



PennState
Dickinson Law

PRE-ARRIVAL HOUSING GUIDE CARLISLE, 2025-2026

International Programs & Graduate Education
150 South College St.
Carlisle, PA 17013

2025-2026

Welcome to Penn State Dickinson Law!

As you may have already discovered, securing comfortable and affordable housing near the Penn State Dickinson Law campus can be challenging, particularly for international students unfamiliar with Carlisle, Pennsylvania. However, with consistent effort, careful research, and this reference guide, you will find a place that is convenient for you. As an international student from Ghana, I initially struggled with securing housing. All worked out for me, and it will work out for you, too.

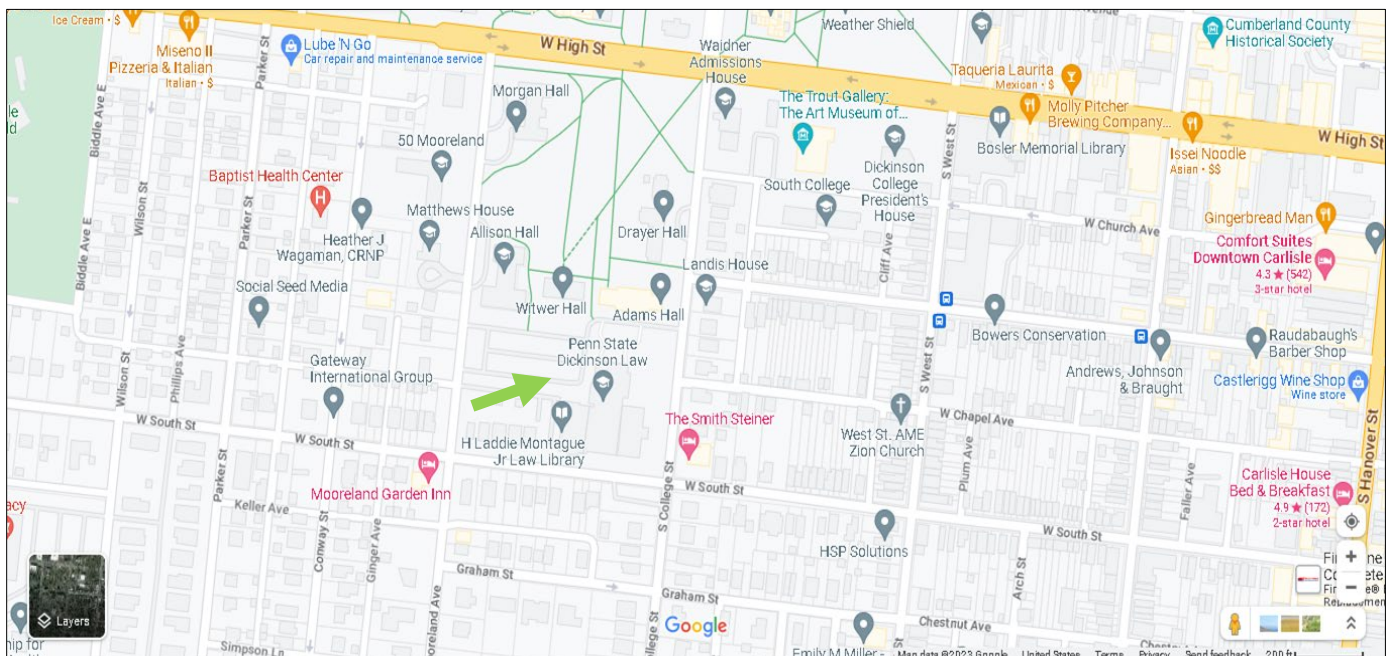
The Dickinson Law campus is surrounded by well-connected streets that offer numerous housing options within walking distance. The map below highlights key streets closest to the law school. It is strongly recommended that students prioritize housing within downtown [Carlisle](#), which provides convenient access to campus, shopping centers, local businesses, and entertainment venues. For students with personal transportation, additional housing options are available within a short driving distance.

