

## **CASE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE HOUSING CONDITIONS CIVIL CALENDAR**

### **I. Introduction**

The Housing Conditions Civil Calendar is a problem-solving court. Its goal is to efficiently and quickly achieve compliance with the District of Columbia Housing Code Regulations (14 D.C.M.R. §§ 500 – 900, 1200) and Property Maintenance Code (D.C.M.R. Title 12G). The Superior Court has worked closely with stakeholders to develop and improve this Calendar in order to expedite actions for enforcement of housing code regulations. A critical component of the Calendar is the housing inspector assigned by the D.C. Department of Buildings.

### **II. Procedures**

The Housing Conditions Civil Calendar is governed by the terms of these practices and procedures and the Superior Court Rules of Civil Procedure.

### **III. Complaint**

Litigants who want their complaint to be heard on the Housing Conditions Civil Calendar are required to use Form CA 116 – Verified Complaint to Enforce Housing Code Regulations. The litigant must complete **both** pages of the Complaint. A litigant may supplement the Complaint with additional documents, but those documents will not be accepted as a substitute for Form CA 116, which must be completed in **every** case. A copy of the Complaint must be served on each defendant as described below.

Form CA 116 is available at the Civil Actions Branch Clerk's Office, Moultrie Building, 500 Indiana Avenue, NW, Room 5000. The Complaint is also available online at [https://www.dccourts.gov/sites/default/files/HCC\\_HousingCodeComplaint.pdf](https://www.dccourts.gov/sites/default/files/HCC_HousingCodeComplaint.pdf)

### **IV. Summons**

In addition to completing and serving Form CA 116, litigants who wish to file a complaint on the Housing Conditions Civil Calendar are required to complete and serve the Summons to Appear in Court and Notice of Hearing. A copy of the Summons, Notice of Hearing, and Form CA 116 must be served on each defendant. Litigants will receive the date of the initial hearing at the time of filing the Summons with the Civil Actions Branch Clerk's Office.

The Summons to Appear in Court and Notice of Hearing is available at the Civil Actions Branch Clerk's Office, Moultrie Building, 500 Indiana Avenue, NW, Room 5000. The Summons is also available online at [https://www.dccourts.gov/sites/default/files/pdf-forms/HCC\\_Summons.pdf](https://www.dccourts.gov/sites/default/files/pdf-forms/HCC_Summons.pdf)

## **V. Filing and Fees**

A completed Form CA 116 – Verified Complaint to Enforce Housing Code Regulations and Summons to Appear in Court and Notice of Hearing must be filed in person at the Civil Actions Branch Clerk's Office, Moultrie Building, 500 Indiana Avenue, NW, Room 5000, or may be electronically filed through the Court's eFiling system. Instructions for electronic filing are available at <https://www.dccourts.gov/superior-court/e-filing>.

The filing fee for the Complaint and Summons is \$15.00. All other fees shall be in accordance with the schedule set out in Rule 202 of the Superior Court Rules of Civil Procedure.

Any party may file an Application to Waive Court Costs and Fees. The application is available at the Civil Actions Branch Clerk's Office, Moultrie Building, 500 Indiana Avenue, NW, Room 5000. The application is also available online at [https://www.dccourts.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/DCSC\\_Courtwide\\_Fee\\_Waiver%20Application.pdf](https://www.dccourts.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/DCSC_Courtwide_Fee_Waiver%20Application.pdf).

## **VI. Service of Process**

The plaintiff must serve a copy of the Complaint, Summons, and Initial Instructions and Notice of Hearing on each defendant pursuant to Rule 4(c) – (j) of the Superior Court Rules of Civil Procedure.

The plaintiff must file with the Civil Actions Branch Clerk's Office either an acknowledgment of service of process or proof of service of process pursuant to Rule 4(l) of the Superior Court Rules of Civil Procedure at least three (3) calendar days before the initial hearing date, unless the Court exercises its discretion to extend this deadline.

The time limit for service of process in Rule 4(m) of the Superior Court Rules of Civil Procedure applies to cases on the Housing Conditions Civil Calendar. The Court has discretion to extend the time for service and schedule a new initial hearing.

Instructions for service are available online at [https://www.dccourts.gov/sites/default/files/HCC\\_InstructionSheetForServiceOfHousingCodeComplaintAndSummons.pdf](https://www.dccourts.gov/sites/default/files/HCC_InstructionSheetForServiceOfHousingCodeComplaintAndSummons.pdf)

## **VII. Timing of Events**

The clerk's office will schedule an initial hearing on the Housing Conditions Civil Calendar on the next available date no sooner than 21 days after the date of filing. Most hearings on the Housing Conditions Calendar are held remotely unless a judge directs an in-person appearance.

Due to the expedited nature of the Housing Conditions Civil Calendar, the plaintiff must serve the Complaint and Summons at least eight (8) calendar days before the date of the initial hearing.

As soon as proper service is established, the Court ordinarily schedules a prompt inspection by the Department of Buildings housing inspector. The Court may schedule a re-inspection if warranted. The reports of the housing inspector generally provide the basis for the Court's assessment of the existence and abatement of housing code violations.

