

Tenant Screening

What You Need to Know When Applying for Rental Housing

In 2012 a new State law passed requiring landlords to provide certain information to you if you have applied to rent an apartment, house or mobile home. Under the new law, if a landlord screens your application...



They are required to let you know in writing*:

- ✓ The kind of information they will access to conduct the screening (examples: credit report, criminal background search, references, etc.)
- ✓ The kind of information from the screening that might result in you not getting housing
- ✓ If they use a consumer report they must:
 - Give you the name and address of the consumer reporting agency
 - Let you know your right to get a free copy of the consumer report if the landlord denies your application
 - Let you know your right to dispute the accuracy of information in the consumer report.

**This information must be posted or given in writing, a verbal notice is not sufficient.*

If you are charged for the screening:

- ✓ The landlord must let you know in writing you will be charged
- ✓ You must only be charged for actual cost of screening
- ✓ If the landlord does the screen on their own they can only charge what a normal screening company would charge. Charges can include:
 - Costs of long distance phone calls
 - Time spent calling your past and present landlords, employers, and banks.

If the landlord denies your application based on something they found when screening your application

The landlord must tell you in writing why they are denying your application. The Northwest Justice Project put together a sample written notice (see next page). The landlord's written notice to you must have the same information that is on this sample form.

If a landlord screens your application without notifying you in writing beforehand and then turns down your application they are violating the law.

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.

Do you think you were screened or denied housing because of your race, national origin, sexual orientation, family status or other protected class?

Tenant screening must always be applied consistently. If you are denied housing and you think your application was screened and turned down because of your race, national origin, sexual orientation, religion, family status or other protected class, you can file a charge of discrimination. This is a free process and your right under the law. **For more information call the Seattle Office for Civil Rights, (206) 684-4500 or visit www.seattle.gov/civilrights.**

*Fact sheet modified from NW Justice Project publication:

<http://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/documents/5156016302EN.pdf?stateabbrev=/WA/>

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:

The reason(s) for the adverse action is:
[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

(Template provided by NW Justice Project:
<http://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/documents/5156016302EN.pdf?stateabbrev=/WA/>)