Housing costs in the area are generally affordable, particularly for those sharing expenses with housemates. On average, students spend between \$600 and \$1,000 USD per month on rent. While housing options outside of Carlisle may be more cost-effective, it is essential to note that Carlisle lacks a reliable public transportation system. Students considering housing farther from campus should ensure they have personal transportation for commuting.

This reference guide has been created to address common housing-related questions and provide insights into securing accommodations. As I am already based in Carlisle, please feel free to reach out if you require assistance. My goal is to help make your transition as seamless as possible.



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HOUSING INFORMATION SESSIONS & WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

Beginning March 2025, Penn State Dickinson Law will host monthly housing information sessions for students studying in Carlisle. These sessions offer a great opportunity to meet fellow students, find roommates, and receive valuable housing tips. Please visit our [website](#) for dates and times.

Additionally, Carlisle students will receive a weekly email featuring housing opportunities and related guidance.

HOUSING IN CARLISLE


Carlisle offers a variety of housing options to accommodate different preferences and budgets. Below are some available choices:

1. **Studio Apartments.** A studio apartment is a self-contained living space that combines the bedroom, living area, and kitchenette into a single open layout, with a separate bathroom. Most studio apartments have shared bathrooms.
2. **Multi-Bedroom Apartments & Houses.** These accommodations typically feature at least one bedroom, a living room, kitchen, and bathroom, with some including a dining room, laundry room, or additional amenities.
3. **Suites.** Suites are often fully furnished and may include features such as carpeting, premium lighting fixtures, and modern appliances like dishwashers or garbage disposals. Many suites offer common areas and balconies, providing a more comfortable living experience, though they tend to be more expensive.
4. **Shared Housing.** In this arrangement, students rent individual rooms within a shared house or apartment, with common access to the living room, kitchen, and bathroom. Rent and utilities are typically split among the tenants.
5. **Room in Private Home.** Some Carlisle residents rent out rooms in their homes with students, offering an affordable living option. This setup may resemble a “homestay”, where students share common spaces with the homeowner/landlord.
6. **Single Family Home.** Ideal for students with families, these are private homes designed to accommodate an entire household.
7. **Long-Term Hotels.** Some hotels in Carlisle offer extended-stay options for a few weeks to several months, often providing discounted rates for long-term bookings.
8. **AirBnB & Short-Term Rentals-** A variety of short-term rental options are available in Carlisle through Airbnb and other housing platforms, offering flexibility for students who prefer temporary accommodations.

DISTANCE & ACCESSIBILITY

For convenience, it is recommended that students seek housing options within walking distance of campus. Biking is also an option; however, students should be aware that Carlisle lacks well-established bike lanes. Additionally, weather conditions should be considered, as Carlisle experiences colder temperatures in winter and spring, and frequent rainfall in the fall.

For students with personal vehicles, more affordable housing options are available within driving distance of the law school. When finalizing a lease, be sure to confirm the availability of parking, as it may not always be included in the rental agreement. Additionally, consider the property’s proximity to shopping centers, restaurants and entertainment venues for added convenience.



[Carlisle, PA](#) is generally regarded as a safe and welcoming community, with very few areas where residents cannot walk freely. However, it is always advisable to take standard safety precautions. When selecting housing, students should evaluate the surrounding neighborhood and the

CONDUCTING A HOUSING SEARCH

Dickinson Law maintains a database on its website where [property owners list available housing options](#) around the campus. In addition, there are [various websites](#) you may also use in the search for your housing choice.

