

# GOING TO HOUSING COURT AGAINST OFFENSIVE NEIGHBORS (abridged)

Springfield, MA

This is a short guideline for those who are fed up with an unruly neighbor, and have decided to do something about it. See the expanded version for more details.

1. **Make some notes for yourself.** Nature of offense, dates, locations, & people involved.
2. **Get witness support.** Try to have at least 1 neighbor to back you up. The more witnesses, the more credibility you'll have in court.
3. **Seek assistance from community groups.** Start attending the *Community Police Beat Management Team meetings*, (<http://www.springfieldpolice.net/departments/cp/sectormp.html> or call the *Community Police liason, Kathleen Brown* at 787-6359 for info). You can also attend neighborhood Civic Association meetings, or Crime Watch Groups.
4. **Create a Police Log.** Call the *Springfield Police complaint* line at 787-6302. Also report the incident your to Community Police Officer. You can also report incidents via the internet at: [http://www.springfieldpolice.net/forms/records\\_crimereport.htm#formslink](http://www.springfieldpolice.net/forms/records_crimereport.htm#formslink). Follow the instructions on the page.
5. **Fill out a Housing Court Emergency Order Complaint.** This is the form that will be submitted to the Court to begin the proceedings. Go directly to the *Western Housing Court* Clerks Office and get a copy. The address is *37 Elm St., Springfield, 748-7838*. Their web address is: <http://www.mass.gov/courts/courtsandjudges/courts/hampdenhousingmain.html>. There is also a copy on the Springfield Police Website: [http://www.springfieldpolice.net/resources/localinfo/court/local\\_housingct.htm](http://www.springfieldpolice.net/resources/localinfo/court/local_housingct.htm). Your complaint should be clear and to the point. The form is fairly self-explanatory. *Where it asks "What are you asking the court to do", part of the answer should be: "I'm asking for protection against retaliation to be included in the order."*
6. **File your complaint.** Bring the form to the Housing Court Clerk's Office. The *court fees* are around \$105 and have to be prepaid, so bring your checkbook. From the court you have to go to the *Hampden County Sheriff's Office* who will serve the court date notice to the accused. It's only a couple blocks away at *1170 Main Street* (south of State), *732-5772*. Their website is: <http://www.hampdencountysheriff.com/>. They also charge a fee, and is around \$35.
7. **Your day in Court.** Be on time with your witnesses. Check the lobby board or with the Housing Court Clerk to find out where to go. All the cases get called in together at 9am, and a roll call is conducted. When addressing the judge, be clear, concise, and to the point. Listen carefully to his/her questions, and try to answer them as directly as possible. *Don't forget to ask the judge for protection against retaliation.*

If all goes well, the judge will impose strict orders against the defendants. There should also be clear consequences as to what will happen if the accused tries to be vengeful against you.

These are not the hard and fast rules, but just a guideline based on my experience and that of others. I'm just an ordinary citizen with no formal legal knowledge, so ask questions as you move along through the process to get ideas from others. If unsure of yourself, you can always call an attorney for advice. Good luck!

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