



A Division of the New York Legal Assistance Group

LegalHealth

Professional Partnership to Promote Well Being[®]

This is general information, not legal advice. Patients should consult an attorney for specific guidance.

YOUR PATIENT MAY HAVE THE RIGHT TO A FREE ATTORNEY IN HOUSING COURT

Tenants facing eviction in New York City have the right to go to court before a landlord can evict him/her. Thanks to NYC's Universal Access law passed in 2017, having representation in housing court has become easier. While the program is still being rolled out, Universal Access guarantees low-income tenants in certain NYC zip codes a free attorney to represent them in eviction cases. Read on for some answers to frequently asked questions your patients may have:

- **Who qualifies for a free attorney in housing court through Universal Access?**

- Tenants under 200% of the federal poverty guidelines (approximately \$50,000 for a family of 4) qualify for a free attorney in the following zip codes:

Bronx: 10457, 10467, 10468, 10462

Brooklyn: 11216, 11221, 11225, 11226

Manhattan: 10026, 10027, 10025, 10031

Queens: 11433, 11434, 11373, 11385

Staten Island: 10302, 10303, 10314, 10310

- Visit <https://www.evictionfreenyc.org> for up-to-date zip code lists.

- **What types of cases does Universal Access Apply?**

- Non-payment of rent
- Holdover Petitions
- NYCHA terminations in limited circumstances

- **How can a tenant obtain a free attorney through Universal Access?**

- At the first court appearance the tenant should speak to the court attorney in the court room for assistance in obtaining a free attorney through Universal Access. The court attorney will refer the tenant to legal services providers for screening for legal representation.
- If the judge calls the case before the tenant can speak to the provider on duty, then the tenant should go in front of the judge and simply say "I would like to ask for an adjournment and a referral to a free attorney."
- Tenants should NOT sign anything before obtaining an attorney!

- **What if my patient does not qualify for Universal Access?**

- If a tenant is not income-eligible or lives outside the Universal Access zip codes, s/he still has the right to a one-time legal consultation or advice session regarding their case.

More questions? Refer patients for an appointment with a LegalHealth Attorney to discuss their case.

REMINDER:

When served a Nonpayment Petition, the tenant must file an Answer immediately to get the first court date.

When served a Holdover Petition, the court date will be stated on the petition.