Before signing a lease, whenever possible, inspect the actual unit you intend to rent and document any necessary repairs that should be completed before your move-in date. Consider taking photographs of the entire unit upon move-in for

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

1. **Dishwasher.** It is common to find automatic dishwashers in most housing units in the U.S. Some apartments, however, may only have space for a dishwasher, but not the appliance itself. Check to see what your choice of housing has.
2. **Air-Conditioning.** Most housing will have central heating and air-condition, or individual units in each room of the home. It can get cold in the winter and very hot in the summer. Check to ensure heating and air-conditioning is included.
3. **Cable & Internet.** Determine whether the home is pre-wired for internet service and ready for immediate activation. In some cases, the property may only be serviced by a specific internet provider, so it is advisable to confirm availability in advance.

walking routes to the Dickison Law campus to ensure convenience and security.

reference. Security is a crucial factor to evaluate. It is advisable to ensure that the unit has at least two means of egress. Additionally, for fire safety compliance, a smoke detector must be installed in the unit, as required by law. Verify its presence and functionality before moving in. If utilities such as water, electricity, and internet are not included in the lease, decide to have them activated by your move-in date. Lastly, carefully consider your intended arrival date (e.g., August 1, 2025) when finalizing your lease agreement.

4. **Parking.** Off-street parking is common in the U.S. Ensure that your housing unit has parking spaces if you will have access to a vehicle.
5. **Furniture.** Confirm which furnishings will remain in the property upon leasing, such as bedframes, desks, and chairs. Kitchens and bathrooms are typically fully equipped, but even in furnished homes, you may need to purchase additional accessories to meet your needs.
6. **Laundry.** Inquire if the home or the property has access to laundry facilities.
7. **Smoking.** Determine whether smoking is permitted in the home, as regulations and policies on smoking can be strictly enforced in certain areas in America.
8. **Pet Policy.** Some landlords permit tenants to have pets; however, an additional pet fee and security deposit may be required.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Sharing accommodation with housemates can significantly reduce housing expenses by splitting rent and utility costs. If your housing unit is unfurnished, be sure to account for the cost of renting or purchasing furniture when budgeting for your living expenses. Additionally, when determining your maximum affordable rent, include estimated utility costs. You may inquire with the landlord or outgoing tenants (if known or available) about the average utility expenses for the unit.

Most landlords require a security deposit, which is used to cover any damages you may cause during your tenancy. Upon moving out, you are entitled to a refund of your security deposit, minus

SIGNING A LEASE AGREEMENT

It is crucial to thoroughly review the lease agreement before signing to avoid potential conflicts with your landlord. Oral leases are not recommended, as they offer limited legal protection for the tenants- always request a written lease.

Some landlords, particularly property management companies, may require an application fee to process your rental application. Be sure to understand the specific application procedures for each landlord you engage with. Pay close

SETTING UP UTILITIES

It is important to know what utilities are included in the lease agreement. In most cases, water and sewer services will be included, but generally electric, gas and internet are not. Tenants must contact local utilities providers to get these services set-up, and in some cases, this can take up to two weeks. In the Carlisle area, these are the following major providers:

the cost of any necessary repairs. If any portion of the deposit is withheld, the landlord must provide a written, itemized statement detailing the repairs and their associated costs. Normal wear and tear, such as routine replacements, is typically not deducted from the security deposit.

Security deposits are usually equivalent to one month's rent. While landlords must issue a receipt for the deposit, it is sufficient if the lease you signed explicitly states the deposit amount. To help ensure the return of your deposit, it is strongly recommended that you request a list of existing damages at the time of move-in and document the unit's condition with photographs.

attention to the duration of the lease and any penalties for early termination. While most leases are for a 12-month term, some landlords may offer 6-month leases, often with an additional monthly premium. When signing a lease, consider your intended move-in date. International students, for example, typically enter the U.S. no earlier than one month before classes begin. Ensure your lease aligns with your arrival schedule.

- **Electric.** PPL, www.ppelectric.com
- **Gas.** UGI Utilities, Inc. www.ugi.com
- **Internet.** Xfinity, www.xfinity.com

Contact the [Borough of Carlisle](#) with questions related to water and sewer, if the property you intend to lease does not have these.

