Washington's Association
of Dispute Resolution Centers

Eviction Resolution Pilot Program (ERPP)
Update June 30, 2021

Are you a renter worried about rent you owe, getting evicted, or becoming homeless?

Are you a landlord with tenants who have fallen behind on their rent?

Mediation services help tenants and landlords talk about solving these problems before going to court.

Washington's 21 nonprofit Dispute Resolution Centers (DRCs) across the state bring tenants and landlords together with a trained, impartial mediator to help resolve unpaid rent issues. Services are free, confidential, and available regardless of immigration status.

The Eviction Resolution Pilot Program (ERPP) is in development, working to resolve unpaid rent issues. DRCs are working diligently to prepare mediation and referral resources to support tenants and landlords once the eviction moratorium expires to help stabilize rental housing for everyone.

Dispute Resolution Centers can:

- help renters and landlords to access legal and rental assistance resources; and

- help landlords and renters resolve unpaid rent issues through mediation services.

Learn more about the Eviction Resolution Pilot Program through the Administrative Office of the Courts, public education videos in English and Spanish, and our ERPP web page.

Get in touch with your county's DRC to find out more about help available.

ERPP Update following the Governor's Proclamation

On June 29th, Governor Inslee announced a new proclamation that will suspend most evictions for nonpayment of rent during July, August and September, 2021. The proclamation also addresses the development of the ERPP and access to rental assistance.

DRCs are preparing to launch these expanded tenant and landlord services as soon as possible. After the eviction moratorium ends, the ERPP will launch in each county that completes the following three steps, if and when that happens:

- the local Superior Court implements an ERPP standing order under SB 5160 and the proclamation;

- rental assistance is operational in the county and the Court has posted an attestation from the rental assistance agency/agencies on their operational status; and

- DRC ERPP services are operational and the Court has posted an attestation from the local DRC on their operational status.

The Governor's proclamation 21-09 asks DRCs, in those counties where there is a standing order, to attest to being operational once they are ready to fully provide ERPP dispute resolution services, including access to rental assistance in those counties. DRCs have been working closely with stakeholders to prioritize offering these services for the public, including accessibility for underserved community members.

Resolution Washington, the statewide association of DRCs, is helping DRCs ramp up ERPP and housing stability dispute resolution services in order to support access to justice and equity. Resolution Washington is committed to equal justice for all community members and supports people of color and residents with low income in having access to equitable opportunities statewide.

A list of DRCs serving each county is available here: www.resolutionwa.org/locations. Contact your local DRC for information and support, and for updates on ERPP in your county.

On April 22, 2021, the Senate passed and Governor Jay Inslee signed Senate Bill 5160. This new law creates the Eviction Resolution Pilot Program (ERPP), which will go into effect once the eviction moratorium in Washington State expires. The changes in law and the eviction moratorium were created in response to the public health and economic crises that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal of ERPP is to provide housing stability and prevent the buildup of backlogs at the courts by combining dispute resolution, rental assistance, and access to legal aid for nonpayment of rent cases statewide. When a local superior court issues a "standing order," as established under chapter 115, laws of 2021, sec. 7, ERPP becomes mandatory in their jurisdiction and designates the Dispute Resolution Centers (DRCs) of Washington State to help solve the disputes and issue certifications of program completion. When ERPP is in place, landlords cannot file for eviction in court without the DRC certification.

The DRCs were closely involved in developing the initial version of the pilot program in late 2020, based upon the Supreme Court of Washington order to authorize local superior courts to implement the program. Six pilot counties, representing 80% of nonpayment of rent cases in Washington State, participated and launched the program in November and December 2020, and DRCs in those counties continue to provide services today. King, Snohomish, Pierce, Spokane, Clark and Thurston Counties are already operating with a voluntary version of the ERPP that will shift into mandatory participation when the eviction moratorium ends. At this time, the ERPP will expand beyond the initial six counties and become active in each county where the local court opts in and creates a standing order.

The DRCs form an integral part of ERPP in delivering conflict resolution services through conciliation, mediation, conflict coaching, and by providing information and referral services. They are engines of local outreach and community engagement around ERPP.

DRCs have been helping tenants and landlords resolve conflicts for nearly 40 years, including addressing issues related to rent payments, and helped the state handle the foreclosure crisis in the previous recession. They are now putting their expertise to work in helping clients access rental assistance and apply for legal aid to help solve the disputes. The DRCs have developed an intake process that is trauma-informed and that employs their empathetic listening skills as impartial third parties. This helps prepare clients for the ERPP process. In response to the pandemic, DRCs provide ERPP services by phone, via online/video, and in person when safety allows. DRCs use the approach that best meets the needs of the parties in terms of process and access.