

WHAT TO DO ON YOUR LANDLORD TENANT COURT DATE

If your landlord has filed an eviction case against you in D.C., your case will be heard in the Landlord and Tenant Branch of D.C. Superior Court. Here are tips on what you should do **on your first court date** (the “initial hearing”):

- 1) **Arrive to court (Room 109 at 510 4th Street NW) at 9:00am sharp. Say your name when you hear the courtroom clerk say your case.** If you are late or if you do not show up, then you may automatically lose your eviction case. If you arrive late, then line up by the windows to tell the courtroom clerk that you are present. The clerk will ask you to wait in the courtroom so that your case can be called before the judge. If your case is called in front of the judge before you have had a chance to go talk to a lawyer at the Landlord Tenant Resource Center, then tell the judge that you want to talk to the Resource Center about your rights and defenses first.
- 2) **After the courtroom clerk marks you as present, go immediately to the Landlord Tenant Resource Center in Room 208.** Sign in on the clipboard. The Resource Center may be able to get you a temporary lawyer that can stand up with you in court that same day. You may meet with a lawyer quickly, but sometimes you may have to wait an hour or longer to meet with a lawyer. It is important to wait so that an expert on your side can discuss your options with you.

The Resource Center will share the names on the clipboard with the courtroom clerk. The courtroom clerk should not call your case before the judge while you are waiting to speak with an attorney or while you are speaking with an attorney.

- 3) **On your first court date, you can ask for a “2 week continuance, all rights reserved.”** It is important that you say “all rights reserved.” Explain to the judge that you have applied for a lawyer. You want to talk to a lawyer about your rights and defenses.
- 4) **Avoid talking to the landlord’s lawyer by yourself.** The landlord’s lawyer and the landlord are trying to get you evicted. The landlord’s lawyer has only the landlord’s interests in mind, not yours. You can appear in front of the judge without having to talk to the landlord’s lawyer first, even if the court clerk tells you that you have to. It is best to talk to the Resource Center.
- 5) **Be prepared for a long day in court.** Judges, lawyers, landlords, and tenants often have to be in court all day, sometimes up to or even after 5pm.