



United States District Court Western District of Washington

www.wawd.uscourts.gov

Pro Se Guide

TO FILING YOUR LAWSUIT IN FEDERAL COURT



Disclaimer:

This guide is intended to assist individuals wishing to file a civil action in the United States District Court, Western District of Washington without an attorney, which is referred to as appearing "pro se." This manual is provided for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. The Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (FRCP), this court's Local Civil Rules (LCR) and the Electronic Case Filing System (CM/ECF) Procedures control how civil cases must be filed and processed.

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Part One

BEFORE YOU FILE YOUR CASE

Consider ways to resolve your dispute or problem outside of court.

Are you having a disagreement with another person, business, or government agency? Are you thinking about going to court to ask a judge to resolve a disagreement or solve a problem for you?

Federal court is one type of court that can help people resolve disputes. When two or more people (or a person, business, or government agency) have a disagreement and want a judge to resolve the dispute, it's called a "case" or a "lawsuit."

Before you decide to file a case in federal court, you may want to consider other ways to solve your dispute.

- **Try talking to the person, business, or government agency that you feel has done something wrong by asking them to fix the problem.** Many government agencies have requirements or special rules you must follow before filing a case in federal court.
- **Seek help from other sources.** There are a number of local and state-wide agencies that may be able to assist you.
- **Contact an attorney.** An attorney will be able to help you determine if federal court is the right place to solve your problem and provide you with information about legal resources available in the community.

You also have the right to file your case without an attorney, which is known as proceeding, “**pro se**.” Appearing pro se means that you will be representing yourself without the assistance of a lawyer.

If you decide to represent yourself, the court will treat you the same as it would an attorney. You will be expected to state your issues clearly and concisely, meet all deadlines, and follow the court rules.

Are you in the correct court?

Before filing a case in federal court, you first need to make sure that you are filing it in the correct court. This can be especially important if you are working with a deadline for certain statutes of limitations. Filing your case in the wrong court may affect whether or not you meet those required deadlines.

Before filing your case in federal court, you may want to ask yourself the following questions.

Is your case about a divorce, child custody, adoption, name change, landlord-tenant dispute, or a will?

If so, you are likely in the wrong court. State courts generally hear family law matters and landlord-tenant disputes. You can learn more about Washington State Courts at www.courts.wa.gov. If in doubt, contact an attorney for legal advice about your specific situation. The Clerk’s Office cannot make this determination for you.

Is your case about a federal law, the denial of Social Security benefits, other federal benefits, or a decision by a federal agency?

If so, you are likely in the right court.

Should you file your case in Tacoma or Seattle?

The U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington has courthouses in Seattle and Tacoma. Where you file your case depends on the county in which the claim arose or where the defendant(s) reside, as established by the Court’s Local Civil Rules (LCR).

A list of counties and their corresponding jurisdictional courthouses can be found on the following page.

If the defendant(s) reside in or the incident occurred in one of the following counties, you should file your case in **Seattle**.

- Island County
- King County
- San Juan County
- Skagit County
- Snohomish County
- Whatcom County

If the defendant(s) reside in or the incident occurred in one of the following counties, you should file your case in **Tacoma**.

- Clallam County
- Clark County
- Cowlitz County
- Grays Harbor County
- Jefferson County
- Kitsap County
- Lewis County
- Mason County
- Pacific County
- Pierce County
- Skamania County
- Thurston County
- Wahkiakum County

Types of cases filed in federal court

Federal courts are courts of limited jurisdiction and therefore, the following types of cases may be filed here.

1. Cases where the United States government is a party to the action.

Federal courts hear lawsuits involving the Social Security Administration, Veterans Administration or cases against a federal agency, such as the United States Postal Service or the Internal Revenue Service.

2. Cases brought under federal laws.

Federal courts hear specific types of cases arising under the United States Constitution and federal laws such as damages at sea, federal tax matters and other areas. Some federal laws may duplicate some state laws, such as civil rights matters.

3. Cases where the parties reside in different states.

Lawsuits between parties residing in different states are governed by “**diversity**” jurisdiction. For example, if you live in Washington and you file a lawsuit against a defendant who lives in Oregon, the case would be considered diversity.

Diversity cases must involve a claim of damages over \$75,000. If you are not seeking more than that amount, or your case does not involve federal law of a government defendant, you may need to file your claim in state court.

Are your claims timely?

The period of time set by law in which a lawsuit must be filed is called the “**statute of limitations**.” This period of time usually begins when the injury occurs or a right has been violated. If you fail to bring your claim within the timeframe allowed by a specific statute, your lawsuit may be dismissed.

Other issues to consider

Before filing your case in federal court, please be aware of the following:

Frivolous or harassing lawsuits

The Federal Rules of Civil Procedures, FRCP 11(b), prohibits the filing of lawsuits that are clearly frivolous or filed just to harass someone. If the judge determines that you have filed a lawsuit for an improper or unnecessary reason, sanctions may be imposed against you, including ordering that you pay the legal fees of the party you sued.

What happens if you lose?

If you lose your case, the winning party may ask that you be ordered to pay attorney fees. The winning party is also entitled to seek certain costs which were incurred during the lawsuit. These costs can include deposition transcript fees, witness fees, copy expenses, etc. These fees may add up to thousands of dollars. It is very common for a winning party to seek costs from the losing party.

Part Two

FILING YOUR CASE

Before a judge can address the facts you are contesting, you must submit the required documents to open a case in the United States District Court for the Western District of Washington.

Rules that you must follow

Before you file a case, you should begin by reviewing the local and federal rules that govern the filing of a case in this court. By appearing pro se and representing yourself, the judge will expect you to be familiar with the court rules that govern the filing of a civil lawsuit in federal court.

1. Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (FRCP)

The Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (FRCP) govern court procedures for civil cases. A link to the federal rules can be found at www.law.cornell.edu/rules/frcp.

2. Local Civil Rules (LCR) for the Western District of Washington

This is a collection of local rules that are written for the practice of law in the United States District Court for the Western District of Washington. They are published in addition to the federal rules. Be aware that local rules differ from court to court, so you should refer to the local rules of the Western District of Washington.

