

# **Stout's Independent Evaluation of RTC-C – Key Findings**

**July 1, 2020 – December 31, 2022**

**January 31, 2023**



- Cleveland Legal Aid attorneys were overwhelmingly able to assist their clients in achieving their eviction case goals.
- The percentage of Cleveland residents facing eviction who were represented has increased 8x since 2020.
  - In 2022, we estimate that approximately 79% of RTC-C eligible residents were able to access legal representation.
- Children in RTC-C client households are attending Say Yes schools, and certain RTC-C clients may be living in homes that qualify for Cleveland’s Lead Hazard Control Program.
  - Demonstrating how households experiencing eviction may need other supportive services or are living in potentially unsafe housing.

- Emergency rental assistance was crucial to effectively and efficiently resolving certain RTC-C cases and likely prevented a significant number of eviction filings in Cleveland.
- Although emergency rental assistance was an important component of resolving certain RTC-C cases (and likely prevented a significant number of evictions), no new applications were being accepted as of December 2, 2022.
- COVID-19 continues to impact RTC-C clients' employment and is a common reason cited by clients for non-payment of rent.
- Fewer hours were required by Cleveland Legal Aid to assist RTC-C case clients in 2022 while maintaining a high percentage of client goals achieved by recognizing efficiencies through staffing, management, and program improvement.

- RTC-C creates economic and fiscal benefits that significantly exceed the estimated cost of providing the services.
- Rental property owners may consider changing their business practices to minimize financial risk.
  - More robust tenant screening requirements, higher security deposits, more stringent employment verification processes.
  - Not necessarily in direct response to RTC-C but as a reaction to their experiences during the pandemic.

## *Cleveland Legal Aid Attorneys Were Overwhelmingly Able to Assist Clients in Achieving Their Eviction Case Goals*

- Cleveland Legal Aid assisted clients in achieving 79% - 94% of their case goals since July 2020.

Client Goal	Since July 2020		
	Frequency Goal was Achieved	# of RTC-C Clients with Goal [a]	% of RTC-C Clients with Goal [b]
Prevent eviction judgment or involuntary move	90%	1,687	83%
Secure time to move (30 days or more)	91%	622	41%
Secure rent assistance	79%	773	38%
Mitigate damages	94%	548	27%
Secure monetary relief	94%	225	11%

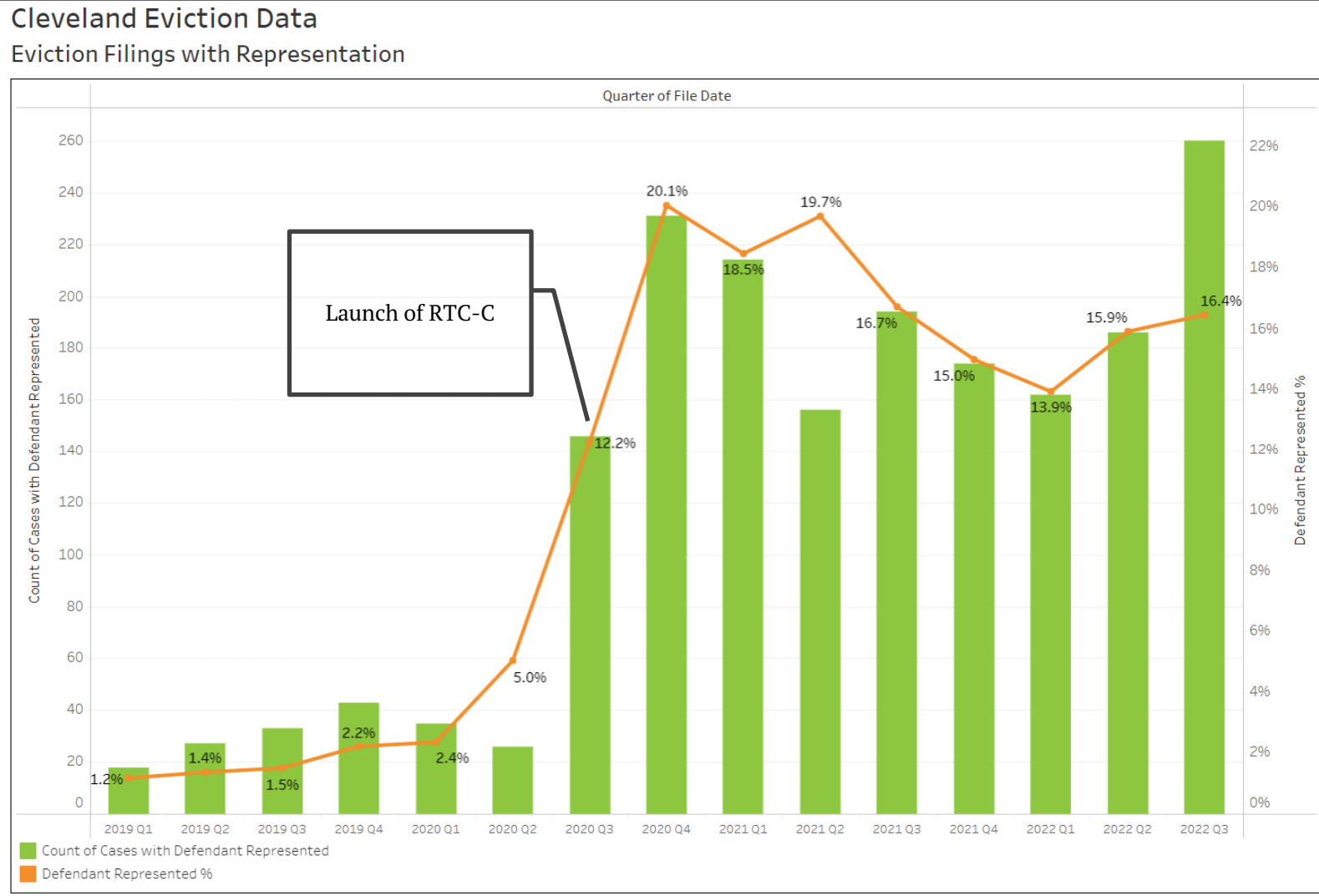
[a] Clients can have multiple goals for their case.  
 [b] Total will be greater than 100% because clients can have multiple goals for their case.

