

1 VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY — CHAPTER

2 *An Act to require the Forms and Efiling Subcommittee of the Committee on Self-Represented Litigants of*
3 *the Supreme Court of Virginia's Access to Justice Commission to develop plain English instructions*
4 *for interpretation of the Summons for Unlawful Detainer form.*

5 [H 1996]

6 Approved

7 **Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

8 1. § 1. *The Forms and Efiling Subcommittee of the Committee on Self-Represented Litigants of the*
9 *Supreme Court of Virginia's Access to Justice Commission shall develop plain English instructions that*
10 *explain to defendants how to interpret Form DC-421 (Summons for Unlawful Detainer/Civil Claim for*
11 *Eviction). Subject to the approval of the Supreme Court of Virginia, such instructions shall be posted by*
12 *the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia on the Virginia Courts website*
13 *and made available to the public at the clerks' offices of the local general district courts and may be*
14 *attached to the Summons for Unlawful Detainer served upon defendants at the direction of the chief*
15 *judge of the general district court. Such instructions shall (i) be printed in no less than 14 point type;*
16 *(ii) be understandable to persons whose literacy level matches the Virginia literacy level for fourth*
17 *grade; (iii) explain that failure to appear in court on the hearing date may result in eviction from the*
18 *defendant's household; and (iv) provide the statewide Legal Aid and Virginia Eviction Reduction Pilot*
19 *program websites and, if applicable, telephone numbers, directing defendants to contact those programs*
20 *for more information and assistance. Such instructions may be translated by the local general district*
21 *courts into languages other than English as necessary. For purposes of this act, "plain English" means*
22 *written in nontechnical, readily understandable language using words of common everyday usage and*
23 *avoiding legal terms and phrases or other terms and words of art whose usage or special meaning*
24 *primarily is limited to a particular field or profession.*

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