



## **ANNUAL REPORT**

to Cleveland City Council  
and courtesy report to Cleveland Mayor's Office

**JANUARY 31, 2021**





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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**93% of cases represented in Cleveland Housing Court by a Legal Aid attorney, that were seeking to avoid eviction or an involuntary move, avoided displacement in the first 6 months of Cleveland’s Right to Counsel (RTC).**

Additionally, thanks to tenants having legal help, more than \$3.8 million of rent relief has been distributed within Cleveland, preserving income of landlords.

Pre-COVID-19, there were about 9,000 evictions filed annually in Cleveland Housing Court. The majority of these evictions involved Black female-headed households with minor children. In this COVID-19 era, the households facing eviction have similar demographics. A significant increase in eviction filings is anticipated when rent assistance depletes and various tenant protections expire.

## RTC FIRST SIX MONTHS (SINCE JULY 1, 2020)

**323** cases to whom Legal Aid has provided services to (household members helped via cases closed + cases currently opened)

**1,600** tenants that have reached out to inquire about RTC services

**3,000** informational letters (*Appendix A*) and brochures have been sent to residents of households with an eviction filing

**2,000** individual visits to FreeEvictionHelp.org

**596** residents who spoke to door knockers, of which 32% were aware of RTC and 41% were aware of rent assistance

## FOR CASES CLOSED (AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2020)

**93%** of Legal Aid RTC clients seeking to avoid an eviction or involuntary move were able to achieve this outcome

**83%** of Legal Aid RTC clients seeking more time to move (30 days or more) were able to achieve this outcome

**89%** of Legal Aid RTC clients seeking to mitigate their damages were able to achieve this outcome

**700** children under the age of 18 that were impacted through RTC

**133** of the 700 children under the age of 18 have already avoided the trauma of disruptive displacement that is caused by eviction or involuntary moves as their cases have been successfully closed

AS OF DECEMBER 2020, MORE THAN 11,000 CUYAHOGA COUNTY RESIDENTS HAVE APPLIED FOR RENTAL ASSISTANCE, AND THOSE RESIDENTS LOST AN AGGREGATED \$148 MILLION IN ANNUAL INCOME. WITHOUT ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOCUSED ON LEGAL REPRESENTATION IN CLEVELAND HOUSING COURT (FOR MORE THAN JUST THOSE COVERED BY THE CURRENT ORDINANCE), THE RIPPLE EFFECTS OF THESE EVICTIONS WILL HOLD CLEVELAND BACK FOR DECADES.

Access to quality legal representation can prevent the negative impacts of evictions for individual households and communities. Those who have experienced an eviction are:

- **More likely to experience homelessness and extended usage of homeless shelters**
- **30% more likely to lose their jobs**
- **More likely to have children who become chronically absent from school after the eviction**
- **Less likely to have their children tested for lead poisoning. And when they do, their children are more likely to have Elevated Blood Lead Levels (EBLLs)**

In 2019, Cleveland City Council passed Cleveland’s Right to Counsel (RTC) ordinance with a recognition that “a lack of legal counsel for low-income tenants with minor children during eviction cases is a violation of a basic human right.” Through Cleveland Codified Ordinance 375.12, the city became the first in the Midwest to provide such a right.

**RIGHT TO COUNSEL – CLEVELAND (RTC)** provides a right to free legal representation pursuant to the ordinance. This right is delivered to eligible households through a partnership between United Way of Greater Cleveland (United Way) and The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland (Legal Aid). United Way and Legal Aid have developed a program model that provides comprehensive access to high-quality legal representation and other supportive services.

**UNITED WAY** provides administrative leadership, including fundraising, communications and outreach, website and collateral design, and oversees the contract with a national evaluation firm, Stout Risius Ross, LLC (Stout). In addition, United Way’s 211 HelpLink connects Legal Aid clients with rent assistance and other important supportive services. And United Way facilitates and leads the Steering and Advisory Committees and Working Groups.

**LEGAL AID** provides high-quality legal advice, representation, and community legal education. Legal Aid hired more attorneys and support staff to ensure that eligible households receive full representation, as contemplated by the ordinance. Legal Aid’s work

extends beyond legal representation, as Legal Aid staff members co-lead the Steering and Advisory Committees and Working Groups with United Way. Additionally, Legal Aid provides fundraising, marketing, and other in-kind support.

Tenants eligible for Right to Counsel can access Legal Aid’s RTC services through:

- **Online and phone intake (in person intake has been suspended temporarily due to COVID-19)**
- **The program website, [www.FreeEvictionHelp.org](http://www.FreeEvictionHelp.org)**
- **Referrals from United Way’s 211 HelpLink or other community partners**
- **The Housing Court prior to or during the eviction hearing**

In this COVID-19 era, RTC together with rental assistance and various new tenant protections have “flattened the curve” – on a mounting eviction crisis. With the prospect of the expiration of various tenant protections and the spend-down of rental assistance, 2021 could be the year of an eviction spike. As of December 2020, more than 11,000 Cuyahoga County residents have applied for rental assistance, and those residents lost an aggregated \$148 million in annual income. Without additional resources focused on legal representation in Cleveland Housing Court (for more than just those covered by the current ordinance), the ripple effects of these evictions will hold Cleveland back for decades.

The City of Cleveland’s initial annual \$300,000 support of RTC is leveraged with private philanthropy to complete a \$2.4 million annual program budget (full budget & projections on pages 20-21). This Cleveland model is unique: no other city in the United States that has legislated a housing right to counsel is set-up this way: fundraising is crucial for initial success, and long-term government support is contemplated for sustainability once evaluation proves positive results for the community.

**The initial 6-month RTC data begins to shed light on the importance of long-term government investment to stabilize housing and neighborhoods. In this report, we are proud to detail the progress made to bridge the justice gap for tenants facing displacement from their homes and neighborhoods. ■**

# I. PARTNER INTRODUCTIONS

For more than a century, nonprofit leaders in Cleveland have convened to develop, implement, and manage social safety net programs for Cleveland residents.

United Way and Legal Aid have a combined 224-year history of helping families thrive by offering them assistance where and when they need it.

Today, both organizations are at the forefront of addressing housing instability, which is both a consequence of and a contributor to Cleveland having the highest rate of childhood poverty and the second highest rate of adult poverty in the nation.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 only exacerbated these issues and further highlighted the barriers to opportunity created by structural racism and extreme inequality.

Cleveland City Council leadership created a new safety net through legislation signed into law on October 1, 2019. In accordance with this legislation, as of July 1, 2020, low-income tenants in Cleveland with at least one minor child in the household have the right to full legal representation by an attorney when facing eviction in Cleveland Housing Court. The legislation calls for a “lead partner organization” to establish and implement a program and a “designated organization”, to provide legal services, roles that United Way and Legal Aid are proud to fulfill.

CLEVELAND HAS THE HIGHEST RATE OF CHILDHOOD POVERTY AND THE SECOND HIGHEST RATE OF ADULT POVERTY IN THE NATION.<sup>1</sup> THE ONSET OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IN EARLY 2020 ONLY EXACERBATED THESE ISSUES AND FURTHER HIGHLIGHTED THE BARRIERS TO OPPORTUNITY CREATED BY STRUCTURAL RACISM AND EXTREME INEQUALITY.

## UNITED WAY OF GREATER CLEVELAND

In 1913, Cleveland was the nation's sixth largest city with millionaires who helped establish many of today's renowned cultural, medical, educational, and social institutions. Yet poverty existed in the city and was increasing with an influx of new residents from Europe and the rural South seeking better lives. United Way was founded as the Cleveland Federation for Charity and Philanthropy and soon became the national model for volunteer-driven community philanthropy. The organization's goals were to simplify fundraising for the community's health and human services agencies, seek donations from people beyond Cleveland's wealthiest citizens, and ensure that donations were invested in reputable agencies.