The Local Civil Rules (LCR) and Federal Rules of Civil Procedures (FRCP) can be found on our website at www.wawd.uscourts.gov/representing-yourself-pro-se

3. Western District of Washington's Electronic Filing System (CM/ECF)

Information about how to register to file and receive documents electronically through the court's Electronic Filing System (CM/ECF) can be found in Part Three of this guide or on our website at wawd.uscourts.gov/attorneys/cmecf

Required forms to file a new case

The following documents are required to file a new case.

- 1) Complaint form
- 2) Civil Cover Sheet
- 3) Payment of the filing fee (\$402.00) or submittal of an **Application to Proceed In Forma Pauperis** – commonly referred to as an “IFP” – requesting that the court waive the filing fee. Additional information about how to submit an IFP can be found on page 14.

Complaint

To file a new case, you must first complete a document called a “**Complaint.**” A complaint is a legal document that describes why you believe the defendant(s) violated the law and what you want the court to do about it.

To file a case, you must follow the procedures outlined below.

1. Select the correct complaint form based on the type of case you are filing. Complaint forms can be found on our website at www.wawd.uscourts.gov/court-forms under “Self-Representation” or by calling the Clerk’s Office in Seattle (206-370-8400) or Tacoma (253-882-3800) to request a complaint form be mailed to you.
2. Documents must be typed or neatly written in blue or black ink (no pencils) on white, 8½ x 11 paper. Do not write on both sides of the paper. You must include your name, address and phone number on each document submitted.
3. All documents must be dated and signed with an **original** signature, as established by FRCP 11(a).

4. In the body of the complaint, explain in detail what happened, where it happened, when it happened, how it happened and who was involved.
5. You may also choose to supplement your complaint in the form of an **“exhibit.”** An exhibit is a document, record or physical object. For example, medical reports, transcripts or photographs.
6. Documents with personal identifiers must be redacted (blacked out) or removed before they are filed, as established by LCR 5.2(a).
 - Dates of birth (redact to year of birth)
 - Names of minor children under 18 (redact to initials)
 - Social security numbers (remove entirely)
 - Financial account numbers (redact to last four digits)
 - Taxpayer identification numbers (remove entirely)
 - Passport ID numbers (remove entirely)
 - Driver license numbers (remove entirely)

Civil Cover Sheet

A **“Civil Cover Sheet”** is a document that provides the court with basic information about your case and must be filed when you submit your initial documents, as established by LCR 3(a). The Civil Cover Sheet can be found at the end of this guide or on our website at www.wawd.uscourts.gov/court-forms under “Civil.”

Section I - Parties

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS	DEFENDANTS
<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; margin-bottom: 10px;">Your name</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; margin-bottom: 10px;">Name(s) of Defendant(s)</div>
(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff <small>(EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)</small> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; margin-top: 10px;">County you live in</div>	County of Residence of First Listed Defendant <small>(IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)</small> NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED. <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; margin-top: 10px;">County of first defendant on complaint</div>
(c) Attorneys <small>(Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number)</small> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; margin-top: 10px;">Your address & phone number</div>	Attorneys <small>(If Known)</small> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 10px; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; margin-top: 10px;">Leave blank unless filing a Notice of Removal from state court</div>

Section 1(a): Your name and name(s) of the defendant(s).

Section 1(b): Your county and county of first listed defendant.

Section 1(c): Since you are appearing pro se, write your name, address and phone number under “Attorneys.”

Section II – Basis of Jurisdiction

II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION *(Place an "X" in One Box Only)*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 U.S. Government
Plaintiff | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Federal Question
<i>(U.S. Government Not a Party)</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 U.S. Government
Defendant | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Diversity
<i>(Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)</i> |

This section lets the court know what type of case you are filing.

1. Government – Plaintiff: This box is for government agencies only.
2. Government – Defendant: Mark this box if you are filing a case against a federal agency or the United States government.
3. Federal Question: Mark this box if your case is about a federal law.
4. Diversity: Mark this box if the defendant(s) live in another state or country; is not a federal agency or if your case involves a claim valued over \$75,000.

Section III – Citizenship of Principal Parties

III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES <i>(Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant)</i>					
	<i>(For Diversity Cases Only)</i>				
	PTF	DEF		PTF	DEF
Citizen of This State	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Incorporated <i>or</i> Principal Place of Business In This State	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Citizen of Another State	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Incorporated <i>and</i> Principal Place of Business In Another State	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	Foreign Nation	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

This section is **only** used if you marked "Diversity" in Section II. Diversity refers to cases where the parties involved are from different states or countries. If "Diversity" was chosen, mark the correct box where you and the first listed defendant(s) are located.

