

October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021

## **New Eviction Resolution Pilot Program Helps Tenants and Landlords Program brings renters and housing providers together to find solutions on rent owed, before filing for an eviction**

A new eviction prevention program requires tenants and landlords in Cowlitz County to try to resolve issues around rent owed through an eviction resolution specialist or mediation, before eviction cases may be filed in court. The Eviction Resolution Pilot Program (ERPP) aims to stabilize housing and reduce a pending wave of eviction cases once the Washington state moratorium on evictions ends, set to expire October 31, 2021. A pilot program has been available in six since November 2020, and the program is now available statewide.

The ERPP connects tenants who are behind on rent with the Center for Constructive Resolution and Conversation to problem solve together with their landlord, most often in some combination of rental assistance counseling, legal aid, and mediation. The landlord and tenant may be able to access rental assistance, create a rent payment plan, or create a move out plan, without going to court.

As the COVID-19 pandemic endures, many tenants are unable to pay rent, and many landlords are not receiving payments. Recent estimates from the U.S. Census Weekly Household Pulse show that approximately 1 in 10 Washington renters are behind on rental payments and 24% of renters are concerned they may not be able to pay next month's rent.

“Chronic housing stability issues are surging, particularly in communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19,” said Janice Juntunen, executive director of CCRC. “The ERPP supports people in our community in immediate need and helps stabilize housing over the long term with access to services and channels for resolving rent-owed issues outside the court system.”

An eviction record, or even a filing, may appear on rental history, so avoiding an eviction can benefit the renter’s ability to find future housing.

The ERPP is a mandatory step in addressing rent owed. Before legal action leading to an eviction, landlords must provide the tenant with an ERPP notice with information about mediation services, legal aid, and rental assistance agencies, and must participate. The ERPP is free to the tenant and to the landlord and is confidential and available regardless of immigration status. Language assistance is available.

Dispute Resolution Centers have been working in housing stability and dispute resolution for over 30 years and offer conflict resolution services including mediation, facilitation, and conflict resolution that can be an alternative to the court system and resolve disputes within the local community.

The ERPP was developed by the state Superior Court Judges’ Association in partnership with the state Office of Civil Legal Aid, Dispute Resolution Centers, and other stakeholders, at the direction of the Washington State Supreme Court, codified by the Washington State Legislature, and supported by the Governor and the Administrative Office of the Courts.

For more information:

[www.lewiscountycrc.org](http://www.lewiscountycrc.org)

[www.courts.wa.gov/evictionresolutionprogram](http://www.courts.wa.gov/evictionresolutionprogram)

[www.resolutionwa.org/erpp](http://www.resolutionwa.org/erpp)

#### About CCRC:

The organization was originally formed in 1993 as the Dispute Resolution Center of Lewis County by a group of concerned citizens, Lewis County Bar Legal Aid and the Lewis County Commissioners.

CCRC has been providing alternative dispute resolution services to the people of Cowlitz County since it was created.

#### CCRC mission statement:

*"The Lewis County Center for Constructive Resolution and Conversation nurtures healthy relationships in our community by teaching strategic, respectful communication, and by facilitating necessary conversations between those in conflict."*