

**Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma, Inc
2021 Budget Proposal Summary**

| | 2020 | 2021 Proposed |
|--|----------------|--------------------------|
| Revenue | | |
| 2020 LSC Grant Carryover (Basic Field Only) | | 1,600,000 |
| Unrestricted Donations | 500,000 | 500,000 |
| Sarkeys Foundation | 20,000 | - |
| Medical Legal Partnership OU Tulsa | 84,749 | 84,749 |
| MLP - Okla City County Health Dept | 50,000 | 50,000 |
| Oklahoma Bar Foundation (OBF) Foreclosure/Other Grants | 130,000 | 135,000 |
| Zarrow, Anne and Henry Foundation | 85,000 | 85,000 |
| Inasmuch Foundation | 80,000 | 90,000 |
| ONEOK Foundation | 10,000 | 10,000 |
| Bernsen Foundation | 15,000 | 15,000 |
| John Steel Zink Foundation | 15,000 | 15,000 |
| Mervin Bovaird Foundation | 15,000 | 15,000 |
| George Kaiser Family Foundation | 180,000 | 180,000 |
| Gelvin Foundation | 4,000 | - |
| Zarrow, Maxine and Jack Foundation | 10,000 | 10,000 |
| Gallogly Foundation | 27,500 | - |
| Conoco Phillips | 2,500 | 2,500 |
| Sharna & Irvin Frank Foundation | 10,000 | 10,000 |
| Schusterman Foundation/Tulsa Court Parent Representation | - | 778,461 |
| Flint Foundation | 40,000 | - |
| Oklahoma Bar Foundation (OBF) - IOLTA | 85,000 | 85,000 |
| Mercy Hlth-Ardmore | 50,000 | - |
| Comanche County MLP | 50,000 | - |
| Total Foundations (Restricted) | 963,749 | 1,565,710 |
| Ada Regional United Way | 6,525 | 6,000 |
| United Way of Southwestern Oklahoma (Lawton) | 13,500 | 12,502 |
| Lake Area United Way (Muskogee/Tahlequah) | 37,582 | 37,963 |
| United Way of Norman | 48,110 | 51,277 |
| United Way of Central Oklahoma (OKC) | 126,000 | 126,378 |
| United Way of Pottawatomie County (Shawnee) | 3,333 | 1,250 |
| United Way of South Central OK (Ardmore) | 12,368 | 11,900 |
| United Way of Stephens County (Duncan) | 5,000 | 5,000 |
| United Way of Payne County (Stillwater) | 11,800 | 12,000 |
| United Way of Tulsa | 472,660 | 536,245 |
| United Fund of Woodward | 5,000 | 5,000 |
| United Way of McAlester (former service area) | - | 5,765 |
| Total United Way | 741,878 | 811,280 |
| Areawide Aging Agency | 58,619 | 117,238 |
| Association of South Central Oklahoma Government | 26,447 | 26,447 |
| Central Oklahoma Economic Development District | 22,594 | 22,594 |
| Eastern Oklahoma Development District | 36,499 | 51,499 |
| Grand Gateway Economic Development Association | 47,934 | 47,934 |

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| Kiamichi Economic Development District of OK | 22,750 | 22,750 |
| Long Term Care Authority of Enid | 24,090 | 24,090 |
| Oklahoma Economic Development Association | 25,934 | 25,934 |
| Southern Oklahoma Development Association | 25,601 | 25,601 |
| Southwestern Oklahoma Development Authority | 24,569 | 24,569 |
| Indian Nation Council of Governments | 43,904 | 68,904 |
| Eastern OK Dev District - Younger Caregivers | 5,000 | - |
| Eastern OK Dev District - Younger Relatives | 500 | - |
| Total Title III Grants | 364,441 | 457,560 |
| Legal Services Corporation Basic Field | 4,864,596 | 5,148,420 |
| Legal Services Corporation Migrant | 169,140 | 179,016 |
| LSC COVID | | - |
| TIG 16054 DV Connect | | - |
| TIG 16055 Triage | | - |
| TIG 18009 Utah contract | 5,000 | - |
| LSC Telecommuting | | - |
| LSC Disaster Mitigation | 212,000 | 212,000 |
| LSC Disaster Response | 325,000 | 325,000 |
| Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) - Grants and Subgrants | 2,167,270 | 1,424,495 |
| Navigator | 150,000 | 295,973 |
| MLP Cherokee Nation | 34,384 | - |
| SSVF Support Services for Veterans _Goodwill | 48,000 | 48,000 |
| Fair Housing | 300,000 | 300,000 |
| The Education and Employment Ministry | 25,000 | 25,000 |
| DOJ/OWV Rural (Osage Nation) | 82,500 | 82,500 |
| OWV Subgrant (Poteau) | 75,000 | - |
| DOJ Opioid | 250,000 | 260,000 |
| CTAS Cherokee Nation | 80,000 | 80,000 |
| LAV Palomar | 200,000 | 200,000 |
| Low Income Tax Clinic | 63,000 | 63,000 |
| Total Federal Funding | 9,050,890 | 8,643,404 |
| DHS Foster Care Prevention | 400,000 | 400,000 |
| OK Department Human Services TANF | 170,720 | 200,720 |
| OK State Revolving Fund | 909,613 | 873,034 |
| Total State Funding | 1,480,333 | 1,473,754 |
| City of Tulsa Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) | 20,520 | 20,520 |
| Oklahoma City Muni Court (PD) | 505,520 | 456,072 |
| City of OKC CBDG (Eviction/Foreclosure prevention) | | 249,750 |
| City of OKC Social Services Grant (SSG) | 5,000 | 5,000 |
| City of OKC ESG-COVID | - | 105,363 |
| City of OKC Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) | 34,105 | 34,105 |
| Total City Funding | 565,145 | 870,810 |
| OK Aids Care Fund | 20,000 | - |
| Bama Caring Center | 80,000 | 80,000 |
| Citizen Potawatomi - employees | - | 80,000 |