Although it has operated under different names over the years, United Way is committed to ensuring a safety net of services exists for vulnerable individuals and families. Staff members work with a broad network of community and government agencies, businesses, foundations, researchers, policymakers, and citizens to assist people in need. Staff uses a comprehensive review process to invest donations in well-qualified health and human services agencies, evaluate agencies' programs to guarantee people receive high-quality services, and reduce duplication of services.

## THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF CLEVELAND

In 1905, The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland became the fifth legal aid organization in the United States. In the early years, Legal Aid's clients were mostly European immigrants who lived in Cleveland. Over time, Legal Aid grew to serve a more inclusive demographic across a more expansive geographic area.

Today, Legal Aid operates multiple offices serving Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Lake, Lorain, and Geauga counties. Legal Aid is the only civil legal aid organization in Northeast Ohio. With a staff of 64 attorneys and 44 administrative/support staff, Legal Aid also boasts a volunteer roster of more than 3,000 attorneys – nearly 600 of whom are engaged in a case or clinic in a given year.

Legal Aid's mission is to secure justice and resolve fundamental problems for those who are low-income and vulnerable by providing high-quality legal services and working for systemic solutions. As community members struggle to keep their jobs, stay in their homes, and provide basic necessities for their families, Legal Aid works to protect their legal rights and open doors to opportunity.

## STOUT RISIUS ROSS, LLC.

Stout is a global advisory firm specializing in financial and management consulting. In addition to these services, Stout's professionals have premier experience and expertise in strategy consulting involving a variety of socioeconomic issues. Stout's clients and their advisors rely on its unique skillset which combines research, impact analyses, quantitative evaluation methods, database creation and management, interactive data visualization, and comprehension of court and social safety net systems.

Stout has conducted research and analyses of right to counsel in New York City, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Detroit, and Baltimore. Stout's publicly available reports for New York City, Philadelphia and Baltimore have contributed to landmark legislation passing in those jurisdictions.

In mid-2020, Stout developed innovative analyses of tenant household instability caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and estimates of how that instability could result in an unprecedented number of evictions in states throughout the country. Stout's research and analyses have been cited in local and national publications, including, but not limited to, The New York Times, The Washington Post, CNBC, Reuters, Forbes, Politico, and Bloomberg, and was referenced in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention September 4, 2020 Order enacting a nationwide eviction moratorium. Stout also maintains an Eviction Right to Counsel Resource Center which is a compilation of resources related to the eviction process, housing instability, racial bias, the impacts and economic costs of eviction, and draft and enacted legislation. ■

## II: STATE OF EVICTION & COVID-19

Because income and eviction are inextricably linked, it is important to understand 'housing cost burden' and how it financially strains households.

A household should not devote more than 30% of its income toward housing costs. When residents spend more than 30% of their income on housing, they are less likely to have enough money to meet other daily basic needs. In these instances, even a minor setback can result in a missed rent payment and a subsequent eviction filing.

Pre-COVID-19, there were approximately 20,000 eviction filings per year in Cuyahoga county, with about 9,000 of them occurring in Cleveland.

A 2019 study by Case Western Reserve University of evictions in Cleveland found that in eviction filings, "the average age of head of household is 37, and in 60% of cases, households have children under the age of 18 at the time of the filing. Among those that have children, the average number of children per household is 2.1. In most cases the head of household is a woman (78%) and African American (77%)."<sup>2</sup>

IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY, APPROXIMATELY 36% OF PEOPLE SPEND MORE THAN 30% OF THEIR TOTAL INCOME ON HOUSING COSTS. NOWHERE IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY CAN SOMEONE AFFORD THEIR RENT ON A MINIMUM WAGE JOB WORKING 45 HOURS A WEEK. TO AFFORD A TWO-BEDROOM APARTMENT IN CLEVELAND WHILE MAKING MINIMUM WAGE, YOU WOULD HAVE TO WORK 73 HOURS A WEEK, 52 WEEKS A YEAR JUST TO MAKE RENT.



An eviction can lead to a multitude of ripple effects that inhibit families from economic, social, academic, and other areas of success.

- Tenants who experience an eviction are 30% more likely to lose their wages or jobs.<sup>3</sup>
- They also move four times more frequently than those who have not been evicted and are more likely to spend time in homeless shelters.
- Children in evicted families are more likely to become chronically absent from school, which impacts graduation rates.
- Children who experience an eviction are less likely to be tested for elevated blood lead levels – and when they are tested, they are more likely to have results with elevated levels.<sup>4</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the economic, systemic, and racial factors influencing eviction in the community. Emerging evidence has shown that there are links between eviction and excess mortality. Nationally, researchers found that lifting eviction moratoria led to an additional 433,700 COVID-19 cases and 10,700 associated deaths.<sup>5</sup>

To gather data on the social and economic effects of COVID-19 on American households, the US Census Bureau deployed the Household Pulse Survey, which is being used to gauge the impact of COVID-19 on communities across the country.<sup>6</sup>

### INCREASED HOUSING AND FINANCIAL INSTABILITY

Low- and moderate- income tenants throughout the country have expressed low levels of confidence in their ability to make next month’s rent payment. With limited access to financial capital, low-income tenants have been turning to making rent payments via credit cards, borrowing from friends and family, taking out high-interest payday loans, and depleting their emergency saving funds – all in the effort to stave off eviction. Meanwhile, an estimated 54 million Americans will struggle with hunger during this time, a 45% increase from 2019, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.<sup>7</sup>

### CDC EVICTION MORATORIUM

On September 4, 2020, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued an order establishing the federal moratorium on evictions, initially set to remain in place until December 31, 2020, then extended

[continued next page](#)

#### HOUSEHOLD PULSE SURVEY DATA FOR OHIO RESIDENTS (AS OF DECEMBER 21, 2020)

**\$29,953** is the median household income in Cleveland.

**41%** of households **with minor children** indicated they had ‘Slight Confidence’ or ‘No Confidence’ in the ability to pay next month’s rent.

**29%** of households **without minor children** had ‘Slight Confidence’ or ‘No Confidence’ in their ability to pay next month’s rent.

#### 2019 HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF \$50,000 OR LESS

**22%** were not current on their rent.

**40%** indicated they had ‘No Confidence’ or ‘Slight Confidence’ in their ability to pay next month’s rent.

**75%** that were not current on their rent indicated that they were ‘Very Likely’ or ‘Somewhat Likely’ to leave their home due to eviction in the next two months.

#### 2019 HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF \$25,000 OR LESS

**22.8%** were not current on their rent.

to January 31, 2021 and extended a third time until at least March 31, 2021. In light of this order, the assumption is that a portion of those households that would have normally received an eviction notice for nonpayment of rent have not, with any eviction deferred until after February 2021 or later.

Locally, Cleveland Municipal Housing Court suspended eviction hearings and eviction move outs from March 18, 2020 through June 15, 2020. No additional protections to avoid eviction were put in place locally. Furthermore, in Ohio, no state-wide eviction moratorium was enacted, because the Ohio Supreme Court gave local courts discretion.

United Way and Legal Aid are working to obtain full details about eviction filings from Cleveland Housing Court. Data for Cleveland Housing Court cases has recently been obtained from Stout and is being incorporated into its data platform for future reporting. In the interim, based on data provided to the Eviction Lab and publicly reported, Stout estimates that from June 1 – December 31, 2020 there have been approximately 2,800 eviction filings in Cleveland, averaging 75-100 per week.

The CDC moratorium paired with increased financial assistance may be causing eviction figures to decrease from pre-pandemic rates. The City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County dedicated millions of dollars to rental assistance. As of December 2020, more than 11,000 applications had been filed for this assistance,

thereby reducing the number of evictions that had been anticipated due to COVID-19 impacts. As our evaluation of RTC continues we will be analyzing the intersection of rental assistance and legal assistance as impactful means of reducing the number of eviction filings and the number of evictions or other forms of disruptive displacement.