Section IV – Nature of Suit

IV. NATURE OF SUIT (Place an "X" in One Box Only)				Click here for: Nature of Suit Code Descriptions	
CONTRACT	TORTS	FORFEITURE/PENALTY	BANKRUPTCY	OTHER STATUTES	
<input type="checkbox"/> 110 Insurance <input type="checkbox"/> 120 Marine <input type="checkbox"/> 130 Miller Act <input type="checkbox"/> 140 Negotiable Instrument <input type="checkbox"/> 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment <input type="checkbox"/> 151 Medicare Act <input type="checkbox"/> 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Excludes Veterans) <input type="checkbox"/> 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits <input type="checkbox"/> 160 Stockholders' Suits <input type="checkbox"/> 190 Other Contract <input type="checkbox"/> 195 Contract Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 196 Franchise	PERSONAL INJURY <input type="checkbox"/> 310 Airplane <input type="checkbox"/> 315 Airplane Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 320 Assault, Libel & Slander <input type="checkbox"/> 330 Federal Employers' Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 340 Marine <input type="checkbox"/> 345 Marine Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 350 Motor Vehicle <input type="checkbox"/> 355 Motor Vehicle Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 360 Other Personal Injury <input type="checkbox"/> 362 Personal Injury - Medical Malpractice	PERSONAL INJURY <input type="checkbox"/> 365 Personal Injury - Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 367 Health Care/Pharmaceutical Personal Injury Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 368 Asbestos Personal Injury Product Liability PERSONAL PROPERTY <input type="checkbox"/> 370 Other Fraud <input type="checkbox"/> 371 Truth in Lending <input type="checkbox"/> 380 Other Personal Property Damage <input type="checkbox"/> 385 Property Damage Product Liability	<input type="checkbox"/> 625 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881 <input type="checkbox"/> 690 Other LABOR <input type="checkbox"/> 710 Fair Labor Standards Act <input type="checkbox"/> 720 Labor/Management Relations <input type="checkbox"/> 740 Railway Labor Act <input type="checkbox"/> 751 Family and Medical Leave Act <input type="checkbox"/> 790 Other Labor Litigation <input type="checkbox"/> 791 Employee Retirement Income Security Act IMMIGRATION <input type="checkbox"/> 462 Naturalization Application <input type="checkbox"/> 465 Other Immigration Actions	<input type="checkbox"/> 422 Appeal 28 USC 158 <input type="checkbox"/> 423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157 PROPERTY RIGHTS <input type="checkbox"/> 820 Copyrights <input type="checkbox"/> 830 Patent <input type="checkbox"/> 835 Patent - Abbreviated New Drug Application <input type="checkbox"/> 840 Trademark <input type="checkbox"/> 880 Defend Trade Secrets Act of 2016 SOCIAL SECURITY <input type="checkbox"/> 861 HIA (1395ff) <input type="checkbox"/> 862 Black Lung (923) <input type="checkbox"/> 863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g)) <input type="checkbox"/> 864 SSID Title XVI <input type="checkbox"/> 865 RSI (405(g)) FEDERAL TAX SUITS <input type="checkbox"/> 870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff or Defendant) <input type="checkbox"/> 871 IRS—Third Party 26 USC 7609	<input type="checkbox"/> 375 False Claims Act <input type="checkbox"/> 376 Qui Tam (31 USC 3729(a)) <input type="checkbox"/> 400 State Reapportionment <input type="checkbox"/> 410 Antitrust <input type="checkbox"/> 430 Banks and Banking <input type="checkbox"/> 450 Commerce <input type="checkbox"/> 460 Deportation <input type="checkbox"/> 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations <input type="checkbox"/> 480 Consumer Credit (15 USC 1681 or 1692) <input type="checkbox"/> 485 Telephone Consumer Protection Act <input type="checkbox"/> 490 Cable/Sat TV <input type="checkbox"/> 850 Securities/Commodities/Exchange <input type="checkbox"/> 890 Other Statutory Actions <input type="checkbox"/> 891 Agricultural Acts <input type="checkbox"/> 893 Environmental Matters <input type="checkbox"/> 895 Freedom of Information Act <input type="checkbox"/> 896 Arbitration <input type="checkbox"/> 899 Administrative Procedure Act/Review or Appeal of Agency Decision <input type="checkbox"/> 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes
REAL PROPERTY	CIVIL RIGHTS	PRISONER PETITIONS			
<input type="checkbox"/> 210 Land Condemnation <input type="checkbox"/> 220 Foreclosure <input type="checkbox"/> 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment <input type="checkbox"/> 240 Torts to Land <input type="checkbox"/> 245 Tort Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 290 All Other Real Property	<input type="checkbox"/> 440 Other Civil Rights <input type="checkbox"/> 441 Voting <input type="checkbox"/> 442 Employment <input type="checkbox"/> 443 Housing/Accommodations <input type="checkbox"/> 445 Amer. w/Disabilities - Employment <input type="checkbox"/> 446 Amer. w/Disabilities - Other <input type="checkbox"/> 448 Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Habeas Corpus: <input type="checkbox"/> 463 Alien Detainee <input type="checkbox"/> 510 Motions to Vacate Sentence <input type="checkbox"/> 530 General <input type="checkbox"/> 535 Death Penalty <input type="checkbox"/> Other: <input type="checkbox"/> 540 Mandamus & Other <input type="checkbox"/> 550 Civil Rights <input type="checkbox"/> 555 Prison Condition <input type="checkbox"/> 560 Civil Detainee - Conditions of Confinement			

You can only choose **one** box. If your complaint includes multiple claims, select the one that most closely represents what your case is about.

Section V – Origin

V. ORIGIN (Place an "X" in One Box Only)						
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Original Proceeding	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Removed from State Court	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Remanded from Appellate Court	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Reinstated or Reopened	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Transferred from another district (specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> 6 Multidistrict Litigation	<input type="checkbox"/> 7 Appeal to District Judge from Magistrate Judgment

This section has several options to choose from. Origin (1) "Original Proceeding," is frequently chosen as it indicates you are filing a new lawsuit. However, if you are filing a case that you are removing from state court to federal court, you should choose (2) "Removed from State Court."

Section VI – Cause of Action

VI. CAUSE OF ACTION	
Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing (Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity):	Brief description of cause:

In this section, you will provide a brief statement explaining what your case is about.

Section VII – Requested in Complaint

VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:	<input type="checkbox"/> CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER RULE 23, F.R.Cv.P.	DEMAND \$	CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint: JURY DEMAND: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
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The only information you will complete in this section is the jury demand box, as established by LCR 38(b).

Section VIII – Related Case(s) If Any

Complete this section if you currently have or have had cases in this court or other federal courts with the same defendant(s). If so, add the name of the judge and case number to the form. You are also required to file a **"Notice of Related Cases,"** listing the case information. As the court does have a general form to use, you may create your own.

VIII. RELATED CASE(S) IF ANY	(See instructions):	JUDGE	DOCKET NUMBER
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Sign and Date Form

Because you are appearing pro se (i.e., acting as your own attorney), you must sign and date the box at the bottom of form under, "Signature of Attorney of Record."

DATE	SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD
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Summons

A **"Summons"** is a document that demands that the defendant(s) respond to your complaint. You must fill out the required fields on the summons form before submitting it to the court. The form may be found on our website at www.wawd.uscourts.gov/court-forms under "Civil" and at the end of this guide.

If you pay the filing fee, summons can be issued immediately. If you file an IFP, summons will not be issued until the motion is granted and the clerk receives permission from the court to do so. The clerk will then sign and adhere the court's seal to the summons. The clerk can only issue summons for defendant(s) listed on the complaint.

After summons have been issued and the defendant(s) have been "served" a copy of the complaint and accompanying documents, you must file a document called a **"Proof of Service,"** which is on the second page of the summons form. This document provides proof to the court that the defendant(s) have been properly served with your lawsuit. See Part Four of this guide for more information.