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|---|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Muscogee (Creek) Nation - Embedded Attorney | 60,000 | 60,000 |
| Tulsa ReEntry CSC | 37,500 | - |
| MCN-Family Violence Prevention Program | 45,000 | 75,000 |
| CAA OKC - CARES | | 60,000 |
| Citizen Potawatomi Re-entry | 97,500 | 37,500 |
| Center for Employment Opportunities | 75,000 | 40,000 |
| Total Private Grants | 415,000 | 432,500 |
| Investment Income | 54,000 | 54,000 |
| Miscellaneous Revenue | 3,000 | 3,000 |
| Attorney Fees | 200,000 | 200,000 |
| Cy Pres Awards | 100,000 | 100,000.00 |
| Total Other Funding | 357,000 | 357,000 |
| Total Revenue | 14,438,436 | 16,712,018 |
| Expense | | |
| Salaries | 8,687,006 | 9,998,168 |
| Benefits | 2,728,436 | 3,105,380 |
| Total Payroll Expense | 11,415,442 | 13,103,548 |
| Occupancy | 841,496 | 913,980 |
| Office Expense | 193,446 | 193,446 |
| Telephone | 175,750 | 206,028 |
| Travel | 162,383 | 162,383 |
| Litigation | 50,000 | 50,000 |
| Training | 53,000 | 53,000 |
| Library | 68,207 | 70,500 |
| Dues & Fees | 59,000 | 60,000 |
| Insurance | 64,640 | 67,476 |
| Professional Services | 447,475 | 410,630 |
| Contract Attorneys | 90,796 | 752,780 |
| Equipment Rental | 110,000 | 117,902 |
| IT equipment and software | 146,631 | 195,648 |
| Depreciation | 6,526 | 8,063 |
| Other | 148,051 | 195,170 |
| Total Operational Expense | 2,617,401 | 3,457,007 |
| Total Expense | 14,032,843 | 16,560,556 |

Elizabeth Weill-Greenberg

Feb 18, 2021

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A Maricopa County constable knocks on a front door before eviction proceedings began in October 1, 2020 in Phoenix, Arizona.

Photo by John Moore/Getty Images

MOST TENANTS FACING EVICTION DON'T HAVE A RIGHT TO AN ATTORNEY. LAWMAKERS WANT TO CHANGE THAT

Numerous city councils and state legislatures are debating giving renters a right to counsel, which can make the difference between stability and catastrophe.

During housing court on Tuesday in Dane County, Wisconsin, a tenant, who is non-verbal and facing eviction, didn't appear at his virtual hearing.

"He doesn't know American Sign Language," Commissioner J. Alberto Quiroga reported to the landlord's attorney, who was displayed in a square underneath the commissioner's in the Zoom meeting. "The only way he responds is either, 'No' or 'I know.' So the court's concerned with his competency."

"I'm not going to find him in default when he's disabled," said Quiroga, who set the case for trial next month. Typically if a tenant does not appear in court, a default judgment is entered in favor of the landlord.

"That'll give him some time to find a counsel, get an advocate," he said. "I can't find him in default under these circumstances. I just think that would be egregious."