GENERAL TIPS

- **Transportation.** If you do not have a car, choose a unit that is within walking distance or close to the law school.
- **Lease.** Leases are generally for one year. Not all landlords allow their tenants to sublet their apartments/houses.
- **Background Check.** Some rental applications may require a criminal background check, which typically requires a Social Security number. Since international students can only obtain a Social Security number through on-campus employment, they may need to inform potential landlords of this limitation. If assistance is needed, students are encouraged to consult the Director of International Programs and Graduate Education.
- **Renters' Insurance.** The landlord's property insurance policy usually does not cover your personal possessions, so you might need to consider purchasing renter's insurance to cover your personal belongings. Getting quotes for renter's insurance is usually quick, easy and affordable.
- **Issues/Concerns.** Notify your landlord or leasing office in writing about any issues with the home. Upon moving in, take photos of the apartment or house to document its condition. This can help protect your security deposit if the landlord later tries to hold you responsible for pre-existing damage(s).
- **Repairs.** If damage to the property occurs during the rental period, it is the landlord's responsibility to fix/ repair the damage. Ensure this is stated in the lease document before you sign.
- **Major Appliances.** Most apartments include a stove, oven and a refrigerator, but always confirm this with your landlord/leasing office. Ask if other appliances would be provided.
- **Laundry.** If a washing machine and a dryer are not included in the unit, ask about on-site laundry facilities or nearby laundromat options. You can equally use google maps to locate nearby laundromats close to the property.
- **Walk Through.** Whenever possible, visit the apartment in person before signing the lease to ensure it's the right fit for you. A lease is a legally binding contract, and once signed, it can be difficult to cancel. If an in-person visit isn't feasible, ask a trusted friend or contact to view the apartment on your behalf and record a video of the entire property—not just the online listing photos. Additionally, request as many updated pictures as possible from the landlord to make an informed decision.

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

1. **Don't sign a lease without reading it thoroughly.** Carefully read the lease before you sign it. This is because once you make a commitment and sign the lease, the agreement becomes binding, and it will serve as a reference should any issue arise throughout the tenancy.
2. **Don't sign a lease without viewing the property and meeting with the landlord.** It is recommended that you or someone you know visits the housing unit before you sign the lease. This is to ensure that the description and actual unit match as promoted. Knowing what is expected can help you with finalizing your housing budget ahead of moving in.
3. **Don't forget to take into consideration your transportation options.** This is important because the distance to the law school matters. It is advisable for students without a car to find housing within walking distance of the school.
4. **Don't fail to consider the cost of utilities.** It is important to consider utility costs and what the lease covers. Electricity and gas can be expensive, especially in winter and spring.

Knowing these costs will help you estimate your monthly expenses beyond rent. Ask the landlord or previous tenants for past utility bills from summer and winter, the peak seasons for heating and cooling to help with budgeting.

5. ***Don't fail to understand your responsibilities as a tenant (e.g., trash disposal, lawn care, etc.).*** The responsibilities of any tenant are usually stated in the lease. Read the lease agreement thoroughly and ask questions if you do not understand any of the

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: *I just got accepted to Dickinson Law. When should I start looking for housing options?*

A: Once you have been accepted, you should start searching for accommodation immediately, even if you require a visa to enter the United States. Many international students begin their search early and intensify it after securing a visa, then finalize their accommodation arrangements.

Q: *What is the average cost of apartments around the law school?*

A: With or without utilities, a studio room is within the range of \$650 to \$800, one/two-bedroom apartments could be between \$850 and \$1,500. However, it is recommended that students get roommates to cut some costs by splitting the rent and utility bills. You can start by connecting with other admitted students through email, zoom sessions, or phone calls to build connections.