If you prefer to wait and have summons issued later, you may submit them with a **"Praecipe"** form. A praecipe is a document asking the court to take official action on a specific request. Praecipe forms can be found on our website at www.wawd.uscourts.gov/court-forms under "Civil."

Application to Proceed In Forma Pauperis (IFP)

The filing fee to open a case in federal court is \$402.00.

If you cannot afford to pay the filing fee, you can apply to have the fee "waived," which means your case may proceed without payment of the filing fee. In order to make that request, you must complete an "**Application to Proceed In Forma Pauperis**" – commonly referred to as an "IFP" – and submit it with your initiating documents.

It is very important to fill out the form completely as the judge will use this information to determine if you have the financial ability to pay the filing fee.

Once a decision has been made, a copy of the order will be mailed to you at the address listed on the complaint. Summons will not be issued until the IFP has been granted and the court gives the clerk permission to do so.

The IFP form can be found at the end of this packet or on our website at www.wawd.uscourts.gov/court-forms under "Self-Representation."

Application for Court-Appointed Counsel

If you cannot afford an attorney but would like to request one be appointed, you can submit an "**Application for Court-Appointed Counsel.**" Although this option is available, there is no right to representation in civil matters and no guarantee that the judge will appoint an attorney in your case.

The judge may base his or her decision on several factors, including but not limited to:

1. Do you have the financial ability to hire counsel?
2. Have you made reasonable efforts to hire counsel on your own?
3. Can you prepare and present your case without the help of an attorney?
4. How complex is your case?

To request an attorney, you must complete the correct form based on the type of case you are filing. One form is specifically for civil rights cases and the other for employment discrimination cases. Both forms can be found at the end of this guide and on our website at www.wawd.uscourts.gov/court-forms under "Self-Representation." If your claims do not fall under either category, you can create your own form and submit it to the court.

Where to file your complaint

1) In Person

The Clerk's Office window is open to the public Monday-Friday from 9am to 4pm. Please make sure you have completed and signed all of the required forms before submitting them to the court.

If you arrive outside of those hours, documents may be filed via the locked drop box located in the lobby of both courthouses. Once your case has been opened, you will receive a letter in the mail with the case number and judge assignment.

2) By Mail

Documents may also be mailed to the Seattle or Tacoma courthouse. Where you mail them is based on the county where the incident took place or where the defendant(s) reside (see page 6). After your case has been opened, you will receive a letter with the case number and judge assignment. All documents filed after the case has been assigned should be mailed to the courthouse where your judge is located.

Seattle

U.S. District Court
700 Stewart St., Suite 2310
Seattle, WA 98101
(206) 370-8400

Tacoma

U.S. District Court
1717 Pacific Ave., Room 3100
Tacoma, WA 98402
(253) 882-3800

3) Email

You also have the option of submitting new case documents electronically. Where you email them is based on the county where the incident took place or where the defendant(s) reside (see page 6).

Seattle: newcases.seattle@wawd.uscourts.gov

Tacoma: newcases.tacoma@wawd.uscourts.gov

You are **only** permitted to email documents when filing a new case. Once a judge has been assigned, documents must be submitted in person, through the mail or via the court's electronic filing system, if registered (see page 18).

What does the Clerk's Office do with the case information?

If you **pay** the filing fee, the clerk will:

- 1) Randomly assign a case number and judge, based on the county where the incident took place or where the defendant(s) reside.
- 2) Social Security appeals are randomly assigned to judges in Seattle or Tacoma, regardless of where you reside.
- 3) Issue summons, if submitted.

If you **file an IFP** requesting that the court waive the filing fee, the clerk will:

- 1) Randomly assign a case number and judge, based on the county where the incident took place or where the defendant(s) reside.
- 2) Social Security appeals are randomly assigned to judges in Seattle or Tacoma, regardless of their location.
- 3) Summons will not be issued until an order is entered by the court and the clerk is given permission to issue them.

Options for Payment of Copy and Filing Fees

The Clerk's Office accepts the following forms of payment:

- Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover
- Personal checks, cashier checks and money orders



What the Clerk's Office can and cannot do

Although the clerk can answer most questions, we are legally prohibited from providing legal advice.

We can:

- Answer general questions about how the court works, including providing you with the required forms to open a new case.
- Provide general information about court policies and procedures.

We cannot:

- Give legal advice. This policy applies to all parties, including attorneys.
- Tell you whether you should file a case or what information to include in your court pleadings.
- Talk to the judge for you or let you talk to the judge outside of court.
- Determine when a decision will be made on your IFP or other pending motions as well as interpreting court orders.
- Interpret court rules.

Part Three

ELECTRONIC FILING SYSTEM (CM/ECF)

When filing a new case, you must either pay the \$402.00 filing fee or submit a Motion to Proceed In Forma Pauperis – referred to as an “**IFP**” – asking that the court waive the filing fee.

Once the filing fee has been paid or the court has granted your IFP, you have the option of filing documents directly into the Case Management/Electronic Case Filing System, referred to as “**CM/ECF**.” The CM/ECF program allows you to electronically file documents in your case directly into the system – commonly known as “e-filing” – without having to deliver them in person or through the mail. The term, “e-file” differs from “email” in that the court does not accept pleadings via email. The CM/ECF system allows you to receive and view via email everything that has been filed by you, the judge, the defendants, or any other parties in your case.

Information about how to directly file documents into CM/ECF, the rules and procedures that must be followed and the ECF User Manual can be found on our website at www.wawd.uscourts.gov/representing-yourself-pro-se/how-to-e-file. You will also find a CM/ECF Pro Se Registration Form at the end of this guide. It is important that you review the registration form carefully as it is your responsibility to comply with the court’s electronic filing procedures.

For questions, please contact the ECF Support Team at (206) 370-8440, option#2 or via email at cmecf@wawd.uscourts.gov.

Registration Requirements

You are not required to use the court's electronic filing system. If you are not computer savvy or do not have access to a computer, we recommend that you file your documents in person or through the mail.