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The commissioner's decision was rare. In another two eviction cases heard that day, the tenants didn't sign on to the virtual hearing and the commissioner entered a default judgment. Studies of several [large cities' eviction data](#) have shown that landlords win default judgments in a majority of eviction cases.

Like most tenants facing eviction across the country, Dane County renters are not guaranteed a right to counsel in housing court. Tenants are left on their own to navigate an evolving maze of federal and local directives that dictate when and how an eviction can occur, a legal landscape that has become infinitely more confusing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Local studies in recent decades have repeatedly [shown that a large majority of landlords](#) have counsel in housing court, while a small minority of tenants have representation.

Prior to the pandemic, Debra Puzzo, a co-director of the housing program at the Tenant Resource Center, said she went to the Dane County courthouse to make sure tenants and landlords knew their rights. When necessary, she directed tenants without representation to pro bono attorneys. But with virtual hearings, those referrals have been nearly impossible to make, she said. Proceedings move so quickly, she said, that if she speaks to tenants at all, it's usually after they've already agreed to a payment arrangement or have an eviction trial coming up.

"It's a very scary situation for tenants because they're really cut off from even the meager resources that were available," said Puzzo.

One of President Biden's [first executive actions](#) was to extend the federal moratorium on evictions to March 31. The moratorium, first imposed last spring, hasn't completely halted evictions. Since the start of the pandemic, landlords have filed for [more than 245,000 evictions](#) in the five states and 27 cities tracked by the Eviction Lab at Princeton University.

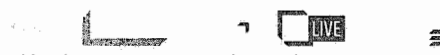
But momentum is building in cities, states, and in Congress to ensure every person facing eviction has an attorney. [A majority of American voters](#), including Democrats and Republicans, support a right to counsel in eviction proceedings, similar to the right that exists for criminal cases, according to a new poll from Data for Progress and The Lab, a policy vertical of The Appeal.

In criminal court, an attorney is provided to those who can't afford one, but no such universal right exists in housing court. The U.S. Supreme Court issued two separate rulings, in 1981 and 2011, that deny a right to counsel to petitioners in civil cases. In the first case, a parent was [at risk of losing his parental rights](#); in the second, a parent had been [repeatedly jailed](#) for not paying child support.

"The Supreme Court has been incredibly hostile to the concept of right to counsel in civil cases," said John Pollock, the coordinator of the National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel. "If you don't get a right to counsel when your parental rights are being severed and you don't get a right to counsel when you're going to jail, it's hard to imagine what you do get a right to counsel for in their view."

Instead of seeking a right to counsel through the courts, housing rights

Pollock.



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"The cases are not simple," said Pollock. "The tenant may have paid the rent and the landlord may be saying they didn't. ... If the tenant didn't pay the rent, they may have defenses as to why they didn't pay."

An attorney can make the difference between stability and catastrophe for families, he said.

"These people can lose everything in an eviction," said Pollock. "They can lose their kids potentially. They can become homeless. They can get jailed. They can lose their jobs."

But despite the high stakes, no right-to-counsel programs existed at the city, state, or federal level until 2017. That year, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio signed into law the first program in the country. Six more cities have since followed suit: Philadelphia; Newark, New Jersey; Boulder, Colorado; San Francisco; Cleveland; and, most recently, Baltimore.

A study of New York City's program, which is being phased in over five years, showed that from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020, 86 percent of households with counsel were allowed to stay in their homes. New York's program provides representation based on a tenant's income and ZIP code.

In 2018, San Francisco voters approved Proposition E, which guarantees legal assistance to all people facing eviction. However, before the pandemic even began, not all tenants were provided counsel because of a shortage of attorneys, according to the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development. A study of the city's program showed a decrease in eviction filings by 10 percent between 2018 and 2019, and 67 percent of represented tenants stayed in their homes.

"When people have counsel it completely changes what happens in housing court," said Pollock.

Cleveland's program, which launched last summer, provides counsel to tenants who are at or below the federal poverty line and have at least one child under 18 in the home. Ninety-three percent of represented tenants seeking to avoid an eviction or other involuntary moves were successful, according to a report on the program released last month.

Supporters of Baltimore's program expect to see similar results. In November, the City Council approved a program, to be implemented over a four-year period, to grant counsel to all residents facing eviction. The city's eviction rate is more than twice the national average, according to the Evictions Study, a project of University of California, Berkeley and University of Washington researchers. An estimated 96 percent of landlords were represented in eviction proceedings either by an attorney or an agent, compared with 1 percent of tenants, according to a study of a sample of evictions from 2019. This power imbalance affects the entire eviction process, said Pollock.

