

# Practical tips for going to court

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You may need some things to be able to take part in your court case. Having access to these things may increase your chances of getting a good result in your case. This is true whether you have a lawyer or not.

## **When will I need identification and how can I get it if I don't have it?**

You may need identification if a document needs to be **notarized** (when another person checks to make sure you are who you say you are before you sign a document). A driver's license or a state ID card will work.

There is a fee for either, but if you get public assistance, such as TANF or food stamps, you might be eligible for an ID card at a reduced cost. Ask your DSHS caseworker to fill out form 16-029 "Request for Identocard."

## **How can I get mail from the court if I don't have a permanent address?**

If you live in Seattle, you can have your mail sent to you at the Compass Center Client Services Center (<https://www.compasshousingalliance.org/emergency-programs/client-services-office/>) at Compass Housing. If you live in a more rural community, you might be eligible to get a post office box at no charge.

If you have no other option, you may have your mail delivered "general delivery." If you do this, you'll need to check the post office often.

### **Can I get phone service so I can stay in touch with the court?**

You can get discounted phone service through the [Lifeline Program](https://www.lifelinesupport.org/) (<https://www.lifelinesupport.org/>). You might be eligible if you're at or below **135% of the federal poverty guideline** or if you get food stamps, Apple Health, or certain other federal benefits. You can apply the discount to a landline or a cell phone.

To qualify for some benefits, you might need a household income lower than a certain percentage of the **Federal Poverty Guidelines**. These guidelines depend on how much money your household makes before taxes, and how many people live in your house.

### **Can I get a computer or tablet so I can attend court hearings electronically?**

In the Seattle area, [InterConnection](https://interconnection.org/) (<https://interconnection.org/>) offers free or low-cost computers or devices to people with low incomes. If you just need a computer for a court hearing, many local nonprofits and libraries will let you borrow one for a short period of time.

If you only need the internet occasionally, many libraries check out "hot spots" that give you temporary internet access for free.

### **What if I need to scan things to give to the court?**

If you only need to scan a few sheets, and you have a smartphone, it's cheapest and easiest to use a free app to do it. For bigger projects, your local public library (<https://librarytechnology.org/libraries/public.pl?State=Washington>) or law library (<https://wacll.weebly.com/directory.html>) may have a copier that will allow bulk scanning for free.

### **How can I print court forms if I don't have my own printer?**

If you need a standard court form, some courts offer blank copies of the forms, so you won't need to print it. If yours doesn't, check with your local public library (<https://librarytechnology.org/libraries/public.pl?State=Washington>). Many offer free printing, but the systems differ between libraries.

If these options aren't available, check with a social service provider. Sometimes they will print things for court, even if they wouldn't normally print things for you.

### **Is there childcare at the courthouse?**

The courts in King County (Kent) (<https://kingcounty.gov/courts/superior-court/locations/mrjc/childcare.aspx>) and Spokane County (<https://www.spokanecounty.org/471/Childrens-Waiting-Room>) have on-site childcare. You should check in ahead of time to make sure they have space. Daycare isn't available at the other courthouses in Washington, so you should try to arrange for childcare ahead of time. If you must bring your school-aged children with you, make sure to call their school and excuse them, so you don't get a call later about their absence.

### **How should I get to court?**

It's good to have a plan for how to get to court way ahead of time. No matter if you're taking the bus, driving a car, or getting a ride, try to make sure you have another option, in case something goes wrong. Usually courthouses have parking available, but there may be an extra cost or time limits.

### **How should I dress for court?**

Many courts have dress codes. A judge might be more likely to listen to what you say if you follow the dress code.

If you don't have a suit, try to avoid sleeveless shirts, clothes with rips or stains, clothes with words or pictures that people could think are vulgar or offensive, and flip-flops. The YWCA in some counties provides appropriate clothing for women who need to go to court.

### **How can I make online payments if the court orders me to?**

There are some costs related to getting things done in your court case that may require an online payment. If you don't have a credit card, you can buy a prepaid debit card (usually available at grocery stores) for the amount you'll need to make that payment.

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