



Breakout session

From Concept to Counsel: How Limited Representation Became a Part of Hamilton County's Eviction Mitigation Ecosystem

Speakers

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From Concept to Counsel

How Limited Representation Became a Part of Hamilton County's Eviction Mitigation Ecosystem

Presented by:

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Shannon Price, Visiting Associate Professor, University of Cincinnati College of Law



An Overview of the Eviction Process

Step 1: Serve Notice to Leave the Premises

- Three days to leave before an eviction complaint can be filed (if for non-payment).

Step 2: Landlord Files Eviction Complaint. Can include two different types of counts:

- Possession of Premises ("First Cause")
- Monetary Claims ("Second Cause")



An Overview of the Eviction Process

Step 3: Tenant is Served with the Summons.

- Includes date/time/location of hearing solely for possession of premises (the "first cause" hearing).

Step 4: The Hearing

- Normally confirms basic information for legal sufficiency of the eviction:



An Overview of the Eviction Process

Step 5: Issuance of Writ of Possession

- Normally 7 days for tenant to vacate the premises or otherwise reach a resolution with the landlord.

Step 6: Scheduling of Setout

- If tenant has not moved out by end of 7 day period, landlord can contact the civil bailiffs on day 8 to schedule a setout.
- Civil bailiffs do not move the tenant out. They oversee the removal of the tenant.



The “Eviction Economy” By the Numbers

- 13,000 filings in Hamilton County in 2024 alone.
 - Eviction rates rising with housing costs and economic instability: 6% higher than pre-pandemic yearly average.
- “Mom & Pop” landlords increasingly displaced by institutional investors: economies of scale for bulk eviction filings.
- Roughly 7% of tenants come to court with legal representation; roughly 98% of landlords have lawyers.



The “Eviction Economy” & Health

- Documented increase in material hardship; mental & physical health problems; infant & child health disparities for families facing forced displacement.
- Desmond & Kimbro: “We estimate the likelihood of experiencing job loss to be between 11 and 22 percentage points higher for workers who experienced a preceding forced move, compared to observationally identical workers who did not.”
 - Missed work for court hearings and moving; changing transportation and childcare arrangements; and mental and physical health strain all impair the ability to sustain or reenter employment.



So – How Do We Approach Change?

**Engaging diverse stakeholders &
identifying service gaps.**



November 30, 2023

- The first "eviction docket observation" event took place in Courtroom B of the Hamilton County Justice Center.
- Most hearings concluded in less than a minute.
- Nearly every landlord was represented. Nearly every tenant wasn't.
- Nearly every contested hearing ended with a ruling for the landlord.



What is the eviction docket observation?

- The eviction docket observations are hosted jointly by the Help Center and Cincinnati City Councilmember Meeka Owens.
- Raises awareness and understanding of how eviction impacts our communities.
- Allows people to observe the eviction process and see the inequity that exists.
- Has now become a monthly community event.
- Inaugural event was attended by Kate Schroder of Interact for Health.



"What we witnessed in housing court was a living example of an uneven playing field. It was as if two teams came to play a soccer match... one team (the landlords) had a coach (a lawyer) who knew the rules of the game. The other team (the tenants) were never told the rules and didn't have a coach. Many of the tenants had concerning complaints of neglect by their landlord (no heat, infestations, etc.), but were immediately silenced because the tenants did not know how to raise them in the right legal language, and they did not know about escrow. The 'matches' were over in seconds; tenants shuffled out with their heads down – unseen and unheard."

-Kate Schroder, Interact for Health



Gaps Identified

- Existing partners were well-suited to identify tenants in need of legal services – but demand for legal services far, far exceeded supply.
- Large-scale expansion of full-scope legal services would require exponential and unsustainable funding increase.
- Small percentage of tenants able to access full-scope legal services received “Cadillac” version of assistance.
 - Vast majority of eligible tenants received no service at all.



Next Steps:

Empowering organizations who can
creatively target service gaps.



Access to Counsel Ordinance

- Shortly after the first eviction docket observation took place, the Access to Counsel ordinance unanimously passed Cincinnati City Council.
 - Included in the ordinance was the concept of "brief legal assistance" as a bridge to the gap between full representation and no representation.
- No organization in Cincinnati offered brief legal assistance in the manner it was envisioned by the ordinance.

Enter...



The Help Center – How We Started

- How we started/history of Help Center
 - Founded in September of 2017
 - Started as one attorney (Rob Wall) and one paralegal.
 - Exclusively assisted with municipal civil matters.
 - Forms and guides created over time.



The Help Center – What We offered

- In-person and phone consultations
- Limited legal representation provided by appointment.
- Assist individuals representing themselves in court
- Provide valuable guidance on courtroom procedure
- Instruct individuals on how to file legal documents
- Preparation of documents for clients to file pro se.



The Help Center – By The Numbers (YTD)

- 6,689 people provided info in-person at Municipal Court.
- 5,592 people provided info by phone through Municipal Court
- 1,399 people provided info by phone through Juvenile Court
- 2,863 people provided info in-person at Juvenile Court
- 1,705 attorney appointments
- 682 eviction limited appearances

Total of 18,930 people helped in 2025!*

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Putting it All Together:

**Building sustainable services &
partnerships**



The Help Center – Eviction Limited Representation Pilot Project

- Launched on September 10, 2024
- Initially offered same-day, in-person representation on first-cause hearings solely to Cincinnati tenants.
 - Not a substitute for full-scope rep – but much better than nothing.
 - Think “used Buick” instead of “Cadillac”
- Expanded in May of 2025 to provide county representation.



The Help Center – Eviction Limited Representation Pilot Project

- Partnerships with City of Cincinnati; United Way; Legal Aid; HOME; Cincinnati Public Schools; Interact for Health; & more!
- Pairing legal representation with rent assistance and other housing stability resources.
- Improving referral pathways between organizations.



Limited Representation By the Numbers

- Over 890 notices of appearance filed since launch in September 2024; more than 450 households served.
- 93.7% of total appearances result in a positive outcome for tenants – either more time, or an outright dismissal.
- 88.8% of 366 cases tried to completion have been dismissed.

** Numbers updated 9/26/25.*

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Questions?

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We value your opinion

Please fill out our evaluation form to share your thoughts on this breakout session