"It's not just that tenants don't have counsel, it's that the landlords always have counsel in these cases," said Pollock. "The courts essentially are really just there for the landlords. They're like rent collection devices for the landlords."

Tenants may not be able to attend the hearings because they cannot arrange childcare or take time off work, and don't have an attorney to go in their place,

who don't appear in court, he said, they feel an eviction is inevitable.

"If you know the outcome is a foregone conclusion whether you participate or not, why would you bother?" said Pollock.

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Black tenants are disproportionately affected by evictions, which makes a right to counsel a matter of racial justice, according to housing rights activists. Mirroring a national trend, evictions in Baltimore, for instance, have historically fallen hardest on Black residents. Between July 2018 and June 2019, Black Baltimore tenants were evicted at a rate estimated to be three times higher than white tenants, according to the Evictions Study.

In response to advocates' demands, lawmakers in several states are sponsoring right-to-counsel legislation, from city councils to state legislatures. Federal legislation to guarantee a right to counsel has not yet been introduced, but the stimulus bill that passed in December included \$20 million to fund existing tenant representation programs.

City councils in Fresno, California; Seattle; and Tulsa, Oklahoma, are considering similar ordinances. Last month, a hearing was held on a right-to-counsel bill proposed by Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant, but no further action has been taken.

Tenant right-to-counsel bills have been introduced in seven states, including Washington state, Nebraska, and Maryland. The proposed legislation differs, primarily, in who would receive representation. Nebraska's legislation, unlike the other six statewide bills, would grant a right to counsel for anyone in an eviction proceeding. A committee hearing was held earlier this month.

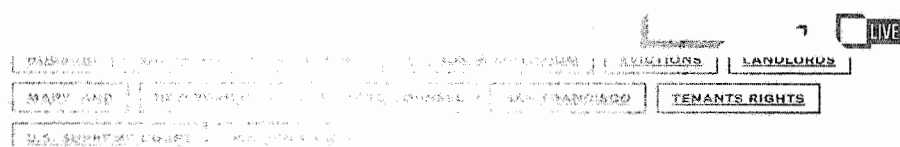
In Washington, counsel would be provided to, among others, those who receive certain benefits, like food stamps, or have an income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line. (It would also prohibit evictions for unpaid rent that accrued between March 1, 2020, and the end of the governor's moratorium on evictions.) The bill has already cleared one hurdle—it passed out of the Senate Housing Committee earlier this month, and on Tuesday a hearing was held before the Ways and Means Committee.

"When the moratorium here ends on March 31, in the absence of legal representation, in the absence of legislative intervention, there will be a tsunami of evictions," said Jim Bamberger, director of the Office of Civil Legal Aid based in Olympia, Washington.

Last month, a hearing on Maryland's right-to-counsel bill was held before the Senate Judiciary Committee, but its members have not yet voted. The bill would create, over a four-year period, a statewide right-to-counsel program for households with an annual income that is at or below 50 percent of the state's median income. On Wednesday, a hearing on the companion bill occurred before the House Judiciary Committee.

Between July and November of last year, more than 2,500 households have been evicted in Maryland, according to the Maryland District Court.

"The laws and the protections that we put in place are only as good as the enforcement," said Matthew Hill, an attorney with the Baltimore-based Public Justice Center. "Providing folks access to counsel to help balance the scales of justice a little bit is one way that we can actually enforce the legal protections that are out there."





KEY STUDIES AND DATA ABOUT HOW LEGAL AID IMPROVES HOUSING OUTCOMES

Evictions are landlord-initiated moves to expel tenants from their homes. Evictions are a leading cause of homelessness.¹ Tenants often do not know their legal rights and often do not have legal representation in eviction hearings.² Further, many landlords will refuse to rent to prospective tenants who have eviction filings on their records, regardless of whether a judgment was actually filed by a court or if a court ruled in the tenant's favor.³ When they do have access to legal representation, tenants are more likely to remain housed and have their children stay in school. Legal representation can also help ensure landlords redress unlawful unsanitary housing conditions that pose health risks, (O'Sullivan, 2012), or help prospective tenants seal old eviction case records to prevent future barriers to housing.

