

Biannual Progress Report to the Council of the District of Columbia and the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants: Executive Summary

CIVIL LEGAL COUNSEL PROJECTS PROGRAM (CLCPP) EVALUATION

Grantee Name: District of Columbia Bar Foundation (DCBF)
Grant Number: 2023-DCBF-01
Project Title: Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program (CLCPP)
Grant Year Reporting: FY23 DCBF Admin Year, FY23 Subgrantee Year
(January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023)
Reporting Period: January 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023



DC BAR FOUNDATION

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INTRODUCTION

The Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program (CLCPP) is a grant program established by the Expanding Access to Justice Amendment Act (DC Act 22-130) enacted by the Council of the District of Columbia (DC Council) in July 2017. Grants are administered by the DC Bar Foundation (DCBF) and awarded to legal services organizations in the District of Columbia (DC) to provide legal assistance to DC residents with low incomes who are facing, or at risk of facing, eviction proceedings or the loss of a housing subsidy.¹ Each year from 2018 through 2022, DCBF administered grants to 6 legal services organizations that formed the CLCPP network: Bread for the City, DC Bar Pro Bono Center's Landlord Tenant Resource Center, Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia, Legal Counsel for the Elderly, Neighborhood Legal Services Program, and Rising for Justice. In July 2022, the legislation that authorized the CLCPP was expanded to allow for grant funds to be used to provide legal services to tenants who wanted to initiate a legal action ("tenant petition cases"), whether it is against their landlord (e.g., to repair housing conditions) or with an agency such as the DC Housing Authority (e.g., to request a change in their housing subsidy). In January 2023, the Children's Law Center was added as the 7th CLCPP grantee to join the network.

As part of the evaluation, NPC submits biannual evaluation reports to the DC Council for each 6-month reporting period that present the aggregated results of the CLCPP Service Data collection and summarize the CLCPP network activities. The current report describes the evaluation activities between January – June 2023.

KEY RESULTS

CLCPP partners focused on eviction cases. During the current reporting period, the CLCPP partners served 1,657 tenants across 2,171 cases. Although the changes to the CLCPP statute authorized the partner organizations to provide services in cases not related to a potential loss of possession, nearly all the cases closed in the current period (96%) were eviction cases in the Landlord Tenant (L & T) Branch of the Superior Court (the Court). A further 1% were administrative cases related to the potential termination of a Housing Choice Voucher. A small percentage of clients received services for tenant petition matters as 2% of cases closed were related to a housing condition issue and just under 1% involved another type of tenant petition. Most of these tenant petition cases were closed by the new grantee, the Children's Law Center (CLC), which provides legal help to tenants in cases where the condition of the rental housing poses a health risk to minor children in the household. Exhibit 1 on the following page shows the number of cases closed during the current reporting period and since data collection began in August 2019, separated by type of case.

¹ The statute also mandates an evaluation of the program. In 2019, NPC Research (NPC) was hired by DCBF to design and conduct this evaluation, which is ongoing.

Exhibit 1. Number of Tenants Served and Cases Closed

Across all 7 CLCPP partners, total number of...	Current Period # (%)		Total # (%)	
Tenants served	1,657	(100%)	7,665	(100%)
Cases closed	2,171	(100%)	9,670	(100%)
Eviction cases closed	2,085	(96%)	7,430	(97%)
Voucher termination cases closed	16	(1%)	221	(2%)
Housing conditions cases closed	46	(2%)	46	(< 1%)
Other tenant petition cases closed	7	(< 1%)	7	(< 1%)

Note. The current period includes cases closed Jan. to Jun. 2023. Total includes cases closed from Aug. 2019 to Jun. 2023.

Note. Tenants can receive help for more than one case.

Note. Case type information is missing for 17 cases during the current period and 43 cases total.

The CLCPP network partners expanded during the current reporting period. The Children’s Law Center joined the CLCPP network to provide legal services to tenants seeking to remediate substandard housing conditions by requiring the landlord to make repairs. This work was made possible by changes to the CLCPP statute that authorized the partners to provide services in tenant petition cases where the tenants came to the network looking to initiate a legal action to enforce their rights. Attorneys in these tenant petition cases helped tenants by sending landlords a demand letter, filing a petition to initiate a legal case, or initiating administrative petitions to preserve, transfer, or protect housing vouchers.

Tenants continued to utilize the LTLAN to connect with the CLCPP. Tenants have multiple avenues available to contact CLCPP attorneys, however, between January – June 2023, the key entry point to CLCPP services was through the Landlord Tenant Legal Assistance Network (LTLAN), a coordinated intake and referral system established by the CLCPP partners in 2020 that tenants can access by calling a single phone number or completing an online intake form. Among the 1,657 tenants served during the current reporting period, **69% connected with services through the LTLAN**. Most of the tenants who did not connect through the LTLAN called a CLCPP partner organization directly (24%), while some connected with a CLCPP attorney in the courtroom (2%).