### DISPARATE IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES OF COLOR AND LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS

National research has found that eviction disparately impacts communities of color, specifically single, female-headed households. These communities often face housing instability in addition to a variety of other financial and socioeconomic challenges. In Cleveland, 42% of African Americans live below the poverty level compared to 24% of white people.<sup>8</sup> According to the Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services, around 6,400 people enter through their shelter system (22% are white and 78% are people of color).<sup>9</sup> More specifically, in Cleveland, the top 10 tracts for eviction filings from 2016-2018 were all majority Black tracts, of which six had poverty rates above 10%.<sup>10</sup> This aligns with the Case Western Reserve University’s report identifying that the most commonly evicted tenants are black female heads of households with minor children. As our evaluation of RTC continues we will be analyzing the disproportionate impact that eviction has on women and communities of color. ■

#### CHANGES IN EVICTION FILINGS

Eviction filings in Cleveland were slightly below average in January and February of this year.<sup>1</sup> Filings dropped dramatically in March and have been near zero since then.

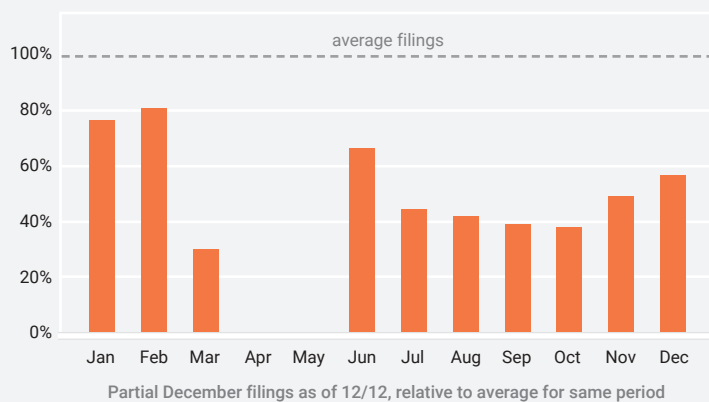
■ **FILINGS THIS YEAR**  
Relative to Average

<sup>1</sup> Average eviction filings taken from Eviction Lab data for 2012, 2013, 2015, and 2016

<sup>2</sup> Filing data for 2020 collected by January Advisors

Eviction lab: <https://evictionlab.org/eviction-tracking/cleveland-oh/>

#### MONTHLY EVICTION FILINGS RELATIVE TO AVERAGE



### THE GEOGRAPHY OF CHANGES IN EVICTION FILINGS

Cleveland is divided into 177 Census Tracts. Here we map, in each of those Tracts, eviction filings over the last four weeks compared to the typical number of filings in the average year.<sup>1</sup> Over that period, we see steep declines in eviction filings across the city.

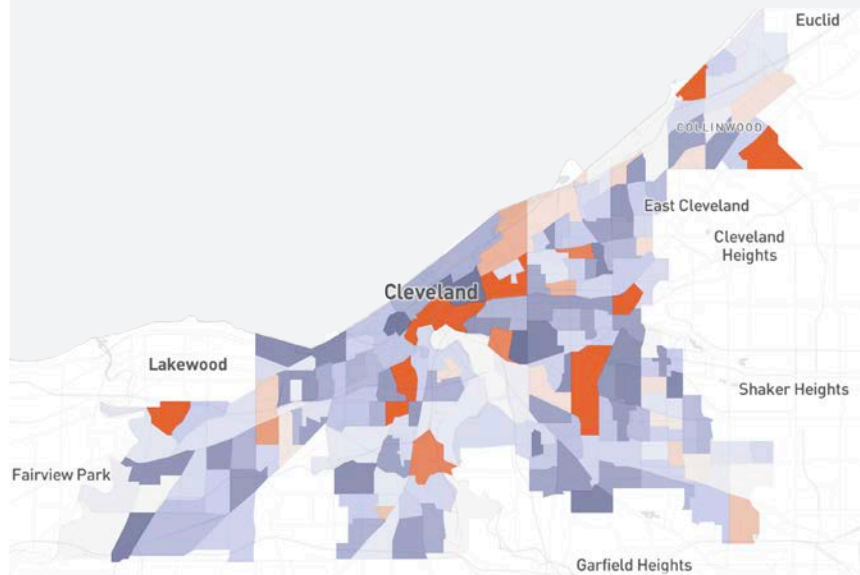
#### EVICTION FILINGS Since November 15, 2020



<sup>1</sup> Average eviction filings taken from Eviction Lab data for 2012, 2013, 2015, and 2016

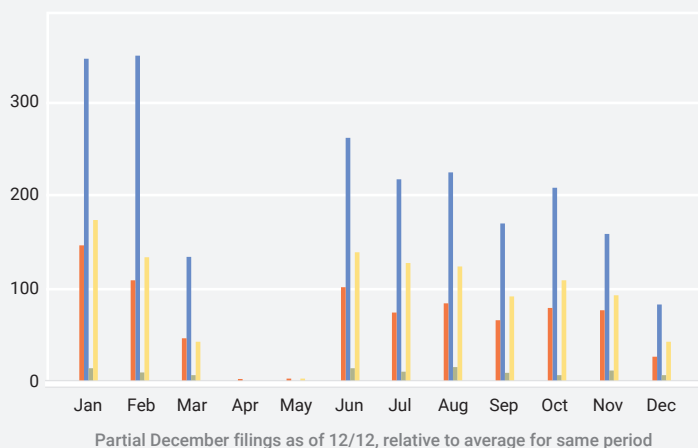
<sup>2</sup> Tract racial majority determined using American Community Survey (ACS) estimates for 2014–2018

Eviction lab: <https://evictionlab.org/eviction-tracking/cleveland-oh/>



THE CDC MORATORIUM PAIRED WITH INCREASED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE MAY BE CAUSING EVICTION FIGURES TO DECREASE FROM PRE-PANDEMIC RATES. THE CITY OF CLEVELAND AND CUYAHOGA COUNTY DEDICATED MILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO RENTAL ASSISTANCE. AS OF DECEMBER 2020, MORE THAN 11,000 APPLICATIONS HAD BEEN FILED FOR THIS ASSISTANCE, THEREBY REDUCING THE NUMBER OF EVICTIONS THAT HAD BEEN ANTICIPATED DUE TO COVID-19 IMPACTS.

#### FILINGS BY NEIGHBORHOOD RACIAL/ETHNIC MAJORITY



#### EVICTION FILINGS BY NEIGHBORHOOD DEMOGRAPHICS

American Community Survey (ACS) data allow us to categorize neighborhoods by their racial/ethnic majority: White, Black, Latinx, or Other/None. In January and February, eviction filings were concentrated in majority-Black neighborhoods. Since March, eviction filings have dropped steeply across all neighborhoods.



<sup>1</sup> Average eviction filings taken from Eviction Lab data for 2012, 2013, 2015, and 2016

Eviction lab: <https://evictionlab.org/eviction-tracking/cleveland-oh/>

## III: RIGHT TO COUNSEL – CLEVELAND (RTC)

In October 2019, Cleveland City Council passed historic legislation ensuring a right to counsel in certain housing cases.

The right applies to Cleveland tenants living at or below 100% of the federal poverty level (\$21,720 annual income, for a family of three) with at least one minor child in the household as of July 1, 2020.

The right to counsel legislation laid the foundation for the partnership between United Way and Legal Aid.

United Way (the lead partner organization) and Legal Aid (the designated organization) are working together to ensure that all eligible households facing eviction in Cleveland Municipal Housing Court are provided with free legal representation and to fulfill the civil right created by the legislation.

The implementation of RTC comes at a critical time for families that are low-income.