- Approximately 65% - 75% of client goals are achieved in Connecticut and Milwaukee where Stout is also evaluating eviction RTC implementation.

### *Cleveland Legal Aid Significantly Increased Access to Legal Representation*

- From January 1 to September 30, 2022, 16% of all tenants in eviction cases in Cleveland had legal representation reflected in court records.
  - From 2011 to 2019, only 2% of tenants had legal representation reflected in court records.
- Stout estimates that Cleveland Legal Aid represented approximately 79% of RTC-C eligible clients from January 1 to December 31, 2022.
  - An increase of 19 percentage points from Stout's 2021 estimate.
    - Court-based intake, increasing awareness over time, outreach efforts of United Way and Cleveland Legal Aid, door-to-door canvassing.

## Cleveland Legal Aid Significantly Increased Access to Legal Representation



## *There is an intersection between RTC-C clients, their children attending Say Yes schools, and Cleveland's Lead Hazard Control Program.*

- In 2022, Cleveland Legal Aid added a question to the RTC-C client interview regarding where clients' children were attending school.
- Approximately 57% of children in RTC-C client households were attending Say Yes schools.
  - Many students attending Say Yes schools live in households with lower incomes and may need supportive services.
- Of RTC-C clients indicating their home had defective conditions, approximately 5% identified lead as a defective condition.
  - However, this metric could be significantly understated as many tenants may not be aware of the presence of lead in their home.
  - Of the 5% of RTC-C client households with lead as a defective condition in their home, approximately 55% had at least 1 child under the age of 6.