Page 1 of this research brief provides research highlights; pages 2-3 a narrative overview; page 4 two featured federal resources; page 5 other helpful resources; page 6 endnotes; and pages 7-20 summaries of the curated studies. All endnotes are to sources not included in our summaries section.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS:

- "For every dollar Baltimore City spends on providing free representation to eligible tenants through a right to counsel, it may reduce its current social safety net response to disruptive displacement caused by eviction by at least \$3.06. ... Stout estimates the annual cost of disruptive displacement and potential costs avoided as a result of a right to counsel in Baltimore City eviction cases that accrue to Baltimore City and Maryland to be approximately \$35.6 million annually, which would result in a dollar value of a right to counsel for every dollar invested of at least \$6.24 for Baltimore City and Maryland combined" (Stout Risius Ross, 2020).
- "Fully represented tenants win or settle their cases 96% of the time. Clients receiving limited representation win or settle their cases 83% of the time. These figures compare with just 62% of tenants without any representation." Tenants with full representation were twice as likely to stay in their homes or got twice as much time to move, left court without an eviction record, and were four times less likely to use homeless shelters (Grundman & Kruger, 2018)
- "Stout's analysis finds that when tenants are unrepresented, they face case outcomes that can result in disruptive displacement 78 percent of the time. When they are represented, lawyers assist tenants in resolving the matter without this kind of disruptive displacement 95 percent of the time" (Stout Risius Ross, 2018).
- An analysis of the Shriver Housing Pilot Projects found that "clients [with full representation] were significantly less likely to end their cases by default (8%) than were self-represented defendants (26%)" and "had, on average, 85 days to move, versus 74 days among self-represented defendants ... and were ordered to pay holdover damages (26% vs. 11%, respectively), landlord attorney fees (28% vs. 18%), and other costs (33% vs. 15%)" (NPC Research, 2017).
- Harvard researchers found that for individuals with representation, "approximately two-thirds of treated-group occupants retained possession of their housing units at the end of summary eviction proceedings, as compared with about one-third of control group occupants" who did not have representation (Greiner et al., 2012).
- "The Homelessness Prevention Program in Erie county originally planned to do outreach, education and landlord/tenant mediation providing legal assistance when necessary. During the court of implementation, this program found that the need for legal advice and representation was more extensive than originally believed. For this reason, the program now provides legal services to many of its clients along with the originally proposed community education activities" (O'Sullivan, 2012).

NARRATIVE OVERVIEW RE: IMPROVING HOUSING OUTCOMES

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), the United States currently has a nationwide shortage of 7 million affordable and available rental homes. Approximately 47 percent of renters (or about 20.5 million households) are “rent burdened” and pay more than 30 percent of their total income toward housing expenses. Even more striking, a quarter of all renters (about 10.7 million households) pay more than half their income toward housing expenses.⁴ Rent burdened households are often financially insecure in other ways – nearly two-thirds report savings of under \$400.⁵ As explained by the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, this lack of affordable housing increases instability for low-income renters and leads to increased risk of eviction.⁶

Evictions are landlord-initiated moves to expel tenants from their home and most often occur because a tenant cannot pay rent. Though the true annual incidence of eviction filings and evictions in the U.S. is unknown, Eviction Lab estimates that 1 in 17 renter households face eviction filings and 1 in 40 lose their housing each year.⁷ Eviction has many collateral consequences: families often lose their possessions and move to communities with less expensive, lower quality housing; children often have to switch schools, uprooting ties to the community; and heads of households often lose their jobs, resulting in increased financial strain.⁸ As Matthew Desmond, Pulitzer Prize winning author of *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, said in an interview with NPR, “Eviction isn’t just a condition of poverty; it’s a cause of poverty. Eviction is a direct cause of homelessness, but it also is a cause of residential instability, school instability [and] community instability.”⁹

Studies show that evictions have a disproportionate impact on communities of color as part of a long history of segregation in housing and employment markets.¹⁰ Politico reports that Black and Latinx people are twice as likely to be renters as white people: While nearly three-quarters of white people are homeowners, under half of Black and Latinx individuals own homes.¹¹ A study out of the University of Washington Evictions Project also found that Black and Latinx households had consistently low incomes, and Black women were evicted at nearly four times the rate of white men.¹² In June 2020, nearly half of Black/Latinx renters were unable to make rent, compared to 25 percent of white renters.¹³

As ethnographic studies have shown, eviction is a cause of homelessness.¹⁴ A report from the New York State Department of Social Services agrees.¹⁵ It finds that one-sixth of homeless shelter requestors report that they are there because of an eviction. Further, 98 percent of homeless shelter requestors had once been primary tenants, demonstrating a history of being evicted. Notably, even if a filing does not result in court judgment, prospective renters often face challenges securing affordable housing or obtaining subsidized housing vouchers because of the presence of old evictions on their records.¹⁶

Those who face being evicted often live in crumbling housing stock. For example, the Public Justice Center partnered with the Right to Housing Alliance to study the experiences and outcomes of renters in eviction cases in Baltimore.¹⁷ They found that nearly 80 percent of tenants who appeared in court experienced serious housing defects and over 70 percent notified their landlord of them. Further, almost half of landlords submitted invalid registration and credentials and 80 percent provided incorrect or outdated mandatory lead risk reduction compliance. Legal aid attorneys can help tenants remain housed, clear old eviction records, and ensure landlords redress unlawfully unsanitary conditions.

