Send requests in writing through the USPS. This is the only way Texas law recognizes your request.

- Never withhold rent if maintenance items are not fixed.

- Have the manager sign and date the apartment condition form and keep a copy.

Get Insurance

The landlord generally has insurance that covers the building, but not your belongings. Inquire about renter’s insurance, general liability insurance, personal injury, and flood insurance. Renter’s insurance is very affordable and you may be able to bundle it with your parent’s homeowners’ policy.

- Talk to your insurance company about getting insurance that will cover the following scenarios:

  - Your belongings are damaged due to water, smoke and/or fire.

  - An electrical power surge damages your computer, TV or other electronic equipment.

  - Accidental damage to another person’s property, including the apartment complex.

  - Someone sustains an injury in your apartment.

  - Flooding if you are in a flood zone.

Make sure all utilities (water, electric, gas, etc.) are turned on and in your name. Consider using a utility sharing service when setting up utilities with your roommates.

Moving In
Living with roommates can be rewarding and challenging. Sharing a living space with another person is an option for many off-campus students. Some benefits of shared living include dividing the cost of living expenses and having someone to share your college days. While benefits exist, one should also consider the drawbacks of living with someone who may have different cleaning, sleeping, and studying habits as well as different views on religion and politics. Being someone’s roommate can be the beginning of a very influential relationship. It is important to remember that your roommate is not a mirror image of you, and it is OK if roommates are not best friends. Learning to accept each other’s differences without infringing on one another’s freedoms can be a valuable part of your education.

- How many roommates are you looking to have?
- Will you live with friends, or utilize roommate matching services?
- Create a roommate agreement to establish standards for everyone to sign.
  - Cleanliness
  - Quiet Time
  - Space
  - Groceries
  - Visitors
  - Respect
- A Roommate Agreement example can be found at: http://templatelab.com/roommate-agreement/

If you have a roommate conflict, try to handle it on the onset, before it gets worse. For minor problems, talk with your roommate. Listen to the other person’s side, and work together to come up with a solution. If needed, put the solution in writing. If your landlord assigned your roommate, you can ask your landlord for assistance. If the problem escalates, you may want to try mediation.

**Mediation**

- Informal, private, peaceful, and confidential.
- Impartial and seeks to help you explore and evaluate your options.
- Designed to help you find different ways to have your needs met.

Central Texas Dispute Resolution Center
512.878.0382
centexdrc.org
829 N. LBJ, Suite 108
Roommate Agreement

Now take the time to review each other’s response verbally. After each of you has shared your responses, fill in, and sign your agreement.

We agree on the following: (Be specific on times, amounts, conditions, etc.)

Cleaning Issues: __________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Security Agreement: ______________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Study Times/ Quiet Hours/ Sleep Times: _______________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Visitors and Guests: ________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Social Behavior: ___________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Personal Possessions: _______________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

When we disagree or are in conflict: __________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Another thing we might have to compromise on is: ______________________________

________________________________________________________________________

If you approach me with a concern (check all that apply):

☐ I will listen carefully and respond politely.
☐ I will try to understand your concern even if I don’t agree.
☐ I will ask for clarification if I don’t fully understand.
☐ I will try to act positively to improve the issue.
☐ I might be defensive and angry.
☐ Other: _____________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Name: ___________________________ Signature: ___________________________ Date: __________
Be a Good Neighbor

Texas State University and the City of San Marcos work together to make students more aware of city codes and common violations. The goal is to make San Marcos a more enjoyable place to live for everyone. Remember these common courtesy rules and do your part to be a good neighbor, Achieving Community Together.

Introduce yourself to your neighbors.

- Exchange phone numbers, if you feel comfortable.
- Neighbors may be more likely to watch your residence when you are away.
- Neighbors could contact you directly if there is a problem.

Let neighbors know in advance when you are having a gathering.

Be respectful when having guests over.

- Make sure visitors park in guest parking.
  - Not on the grass, nor reserved spots.
  - Not in front of a neighbor’s house/apartment.

Be a Safe Bobcat

- Sign up and use the Bobcat Guardian app.
- Lock your doors.
- Know your surroundings.
- Let someone know when you are leaving, and when you will return.
- Don’t go out at night alone.
- Wear bright/reflective clothing when walking or running when it is dark.

Be a Responsible Bobcat

Any noise heard outside your residence is too loud.

Follow all rules and make timely payments to AVOID EVICTION.

- A property owner may evict a resident for violation of conditions specified in the lease, major destruction of property or nonpayment of rent.
- The manager must give the resident 24 hours written notice (depending on the lease) of his or her intent to evict for nonpayment of rent.
- If the resident refuses to move, the manager may file an eviction lawsuit in the Justice of Peace Court to forcibly evict a tenant.

Call the City of San Marcos to schedule a bulk waste pick up—do not leave it at the curb.
As your lease is ending, are you planning on staying at your current apartment complex, or do you want to move elsewhere?

Many individual leases end in July and a new lease at a different complex will usually begin the middle of August.

If you renew your lease and stay at your current apartment complex, you will be able to continue living in your current apartment, without moving out.

If you decide you want to change apartment complexes, plan ahead if there is a gap in dates between leases.

- Where will you live during the time between leases?
- Where will you store your belongings?

Two Week Gap
Be aware of any gaps between leases.
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- Individual Leases
- Roommate Matching
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