

Superior Court of the State of Washington for Snohomish County

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COVID Housing Impacts: Snohomish County Superior Court's New Eviction Resolution Program to Help Tenants and Landlords

With many landlords and tenants hit hard by impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Snohomish County is expecting to face a large number of eviction cases after state and federal moratoria on evictions are lifted. In hopes of reducing the severity of a wave of evictions in the community and the likely significant impact on our Court, the Snohomish County Superior Court has established an Eviction Resolution Program (ERP) that will require problem-solving steps before eviction cases may be filed in court.

The program has already been implemented and remains in effect until December 31, 2020, unless otherwise terminated or extended by the court. Though state and federal eviction moratoria have not lifted yet, it is hoped that many landlords and tenants will join in the resolution program early to take advantage of the assistance and get a head start on problem-solving. Additionally, complying with the voluntary requirements now will satisfy the prerequisites required to fulfill the obligations necessary to seek relief from the court.

The program's goal is to bring all parties together with trained resolution specialists to explore solutions such as available state and local rental assistance or achievable payment plans that can help tenants retain their housing and divert many situations from the legal eviction process. The program was developed by the state Superior Court Judges' Association (SCJA) in partnership with the state Office of Civil Legal Aid.

Judge Bruce Weiss, Presiding Judge of the Snohomish County Superior Court in referencing the program, has stated, "This program was developed by speaking with many stakeholders on a state and local level. Everyone agrees that to the extent these matters can be resolved it

benefits all parties and the court. We hope our community can come together to resolve as many of these matters as possible without the need for court intervention.”

Landlords and tenants can find details about the eviction resolution program on the Snohomish County Superior Court website at <https://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/197/Superior-Court>. Additional information, background, and links are available on the statewide web site dedicated to the program at <http://www.courts.wa.gov/>.

The Washington State and federal moratoria on evictions are set to expire December 31, 2020, but the Eviction Resolution Program is available now for landlords and tenants. Funding from the federal CARES Act has been used to establish the pilot program, including free assistance from dispute resolution specialists who will be trained with information and resources specific to eviction situations based on non-payment. Funding also includes free assistance of interpreters.

The state Supreme Court issued an order on September 9, 2020, authorizing the establishment of Eviction Resolution Programs in all Washington superior courts. The order gives judges the authority to require participation in the program before eviction cases can proceed through the court process.

In legal terminology, eviction cases are called “unlawful detainer” cases. The new program includes required communication steps between landlords and tenants, notifications to tenants that include specific information, specific court forms, detailed steps and roles for all parties involved, and more. While landlords are required to take part in the program before eviction cases can be filed with the court, tenants are not required to participate.

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