

FILED
SUPERIOR COURT

'21 DEC -8 AM 12:24

COWLITZ CO. CLERK
STAFF MYKLELOUST

BY _____

SUPERIOR COURT OF WASHINGTON FOR COWLITZ COUNTY

AMENDED STANDING ORDER

Eviction Resolution Pilot Program (ERPP)¹

Effective December 10, 2021 through June 30, 2023² unless modified by the Court.

1. Findings. It is recognized that:

- A. Cowlitz Superior Court anticipates a significant increase in eviction matters for non-payment of rent, once evictions move forward in Washington State. Non-payment evictions are anticipated to be allowed to proceed as of the First of October, 2021.
- B. This court has determined it appropriate to issue this standing order pursuant to the Supreme Court General order to establish an Eviction Resolution Pilot Program (ERPP) to divert unlawful detainer cases from the docket and facilitate both pre-filing and post-filing resolution of cases where the principle issue in context is non-payment of rent.

¹ ERP changed to ERPP given language in ch. 115, Laws of 2021, Sec. 7.
² Per ch. 115, Laws of 2021, Sec. 7(9).

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2 **2. Order**

3 **A. ERPP Administration**

4 The court designates that Judge Gary Bashor will serve as the procedural point person to
5 work with relevant stakeholders on the implementation and ongoing administration of the
6 ERPP and such designation has been provided to the Administrative Office of the Courts.
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8 **B. Landlord/Landlord counsel's Obligations regarding Eviction Resolution.**

9 **a.** Prior to serving and/or filing a summons and complaint for non-payment of rent,
10 the landlord or landlord's counsel shall;

11 **(i) strictly comply with** the notice, service, and certification requirements of Sec.
12 7(3), (4), and (5) of Chapter 115, Laws of 2021,

13 **(ii)** meet and confer with the local DRC and the tenant and tenant's attorney to
14 facilitate the resolution of the issue of nonpayment of rent.
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16 **b. At the time of filing**, the ERPP DRC Certification Form, shall be filed with a
17 summons and complaint with the court for any cases involving non-payment of
18 rent.
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20 **B. DRC Certification of ERPP.** The DRC shall complete the Certificate of ERPP

21 Participation promptly once the parties have completed their obligations under Sec.
22 7(3), (4), and (5) of Chapter 115, Laws of 2021. For purposes of this order, the
23 obligations referenced in this section are complete whether an agreed resolution is
24 reached through ERPP or not. A copy of the completed Certificate shall be provided to
25 the Landlord upon completion as defined in this paragraph. The Clerk will not accept
26 for filing any Unlawful Detainer based upon non-payment of rent which does not
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1 include a completed ERPP Certificate which shall be filed as a document separate
2 from the Complaint.

3 The local DRC may add relevant language to a certificate of ERPP participation
4 prior to its issuance to a landlord that details: whether rent assistance was available at
5 the time of the engagement (*for example*, did the tenant qualify for rent assistance and
6 was rent assistance available in the relevant locality at this time); the date the DRC
7 received the notice and the date on the notice; whether the tenant participated in
8 ERPP efforts; whether the tenant had counsel during ERPP; whether the DRC was
9 able to conduct conciliation efforts; and any other relevant information to help the court
10 determine whether the matter is ripe for adjudication.
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12 **The the ERPP Notice and Resource Form is available on the Court Website**
13 **at: www.CowlitzSuperiorCourt.us/Evictions**

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15 **C. DRC Reporting Obligations.** On a quarterly basis, the local DRC shall provide to the
16 Court Administrator the ERPP data/information required by Sec. 7 (b)-(f) in a useable
17 and readable format.
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19 **D. Initial Hearing Procedures for Unlawful Detainer Cases.**

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21 i. Upon implementation of the right to counsel plan for this court by OCLA pursuant
22 to Secs. 8 and 9 of Chapter 115, Laws of 2021, the following provision will take effect:

23 At the first hearing, the court will advise the tenant of their right to appointed counsel if
24 indigent and inquire whether they wish to assert that right. If so, the court shall either
25 appoint counsel or refer the tenant to Northwest Justice Project (NJP) for eligibility
26 screening by sharing the name and contact number for NJP, unless counsel has
27 previously been appointed for the tenant. If a tenant is referred for screening, the Court
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1 will continue the initial hearing one (1) week to allow the litigant to contact assigned
2 counsel and to appear with counsel and provide the court with a case status update.

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5 ii. In non-payment of rent cases in which a DRC Certification has been issued:

6 At the first hearing, the court shall determine: (a) whether the landlord has complied
7 with the notice, service, participation, and certification filing requirements of Sec. 7 of
8 Chapter 115, laws of 2021, and (b) whether the landlord and tenant met and conferred
9 with the local DRC for purposes of resolving the issue of nonpayment of rent.
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12 E. **Superseding Effect.** This order supersedes all prior standing orders issued with
13 respect to the practice and procedure relating to the Eviction Resolution Pilot Program.

14 DATED this 8 day of December, 2021.

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18 The Honorable
19 Presiding Judge Gary B. Bashor
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