The following requirements must be met to register for electronic filing:

- The filing fee has been paid or the Motion to Proceed In Forma Pauperis (IFP) has been granted.
- You are a party to the case for which you are applying for electronic filing.
- You meet the following technical requirements:
 1. A personal computer with Internet access.
 2. Internet Explorer or Firefox browser. Other browsers (Safari, Google Chrome; Microsoft Edge) may have functionality issues with the court's ECF system and are not supported.
 3. Software to convert your documents to PDF format (portable document format) OR a scanner set to 200 dpi (dots per inch) for scanning documents to PDF format.
 4. Adobe Acrobat Reader software to view and save documents in PDF format.
 5. Experience and knowledge of word processing applications, printers and the Internet.
 6. An email account to receive notices of filings and court orders.

How to Register

The court offers two CM/ECF registration options:

1. **E-Filer and E-Service**

With this service, you can directly file documents through the court's CM/ECF system as well as receive service of court documents via email.

2. **E-Service Only**

With this service, you will receive court documents electronically via email, but you must file all documents in person or through the mail.

E-Filer and E-Service Registration

To successfully register to directly file documents in CM/ECF in this court, you must complete the following steps:

1. Complete and submit the registration form, indicating which e-filing service you are applying for.
2. Register for a **PACER-Case Search Only** account through pacer.gov.
3. Register for **Non-Attorney Filers** access through pacer.gov.

Complete the Registration Form

A separate ECF Pro Se Registration Form must be submitted for every case that you file in this court. You are also required to have a case number before your account can be activated. The following instructions are designed to help you successfully register to e-file in this court.

1. Complete all fields on the Pro Se Registration Form, including your name, phone number, case number, email address and mailing address.
 - a) **To receive service of documents and notice of electronic filings to your email address, chose the FIRST option.** This option does not allow you to file documents electronically. Instead, you must file a paper copy either in person or through the mail.



Please register me to **receive service of documents and notice of electronic filings to my email*** via the Court's electronic filing system (CM/ECF). This option does *not* allow me to file documents electronically. I will continue to file documents in paper with the Court.



Please register me to **file documents electronically** and receive service of documents and notice of electronic filings to my email*** via the Court's electronic filing system (CM/ECF). By signing the agreement to file your documents electronically through CM/ECF, you waive your ability to file your documents in paper form over the counter or through the mail.

- b) **To file documents electronically, receive service of documents and be notified via email when a document has been filed, check the SECOND option.** With this option, you waive your right to file and receive documents in your case in person or by other means. You will receive all documents electronically from the court and other parties. A paper copy will not be mailed to you.

Check One:

☐ Please register me to **receive service of documents and notice of electronic filings to my email*** via the Court's electronic filing system (CM/ECF). This option does *not* allow me to file documents electronically. I will continue to file documents in paper with the Court.

☒ Please register me to **file documents electronically** and receive service of documents and notice of electronic filings to my email*** via the Court's electronic filing system (CM/ECF).
By signing the agreement to file your documents electronically through CM/ECF, you waive your ability to file your documents in paper form over the counter or through the mail.

2. Read the registration form carefully before signing and dating the document.
3. Once you have completed the form, you can return it via email or through the mail. The court's email address and mailing address can be found at the bottom of the registration form.

PACER (Public Access to Court Electronic Records)

Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER) is an electronic public service database that allows users to obtain case and docket information from the United States Federal Appellate Courts, United States District Courts and United States Bankruptcy Courts.

Electronic access is available by registering with the PACER Service Center, the judiciary's centralized registration, billing, and technical support center. Additional information can be found on their website at www.pacer.gov or by calling (800) 676-6856.

Electronic Filing Assistance

If you have questions about electronic filing, the CM/ECF support desk can be contacted by phone or email.

(206) 370-8440
cmecf@wawd.uscourts.gov
Monday – Friday, 8am to 5pm

Electronic Filing Terminology

Available Events. A list containing the types of document(s) you are filing.

CM/ECF. Case Management/Electronic Case Filing.

Docket text. The official court record of your filing.

ECF Menu. The menu is the blue bar located at the top of the page. You will choose "Civil" to begin filing your documents.

Login Screen. The screen where you will enter your ECF login and password. The redaction agreement box to the right of the login must be checked to begin filing your documents. NOTE: The "Client Code" field is not mandatory.

Main Document and Attachments. To search for a PDF document on your computer, click on the "Browse" button. A main document example would be a motion. An attachment example would be a proposed order or exhibit.

Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF). A receipt indicating your document has been transmitted to the court. This will be sent to the email address provided to the court when you registered for CM/ECF. You must save or print the notice. The notice will include a copy of the filed document with a hyperlink (in blue) which will allow you to view, print or save the document. Your availability to view the document will expire fourteen days from the date of receipt.

You may view a document once without being charged by clicking on the document number in the email you receive. This is known as the "free look." Make sure you click on the document **once** (not twice) or you may be charged a viewing fee by PACER, which is currently .10 cents per page.

PDF. Portable Document Format. A document created with almost any word processing program can be converted to a PDF. The PDF conversion program takes a picture of the document, so it can be opened across a broad range of hardware and software systems, with layout, format, links and images intact. Only documents in PDF format may be filed with the court using the ECF system.

Part Four

SERVICE OF SUMMONS AND COMPLAINT

What does service mean?

You are required to let the defendant(s) know that you have filed a case against them. Once the filing fee has been paid or your IFP has been granted, you can request that the clerk issue summons to each defendant listed on your complaint. The original summons form will then be returned to you for execution of service on the defendant(s). The court cannot serve the defendant(s) on your behalf, except if ordered by the court.

It is your responsibility to ensure that each defendant receives a copy of the certified summons form, a copy of your complaint and any other documents that were filed. This process is called “**service**” or “**serving the defendant.**”

The rules for serving the complaint are different from the rules for serving other documents. If the complaint is not properly served on the defendants, your case could be subject to dismissal. The requirements for serving the complaint are established by FRCP 4.

When must service be done?

The defendant(s) must be served within 90 days after the complaint is filed, as established by FRCP 4(m). Since there are different rules for serving individuals living in foreign countries, the United States, federal employees, federal agencies, minors or incompetent persons, corporations and foreign, state or local governments, please review FRCP 4 carefully to ensure defendant(s) are properly served.