Pre-COVID-19, Cleveland was ranked one of the nation's most impoverished cities, with 36.2% of its residents living in poverty. While the national poverty rate for children under age 18 is 18%, Cleveland's child poverty rate is 50.5% – the highest of all major U.S. cities.<sup>11</sup>

In 2018, Cleveland Housing Court heard more than 9,000 eviction cases. In the 2017-2018 school year, the Cleveland School District reported 2,972 homeless students.<sup>12</sup> And, as highlighted earlier in this report, the onset of COVID-19 will only exacerbate housing stability issues.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RTC COMES AT A CRITICAL TIME FOR FAMILIES THAT ARE LOW-INCOME. PRE-COVID-19, CLEVELAND WAS RANKED ONE OF THE NATION'S MOST IMPOVERISHED CITIES, WITH 36.2% OF ITS RESIDENTS LIVING IN POVERTY. WHILE THE NATIONAL POVERTY RATE FOR CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18 IS 18%, CLEVELAND'S CHILD POVERTY RATE IS 50.5% – THE HIGHEST OF ALL MAJOR U.S. CITIES.<sup>11</sup>

## UNITED WAY & LEGAL AID RELATIONSHIP

RTC programming was developed and is co-led by United Way and Legal Aid. From the beginning, both organizations collaborated on program development, fundraising, marketing, and evaluation. This partnership built a comprehensive approach to implementation that involves both internal staff and leaders in the community.

As an integral part of United Way's Impact Institute, RTC leverages collaboration and unique organizational strengths as one of the solutions for housing instability. United Way provides administrative support, coordinates funding and resources, designs marketing and community outreach components, and contracts with Stout to evaluate RTC over a three-year period.

Legal Aid is responsible for the program's intake, legal advice and representation, training of staff lawyers/contract attorneys/volunteers, community legal education, on-going collaboration with Cleveland Municipal Housing Court and community partners, and helps lead with United Way the fundraising, outreach, and evaluative components of RTC. Both organizations engage in working groups and committees that govern and approve the major programmatic decisions related to RTC.

United Way's RTC team consists of two staff members, the Director of Basic Needs, and the Associate Director of RTC. The Associate Director leads the evaluation, volunteer committees, and working groups. United Way invests significant in-kind resources from its Marketing and Resource Development teams in addition to 2-1-1 Help Link, United Way's main referral source to RTC.

Legal Aid's housing practice includes 19 attorneys and 5 other staff (paralegals and tenant info line staff). Of those staff, 10 attorneys and 2 paralegals are 100% dedicated to RTC. The RTC team benefits from being part of Legal Aid's larger housing group as they can strategize together cases and track together larger systemic housing law trends. Considerable resources from the Executive Director, Deputy Director of Advocacy, Director of Development and Communications, Data and Evaluation Manager, and the Director of Finance and Administrative Operations have also been dedicated to RTC. In total, RTC accounts for thousands of staff hours and resources. In addition to the RTC housing staff, a portion of Legal Aid's staff from the intake and Volunteer Lawyers Program (14.0 FTE) provide support to RTC shepherding intakes and placing cases with pro bono attorneys.

In order to meet the ever-evolving demand for RTC, Legal Aid leverages its staff attorney work with additional support from contract attorneys and pro bono attorneys from Legal Aid's Volunteer Lawyers Program. Trained by Legal Aid staff, these contract and pro bono attorneys provide extra human resources to handle what is anticipated will be an ever-fluxing curve of case demand. Legal Aid will also monitor the use of contract and pro bono attorneys to help make decisions in the future of when to add additional full-time staff.

**continued** *next page*

RTC PROGRAMMING WAS DEVELOPED AND IS CO-LED BY UNITED WAY AND LEGAL AID. FROM THE BEGINNING, BOTH ORGANIZATIONS COLLABORATED ON PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT, FUNDRAISING, MARKETING, AND EVALUATION. THIS PARTNERSHIP BUILT A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION THAT INVOLVES BOTH INTERNAL STAFF AND LEADERS IN THE COMMUNITY.

## RIGHT TO COUNSEL OPERATING STRUCTURE WORKING GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

To successfully implement RTC, United Way and Legal Aid are working with subject matter experts in housing stability and have formed an Advisory Committee and four working groups to support and engage community stakeholders as part of RTC. The goals of the working groups are to leverage the expertise on a deeper level, activate networks, and identify opportunities for collaboration. Groups meet at least monthly and take on assignments as needed, acting on behalf of RTC when appropriate. Major activities and Year One (1) key deliverables are outlined below.

- **PROGRAM WORKING GROUP:** The Program work group meets semi-monthly and focuses on access to legal services and resources for eligible households. This group is responsible for successful implementation and provides feedback on opportunities for improvement.

### Key Year 1 Deliverables:

- Adapting its approach to the change from in-person to virtual court proceedings in Cleveland Municipal Housing Court of Legal Aid Attorneys and staff available on all of the Housing Court dockets to ensure eligible households can access legal representation pursuant to the ordinance.
- Developing processes to notify tenants of possible eligibility through Court Summons and other marketing strategies.
- Ensuring that a holistic approach is part of the legal strategies by making a connection to emergency rental assistance through CHN Housing Partners & Emerald Development and Economic Network (EDEN).

- **FUNDRAISING WORKING GROUP:** The Fundraising work group focuses on securing public and private investments to support RTC. The group meets semi-monthly to strategize and pursue opportunities for additional resources or to leverage existing resources to improve outcomes for represented households.

### Key Year 1 Deliverables:

- In addition to a commitment from the City of Cleveland, securing additional investments in RTC.
- Retaining and recognizing current supporters and cultivating new supporters through virtual educational events and briefings.

- **EVALUATION WORKING GROUP:** The Evaluation working group focuses on evaluating the effectiveness, return on investment, and areas of improvement of RTC. The group meets semi-monthly to review, discuss, and inform the evaluative strategies implemented by Stout, RTC's contracted evaluator.

### Key Year 1 Deliverables:

- Releasing a national RFP to identify an evaluator to track outcomes, impact, and return on investment leading to the partnership with Stout.

- **COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH WORKING GROUP:** The Communications and Outreach group meets weekly to create and disseminate publicity and materials for RTC to educate the community, community-based organizations, and landlords regarding RTC. Group members provide feedback and guidance on strategies to share the RTC story across the community, focusing on eligible tenants, the public sector and community-based organizations, foundations and donors, and the community at large.

### Key Year 1 Deliverables:

- Launching a website to function as the front door to RTC and other housing-focused community resources, including those that are COVID-19 specific.
- Developing outreach materials and messaging for potentially eligible RTC households.
- Engaging in multi-tiered campaigns that include radio, social media, and billboard efforts.

## ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

United Way and Legal Aid have invested considerable resources in an expanding engagement and outreach strategy to ensure Cleveland tenants know they may be eligible for this resource. This has been the primary function of the Communications & Outreach Working Group to date.

FreeEvictionHelp.org, RTC’s website, launched on June 30, 2020 and includes a pre-screening tool for possible eligible tenants, links to other community resources, as well as information on Cleveland Municipal Housing Court and updates on the impact of COVID-19. And, once the CDC eviction moratorium went into effect in September 2020, the website includes a pop-up for new visitors to encourage them to learn more. As of December 2020, more than 2,000 stakeholders have visited the website and 505 have completed the pre-screening tool.

Since July 1, 2020, more than 3,000 RTC information inserts (*Appendices B & C*) designed by United Way in both English and Spanish, have been mailed in summons by Cleveland Municipal Housing Court and the same number of follow-up letters have been mailed to tenants based on records provided by Cleveland Municipal Housing Court (*Appendix A*). The number of mailings is slightly higher than evictions filed as follow-up letters are mailed to all parties named in the eviction filing. United Way and Legal Aid are grateful to the Cleveland Housing Court for this assistance: this two-pronged effort has been the source of more than 40% of referrals to RTC intake.