Q: *I have found an apartment but the owner requests that I make a commitment in the form of a security deposit.*

A: Yes, most property owners require that you make a deposit before securing an apartment. This deposit will be refunded if at the end of the lease you did not damage any part of the housing unit or the property in it. Deposits

responsibilities or anything in the lease. If you are renting a room in a private home, you may want to ask about their policies on overnight guests etc.

6. ***Don't lose housing by failing to submit a deposit quickly.*** It is recommended that that you immediately secure any housing unit you have chosen by paying the deposit and signing a lease (if required). This gives the landlord the assurance that you are interested in the housing unit and prevents the landlord from making it available to other renters.

could be an equivalent of one or two-months' rent. Also, some landlords will require one month's rent in advance.

Q: *How do I make payment from outside the United States?*

A: Most landlords will require that make an international wire transfer or pay via some other electronic means, such as PayPal or Venmo. This may take time go through depending on your country. However, another way to make the payment is if you have someone in the United States who is willing to assist you.

Q: *I have found an apartment, but the landlord requests my credit history. What is that?*

A: A credit score or history assures the landlord that the intending tenant is credit worthy and can relatively afford to pay without undue owing of rent. If you are an international student, you may not have a US credit history. One possible solution is to provide your bank statement to demonstrate your financial reliability. This can help assure the landlord that you can pay the rent and highlight that, as an international student, you have already proven your financial capacity to the law school before receiving your I-20.

Q: *My landlord is asking that I sign a lease.*

A: Yes. Most landlords will require a lease. In this case, if you want to move before your lease expires, you may be required to find someone to replace you and continue the lease for the unexpired term. You will be asked to pay the remaining portion of the lease if you not find someone to take over the lease.

Q: *Can I share an apartment with other students?*

A: Yes. Most Dickinson Law students share with other students. This helps to cut costs by splitting the rent and bills. A possible way to connect and find housemates is to build connections with other admitted students through email, zoom sessions, or phone calls and WhatsApp texts.

Q: *Can I find fully furnished accommodation?*

A: Yes. Fully furnished housing units are available but will most likely cost more per month. A fully furnished housing unit usually has everything in it like kitchen equipment, laundry, equipped living room, furniture etc. You move in with your personal belongings without buying any major property. Unfurnished units may require you to make more upfront investment, especially for essential items like beds, desks, and kitchen appliances. It's always a good idea to budget for these items or consider getting second-hand furniture to save on costs.

Q: *How is rent paid in the United States?*

A: Rents are generally paid once a month, usually via bank check. If you pay in cash, be sure to get a written receipt.

Q: *Are there any student dorms or student housing available in Carlisle?*

A: No. Dickinson Law does not provide student dorms or student housing. Each student is responsible for securing accommodations off-campus. There are student-friendly housing options in Carlisle and around the law school.

Q: *Can I sign a 9-month lease?*

A: Most landlords will require that you sign a full 1-year lease. It is rare to find housing where you will be permitted to sign a shorter-term lease. However, a private homeowner, who lives in the same house or apartment as the students, may permit renting out one or two of their rooms without requiring the students to sign a lease. Peculiar circumstances of the landlords determine how this plays out.

Q: *Is there public transportation to the Dickinson Law campus?*

A: Public transportation is not readily available in Carlisle. Students are recommended to secure housing within walking distance to the campus. However, students who intend to drive may find much more affordable housing options within driving distance to the law school.

Q: *I found a great apartment in Mechanicsburg. Can I easily commute?*

A: Yes. Mechanicsburg is about a 20 minutes' drive to the law school. One will need a personal vehicle as reliable public transportation is not available.

Q: *What if I cannot locate housing?*

A: It is not likely that you will be unable to locate any housing at all. However, should that be the case, you may want to reach out to Dickinson Law for guidance. Do not arrive without pre-arranged housing.

Q: *What documents do I need to sign a lease?*

A: Typically, you'll need a passport, proof of student status (e.g. admission letter), proof of income or financial support, and sometimes a reference from the school. Contact the director for Graduate and international program for assistance.