

## Housing Justice

Housing is a human right and the foundation for strong communities. Access to a safe and affordable home creates economic and community stability. At the Center for Court Innovation, we work to prevent evictions, help landlords address health hazards, and increase tenant financial and legal empowerment. By addressing issues early, we keep people safely housed and avoid legal system involvement that can affect employment, family security, and future access to stable housing.

Yet challenges exist to preserving affordable housing including:

### ■ Rent Burden

The percentage of rent-burdened households has steadily increased over the past 20 years. Nearly half of all renters in the US put more than 30% of their take home pay toward rent, forcing many to make hard choices on purchasing food, paying utility bills, and providing for their families.

### ■ Health Hazards

Home repairs and code enforcement pose habitability, safety, and health risks to families and their neighborhoods. Tenants often struggle to hold landlords accountable for repairs involving lead paint, leaks, and lack of heat and water.

### ■ Lack of Access

When issues go to housing court, landlords often have legal representation while tenants do not. New York City and several other jurisdictions have implemented right-to-counsel laws, providing low-income renters with access to legal assistance. However, barriers to services offering economic opportunity and mental and behavioral health remain.



The Center works both within courts—offering help to litigants—and within communities—helping tenants apply for benefits, rental assistance, and lease adjustments, working with landlords to address habitability issues, and co-creating safe, vibrant neighborhoods with community.

- Since 2001, the Center has operated two **neighborhood-based housing courts**, in Harlem and Red Hook, Brooklyn, and a **community-based housing help center** in Brownsville, Brooklyn. The Center's housing resource staff provide court navigation, one-on-one assistance and direct connection to a variety of resources and legal services for tenants.



- **Neighborhood Safety Initiatives** aims to improve public safety at 17 public housing developments by training local residents in community organizing and problem-solving efforts, human centered design, and re-envisioning public spaces to promote resident wellbeing.
- **Legal Hand** staffs three storefront centers where trained, non-lawyer community volunteers provide assistance, legal information, resources, and referrals for tenants, landlords and others.
- **Cities RISE** in upstate New York works with private landlords, tenants, and government to incentivize absentee or distressed landlords to perform repairs so that tenants' homes are not condemned.

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#### For More Information

Visit [courtinnovation.org/programs/housing-resource-centers](https://courtinnovation.org/programs/housing-resource-centers) or email Ignacio Jaureguilorda at [jaureguili@courtinnovation.org](mailto:jaureguili@courtinnovation.org).