As part of the intake process, households are given the opportunity to identify only one source of referral, so data is limited on effectiveness of all outreach. But, United Way and Legal Aid believe a multi-channel marketing approach is important. Potentially eligible

households need to learn about the program in multiple ways in order to develop trust and then act on a call-to-action. Other avenues of broader engagement and outreach have included:

- Radio advertisements on Radio One and La Mega channels for a total reach of 11,863 listeners
- Social media posts, including a Facebook Live interview with Sam Sylk from WZAK radio which was viewed more than 4,600 times and shared to 160 personal networks
- Billboards on display (*Appendix D*) in six targeted locations throughout Cleveland neighborhoods.
- Door-knocking directly engaged 548 tenants through a partnership led by the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless and Cleveland’s chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). While door-knocking, DSA members record tenants’ responses and found that 32% were aware of RTC and 41% aware of available rent assistance.
- FastSigns, a printing company in Cleveland, donated 100 RTC yard signs in English and Spanish (*Appendices E & F*) which were delivered and placed throughout Cleveland in partnership with Community Development Corporations (CDC)
- RTC pamphlets were delivered to hospitals, homeless shelters, churches, and drop-in centers. The Cleveland Public Library inserted 1,000 RTC informational bookmarks into every book checked out in October (*Appendix G*).
- News 5 Cleveland partnered with Legal Aid and United Way to host four phone banks in 2020. Since August 2020, more than 355 callers have been engaged via the Phone Banks and an additional 112 calls have been received by 211 HelpLink as a result.

The involvement of community networks and collaborations such as these has contributed to the large number of families calling Legal Aid. These combined efforts have spread awareness about RTC to tens of thousands of Clevelanders. Legal Aid and United Way and will continue to spread awareness through these avenues and more. ■

## IV: LEGAL SERVICES

### LEGAL AID'S RTC TEAM

To meet the anticipated need, Legal Aid formed a specialized RTC team within its Housing law practice to provide representation solely to eligible Cleveland households.

The RTC team includes 10 attorneys and 2 paralegals who are 100% dedicated to RTC. Eight of the RTC team members were new to the practice area of eviction defense and six were new to Legal Aid.

In the months leading to June 1, 2020, the start date of the RTC Team, Legal Aid developed a training program to prepare the RTC staff team. The training program included the writing of a training manual, “Litigating Evictions in Cleveland Municipal Court, Housing Division,” with a companion manual of sample documents.

Responding to the new and unexpected restrictions on in-person gatherings, the RTC team attended daily training sessions by Zoom to prepare for the effective date of the RTC ordinance (affectionately called “RTC Bootcamp”). These materials for staff training were then modified for training of contract attorneys and volunteer lawyers.

FROM JULY 1, 2020, THE RTC ORDINANCE EFFECTIVE DATE, LEGAL AID RECEIVED 1,647 REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE RELATED TO HOUSING (INCLUDING NON-EVICTION TENANCY MATTERS) FROM WITHIN CLEVELAND. THESE REQUESTS LED TO 323 CASES CLASSIFIED AS ELIGIBLE FOR RTC PURSUANT TO THE CLEVELAND ORDINANCE.



### RTC REPRESENTATION OF ELIGIBLE HOUSEHOLDS

From July 1, 2020, the RTC Ordinance effective date, Legal Aid received 1,647 requests for assistance related to housing (including non-eviction tenancy matters) from within Cleveland. These requests led to 323 cases classified as eligible for RTC pursuant to the Cleveland ordinance.

Cleveland households facing eviction can apply for legal representation using various methods, including, calling Legal Aid’s intake line, completing an online intake form on Legal Aid’s website, or starting the application online at FreeEvictionHelp.org. As of December 31, 2020, 84% of RTC clients called Legal Aid for intake; 16% used the online intake forms. RTC clients indicated that they heard about Legal Aid through several channels – 50% indicated they had received the Summons insert; 37% were identified and screened during their court hearing; 11% were visited by a door knocker at their home; and 3% indicated other means of learning about Legal Aid.

When it is again safe to gather indoors, households will also be able to apply for help on-site at Legal Aid offices during designated intake hours. Additionally, Legal Aid works with many referral partners to reach households who may be eligible. Legal Aid’s Intake Group evaluates each application for representation and conducts an intake interview. Households who meet the eligibility requirements pursuant Cleveland’s Right to Counsel Ordinance are assigned a Legal Aid attorney (or, when needed, a Legal Aid pro bono volunteer or contract attorney).

Legal Aid delivers high quality representation to the RTC households. In contrast to brief service models or “lawyer for the day” models, and pursuant to the Ordinance, RTC is a full legal representation model, requiring adequate time for RTC lawyers to develop the legal strategy and defenses for each represented household. Legal Aid and the Cleveland Municipal Court have worked together to create a process for tenants who appear for their eviction hearing to be screened for RTC eligibility. If their household is RTC eligible, the Court regularly grants a one-week continuance in order for full representation to be provided to the household.

In the Fall of 2020, with the support of Cleveland Housing Court, Legal Aid started to attend every virtual docket to screen tenants who appeared at their hearing for eligibility pursuant to the RTC Ordinance. This presence ensures households who may be eligible for RTC do not fall through the cracks.

Additionally, to provide holistic solutions for Legal Aid clients, Legal Aid has available skilled social workers to provided services and warm referrals. Legal Aid also partners with many community agencies to provide supports for vulnerable populations. With this work, Legal Aid increases the availability and accessibility of affordable housing, improves housing stability, prevents unjust evictions, and improves local housing conditions.

[continued next page](#)

RTC CASES BY OUTCOME & GOAL	ACHIEVED GOAL STATUS		NOT ACHIEVED GOAL STATUS	
	NUMBER OF RECORDS	PERCENT OF RECORDS	NUMBER OF RECORDS	PERCENT OF RECORDS
Prevented eviction or involuntary move	63.00	93%	5.00	7%
Secured time to move (30 days or more)	33.00	83%	7.00	18%
Mitigated damages	16.00	89%	2.00	11%
Had impact beyond individual client(s)	10.00	83%	2.00	17%*
Remedied defective conditions	5.00	50%	5.00	50%
Enforced real property rights	6.00	75%	2.00	25%
Secured utilities	2.00	29%	5.00	71%
Recovered security deposit	3.00	50%	3.00	50%
Significant outcome not covered by list	4.00	100%		
Secured supply of affordable rental housing	3.00	75%	1.00	25%
Secured monetary relief	2.00	67%	1.00	33%
Secured Process Accommodation – Money	1.00	50%	1.00	50%
Secured Process Accommodation – Language Access	1.00	100%		
Secured participation in subsidized housing program	1.00	100%		
Reduced rent/fee	1.00	100%		

\*Goal Status Planned

### SIX-MONTH OUTCOMES: A SNAPSHOT

Other jurisdictions that have implemented a right to counsel have seen considerable success. Even during uncertain times due to COVID-19, after six months, Cleveland’s RTC initiative is on-pace to meet and exceed preliminary expectations. Legal Aid is on track to meet the anticipated case goals originally set, pre-COVID-19.

COVID-19 has impacted the work in several unexpected ways. Eviction moratoria and millions in rental assistance have led to fewer eviction filings since the start of the pandemic. Many Legal Aid cases are remaining open as of the submission of this report. For instance, most open cases have an active CDC eviction moratorium declaration, effectively staying the case. The various moratoria, in addition to rental assistance, likely have a chilling effect on landlords filing evictions.

- 93% of households who received Legal Aid representation and were seeking to avoid an eviction or involuntary move avoided displacement in Cleveland’s initial 6 months of RTC. This outcome is a great success when compared to other right to counsel cities with 75% - 85% of clients avoiding displacement.
- 83% of households represented met the goal of achieving additional time to move out, critical because this allows tenants to engage support services, case management, and to locate long-term, safe and stable housing, often with the assistance of their Legal Aid lawyer.

- Over 700 children under 18 are being impacted through RTC; of these 133, children under the age of 18 have already avoided the trauma of disruptive displacement that is caused by eviction or involuntary moves as their cases have been successfully closed.
- The average number of residents within a household served by RTC is 3.62.
- 85% of RTC cases involve female clients.
- 24% of cases are with tenants living below 25% of FPL; 26% of cases are with tenants living between 26% to 50% and FPL; 23% of cases are with tenants living between 51% and 75% of FPL; and 22% of cases are with tenants living between 76% and 100% of FPL.