## **VIII. Answers and Motions**

a. *Written Answer.* A defendant to a Complaint filed on the Housing Conditions Civil Calendar is not required to file a written answer.

If a defendant wishes to file an answer, the defendant may file an original written answer within twenty-one (21) days after service of the Summons and Complaint, or within such additional time as the Court may allow. The written answer must be filed in person at the Civil Actions Branch Clerk's Office, Moultrie Building, 500 Indiana Avenue, NW, Room 5000, or may be electronically filed through the Court's eFiling system. Instructions for electronic filing are available at <https://www.dccourts.gov/superior-court/e-filing>. A copy of the answer must be mailed to the plaintiff, or if the plaintiff is represented by an attorney, to the plaintiff's attorney.

A form answer is available at the Civil Actions Branch Clerk's Office, Moultrie Building, 500 Indiana Avenue, NW, Room 5000, or online at <https://www.dccourts.gov/sites/default/files/2020-08/Pro-Se-Answer-Form-Civil-08-03-2020.pdf>.

b. *Motions.* Consistent with its problem-solving role, the Court minimizes motions practice to expedite resolution of housing code violations.

c. *Motions for Temporary Restraining Order or Preliminary Injunction.* If the alleged conditions in the rental unit constitute an emergency and pose an immediate threat to the health and safety of the occupants of the unit, a litigant may file a motion for temporary restraining order and/or a motion for a preliminary injunction. The Court generally addresses more urgent housing

code violations that arise after a complaint is filed not through motions but through the scheduling of inspections and status hearings.

## **IX. Calendar Management**

The Housing Conditions Civil Calendar was created to allow expeditious consideration of tenant requests to remedy violations of the housing and property maintenance codes. Although the Court has the same jurisdiction over cases on the Housing Conditions Civil Calendar as over cases on other calendars in the Civil Actions Branch, the Court imposes several limits on cases on the Housing Conditions Civil Calendar in order to allow for timely resolution of such requests and to keep the Calendar within manageable limits consistent with resource constraints. In addition, the judge presiding over the Calendar has discretion to manage the Calendar consistent with its overriding purpose of efficiently and quickly securing compliance with housing and property maintenance code regulations.

The type of complaint suitable for the Housing Conditions Civil Calendar is limited in nature. The Calendar's sole focus is to achieve compliance with the housing and property maintenance code regulations. Litigants seeking relief other than abatement of violations, including monetary relief for the condition of the property, personal injury, damage to personal property, or return of a security deposit, must pursue such relief in the appropriate Branch of the Civil Division. The Calendar can and does impose sanctions, such as rent abatement, if necessary to achieve compliance with the housing and property maintenance code regulations.

The Calendar is limited to complaints by tenants living in rental units. Cases brought by other types of occupants, including residents with ownership interests in condominium or cooperative units, foreclosed homeowners, commercial tenants, and terminated employees of building owners, are addressed on other calendars in the Civil Actions Branch.

In addition, the Court requires tenants to give landlords reasonable notice of violations and a reasonable opportunity to correct them, including providing access to the rental property. The Court ordinarily addresses housing code violations that are directly related to any housing code violations identified in the original inspection, such as violations that result from or are revealed by attempted repairs of earlier violations. The Court ordinarily does not address housing code violations that arose either after the case began or after the first inspection was conducted.

As a problem-solving court, the Court does not conduct trials or, except in rare circumstances, evidentiary hearings. If a landlord has filed in the Landlord and Tenant Branch a complaint for possession based on nonpayment of rent *before* the tenant files a complaint

on the Housing Conditions Civil Calendar, issues relating to compliance with housing code regulations will be addressed in the Landlord and Tenant Branch, not on the Housing Conditions Civil Calendar. However, if the landlord files a complaint for possession in the Landlord and Tenant Branch *after* the tenant has filed the complaint on the Housing Conditions Civil Calendar, the case on the Housing Conditions Civil Calendar will ordinarily proceed. A judge presiding over the Housing Conditions Civil Calendar has discretion to dismiss such a case without prejudice if (a) issues arise that cannot be addressed on the Calendar without adversely affecting the Court's ability to provide efficient and expedited enforcement of housing code regulations in other cases and (b) the Landlord and Tenant Branch can provide relief efficiently and expeditiously.

If issues arise that cannot be addressed on the Housing Conditions Civil Calendar without adversely affecting the Court's ability to provide efficient and expedited enforcement of housing code regulations, the Court may certify the case to a randomly-assigned Civil 2 Calendar. Alternatively, should a judicial officer determine that transfer to a Civil 2 Calendar would undermine judicial economy or efficiency and find that dismissal of the housing conditions case without prejudice would not pose adverse consequences for any litigant, the Court may dismiss the case without prejudice so that the plaintiff can file a new case on a Civil 2 Calendar. If a case is certified to a Civil 2 calendar, a status hearing will be scheduled no more than four weeks from the date of the certification.

If a case is assigned to a Magistrate Judge and a motion to hold a party in contempt of court and/or to impose sanctions for contempt needs to be litigated, the motion shall be transferred to the Presiding Judge of the Civil Division or their designee. All aspects of the case other than the resolution of the contempt motion will remain on the Housing Conditions Civil Calendar.