How should summons be presented?

Once the filing fee has been paid or the court grants your IFP, you may present summons to the clerk for signature and seal, as established by FRCP 4(b). Summons must be presented on the court's form and can be found at the end of this guide or on our website at www.wawd.uscourts.gov/court-forms under "Civil."

Who must be served?

All defendant(s) named in your complaint must be served. Defendants who are not served within the required time limit may be dismissed from your case. The clerk can only issue summons for parties named as defendant(s) on the complaint.

You can ask any defendant that is an individual, corporation, or an association that is subject to service, to waive service by sending a copy of the complaint, a *Notice of Lawsuit and Request for Waiver of Service* (AO Form 398) and a *Waiver of Summons* (AO Form 399), in accordance with FRCP 4(d). For the plaintiff, the benefit of waiving service is not having to pay the cost of serving the summons. A defendant who waives service is allowed extra time – 60 days - to respond to the complaint. However, the United States and some other parties cannot waive service. If the defendant refuses to waive service, then you must serve the documents (see the next section).

Who serves the documents?

You are responsible for arranging to have the summons, complaint, and supporting documents served to the defendant(s) within the timeframe established by FRCP 4(m). Any person over the age of 18 and not a party to the case may serve the required documents. **NOTE:** You may not serve your own documents.

In some cases, the judge may order that service be made by a United States Marshal or someone appointed by the court, as established by FRCP 4(c)(3).

How do you serve The United States, its agencies, corporations, officers, or employees?

FRCP 4(i) explains this process.

1. **When the United States of America is a defendant** (e.g., John Doe V. United States) you may perfect service:
 - By either (a) sending the summons and complaint by registered or certified mail to the attention of the civil process clerk in the United States Attorney's Office in the district where the complaint has been filed, or (b) delivering the summons and complaint to the United States Attorney for the district where the complaint has been filed; and
 - By sending the summons and complaint by registered or

certified mail to the United States Attorney General in Washington D.C.

- If your complaint challenges the validity of an order of an officer or agency not listed as a party to your case, you must also serve the summons and complaint on the officer or agency that issued the order by registered or certified mail.

2. When a federal officer, agency, or corporation is a defendant
(e.g., John Doe v. Commissioner of Social Security or Jane Doe v. Internal Revenue Service), you may perfect service:

- By following the steps above to serve the United States Attorney and Attorney General; and
- By sending the summons and complaint by registered or certified mail to the federal officer, agency, or corporation named as the defendant.

You must perfect service within 90 days from the date the complaint has been filed, or your case may be dismissed. You must also file proof of service for each defendant with the clerk, in accordance with rules 4(l) and (m) of Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

How does the Court know when summons have been served?

Once the defendant(s) have been served, the original proof of service must be filed with the court, as established by FRCP 4(l).

Part Five

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOUR CASE IS FILED?

Every case is unique and may or may not follow the steps outlined below. This information is intended as a general guideline and not as the schedule for your case. You will receive written communication from the court regarding upcoming hearings or deadlines.

Case assignment

After your documents have been submitted, the clerk will randomly assign a case number and judge, based on where the incident took place or where the defendant(s) reside. You cannot request that a specific judge be assigned to your case. Once you have been assigned a case number and judge, the case number must be on every document you file with the court.

If your case has been assigned to a district court judge, he or she may refer your case to a magistrate judge to handle different stages of your case leading up to trial. A magistrate judge may preside over a civil action or proceeding, including a jury or bench trial, pursuant to FRCP 73(a).

If you have questions after your case has been assigned a case number and judge, you may contact the Clerk's Office at the Seattle or Tacoma office (based on case assignment) and ask to speak with a case administrator.

Seattle Clerk's Office: 206-370-8400

Tacoma Clerk's Office: 253-882-3800

Defendants do not file an answer

If a defendant does not file an answer within the timeframe required by law, the court may enter an order of default and default judgment, as established by FRCP 55(a)(b).

Defendants file an answer

If a defendant responds to the complaint by filing an answer or a motion, the case will then proceed to the pretrial stage.

Pretrial process

The judge assigned to your case may schedule a “**pretrial conference**” after discovery has been completed. A pretrial conference is a meeting between the judge and the parties to narrow down the issues and resolve matters necessary to the disposition of the case, as established by LCR 16(a)(1).

Discovery

To prepare a case for trial, the parties will conduct what is called “**discovery**.” The purpose of discovery is to prepare the parties for trial by requiring each party to assemble their evidence and be prepared to call witnesses to testify in court. Each side may file requests or “**motions**” with the court seeking rulings on the discovery of evidence or the procedures to be followed at trial.

Discovery is the pretrial process by which one party acquires potential evidence from the opposing party via written interrogatories, depositions, and demands to produce documents. Discovery documents are rarely, if ever, filed with the court.

As a general rule, a party may not seek discovery from any source before the parties have held a planning conference as required by FRCP 26(f), FRCP 26(d). However, a party may send a letter called a “litigation hold” or also called “preservation letters” or “stop destruction requests”. The letter or communication basically advises the other side of the possibility of future litigation and identifies the relevant documents and electronically stored information which should be preserved.

The following are a few examples of common discovery documents.

- **Deposition**

A “**deposition**” is like an interview where you, the defendant(s) or other witnesses answer questions in person and under oath. A deposition is usually recorded by audio recording, video recording, or by a court reporter, as established by FRCP 30.

You are solely responsible for the payment of fees associated with the services of a court reporter.

- **Interrogatories**

“**Interrogatories**” are written questions that must be answered in writing and under oath, as established by FRCP 33.

- **Requests for Production**

These are written requests for documents and tangible items, like a defective product. The term “**document**” can include all forms of items such as drawings, graphs, charts, photographs, etc., as established by FRCP 34.

- **Requests for admission**

These are written requests asking that you or the defendant(s) admit that certain facts are true or that certain documents are genuine, as established by FRCP 36.

Dispositive motions

During the course of the case, any party may file a “**dispositive motion**,” as established by FRCP 12 and FRCP 56. Dispositive motions are requests asking that the court dismiss one or more of the claims in favor of the moving party or dismiss the case in its entirety.

