

## **The Early Settlement Mediation Program is Available to Resolve Landlord-Tenant Disputes**

Due to the coronavirus, the Oklahoma Supreme Court has ordered that the courts remain closed until May 15, 2020. This means that no court hearings will be held and no eviction orders will be issued until after the courts reopen.

### **Can I still be evicted?**

The Court Clerk is still accepting petitions for eviction. This means you may receive court paperwork that the eviction process has started. If you received a court summons you must go to court at the date and time listed in the Summons. But first, you should call the Court Clerk to verify your court date since many court dates are being temporarily postponed.

If you receive court paperwork, that this does not mean you need to move. You will be given an opportunity to tell your side of the story to a judge before an eviction order is granted, unless you fail to go to court as instructed. No one can be ordered to leave their home until after their court date. The landlord cannot lock you out of your home without a court order, and the landlord cannot terminate your utilities under any circumstances.

### **When can I request mediation with my landlord?**

For tenants experiencing difficulty paying rent due to financial hardship or other disagreements with their landlords, the Early Settlement Mediation Program is available. The Early Settlement Mediation Program provides mediation services to resolve disagreements between tenants and landlord, including non-payment of rent, lease violations, maintenance problems, and other disputes

### **What is mediation?**

A mediation is a meeting with a neutral, third party to help the tenant and landlord resolve their disagreement and come to a agreement that will benefit both of them.

### **What is the Early Settlement Mediation Program?**

The Early Settlement Mediation Program is a free mediation program sponsored by Tulsa County and the Oklahoma Supreme Court. The mediators are professionally trained and certified by the Oklahoma Supreme Court.

You can apply for services from the Early Settlement Mediation Program. There is no cost for either the application or the mediation.

You can apply by calling 918-596-7786 or by completing the intake form and emailing it to [susan.johnson@tulsacounty.org](mailto:susan.johnson@tulsacounty.org). The intake form is available online at: <https://bit.ly/3bGbMcf>.

### **Additional Resources for Rental Assistance:**

The coronavirus has caused many tenants to experience serious financial hardship, such as job loss. If you needs rental assistance, the following services are available:

- 211: Through 211, the Community Service Council helps connect those in need with housing resources. Call 211 or apply online at <https://csctulsa.org/housing-assistance/>.
- Helping Hands Ministry: Provides short-term assistance to Tulsans in need. Call 918-584-6923.
- Restore Hope: Provides rent assistance for individuals who have a recent, sudden loss of income. Call 918-878-7999 or apply online at <https://csctulsa.org/housing-assistance/>.
- Tulsa CARES: Provides rental assistance for people with HIV/AIDS. Call 918-834-4194.

### **Additional Resources for Tenants:**

During this time, you may have questions about your rights and obligations as a tenant. If you need additional advice, the following services are available:

- 211: Through 211, the Community Service Council helps connect those in need with the resources that can assist them. Call 211 or apply online at <http://csctulsa.org>.
- Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma: Provides legal assistance to low-income people in Oklahoma. Call 888-534-5243 or 918-428-4357. Or visit <http://www.legalaidok.org>.
- Oklahoma Indian Legal Services: Provides legal assistance to low-income members of a federally recognized tribe. Call 800-658-1497, extension 118 or apply online at <http://ww.oilsonline.org>.
- OKLegalConnect.org: Helps find legal help for eligible low-income people with legal problems in Oklahoma. Visit <http://www.oklegalconnect.org>.
- Tulsa County Bar Association Lawyer Referral Program: Provides a 30-minute legal consultation on your rights and obligations for a fee of \$25.00. Call 918-587-6014 or apply online at <http://www.tulsabar.com>.