Evidence shows the social forces behind eviction and housing instability also have dire public health consequences. The distribution and extent of these consequences are largely determined by other dimensions of inequity, including gender, age, and ethnicity.¹⁸ One study of low-income urban mothers found that evicted mothers were more likely to experience worse health for themselves and their

children, parenting stress, depression, and material hardship, in comparison to mothers who were not evicted.¹⁹

DATA AND STUDIES SHOW LEGAL AID HELPS:

Tenants often do not know their legal rights. As the Judicial Council of California writes, “Eviction is one of the most urgent civil law issues for low-income individuals and families” (NPC Research, 2017). Tenants often lack legal representation, while landlords often have counsel.²⁰ For example, in DC, of the 33,000 evictions cases filed yearly, less than 10 percent of tenants have legal representation during a hearing, compared to over 90 percent of landlords.²¹ When tenants have counsel they are more likely to remain housed, ultimately reducing bouts of homelessness. Researchers found in New York City that 51 percent of tenants without legal representation lost their homes, compared to 31.8 percent of tenants with legal representation (Frankel et al., 2001). Similarly, in an analysis by Stout Risius Ross (2020), researchers found that tenants without legal representation in Baltimore City likely experienced disruptive displacement in approximately 93 percent of eviction proceedings. When tenants had legal representation, Stout found that they avoided the high likelihood of disruptive displacement in 92 percent of cases. Having access to legal help can also improve housing conditions, reducing allergen exposure and hospital visits (O’Sullivan, 2012).

In one study, researchers tracked pilot projects that provided assistance to low-income individuals on housing matters (NPC Research, 2017). They found that tenants were more likely to remain in their homes, receive more days to move, have a higher settlement rate with balanced representation, and a lower trial rate when they have full representation. Harvard researchers had similar findings (Greiner et al., 2012). They found that two-thirds of those who received an offer of full representation remained in their homes, in comparison to one-third who did not have such representation. For those who received full representation, they received payments or rent waivers for an average of 9.4 months per case, compared to 1.9 months for those without legal representation.

Studies have debated the effectiveness of limited representation in improving outcomes for those facing eviction. The Boston Bar Association found that even limited representation helps tenants in retaining possession and having rent waived and receiving monetary awards (Boston Bar Association, 2012). George Washington law professor Jessica Steinberg found, by contrast, that unbundled or limited legal representation did not substantially affect the outcomes of tenants when compared to those who self-represented (Steinberg, 2011). However, she finds that when tenants had full representation, they experienced significantly better outcomes than those without attorney representation. Programs and legislation that promote right to counsel are also widely supported by American voters. A February 2021 poll of likely voters found that 68 percent of voters support a right to counsel for tenants facing eviction, and a vast majority believe Congress should pass legislation to fund legal services aimed at preventing evictions.²²

Three recent cost-benefit analyses by Stout Risius Ross identified significant savings for cities who could implement a right to counsel in matters relating to eviction, foreclosure, and ejectment. Stout (2020) found that a \$5.7 million investment in a right to counsel in Baltimore City may result in approximately \$17.5 million in costs avoided annually. For Baltimore City and Maryland combined, Stout estimates that every dollar spent on free representation would result in a cost savings of \$6.24. Similarly, in New York City, Stout (2016) found that the right to housing counsel would save \$320 annually.

Since this study was published, New York City became the first city in the U.S. to implement Right to Counsel and reported that over 100,000 tenants facing eviction and housing challenges received legal services in 2019, compared to just under 13,000 in 2013 (New York City Office of Civil Justice, 2020).

NYC's Right to Counsel law also resulted in 38 percent of tenants being represented by attorneys in Housing Court in 2019, compared to just 1 percent in 2013. Citywide, residential evictions in 2019 declined by over 40 percent compared to 2013, and 84 percent of households represented in court by lawyers were able to remain in their homes.