Given COVID-19 and the high demand for rent assistance, it is clear that Cleveland’s current RTC Ordinance, as written, fails to meet the need for eviction representation. Seniors, those living at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, families with dependents over 18 due to a disability or other factors, and others do not qualify for this protection. Legal Aid is representing these vulnerable groups with other staff, outside of the RTC program. But, as more data becomes available, Cleveland may want to examine the limits of the RTC law and identify paths to protecting additional low-income and vulnerable people. Through our evaluation we will include in future reporting the insights we are able to identify regarding the limits of the RTC law and how expansion of that law will have an impact on the residents of Cleveland.

RTC CASES BY RACE		
ASIAN	1	0.3%
NATIVE AMERICAN	2	0.6%
CHOSE NOT TO RESPOND	4	1.2%
MULTIRACIAL	12	3.7%
OTHER	13	4.0%
WHITE	61	18.9%
BLACK	230	71.2%
<b>RTC TOTAL</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## RENTAL ASSISTANCE & RTC

Households receiving legal representation through RTC have also been connected to the additional resources they need. The majority of evictions are filed due to non-payment of rent. In designing RTC, United Way and Legal Aid included access to rent assistance resources to help successfully resolve evictions. Partnerships were forged with CHN Housing Partner's (CHN) Family Stability Initiative, which United Way has funded since 2014, Emerald Development & Economic Network (EDEN), and Catholic Charities. Through these partnerships, eligible families have access to available rental assistance.

In response to COVID-19, new financial and other resources have been made available for struggling families, including significant rental assistance via CARES Act funding allocated by the City of Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, Greater Cleveland COVID-19 Rapid Response Fund grants and other entities. Accordingly, CHN provides expanded rental assistance to RTC-eligible families referred through RTC should they meet specific eligibility criteria. EDEN is also providing longer-term rental support for those who exhaust short-term assistance and need additional resources to maintain housing stability. ■

## MARISSA'S STORY

One client Legal Aid helped recently is Marissa, a young single mother who works as a Certified Nursing Assistant. As the coronavirus pandemic took the world by storm in March, her hours were cut significantly.

In early September, just weeks before her daughter's first birthday, Marissa's landlord filed for eviction. Even though she offered her landlord a late rental payment, he refused to accept it. (Ohio is one of only a small handful of states without a pay-to-stay option.) On top of everything, the roof in one of the apartment's bedrooms collapsed while Marissa and her daughter were out one day. The landlord made no repairs and has not evaluated the rest of the building for safety issues.

As she reviewed the documents sent to her from Cleveland Housing Court, which detailed her rights and the legal proceedings to come, Marissa noticed a pamphlet describing Cleveland's Right to Counsel with the phone number for Legal Aid. "I was hesitant to call at first," says Marissa, "but I'm so glad I did."

A Legal Aid attorney prepared Marissa's case for the hearing in Cleveland Housing Court. A motion to dismiss was filed based on a three-day notice that should not have been served during the initial CDC eviction moratorium. Legal Aid also helped Marissa apply for rental assistance funds. Once the CDC eviction moratorium took effect and it was determined Marissa was eligible, Legal Aid helped Marissa fill out a declaration to protect her under the moratorium, which extends through December 31, 2020.

During the continuance of the case, the Legal Aid attorney filed a motion to halt the proceedings and a notice that the plaintiff was served with the CDC Declaration. However, since the landlord – who was representing himself, pro se – never appeared for the virtual hearing, the eviction portion of the case was dismissed.

Safe from eviction, Marissa is currently working towards securing a new residence for her and her daughter while her Legal Aid attorney continues to fight for her to be compensated for the trouble of living in a home with unsafe conditions. "I've loved working with [my Legal Aid attorney]," says Marissa. "I can send her a text whenever I need anything. If I hadn't contacted Legal Aid, I wouldn't have known about the rental assistance programs, and I would have lost my case."

## V: EVALUATION

A committee, including United Way, Legal Aid, and representatives from CHN Housing Partners, Sisters of Charity Foundation, EDEN, Inc, Cleveland Foundation, and the National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel selected Stout in June 2020 to serve as the external evaluator for RTC and brings a wealth of knowledge on right to counsel after conducting research and evaluations of the initiative in cities like New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Los Angeles and many more.

In Cleveland, the evaluation has been broken up into several phases that build upon the information and understanding gathered.

### PHASE 1: UNDERSTAND THE GREATER CLEVELAND EVICTION ENVIRONMENT

Phase 1 of the RTC evaluation focuses on data collection; more specifically, eviction data and data from stakeholders. Stout received commitments from the organizations listed below to provide data on issues ranging from rental assistance, docket information, demographics, case outcomes, and more. These community data form key pillars of the larger data strategy. Regular updates (monthly or quarterly) with streamlined processes will enable effective data reviews and stakeholder engagement.

- Legal Aid
- United Way 2-1-1 HelpLink
- CHN Housing Partners
- Cleveland Municipal Housing Court

Stout is also collecting publicly available information from various sources that can be integrated with other data sets (described left) to provide a more robust picture of the eviction and housing landscape in Cleveland.

- Lead hazard control orders – City of Cleveland
- Housing assessment survey – Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services
- 10-Year Housing Plan – City of Cleveland
- Aggregated health data – MetroHealth
- U.S. Census, American Community Survey, American Housing Survey
- Household Pulse Survey

Since September 2020, Stout has conducted meetings with 13 Cleveland stakeholders, including: The Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development at Case Western Reserve University, Fair Housing Center for Rights and Research, Enterprise Community Partners, Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services, City of Cleveland Department of Buildings & Housing, City of Cleveland Community Development, Center for Community Solutions, 2-1-1 HelpLink, CHN Housing Partners, MetroHealth, and Cleveland Metropolitan School District. Call topics discussed were stakeholder and Stout backgrounds; stakeholder insights, expertise, experiences; availability of data / reports; and interest in continued dialogue throughout the evaluation.

Between September and October, Stout met with United Way's Community Impact Team and Legal Aid staff attorneys to learn more about the eviction landscape in Cleveland, the impacts of eviction filings on residents, housing challenges residents are facing during the pandemic, and how virtual hearings have been for tenants and Legal Aid attorneys. Insights gained included: the importance of considering historical racial impacts for the evaluation (e.g., redlining); consideration of trauma, housing condition issues, availability of alternative housing; landlord discrimination based on use of rental assistance; issues with virtual hearings; and the need for increased focus on water bills by landlords; and issues with service / notification.

A core component of the evaluative process is to understand lived experience of tenants. In January 2020, focus groups and interviews are being held with tenants who have experienced the eviction process. To facilitate these focus groups, Stout worked with Monique Williams Kelly (The Engagement Group) to

lead in the planning and moderating of tenant focus groups, including strategizing recruitment, determining topics to be discussed, and identifying Cleveland residents to serve on the Tenant Advisory Committee (TAC). This approach considers meeting residents where they are through messengers they already trust and by leveraging existing relationships that the Engagement Group has with community partners.

### **PHASE 2: DATA PLATFORM, VISUALIZATION DEVELOPMENT, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Stout will use its learnings from Phase 1 to transition to Phase 2, which focuses more heavily on data collection and quantitative measures of program performance. Stout will work to create visualizations to clearly display eviction data, provide technical assistance on data platforms for users, and design client feedback forms. The evaluation team expects to undertake the activities below during Q1 2021, contingent upon the receipt of data previously described from stakeholders.

### **PHASE 3: ANALYSIS, EVALUATION, AND SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING**

Beginning in 2022, Phase 3 will include a full review of impact data for RTC, creation of a process to gather and implement feedback for future RTC enhancements, and the further development of the RTC best practice.

The long-term evaluation of RTC will lead to insights that will further improve program performance, a more clearly defined return on investment of the program, and a data platform that will allow learnings and opportunities to be clearly shared with the community. ■

**BETWEEN SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER, STOUT MET WITH UNITED WAY'S COMMUNITY IMPACT TEAM AND LEGAL AID STAFF ATTORNEYS TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE EVICTION LANDSCAPE IN CLEVELAND, THE IMPACTS OF EVICTION FILINGS ON RESIDENTS, HOUSING CHALLENGES RESIDENTS ARE FACING DURING THE PANDEMIC, AND HOW VIRTUAL HEARINGS HAVE BEEN FOR CLIENTS AND LEGAL AID ATTORNEYS.**

# VI: RIGHT TO COUNSEL – CLEVELAND BUDGET

The RTC partners are grateful for the City of Cleveland’s annual \$300,000 contribution to support direct legal services.