Trial process

A. Basic courtroom rules

- Gum chewing, eating, drinking, sleeping, or loud talking are not permitted in the courtroom.
- When the judge enters or departs the courtroom, you must stand up.
- Call the judge “Your Honor” and speak loudly and clearly.
- Cameras or other recording devices are not allowed in the courtroom. Cell phones must be completely turned off.

B. Bench trial versus jury trial

The United States court system has two types of trials, bench trials and jury trials.

Bench trial

A bench trial takes place in front of a judge. The judge – after listening to the evidence and legal arguments – will enter a final decision at the end of the case (called a “finding”).

Jury trial

A jury trial takes place before a group of citizens who have been sworn to consider the evidence presented at trial and decide whether the case has merit and, if so, what damages should be awarded.

C. Opening statement

An “**opening statement**” is an opportunity for you to explain the issues in dispute and summarize what you believe will be proven during trial through witness testimony and evidence admitted by the court. The defendant(s) are not required to make an opening statement but may do so at the beginning of the trial or reserve it until after you have finished presenting your case.

D. Evidence presentation

Following opening statements, you – as the plaintiff – will begin presenting evidence to the judge or jury. Evidence can be presented through witness testimony and physical evidence. Strict rules govern the kinds of evidence that may be admitted and is governed by the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (FRCP) and this court’s Local Civil Rules (LCR).

E. Resting your case

When you have finished presenting all the evidence that you intend to offer at trial, you will indicate to the judge that you have “**rested**” your case.

F. Defense and rebuttal

After you have rested your case, the defendant(s) will have an opportunity to call witnesses and offer evidence to the judge or jury. You may then offer evidence in rebuttal to explain or deny the defendant’s evidence.

G. Closing argument

After each side has rested, the next step is the presentation of “**closing argument**”. Closing argument is an opportunity for each party to summarize the evidence presented during the trial before the judge or jury enters a final decision.

H. Jury instructions (if applicable)

At the end of the presentation of evidence and after closing arguments, the judge will read the jury a set of legal standards, called “**jury instructions**.” These instructions are given to assist the jury in deciding whether the defendant should be held accountable for the plaintiffs’ alleged harm.

I. Verdict

If the case was tried before a jury

Once a decision has been reached by the jury, the verdict will be announced in open court with all parties present.

If the case was tried before the court (bench trial)

The judge may enter a finding immediately or – which is more common – inform the parties that additional time is needed to consider the evidence presented at trial. Once a decision has been made, the court will enter a written finding and notify the parties.

Judgment

If you prevail at trial or win the case by default, the judge will direct the clerk to prepare a judgment indicating the amount of damages you have been awarded. The judgment will include the exact amount – in dollars and cents – and which defendant owes you how much money. The clerk will then prepare and sign a judgment pursuant to the court's order.

If you lose at trial or by summary judgment, the judge will direct the clerk to prepare a judgment stating that the defendant does not owe you damages. The defendant may also request the judge order you to pay costs and attorney fees associated with defending the case. The clerk will then prepare and sign a judgment pursuant to the court's order.

Notice of Appeal

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the trial, you may file an **"Appeal,"** which is an application to a higher court to reverse the decision made by a judge or jury in a lower court.

Appeals from this court are decided by the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, commonly referred to as the "Ninth Circuit." Time limits associated with filing an appeal can be found in the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure, Rule 4.

The fee to file an appeal is \$505.00 unless the judge granted your IFP in this court. However, it is ultimately the decision of the Ninth Circuit whether you will need to pay the filing fee in their court. If you paid the filing fee for your case in this court but you cannot afford to pay the appeal fee, you may file an IFP with your appeal.

To file an appeal, you must submit a **"Notice of Civil Appeal"** which can be found on our website at www.wawd.uscourts.gov/court-forms under "Civil."

Information about the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals can be found on their website at www.ca9.uscourts.gov or by phone at (415) 355-8000.

Part Six

FILING DOCUMENTS AFTER YOUR CASE IS OPEN

Once your case has been filed, you will need to familiarize yourself with the rules regarding how documents are to be submitted to this court.

The judge assigned to your case may have specific requirements for how they want documents to be presented. The web page for each judge – along with links to the Local Civil Rules ([LCR](#)) and Federal Rules of Civil Procedure ([FRCP](#)) – can be found on our website at www.wawd.uscourts.gov/representing-yourself-pro-se.

Once your case has been opened, documents must be filed in paper form or electronically, if registered. In addition, you must serve the defendant(s) with a copy of all documents you file, as established by [FRCP 5](#) and [LCR 5](#).

The clerk can assist you to a certain extent, but as stated throughout this manual, we are not allowed to provide legal advice. If you have questions about whether you should do something in your case, we suggest you consult with an attorney.

Format of documents

Documents must be submitted on 8½" x 11" white paper, bear 25-line numbers in the left margin, include the case caption, case number and typed or neatly written. If you submit pleadings in writing, use black or blue ink (no pencils) and write legibly on one side of the paper only. All documents must be signed and dated with an original signature and include your name, address and phone number.

Motions

To request that the court review and make a decision on a particular issue in your case, you can file a **"Motion."**

Motions must be filed in paper or electronically – if registered – and served on all parties. For most motions, the opposing party can file a response and the party who filed the motion can then file a reply.

All motions must include a **"Noting Date"**. This is the date the motion will be ready for the judge's review. The noting date must appear on the face of the motion directly under the document title, as established by LCR 7.

Noting dates

A. Same day motions

The following motions may be noted for the **same day** they are filed. A response or reply is not permitted unless ordered by the court.

- Stipulations and agreed motions, as established by LCR 10(g).
- Motions to file over-length motions or briefs, as established by LCR 7(f).
- Motions for reconsideration, as established by LCR 7(h).
- Joint submissions pursuant to the optional procedure, as established by LCR 37(a)(2).
- Motions to appoint a mediator, as established by LCR 39.1(c)(3).
- Motions for default, as established by LCR 55(a).
- Requests or motions to enter default judgment when the opposing party has not appeared, as established by LCR 55(b)(1).
- Ex parte motions, as established by LCR 55(b)(2).
- Motions for a temporary restraining order (TRO), as established by LCR 65.