Another study by Stout (2018) found that providing legal representation to tenants would save Philadelphia \$45.2 million annually and prevent disruptive displacement 95 percent of the time, compared to the resulting incidence of disruptive displacement 78 percent of the time when tenants do not have legal representation. In November 2019, the City of Philadelphia joined New York City, Newark, Cleveland, and San Francisco in passing legislation to guarantee access to free legal representation for low-income residents facing eviction.²³

Six months after implementing a right to counsel program for low-income tenants in Cleveland, the United Way of Greater Cleveland and The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, in partnership with Stout Risius Ross, published a report on program outcomes. The January 2021 report indicated that 93 percent of households who had representation avoided displacement, and 8 out of 10 represented households were given additional time to move out. This additional time was critical in allowing tenants to access additional supports such as case management and assistance with locating safe and stable housing. The program also demonstrated nascent success in preventing the long-term impacts of displacement on children under the age of 18. The program reached over 700 children in the first 6 months; Of these, more than 130 children avoided displacement caused by eviction or involuntary moves.²⁴

FEATURED FEDERAL RESOURCES:

U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, *Engaging Legal Services in Community Efforts to Prevent and End Homelessness*

This USICH brief describes how working with legal services providers can contribute to communities' efforts to prevent and end homelessness. It identifies that people at risk of or experiencing homelessness often face legal issues that can create roadblocks to accessing or maintaining safe and stable housing, employment and income supports, health care services, and other opportunities that can help them stabilize and achieve their goals. It has three sections – how legal services can remove individual barriers to permanent housing and supportive services, how legal service providers can assist in removing systemic barriers to housing and supportive services, and how community providers can integrate legal services into their efforts to prevent and end homelessness.

Highlights:

- “Homelessness assistance programs and other housing and services providers should work with legal services providers to ensure that individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness are assessed for a range of potential legal needs and referred to appropriate legal services providers” (p. 1).
- “Civil legal services can play a role helping people experiencing homelessness reduce barriers to employment, housing, benefits, and other obstacles for individuals with a criminal history. Coordination between case management providers and civil legal attorneys is critical in order to facilitate the identification of legal issues when they arise and help vulnerable populations secure basic necessities such as healthcare, housing, government benefits, employment, and educational services. Homelessness service providers might consider retaining legal counsel to serve on staff and provide legal services” (p. 9).
- “In order for people experiencing homelessness to quickly get back on a path to stability and self-sufficiency that will advance their economic opportunity, they need access to the tools that will reduce the legal barriers they face. Legal services providers can play an essential role in removing such barriers to permanent housing and supportive services, helping to further accelerate progress toward preventing and ending homelessness in this country” (p. 10).

Access this resource at: U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, *Engaging Legal Services in Community Efforts to Prevent and End Homelessness* (February 15, 2017), available at <https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/engaging-legal-services-in-community-efforts-to-prevent-and-end-homelessness/>

U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, *Ten Strategies to End Veteran Homelessness*

This USICH brief explains how coordinating with legal service organizations to solve legal needs is one of ten recommended strategies to end veteran homelessness. It reads:

“Veterans experiencing homelessness often have unmet legal needs. Civil legal services attorneys are essential partners in removing barriers to housing and employment by preventing avoidable evictions, navigating outstanding warrants, expunging criminal records, and securing targeted and mainstream benefits. Legal services attorneys can also engage in systemic advocacy (to the degree allowable by law) to promote Housing First practices among public housing authorities and housing assistance programs. Your community should ensure that homelessness assistance programs coordinate with legal services organization to address individual and systemic legal needs” (p. 5).

Access this resource at: U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, *Ten Strategies to End Veteran Homelessness* (June 2, 2016), available at <https://www.usich.gov/tools-for-action/10-strategies-to-end-veteran-homelessness/>

HELPFUL RESOURCES:

