

New State Law: What the Landlord Must Tell You about Tenant Screening

Should I use this publication?

Read this publication if you are looking for an apartment or house to rent. This publication explains a new state law regarding tenant screening. If you apply for a house or an apartment, the landlord may “screen” you. This publication explains:

- What the landlord must tell you about the screening process
- How much the landlord may charge you for screening expenses
- What you can do if you disagree with some of what the landlord learned from screening you
- What you can do if the landlord does not follow the law

◆ This law also applies to rentals of mobile homes.

What does the law say?

A landlord who is taking your tenant application must now let you know the following before you hand in your application:

- What types of information the landlord will access to conduct the tenant screening
- What information from the screening may result in your application being turned down
- If the landlord uses a consumer report:

- the name and address of the consumer reporting agency
- your right to get a free copy of the consumer report if the landlord denies your application
- your right to dispute the accuracy of information in the consumer report

The landlord must post this info or give it to you in writing. The law says that just telling you this info verbally is not enough.

Can the landlord charge me to screen me?

Yes, but:

- only if s/he lets you know the above, in writing and
- only for the actual costs of any screening.

The landlord may not charge you any more than what a local screening service would normally charge. This can include

- costs of long distance phone calls and
- costs for time spent calling your past and present landlords, employers, and banks.

The landlord turned down my tenant application based on something he found in screening me. What can I do?

The landlord must give you a written notice that states his/her reasons. A blank notice at the end of this publication shows what it should look like. It must look “substantially” like our sample form. It needs to have the

same information that our sample form would have.

The landlord screened me. She did not tell me beforehand what information she would use to screen me. But she turned my tenant application down because of the information she got from screening me. What can I do?

Under the new state law, you can take the landlord to court. The law says the court could award you up to one hundred dollars, plus court costs and attorneys' fees.

What if I need legal help?

- **Apply online with [CLEAR*Online](http://nwjustice.org/get-legal-help) - <http://nwjustice.org/get-legal-help>**
or
- **Call CLEAR at 1-888-201-1014**

CLEAR is Washington's toll-free, centralized intake, advice and referral service for low-income people seeking free legal assistance with civil legal problems.

- **Outside King County:** Call 1-888-201-1014 weekdays from 9:10 a.m. until 12:25 p.m. CLEAR works with a

language line to provide interpreters as needed at no cost to callers. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, please call 1-888-201-1014 using your preferred TTY or Video relay service.

- **King County:** Call 211 for information and referral to an appropriate legal services provider Monday through Friday from 8:00 am – 6:00 pm. You may also call (206) 461-3200, or the toll-free number, which may be useful when calling from a pay phone, 1-877-211-WASH (9274). 211 works with a language line to provide interpreters as needed at no cost to callers. Deaf and hearing-impaired callers can call 1-800-833-6384 or 711 to be connected to a relay operator at no cost, who will then connect them with 211. You can also get information on legal service providers in King County through 211's website: www.resourcehouse.com/win211/.
- **Persons 60 and Over:** Persons 60 or over may call CLEAR*Sr at 1-888-387-7111, regardless of income.

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ADVERSE ACTION NOTICE

Your Name
Your Address
Your City/State/Zip Code

This notice is to inform you that your application has been [landlord must check one]:

- Rejected
- Approved with conditions:
 - Residency requires an increased deposit
 - Residency requires a qualified guarantor
 - Residency requires last month's rent
 - Residency requires an increased monthly rent of \$.....
- Other:

Adverse action on your application was based on the following [landlord must check all that apply]:

- Information contained in a consumer report (The prospective landlord must include the name, address, and phone number of the consumer reporting agency that furnished the consumer report that contributed to the adverse action.)
- The consumer credit report did not contain sufficient information
- Information received from previous rental history or reference
- Information received in a criminal record
- Information received in a civil record
- Information received from an employment verification

Dated this _____ day of _____, 20 _____

Agent/Owner Signature