However, the operations of the initiative are significantly higher, and the current resources and Ordinance only serve 38% of tenants experiencing an eviction.

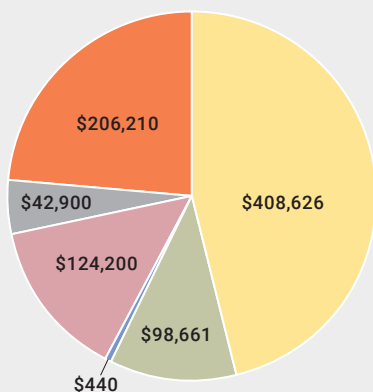
Unlike all other right to counsel cities, Cleveland implemented the tremendous partnership between United Way and Legal Aid that has leveraged both public and private resources for the operation of the program.

This innovative partnership has led to a rapid standup of RTC but additional funding from local government is needed to continue to prevent the ripple effects of lost employment, decreased child lead testing and poorer academic performance, and homelessness from continuing to take hold in the community. Continued support is crucial to work collectively to recover from lasting impacts of COVID-19.

The cost of fully funding RTC pales in comparison to the dollars saved paying for the detrimental effects of eviction. According to an evaluation by Stout, the City of Philadelphia, for example, is likely to save more than \$42 million annually, even after deducting program expenses.

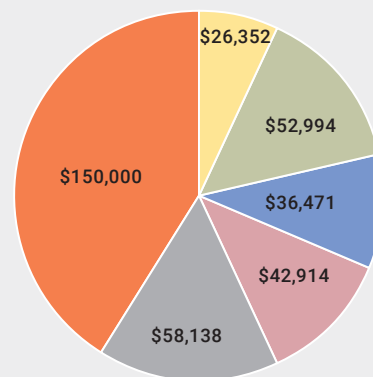
**RTC - STAFFING COSTS TOTAL: \$881,037**

- ATTORNEYS
- LEGAL SUPPORT STAFF
- CONTRACT ATTORNEY COSTS
- COMMUNITY IMPACT STAFF
- ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT STAFF
- BENEFITS



**RTC - DIRECT COSTS TOTAL: \$366,869**

- OCCUPANCY
- INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
- OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT
- PROGRAM SERVICES
- PROGRAM EVALUATION
- IMPACT INSTITUTE INVESTMENT



**RIGHT TO COUNSEL – CLEVELAND BUDGET**

	<b>2020 (Jan. - Dec.)</b>	<b>2021 (Projections) (Jan. - Dec.)</b>
<b>REVENUE SOURCES</b>		
Legal Aid Society of Cleveland General Operating	\$ 80,365	\$ 65,428
United Way Impact Institute Investment	\$ 150,000	\$ 300,000
United Way's Siemer Family Stability Initiative	\$ 25,000	\$ 50,000
City of Cleveland - RTC Investment	\$ 150,000	\$ 300,000
City of Cleveland - CDBG Standard	\$ 40,888	\$ 50,000
City of Cleveland - CDBG CARES*	\$ 36,522	\$ 500,000
The Cleveland Foundation	\$ 750,000	\$ 750,000
The George Gund Foundation	\$ 42,500	\$ 85,000
Ohio State Bar Foundation	\$ 40,000	\$ 10,000
Stout, Risius, Ross	\$ - 0	\$ 5,000
Other	\$ 165,610	\$ 60,000
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 1,480,885</b>	<b>\$ 2,175,428</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
<b>RIGHT TO COUNSEL - STAFFING COSTS (UWGC &amp; LASC)</b>		
Attorneys	\$ 408,626	\$ 870,068
Legal Support Staff	\$ 98,661	\$ 209,091
Contract Attorney Costs	\$ 440	\$ 90,000
Community Impact Staff	\$ 124,200	\$ 130,410
Administrative Support Staff	\$ 42,900	\$ 45,045
Benefits	\$ 206,210	\$ 430,343
<b>TOTAL STAFFING COSTS</b>	<b>\$ 881,037</b>	<b>\$ 1,774,95</b>
<b>RIGHT TO COUNSEL - DIRECT COSTS</b>		
Occupancy	\$ 26,352	\$ 142,025
Equipment & Office Expansion	\$ - 0	\$ 39,900
Information Technology	\$ 52,494	\$ 55,539
Outreach & Engagement	\$ 36,471	\$ 50,000
Program Services	\$ 42,914	\$ 13,500
Program Evaluation	\$ 58,138	\$ 7,115
Impact Institute Investment	\$ 150,000	\$ 6,885
<b>TOTAL DIRECT COSTS</b>	<b>\$ 366,869</b>	<b>\$ 905,948</b>
<b>TOTAL RIGHT TO COUNSEL CLEVELAND COSTS</b>	<b>\$ 1,247,906</b>	<b>\$ 2,680,905</b>
<b>TOTAL REVENUE LESS TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 232,979</b>	<b>\$ (505,477)</b>

\*Budget summary current as of report due date

## VII: NEXT STEPS & CONCLUSION

**RTC and its partners will continue to revise the program’s implementation in order to respond to the needs of low-income Cleveland tenants. Throughout 2021, activities and next steps, including those of the evaluative process, aim to enhance resident engagement, further refine staffing needs, and leverage the Stout relationship to fully understand the picture of evictions in Cleveland – beyond RTC-eligible tenants.**

### TENANT ADVISORY COUNCIL (TAC)

The Tenant Advisory Council (TAC) will incorporate resident feedback into the ongoing evolution of RTC. This group’s insight and guidance will shed light on the needs of those who have experienced eviction/threats to stable housing to illuminate how RTC can be a more robust, effective resource for them. The formation of this group is supported through Stout’s evaluative plan and Stout has engaged Monique Williams Kelly of The Engagement Group to support recruitment and outreach. TAC will launch in 2021 and provide a full update in the 2022 RTC Annual Report.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH

United Way and the RTC team continue to examine the effectiveness and trends in the outreach efforts. As data, like website visits, intakes, call to Legal Aid, efforts to respond continue to shift and to determine in which to effectively invest. This will be the on-going charge of that Working Group.

### SUSTAINABILITY

Work to engage the corporate, philanthropic, and private sectors continues to share and educate them on the RTC story. In addition, future advocacy efforts with local, state, and federal governments is in development.

### SERVICE NEEDS

Cleveland’s legislation covers tenants with at least one minor children in the household living at or below the federal poverty level. This income cap translates to about \$21,720 per year for a family of three in 2021. Under the current definition of a “covered individual,” nearly 62% of tenants do not have the right to an attorney when their housing is in jeopardy and need RTC services.

As rental assistance and the original CDC eviction moratorium are set to expire, 2021 may lead to an eviction tsunami where eviction rates may be five times higher than Cleveland’s annual average. In order to serve more households, Legal Aid would need the funding to hire one new attorney for every 110 new evictions filed, at an average cost of \$120,000 per attorney.

Without this additional support, the economic, social, and community recovery from COVID-19 will lag in the Cleveland community compared to others. The Program Working Group continues to examine the trends and intakes as circumstances evolve in response to COVID-19. ■

**CONCLUSION:** Cleveland’s leadership to ensure stable housing as a moral imperative has paved the way for the City to continue to innovate solutions for some of the community’s biggest challenges. The legislation passed in 2019 set the foundation for the United Way-Legal Aid partnership and the launch of RTC. This cutting-edge initiative protects the housing and dignity of Cleveland’s renting families. By providing the technical expertise of an attorney, it supports the stability of the community and its ability to thrive. While still in its infancy, RTC will bring about significant and visible positive change for low-income tenants and their families for generations to come.




