

# RIGHT TO AN ATTORNEY FOR LOW-INCOME TENANTS



**IN APRIL 2021, WASHINGTON BECAME THE FIRST STATE TO RECOGNIZE A RIGHT TO AN ATTORNEY FOR LOW-INCOME TENANTS FACING EVICTION.**

***Under this new law (RCW 59.18.640), the court MUST appoint an attorney for a low-income tenant in an Unlawful Detainer (Eviction) case.***

## **WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR A COURT-APPOINTED ATTORNEY UNDER THE NEW LAW?**

***Tenants must be (1) financially eligible as determined during intake with the Housing Justice Project, and (2) have received an Eviction Summons.***

## **IF I RECEIVED AN EVICTION SUMMONS THAT WAS FILED WITH THE COURT, WHAT SHOULD I DO?**

***You should check to see if you were also served with an Order to Show Cause. If you were, you should appear at your hearing according to the time and date listed on the Order to Show Cause. When you appear at your hearing, staff from the Housing Justice Project will be on the docket and will conduct a screening to determine whether you are eligible; if you are determined to be eligible, the court will appoint a Housing Justice Project attorney for you and the case will be continued to allow time to meet with the attorney.***

## **WHAT IF I RECEIVED AN EVICTION SUMMONS THAT HAS NOT BEEN FILED WITH THE COURT?**

***You may still be eligible for a court-appointed attorney! If you receive a summons that hasn't been filed, you can start an eligibility screening by completing the online intake at [www.tacomaprobono.org](http://www.tacomaprobono.org). When you complete the intake, be sure to indicate that you have received an Eviction Summons.***

## **DO I NEED TO RESPOND TO THE EVICTION SUMMONS EVEN IF I'M ELIGIBLE FOR A COURT-APPOINTED ATTORNEY?**

***YES! If you do not respond by the deadline on the summons, your landlord could evict you with no further notice or hearing. You should respond whether or not an attorney has been appointed for you. If you need help, please complete the online intake and be sure to include your response deadline.***

**Contact the Housing Justice Project**

**ONLINE [www.tacomaprobono.org](http://www.tacomaprobono.org)  
EMAIL [hjp@tacomaprobono.org](mailto:hjp@tacomaprobono.org)  
PHONE (253) 572-5134 10-12 M-Th  
WALK-IN 1-3 pm M-Th**

## **I RECEIVED AN EVICTION NOTICE BUT NO EVICTION SUMMONS -- AM I ELIGIBLE FOR A COURT-APPOINTED ATTORNEY?**

***No. The right to a court-appointed attorney applies when you are served with an Eviction Summons. But you may be eligible for assistance from the Housing Justice Project's Eviction Prevention HELP Team -- use the contact information above to get help now. If you receive a notice stay in your home and get help. You cannot be evicted without a court order.***