



## New for Seattle tenants: Additional protection from evictions, rent assistance, right to renew leases

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- ❖ Read this only if you live inside city limits in Seattle, Washington.
  - ❖ You can find all the fact sheets we link to here and additional information at [WashingtonLawHelp.org](http://WashingtonLawHelp.org).
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### Tenants in Seattle: Read this

New city laws say when and how tenants can defend themselves from being evicted.

1. Landlords must have a “good” (**legal**) reason for not renewing a rental agreement, ending (terminating) a tenancy, or evicting a tenant—and, in some cases, must pay the tenant to help them move.
2. Between now and May 31, 2022, a landlord cannot evict you for unpaid rent due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Teachers, school staff, and households with children or students cannot be evicted for not being able to pay rent during the school year.
4. Some low-income tenants may qualify for free legal help if they have an upcoming eviction court hearing.
5. Landlords must offer tenants a chance to renew their leases before renting the unit to someone else.
6. Low-income Seattle tenants can apply for rent assistance.

We discuss here briefly how and when these laws protect certain tenants.

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- ❖ Even with the new laws we describe here, successfully defending against an eviction in court can be hard and complicated. **Talk to a lawyer right away if your landlord tries to evict you.** See contact info for legal help below.
  
  - ❖ **In all cases where the landlord wants you to move, the landlord must first properly deliver a written notice (on paper) to you.** They cannot just tell you verbally, or through a text message. They cannot try to force you out by changing the locks, or shutting off the utilities. If a landlord does this to you, you may have a case for wrongful eviction. Talk to a lawyer right away! Read [My Landlord Locked Me Out: What Can I Do?](#) to learn more.
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## Can I get relocation assistance?

Maybe. Seattle law now says **landlords generally must pay tenants to help them move if the landlord wants to remodel, demolish, or change the rental unit.** Landlords must prove that they actually will remodel, demolish, or change the unit.

A landlord must provide relocation funds in each of these situations:

- The landlord gets a city notice that the rental unit is unauthorized and they have to stop renting it, **or**
- The landlord gets a city notice that the housing unit is not up to code and they want to stop renting it (rather than fix it), **or**
- More people live in the unit than is allowed, and the landlord has to reduce the number of people, **or**
- The City orders the landlord to close a rental during an emergency.

## I am behind on rent due to COVID-19. Can I be evicted?

Maybe not. During the pandemic, Seattle has only allowed evictions if a tenant is a threat to the safety of others. Seattle's pause on evictions (eviction moratorium) is scheduled to end on September 30, 2021.

Meanwhile, a new local law provides more protection to tenants who cannot pay rent due to COVID-19. Until May 31, 2022, a landlord who wants to evict you for nonpayment (or late payment) of rent must first give you a written notice saying you have a defense because the moratorium ended less than 6 months ago. You can fight a rent-related eviction by making a written statement (declaration) of financial hardship. The landlord must also give you a chance to have a rent repayment plan.

### **I am a student, or a parent to a student, or I work at a school. I am behind on rent during the school year. Can I be evicted?**

Your landlord cannot evict you for rent you owe during the school year. Your landlord could still try to evict you for other reasons.

The law defines a child or student as under 18 years old or currently enrolled in a school. (They do not have to be both.) The law also protects you if

- You have legal custody of a child or student.
- You work at a school in Seattle, including as an employee or contractor. You can be an administrator, counselor, cafeteria worker, custodian, or teacher.

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❖ “School” here can mean a child care facility or in early childhood education, a head start program, or a private school or public school up to the 12th grade.

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### **I have an eviction case. Can I get a free lawyer?**

**Maybe.** A new Seattle law (“Right to Counsel”) gives some low-income tenants the right to a lawyer in an eviction case. There is a similar state law. Tenants may qualify for a free lawyer if they get public benefits or have an income less than 200% of the federal poverty line. But if you live in Seattle, you may not have these income restrictions. Find out if you are below the federal poverty level here.

Even though the laws give you this right, the government still has to give money to organizations to hire lawyers. The government is in the process of giving this money to different nonprofit organizations in the state. The organizations then have to hire new lawyers for tenants.

It may take several months or up to a year for all tenants to have access to a lawyer. It will not be immediate. However, you should still reach out to your local legal aid organization to see if there is a lawyer for you.

## **My lease ends soon. Does the landlord have to offer me a new lease?**

If you are on a lease, contract, or “fixed term” agreement with your landlord, then your landlord must first offer to renew that lease or agreement before asking you to leave or trying to evict you. The landlord must send you a notice 2 or 3 months before the end of the lease, to offer you a chance to renew it. After you get that notice, you have 1 month to decline or accept the new lease.

However, the landlord can still keep you from renewing the lease if they have a “just cause” or good reason not to.

## **I live in Seattle and need help paying rent. Can I get rental assistance?**

Money is available to help with this! You can apply for local rental assistance if all of these are true:

- You live in King County
- You have a lease (or proof of rent payments)
- Your household is low-income
- Your difficulty paying rent is related to COVID.

Rent assistance is meant to help everyone, no matter what your citizenship or immigration status. Applying for rent assistance will not harm any immigration application you file.

You can apply for King County rent assistance [here](#):

<https://kingcounty.gov/depts/community-human-services/COVID/eviction-prevention-rent-assistance/tenants.aspx>

Our [Eviction Help page](#) found [here](#) has a drop-down menu that will let you search for rent assistance by county. Northwest Justice Project does not have rental assistance money. We only provide a list of organizations that may be able to help.

## Get Legal Help

- **Facing Eviction?** Call 1-855-657-8387.
- **Apply online** with [CLEAR\\*Online](https://www.nwjustice.org/apply-online) - [nwjustice.org/apply-online](https://www.nwjustice.org/apply-online)
- **Facing Foreclosure?** Call 1-800-606-4819.
- **Facing a legal issue in King County** (other than Eviction or Foreclosure)? Call 2-1-1 (or toll-free 1-877-211-9274) weekdays 8:00 am - 6:00 pm. They will refer you to a legal aid provider.
- **Facing a legal issue outside of King County** (other than Eviction or Foreclosure)? Call the CLEAR Hotline at 1-888-201-1014 weekdays between 9:15 am - 12:15 pm or apply online at [nwjustice.org/apply-online](https://www.nwjustice.org/apply-online).
- **Seniors (age 60 and over)** with a legal issue outside of King County can also call CLEAR\*Sr at 1-888-387-7111.
- **Deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired callers** can call any of these numbers using the relay service of your choice.

CLEAR and 2-1-1 will provide interpreters.

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