Ward of residence. CLCPP services reached tenants living in every District Ward, however **almost half (46%) of the CLCPP clients in this reporting period lived in Wards 7 (17%) and 8 (29%)**. An additional 15% of CLCPP clients served between January – June 2023 lived in Ward 5, 12% in Ward 1, 9% in each of Wards 4 and 6, 5% from Ward 3, and 3% from Ward 2. This distribution reflects the historical pattern.

CLCPP Cases Closed and Tenants Served. Across the 1,657 CLCPP clients served for all case types in this reporting period, a total of 2,776 household members were impacted. Of clients, 72% identified as Black or African American and 62% identified as women. **Women of color, who tend to disproportionately experience eviction filings, made up 51% of the CLCPP clients.**

Many of these cases featured households that were particularly vulnerable to the risks of unstable housing or homelessness created by an eviction. Of the 1,657 tenants served during this reporting period, 506 (36%) had at least one minor child living in the household. Additionally, 272 (24%) identified as having a disability or chronic health condition. Further, 32% of tenants who presented for legal help resided in subsidized housing and faced the prospect of losing not only their home, but also their housing subsidy.²

CLCPP clients spend a significant portion of their income on rent. For clients whose income and monthly rent were known (n = 800), 81% spend more than 30% of their household income on rent, while 62% spend more than 50%. Only 19% spend 30% or less of their income on rent.³

The CLCPP partners prioritized serving eviction tenants facing an active eviction complaint. Of the 2,085 eviction cases closed by the CLCPP partners during the current reporting period, 1,126 (54%) were closed after receiving legal services beyond the initial intake screening. Of these 1,126 cases **921 (82%) involved tenants who had an eviction complaint filed against them** when they came to the CLCPP, and, therefore, were facing an active eviction case. Serving tenants whose landlords had filed an eviction complaint was a point of emphasis for the CLCPP partners. As landlords adjusted to new eviction filing requirements, and as it became easier for tenants to find the CLCPP due to the successful promotion of the LTLAN, the partners saw an increase in tenants seeking legal help. In response, the

CLCPP CLIENT INFORMATION

Of the 1,657 tenants served:



72% identified as Black or African American



62% identified as women



51% identified as a woman of color

Tenants in households that were particularly vulnerable to risks of unstable housing:



36% had minors living in the household



24% had a disability or chronic health condition



32% lived in subsidized housing

CLCPP tenants were severely rent burdened:

81% spend >30% of income on rent

62% spend >50% of income on rent

² Disability status and subsidized housing information status is not collected by Landlord Tenant Legal Assistance Network (LTLAN) intake screeners and is entered later by partner staff. Therefore, these percentages are calculated out of the number of cases that have this information: 1,059 cases in the current reporting period.

³ The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines rent burdened families as those who are paying more than 30% of their income on rent. Severe rent burden is defined as paying more than 50% of income on rent.

CLCPP partners triaged cases based on need and urgency, and prioritized tenants who face an imminent risk of being unhoused through an eviction action. Tenants who were not facing an active eviction case at the time of intake were referred to other resources outside of the CLCPP.

Over half of CLCPP clients received legal advice as the highest level of service. During the current period (Jan – Jun 2023), **over half of tenants who received help in eviction cases received legal advice and counsel (54%)**. Another 38% received some form of representation, either limited (21%) or full (19%), while 6% received brief services. The clients who received advice and counsel were provided with guidance on how to respond to the eviction complaint, minimize the impact of the eviction filing, and help families remain housed for as long as possible or find new housing. By providing advice and counsel to tenants facing an active eviction complaint, the CLCPP partners were able to leverage available resources and close more cases during the current reporting period than any 6-month reporting period since data collection began in August 2019.

CLCPP Services Supported Housing Stability. Among active eviction cases closed during the current reporting period that received representation by an attorney, 81% of tenants retained possession of their units. Of those who moved, most did so of their own accord or as part of an agreement—**notably, fewer than 5% of CLCPP clients with an active case for which the outcomes were known had a judgment entered against them that put them at risk for an actual lockout**. Nearly 65% of the CLCPP cases closed in the current reporting period that 1) received services beyond intake, 2) had a complaint filed at the time of intake, and 3) had available outcome data were resolved by a dismissal, either from the Court or the landlord. This result can be attributed to two factors. First, at least half of the tenants whose cases were dismissed received rental assistance funds to help pay the back rent owed to the landlord and close the case, underscoring the critical role that ERAP funds continue to play in keeping DC tenants with low income housed. Second, the CLCPP partners collectively emphasized eviction defense strategies that held landlords accountable to the heightened filing requirements by arguing for dismissal in cases where the notices or complaints were technically deficient or improperly served.

The CLCPP Network Promoted Access to Justice for DC Tenants. Finally, in addition to providing direct legal services to tenants facing an eviction, the CLCPP partners continued to focus on **outreach** to make tenants aware of the CLCPP services. The partners engaged in ongoing **advocacy** efforts to ensure that the needs of tenants with low incomes are represented in policy decisions and continued to **collaborate** with other community partners to develop a more comprehensive approach to eviction protection services, which involves connecting with tenants before they face an eviction case. Through these efforts, the CLCPP network continued to provide an accessible, responsive, and effective resource for DC residents with low incomes that supports tenants' access to justice.