## SOURCES

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: OUTREACH LETTERS IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH




**Dear Tenant,**

Court records show your landlord has filed an eviction case against you in Cleveland Housing Court. If you have not received court papers yet, you will probably get them soon. You may qualify for free legal representation at your eviction hearing if you have at least one minor child in your household and are low income.

**Your eviction court date is soon.**

Call or apply online to find out if you are eligible for free legal help. The sooner you call, the more a lawyer can do for you.

**Apply Online 24/7:**  
 [FreeEvictionHelp.org](https://FreeEvictionHelp.org)  
 Available 24/7




**Call:**  
 Llámamos / Appelez-nous / 呼び / 電話 / 216-861-5835  
 Available Monday – Friday  
 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

**2-1-1**  
 Available 24/7

Do not ignore your eviction case. Tenants' rights in the eviction process can be protected by a lawyer. Lawyers who represent tenants in evictions often get good results, such as:

- Stopping the eviction
- Getting tenants more time to move
- Protecting tenant's property
- Reducing or avoiding debt owed by tenant
- Addressing unit repairs

Call or apply online now. You may have a right to free legal representation in your eviction case. You may not receive assistance if you do not call or apply online before your eviction hearing.






**Estimado Inquilino,**

Los registros de la corte muestran que su arrendador ha presentado un caso de desalojo en su contra en la Corte de Vivienda de Cleveland. Si aún no ha recibido documentos de la corte, probablemente los recibirá pronto. Usted puede tener derecho a recibir representación legal gratuita en su audiencia de desalojo si tiene al menos un hijo menor de edad en su hogar y si cumple con ciertos requisitos de ingresos.

**Su fecha de corte de desalojo es pronto.**

Llame o solicite en línea para averiguar si es elegible para recibir ayuda legal gratuita. Cuanto antes llame, más podrá hacer un abogado por usted.

**Solicite en línea 24/7:**  
 [FreeEvictionHelp.org](https://FreeEvictionHelp.org)  
 Disponible 24/7



**Llame:**  
 Llámamos / Appelez-nous / 呼び / 電話 / 216-861-5835  
 Disponible de lunes a viernes  
 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

**2-1-1**  
 Disponible 24/7

No ignore su caso de desalojo. Un abogado podrá proteger sus derechos como inquilino durante el proceso de desalojo. Los abogados que representan a los inquilinos en los desalojos suelen obtener buenos resultados, por ejemplo:

- Detener el desalojo
- Obtener más tiempo para que los inquilinos puedan mudarse
- Proteger la propiedad del inquilino
- Reducir o evitar la deuda por parte del inquilino
- Atender las reparaciones de la unidad

Llame o solicite en línea ahora. Usted puede tener derecho a una representación legal gratuita en su caso de desalojo. Es posible que no reciba asistencia si no llama o solicita en línea antes de su audiencia de desalojo.

## APPENDIX B: INSERT IN ENGLISH

**ATTENTION CLEVELAND TENANTS!**

You may qualify for free legal representation at your eviction hearing if you have at least one minor child in your household and meet income guidelines. Call us or apply online to find out if you are eligible for free legal help. The sooner you call, the more a lawyer can do for you.



**Call Us**  
 Llámamos / Appelez-nous / 呼び / 電話 / 216-861-5835  
 Monday to Friday, 9 am to 4 pm

**2-1-1**  
 Available 24/7

**Apply Online**  
[FreeEvictionHelp.org](https://FreeEvictionHelp.org)  
 Available 24/7

Do not ignore your eviction case. Tenants' rights during the eviction process can be protected by a lawyer. Lawyers who represent tenants in evictions often get good results, such as:

- Stopping the eviction
- Getting tenants more time to move
- Protecting tenant's property
- Reducing or avoiding debt owed by tenant
- Addressing unit repairs

Call now, you may have a right to free legal representation in your eviction case.




This publication was financially assisted by the Ohio State Bar Foundation.

## APPENDIX C: INSERT IN SPANISH

**ATENCIÓN A LOS INQUILINOS DE CLEVELAND!**

Usted puede tener derecho a representación legal gratuita en su audiencia de desalojo si tiene al menos un hijo menor de edad en su hogar y cumple con ciertos requisitos de ingresos. Llámamos o solicite en línea para descubrir si usted es elegible para obtener ayuda legal gratuita. Cuanto más rápido nos llame, más podrá hacer su abogado por usted.



**Call Us**  
 Llámamos / Appelez-nous / 呼び / 電話 / 216-861-5835  
 Lunes a viernes, de 9 am a las 4 pm

**2-1-1**  
 Disponible las 24/7

**Solicite en línea**  
[FreeEvictionHelp.org](https://FreeEvictionHelp.org)  
 Disponible las 24/7

No ignore su caso de desalojo. Un abogado podrá proteger sus derechos como inquilino durante el proceso de desalojo. Los abogados que representan a los inquilinos en los desalojos suelen obtener buenos resultados, por ejemplo:

- Detener el desalojo
- Obtener más tiempo para que los inquilinos puedan mudarse
- Proteger la propiedad del inquilino
- Reducir o evitar la deuda por parte del inquilino
- Atender las reparaciones de la unidad

Llame ahora, usted puede tener derecho a una representación legal gratuita en su caso de desalojo.




Esta publicación fue financiada por la Fundación del Colegio de Abogados de Ohio.

APPENDIX D: BILLBOARDS

**Facing Eviction?**  
**Call 211**  
 or visit [FreeEvictionHelp.org](http://FreeEvictionHelp.org)  
**YOU MAY QUALIFY for FREE LEGAL SERVICES**

Logos: United Way Greater Cleveland, RIGHT TO COUNSEL FREE EVICTION HELP, Legal Aid Society of Cleveland

**FREE EVICTION HELP**  
**AYUDA GRATUITA EN CUESTIONES DE DESALOJO**  
**YOU MAY QUALIFY for FREE LEGAL SERVICES**  
**Usted puede calificar para servicios legales de manera GRATUITA**

Logos: United Way, RIGHT TO COUNSEL, Legal Aid Society of Cleveland

**FreeEvictionHelp.org • Call 211 Llame al 211**

APPENDIX E: YARD SIGN IN ENGLISH

**FREE EVICTION HELP**  
 You may qualify for  
**FREE legal services**  
**FreeEvictionHelp.org • (216) 687-1900**

Logos: RIGHT TO COUNSEL FREE EVICTION HELP, Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, United Way Greater Cleveland

APPENDIX F: YARD SIGN IN SPANISH

**AYUDA GRATUITA EN CUESTIONES DE DESALOJO**  
 Usted puede calificar para  
 servicios legales de manera  
**GRATUITA**  
**FreeEvictionHelp.org • (216) 687-1900**

Logos: DERECHO A JUICIO AYUDA GRATUITA SOBRE TEMAS DE DESALOJO, Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, United Way Greater Cleveland

APPENDIX G: BOOKMARK

**RIGHT TO COUNSEL**  
**FREE EVICTION HELP**  
 Call the  
 1-800-486-8888  
 211-211  
 (216) 687-1900  
 Monday to Friday,  
 9 am to 4 pm  
 211  
 Available 24/7  
 Apply Online  
[FreeEvictionHelp.org](http://FreeEvictionHelp.org)  
 Available 24/7

**ATTENTION CLEVELAND TENANTS!**

Do not ignore your eviction case. Tenants' rights during the eviction process can be protected by a lawyer.

Call now you may have a right to free legal representation in your eviction case.

Logos: United Way Greater Cleveland, Legal Aid Society of Cleveland

**You may qualify for free legal representation at your eviction hearing if you have at least one minor child in your household and have low income. Call us or apply online to find out if you are eligible for free legal help.**

The sooner you call, the more a lawyer can do for you.



**RIGHT TO COUNSEL – CLEVELAND**

216.861.5835  
[FreeEvictionHelp.org](http://FreeEvictionHelp.org)

**#FreeEvictionHelp**  
**#RighttoCounselCLE**

