

Frequently Asked Questions: Building Capacity and Partnerships to Address Housing Issues for Older Adults

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This FAQ is a follow up to NCLER's training, *Building Capacity and Partnerships to Address Housing Issues for Older Adults*. The webcast [recording](#) and [slides](#) have more information.

Who are the main players in the housing services network?

Throughout the country, a network of government and community based organizations make up the housing services network. Operating at the local, state, and federal level, the following entities exist throughout the country and work together to provide private and public housing to many older adults.

A. Continuum of Care

The Continuum of Care (CoC) is a “regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals.”¹ The Continuum of Care in your area will track the homeless community through a biannual count of the population which provides “an overview of the state of homelessness in a CoC, and offers[s] the information necessary to redirect services, funding, and resources as necessary.”² Data gathered by your CoC can be helpful in understanding who is experiencing homelessness in your community and who advocates should be directing services towards. Advocates can find their local Continuum of Care on the Housing and Urban Development Exchange website.³

B. Subsidized Housing

A variety of subsidized housing is available to older adults throughout the country. Subsidized housing is income-limited and may come in the form of state owned housing, vouchers (e.g. Section 8 Vouchers) that can be used to access private housing, low income housing tax credits, or supportive housing.

C. Private Housing

Private housing is not owned by a government entity, and can include individual homes, apartments, duplexes, mobile home parks, RV parks, or rooms for rent. It should be noted that eviction and unlawful detainer laws vary depending on the type of private housing. Check with the local legal services provider or court to determine any local differences in eviction law.

D. Legal Services Organizations

Legal Services organizations serve older adults throughout the country, providing legal advice and representation in eviction/unlawful detainer cases. Advocates can find their local legal services organization that serves older adults through the ACL Eldercare Locator.⁴

1 National Alliance to End Homelessness, “What is a Continuum of Care”, endhomelessness.org/resource/what-is-a-continuum-of-care/, January 14, 2010

2 *Id.*

3 hudexchange.info/grantees/#/byName

4 eldercare.acl.gov/Public/Index.aspx

What resources are available for older adults who are struggling to pay their rent?

Emergency Rental Assistance Programs (ERAP) are federally funded emergency funds available to help renters pay back rent and utilities. These funds are distributed by State and local programs with income requirements. These funds are available even if the tenant is not facing eviction. For more information, please refer to the NCLER presentation on ERAP⁵ and the accompanying Practice Tip.⁶

What is the most common housing issue for older adults?

One of the most prevalent issues older adults face is the speed of the eviction process. Relative to other types of court cases, the eviction process can be very quick. In many states, tenants have only a few business days to answer a complaint for eviction to avoid a default and the loss of housing. It is imperative for older adult advocates to connect their clients facing eviction to legal services as soon as possible to avoid default. Non-legal advocates can take the following key steps to preserve clients' housing in the face of eviction:

- Connect with the local legal services provider and determine the best way to make referrals.
- Become familiar with how many days tenants in the locality have to respond to an eviction complaint. This information will be available from a local legal services attorney or on the local court website.
- Research local courts' Self-Help resources. Many courts have draft response forms for eviction that a client can complete and file to preserve their case while connecting to legal services.

What steps are key in building community partnerships between legal services and housing providers?

Building strong community partnerships between legal services organizations and housing providers can be key in ensuring older adults in the community acquire and maintain stable housing. Often, housing providers have access to social workers, case workers, and other advocates that can assist clients in connecting to other services that provide stability and much needed social supports. Unfortunately, staff turnover and time commitments of attorneys can impact the ability to maintain relationships with these organizations. The following tips will be helpful in creating and maintaining these relationships:

- Connect more than just one staff member to community organizations so that if there is turnover, there is more than one point of contact;
- Join local coalitions to keep abreast of new housing issues that older adults in the community may be facing;
- Explain intake procedures to partners. This helps partners make appropriate referrals and assists them in managing client expectations. For example: what types of cases do they help with, how long does an average case take, and how long will it take after intake to connect with an attorney;
- Diversify your community partnerships to ensure all groups are being reached in the community. For example: connecting with local Pride Centers to reach LGBTQ older adults or refugee services organizations to reach new immigrants.

5 vimeo.com/631318362

6 ncler.acl.gov/getattachment/Legal-Training/upcoming_event/ERAP-Practice-Tip.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US

Additional Resources

- For more information and data on housing and homelessness nationwide: [National Alliance to End Homeless](#)
- NCLER: [Legal Assistance & the Aging Services Network: Strengthening Partnerships and Communication](#)
- NCLER: [Creating Effective Legal Outreach & Community Engagement Programs](#)

Case consultation assistance is available for attorneys and professionals seeking more information to help older adults. Contact NCLER at ConsultNCLER@acl.hhs.gov.

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