- The Justice in Government Project (JGP) and National Legal Aid & Defenders Association (NLADA) published a [June 2020 newsletter](#) and February 2021 newsletter summarizing the research and resources related to how civil legal aid assists people facing housing instability and eviction.²⁵
- The Eviction Lab has an [interactive map](#) of evictions, [rankings](#) of states' eviction policies, and [spreadsheets](#) of eviction data.²⁶ The Eviction Lab's [Just Shelter](#) website provides [community resources by state](#), with information about organizations that are working to preserve affordable housing, prevent eviction, and reduce family homelessness, including legal aid organizations.
- The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness has [homeless statistics](#) by state and year.²⁷
- The National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel's (NCCRC) maintains a [comprehensive bibliography](#)²⁸ containing every law review article, study, report, paper, news story, and media piece they are aware of, sorted by subject. The collection of pieces on [housing](#)²⁹ includes over 150 entries related to evictions and foreclosures. Learn about the latest civil right to counsel activities and policy developments with NCCRC's [interactive map](#) and [e-updates](#).
- The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty (NLCHP) has a [collection of publications](#) on key issues involving homelessness in the U.S., including legal manuals on [maintaining homeless children's access to education](#) and fighting laws [criminalizing homelessness](#), [know-your-rights materials](#) for families on education rights, and [reports](#) containing recommendations for improving housing security among vulnerable populations, an annual [State Index on Youth Homelessness](#), and information on the criminalization of homelessness, which can quickly compound legal issues. NLCHP also coordinates [Project LEARN](#), a group of attorneys working on homeless students' access to education.³⁰
- [National Low-Income Housing Coalition \(NLIHC\)](#) provides a space to learn about the most critical housing needs across the country, identify and connect with NLIHC partners in your state, and engage with policymakers to advance housing solutions in Congress. Access these comprehensive resources tailored to your state on [NLIHC's Housing Needs By State page](#). NLIHC also maintains an updated collection of [housing-related data](#), rental housing programs, and research on a range of affordable housing topics in its [Housing Research Repository](#).
- Dr. Tim Thomas, with others from the University of Washington, examined court records and Sheriff warrants to identify disparities in evicted renters, with the purpose of "[expanding] public and scholarly knowledge by identifying the prevalence and drivers of evictions in under-studied regions, providing evidence-based research for policy reform." Explore the website [here](#), including an [interactive map of Baltimore findings](#), the latest [news and media on evictions and policy](#) in Washington State, and a 2019 [Washington State report](#).
- Stout's Eviction Right to Counsel Resource Center provides a compilation of studies, evaluations, legislation, and resources related to the eviction process, housing instability, racial bias, the economic impacts of eviction, and pertinent right to counsel information.
- Legal Services Corporation has collected client success stories [here](#).³¹
- For more information about civil legal aid messaging, communications, and story-telling, go to the [Voices for Civil Justice](#) and [All Rise for Civil Justice](#) websites.³²
- For a more comprehensive repository of legal aid related research, go to the National Legal Aid & Defender Association's [LegalAidResearch](#) website.³³

Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma(LASO) Fact Sheet:

LASO has 20 offices across Oklahoma.

LASO employees 230 staff statewide of which 150 are staff attorneys,

70 of the above referenced 150 staff attorneys are embedded at non-profits.

In 2020, LASO closed 11,000 cases statewide impacting 25,000 persons

The ratio of income eligible (125% of federal poverty guidelines) persons to LASO attorneys in the state is 11,000 to one.

LASO serves: Survivors of domestic violence, persons at risk of losing their home; Seniors, Veterans, disabled persons and persons leaving incarceration.

LASO issues resolved include: personal safety/protection orders; preventing evictions/foreclosures/requiring repairs; Discrimination; Access to health/Sooner Care/Social security/VA/ Medicare/ Food stamps; Consumer/fraud, debt collections; Income/unpaid wages/child support/unemployment/stimulus/tax credits; Family Stability/guardianships, custody/visitations/preventing foster care; employment/drivers and occupation licenses, ID, expungement/criminal justice fines and fees.

LASO outcomes include: Full Legal representation; brief services (wills, Power of attorneys and health care directives) and Legal advice/education. Client outcomes achieved in 80% of LASO full legal representation efforts.

The LASO OKC law office budget is \$3,093,473.00. 134,000 persons in OKC are eligible for LASO services. In 2020, LASO OKC law offices served 4,337 persons. In 2020, LASO OKC law office closed 1210 cases for Covid impacted clients and has over 300 open. LASO OKC law office maintains embedded attorneys at the following locations: YWCA OKC; Palomar; Sunbeam; Latino Community Development Association; TEEM, Remerge, Homeless Alliance; NorthCare; Oklahoma City/County Health Department, SSM St Anthony's, OUHSC A Better Chance Clinic; OUHSC children's clinic; Hope Community Services and the Community Action Agency.

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714 OKC CDBG Outcomes

Closed Cases 9/1/2020-2/28/2021

| Outcome | Primary | Additional | Totals |
|--|---------|------------|-----------|
| ADVICE: Increased Client's knowledge of legal rights/options | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| HOUSING: Prevented loss of housing subsidy | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| HOUSING: Prevented or delayed eviction | 43 | 0 | 43 |
| | 49 | 1 | 50 |

Monetary Outcomes

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| Lump Sum Avoidance | 40248.38 |
| Lump Sum Recovery | 0 |
| Monthly Avoidance | 936 |
| Monthly Recovery | 0 |
| Total: | 41184.38 |