

Tenant Screening: Your Rights

Should I read this?

Yes, if you are looking for an apartment or house to rent. If you apply for a house or an apartment, the landlord may “screen” you. We explain:

- What the landlord must tell you about the screening process
- How much the landlord can charge you for screening expenses
- What you can do if you disagree with any 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 is the law?

❖ You can read the law here: [RCW 59.18.257](#). RCW stands for [Revised Code of Washington](#), Washington’s state law.

The law says a landlord must let you know the following before you hand in your application:

- What types of information the landlord will get as part of the screening
- What information from the screening may cause the landlord to reject your application
- If the landlord uses a consumer report:

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

The landlord must post this info OR give it to you in writing. 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
- 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 stating 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 must have the same information our sample form would have.

The landlord 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?

You can sue the landlord. 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 9:15 a.m. until 12:15 p.m.
- **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, 1-877-211-WASH (9274). You can also get information on legal service providers in King County through 211's website at www.resourcehouse.com/win211/.
- **Persons 60 and Over:** Persons 60 or over may call CLEAR*Sr at 1-888-387-7111, regardless of income.

Callers who are deaf and hard of hearing can call 1-800-833-6384 or 711 to get a free relay operator. They will then connect you with 211 or CLEAR.

This publication provides general information concerning your rights and responsibilities. It is not intended as a substitute for specific legal advice.

This information is current as of July 2015.

© 2015 Northwest Justice Project — 1-888-201-1014

(Permission for copying and distribution granted to the Alliance for Equal Justice and to individuals for non-commercial purposes only.)

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