



Protective Orders

Paying Rent to the Court Registry

This information sheet describes protective orders in Landlord and Tenant Court cases. A tenant or landlord who would like help understanding, requesting, or changing a protective order can visit the Landlord Tenant Resource Center or talk to another lawyer. There is information at the end of this sheet on where to find legal help.

■ **What is a protective order?** A *protective order* is when a judge tells a tenant to pay money to the court instead of paying rent directly to the landlord. This usually happens when a tenant asks for a trial. The reason for a protective order is to make sure the tenant keeps paying rent while the case is ongoing. If a case is about something other than nonpayment of rent, a protective order is usually not entered. A landlord can only ask the judge to require the tenant to pay the court what becomes due after the case has been started. When a judge enters a protective order, he or she will tell the tenant when the payment has to be made to the court.

■ **How can a protective order be entered?** The landlord or tenant can ask the judge for a protective order. A written request is usually not required if both the landlord and tenant are in court. If the landlord and tenant do not agree on the amount of the protective order, the judge will allow each side to make arguments and present evidence on what the amount should be. The clerk will give the tenant a Protective Order Information Sheet when the protective order is entered.

■ **If a protective order is entered, how does the tenant pay the court?**

- Payments may be made in person at the Landlord and Tenant Clerk's Office during the following times:

Monday–Friday	8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Wednesday	6:30 to 8 p.m.
Saturday	9 a.m. to noon
- Tenants may pay by any combination of cash, money order, certified check, or cashier's check made out to **“Clerk, D.C. Superior Court.”** The court cannot accept personal checks.
- A protective order payment may not be mailed to the Clerk's Office.

■ **What if a tenant is going to be late with a payment to the court?** If a tenant cannot make the payment in full or on time, the tenant may file a motion asking the judge for more time to make the payment. The Clerk's Office will accept a late or partial payment, but the landlord may ask the judge to take action against the tenant for not paying in full or on time.

■ **What happens when a tenant misses a protective order payment?** If a tenant fails to pay in full or on time, the landlord can ask a judge to throw out the tenant's case and enter a *judgment for possession* or take other action against the tenant. A judgment for possession allows the landlord to evict the tenant and take back the house or apartment. The landlord can only ask the judge to do this if he or she files a written motion with the court. The landlord is required to give the tenant a copy of the motion. The tenant may come to court and make arguments to show why the landlord's request should not be granted.

■ **Will the tenant be required to pay the full rent even if there are housing code violations?** If there are repairs needed in the house or apartment, the tenant can ask the judge to make the protective order payment less than the full rent. The judge will have a *Bell hearing* where the tenant can tell the judge about the problems and show pictures, inspection reports, or any other evidence.

■ **When will money paid to the court be released?** The money is usually released by the judge when the case is over. A landlord can ask for some or all of the money to be released sooner if he or she files a written motion. The landlord must give the judge a reason he or she needs the money before the case is over.

Help Yourself Protective Orders

Finding Legal Help

Visit www.LawHelp.org/DC for more information, including how to contact free legal services providers, or visit the Landlord Tenant Resource Center.

Landlord Tenant Resource Center
Superior Court of the District of Columbia
510 4th Street NW
Building B, Room 115
Washington, DC 20001

Telephone: 202-508-1710

Open 9:15 a.m. to noon, Monday through Friday,
except legal holidays

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