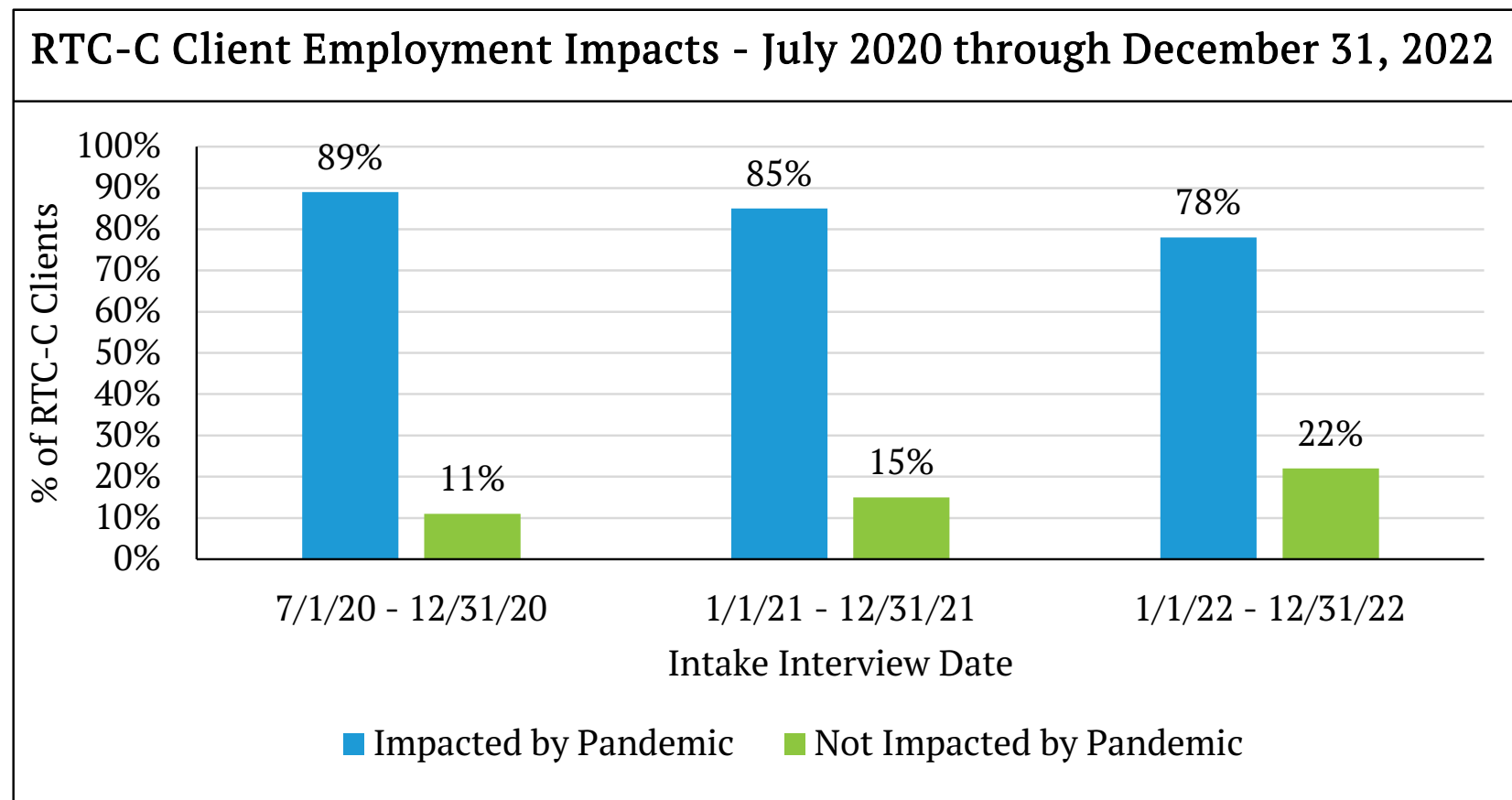
*Emergency rental assistance was crucial to effectively and efficiently resolving certain RTC-C cases and likely prevented a significant number of eviction filings.*

- CHN received nearly 27,000 unique applications for emergency rental assistance from July 1, 2020 – November 30, 2022.
- From July 1, 2020 to November 30, 2022, nearly 9,000 Cleveland residents who applied for emergency rental assistance received emergency rental assistance from CHN.
- Approximately 15% of emergency rental assistance applicants living in Cleveland had received a 3-day notice or an eviction court date when they applied for emergency rental assistance.
- Median amount owed by applicants without a 3-day notice or an eviction court date - \$1,600
- Median amount owed by applicants with a 3-day notice or an eviction court date - \$2,000