B. 14-day motions

The following types of motions cannot be noted earlier than 14 calendar days after they are filed. Unless otherwise ordered by the judge, the response is due no later than 9 days after the filing of the motion; the reply is due by the noting date.

- Motions for relief from a deadline, as established by LCR 7(d).
- Motions for protective orders, as established by LCR 7(d).
- Motions to seal, as established by CR 5(g).

C. 21-day motions

Non-dispositive motions, except those specifically listed in other parts of LCR 7(d), cannot be noted any earlier than 21 calendar days after they are filed. The response is due by 15 days after the filing date and the reply is due by the noting date, unless otherwise ordered by the judge.

Examples of non-dispositive motions include, but are not limited to, motions to amend pleadings, motions to remand and motions to compel discovery.

D. 28-day motions

The following types of motions cannot be noted any earlier than 28 calendar days after they are filed. The response is due by 21 days after the date of filing and the reply is due by the noting date, unless otherwise ordered by the judge.

- Motions to dismiss, as established by LCR 7(d)(3).
- Motions for preliminary injunction, as established by LCR 7(d)(3).
- Motions for class certification, as established by LCR 7(d)(3).
- Motions changing the forum through remand, transfer or to compel arbitration, as established by LCR 7(d)(3).

E. Motions in limine

“Motions in limine” are motions filed by a party asking the judge for an order or ruling limiting or preventing certain evidence from being presented by the other side at the trial, as established by LCR 7(d)(4).

Motions in limine cannot be noted any earlier than 21 calendar days after filing but no later than 6 days before the pretrial conference, unless otherwise ordered by the judge.

After a party files a motion in limine, the response is due by the Monday before the noting date. A reply is not permitted unless ordered by the judge.

Sealed documents

If you are filing a document that you want sealed from public view, you must first seek permission from the judge. The request must be submitted in the form of a "**Motion to Seal**" and include a proposed order and declaration or affidavit supporting your motion.

Sealed documents **cannot** be electronically filed and must be submitted in person or through the mail, as established by LCR 5(g)(9).

The rule regarding the presentation of sealed documents are established by LCR 5(g)(3). The document(s) must be presented in a sealed envelope with the caption, case number and phrase, "**FILED UNDER SEAL**" on the front of the envelope. The envelope must be delivered *in person* to the Clerk's Office.

If the judge grants your motion to seal or permits a document to remain under seal, the document will remain sealed until further order of the court, as established by LCR 5(g)(7).

If the judge denies your motion to seal, the clerk will unseal the document. In addition, the party who is relying on the sealed document may also request that the court withdraw the document from the record rather than unseal it, as established by LCR 5(g)(6).

Once a document is filed under seal, **no one, including the party who filed the document(s), can access, retrieve, review, or print the document unless a motion to unseal is granted by the judge**, as established by LCR 5(g)(8).

Oral argument

To request oral argument on a motion, "**Oral Argument Requested**" must be written under the case number and document title. If the request for oral argument is granted, the parties will be contacted as to the date and time of argument, as established by LCR 7.

If You Move During Your Case- Change of Contact Information

If your address, phone number or email address (if registered for electronic filing) changes, you must file a written notice within 10 (ten) days of the change, as established by LCR 10(f). All subsequent pleadings, motions, or other filings must reflect the new contact information.

Part Seven

RESOURCES THAT MAY HELP YOU

If you cannot afford to hire an attorney, there are several agencies offer legal services. The following list is provided as a courtesy and by no means encompasses all legal resources available in the State of Washington.

Washington State Legal Resources

Clark County Volunteer Lawyers Program
(360) 695-5313
www.ccvlp.org

Clallam – Jefferson County Pro Bono Lawyers
(888) 201-1014
www.cjcpbl.org

Columbia Legal Services
(800) 542-0794
www.columbialegal.org

Cowlitz – Wahkiakum Legal Aid
(360) 425-2579
www.cwlap.org

Eastside Legal Assistance Program
(425) 747-7274
www.elap.org

King County Neighborhood Legal Clinics
(206) 267-7070
www.kcba.org/For-the-Public/Free-Legal-Assistance

Island County Volunteer Lawyer Program
(888) 201-1014
www.islandcountylegal.org

Kitsap County Legal Services
(360) 479-6125
www.kitsaplegalservices.org

Lewis County Legal Aid
(360) 748-0430

Northwest Immigrant Rights Project
(206) 587-4009
www.nwirp.org

Northwest Justice Project
(888) 201-1014
www.nwjustice.org

Snohomish County Legal Services
(425) 258-9283
www.snocolegal.org

Tacoma Pro Bono Community Lawyers
(253) 572-5134
www.tacomaprobono.org

Tacoma-Pierce County Lawyer Referral Service
(253) 383-3432
www.tpcba.com/public/lawyer-referral-service

Thurston County Volunteer Legal Services
(360) 705-8194
www.tcvls.org

Washington State Bar Association
(206) 443-9722 • (800) 945-9722
www.wsba.org/resources-and-services/find-legal-help

Whatcom County LAW Advocates
(360) 671-6079 Ext 15
www.lawadvocates.org

Federal Civil Rights Legal Clinic

The Federal Bar Association for the Western District of Washington offers free, limited legal advice and referrals to King and Pierce County residents. The Clinic focuses on Washington State residents who are contemplating filing or have already filed legal actions in the Western District of Washington and are encountering challenges accessing the legal system. Volunteer attorneys cannot provide legal representation but can refer you to other community resources. The Clinic is accessible regardless of one's disability or fluency in English.

Please note that all clinic sessions are by appointment only.

Seattle Appointments

To make an appointment, call 206.267.7070 and press "1" to leave a message. You may also submit an online form at www.kcba.org/nlc

Appointments are scheduled four Thursdays per month from 12:00pm – 2:00pm

Tacoma Appointments

To make an appointment, call 253.368.6690. Phone lines are open Monday through Thursday from 10:00am to 3:00pm

Appointments are scheduled the first Thursday of every month from 12:00pm to 2:00pm

NOTE: The Clerk's Office is not associated with the legal clinic and cannot assist with making appointments or answering questions about their services. Flyers for both locations can be found at the end of this packet or on our website at www.wawd.uscourts.gov/representing-yourself-pro-se.