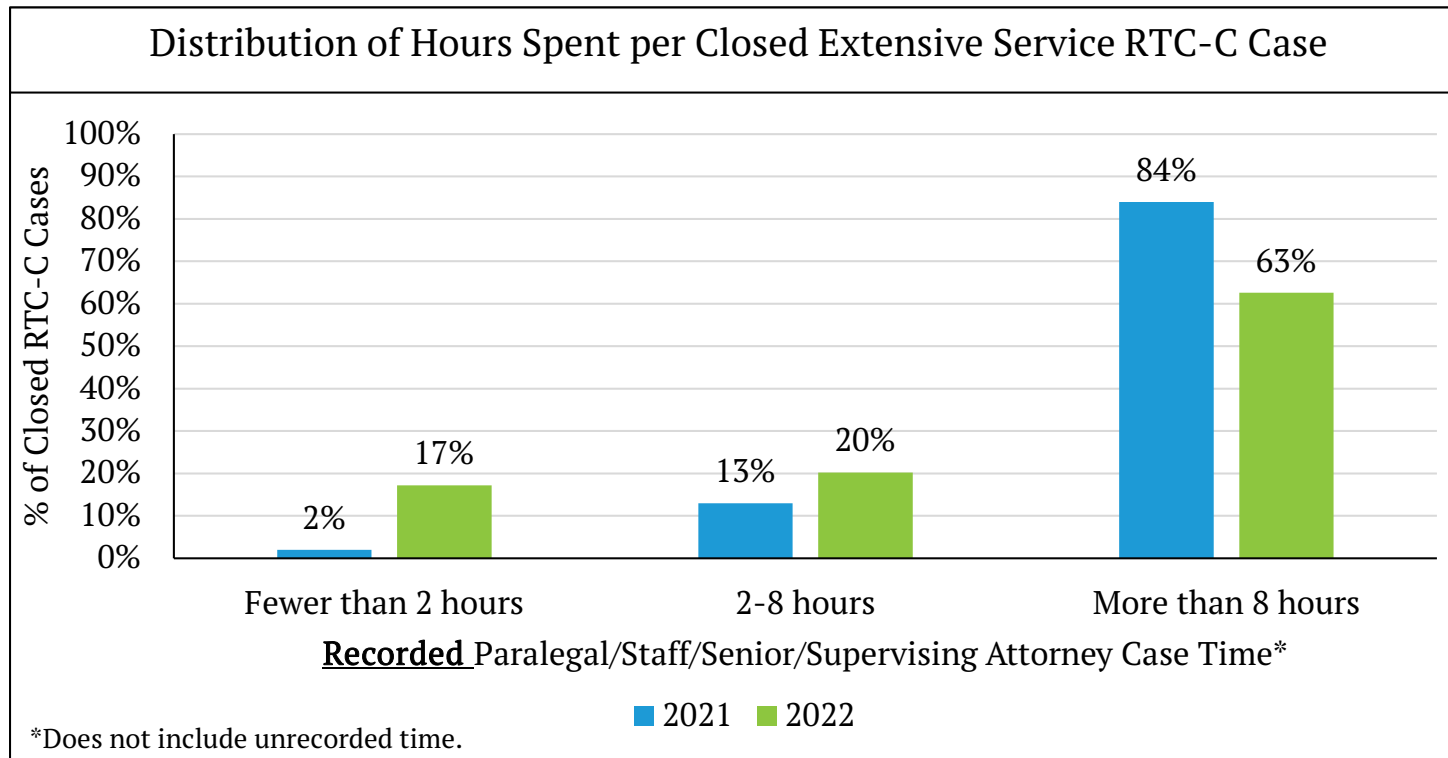
*Emergency rental assistance was crucial to effectively and efficiently resolving certain RTC-C cases and likely prevented a significant number of eviction filings.*

- Cleveland Legal Aid referred at least 239 people to CHN from January 1 – November 30, 2022.
  - Median rent owed by Cleveland Legal Aid referrals - \$2,935.
  - Median rent owed by non-Cleveland Legal Aid referrals - \$2,000.
    - Indicating Cleveland residents seeking legal assistance from Cleveland Legal Aid may be more likely to owe higher amounts and are experiencing or could imminently experience an eviction filing
- Legal aid organizations and rental property owners around the country continue to emphasize the importance of rental assistance in efficiently and effectively resolving (and preventing) eviction cases.

*COVID-19 continues to impact RTC-C clients' employment and is a common reason cited by clients for non-payment of rent.*



## *Fewer hours were required by Cleveland Legal Aid to assist RTC-C case clients in 2022 while maintaining a high percentage of client goals*



- Increased efficiency as staff becomes more experienced, working relationships that have been fostered with rental property owners and/or their counsel, and the availability of emergency rental assistance

## *RTC-C creates economic and fiscal benefits.*

- Stout estimates the total economic and fiscal benefits of RTC-C to be \$11.8 million to \$14 million from July 1, 2020 through December 31, 2022.
  - Economic value preserved by retaining residency in Cleveland - \$4.3 million to \$5.1 million.
  - Housing social safety net responses - \$2.9 million to \$3.5 million.
  - Sustained education funding for children in CMSD - \$2.4 million to \$2.9 million.
  - Foster care savings for children experiencing homelessness – \$1.7 million to \$2 million.
  - Cost savings related to Medicaid spending on health care - \$400,000 to \$500,000.
- Total investment in RTC-C since July 2020 - \$4.5 million.
  - Estimated return on investment of \$2.62 to \$3.11.
- Benefits and ROI are likely understated but consistent with other jurisdictions.

### *Qualitative feedback from the rental property owner community continues to be impactful and informative.*

- Appreciation that representation for tenants is helpful in many circumstances and a preference for interacting with attorneys rather than a pro se tenant.
- Importance of pre-filing eviction diversion, mediation, and sustained, efficient emergency rental assistance as essential complements to eviction right to counsel programs and the ability to promptly resolve cases.
  - Some frustrations with the emergency rental assistance process.
- Adoption of more stringent and robust tenant screening requirements.
  - Not necessarily as a direct response to eviction right to counsel programs, but rather in response to their experiences during the pandemic.
    - Income 3x rent, credit and criminal background checks, employment verification, increasing amounts of security deposits, not renting to tenants with previous eviction *filing* regardless of the outcome of the case.