

*Stout's Independent Evaluation of Cleveland's Eviction Right to Counsel
Annual Report for the Period January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024
Report Date: January 31, 2025*

Key Evaluation Findings

Cleveland's Eviction Right to Counsel continues to demonstrate that legal aid attorneys are: (1) assisting clients who disproportionately identify as female and Black; (2) identifying and responding to poor housing conditions; (3) leveraging rent assistance to assist clients in avoiding eviction, when available; (4) assisting with avoiding disruptive displacement and helping clients achieve their housing stability goals when facing eviction; (5) creating public economic and fiscal benefits; and (6) improving access to justice.

From January 1 through December 31, 2024, The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland (Cleveland Legal Aid) assisted 3,034 Cleveland residents in 1,051 eviction right to counsel (RTC-C) cases. Since July 2020, Cleveland Legal Aid has assisted 13,285 Cleveland residents in 4,517 RTC-C cases.

Based on prior analyses, Stout estimates that Cleveland Legal Aid likely represented between 60% and 80% of all households in Cleveland that were expected to be eligible for RTC-C. Approximately 90% of RTC-C clients received extensive service in 2024, which has been consistent since RTC-C began in July 2020.¹

Overall, including tenants who would not be eligible for RTC-C due to the highly restrictive eligibility of RTC-C,² the percentage of all tenants who are represented in landlord-tenant proceedings in Cleveland has increased from approximately 2% to 3%, before RTC-C, to approximately 16% since RTC-C was implemented. It is important to note the highly restrictive nature of RTC-C, whereby only Cleveland residents with household incomes at or below 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL) and with a child in the household are eligible for RTC-C. While RTC-C has been impactful for this population of Cleveland residents, additional vulnerable Cleveland residents have not been able to access RTC-C services. For example, the following segments of Cleveland residents are not currently eligible for RTC-C but experience significant vulnerabilities putting them at risk of housing instability, eviction, and potential homelessness:

¹ Extensive service cases are cases in which Cleveland Legal Aid has provided legal representation in litigation or negotiations.

² "Eligible tenants must occupy a dwelling with at least one (1) child in the City of Cleveland under a claim of legal right other than the owner, whose annual gross income is not in excess of one-hundred percent (100%) of the federal poverty guidelines as established and updated periodically by the United States Department of Health and Human Services (42 U.S.C. 9902(2)). Ord. No. 1001-2019. Passed 9-30-19, eff. 6-30-20."

- Households with incomes between 100% and 200% of the FPL with a child
 - At 200% of the FPL, a household of 3 has an annual income of \$53,300 which may be insufficient for meeting the cost of basic needs, such as housing;
- The elderly who often have fixed incomes and are experiencing increasing rent and utility costs;
- Individuals with disabilities (intellectual and developmental) who experience similar challenges with fixed incomes; and
- Individuals with primary care responsibilities for elderly adults or adult children with disabilities.

Over the past 4.5 years, Stout has observed the commitment of Cleveland Legal Aid to RTC-C. Cleveland Legal Aid continues to invest in robust data collection and iterative process to continually refine the implementation of RTC-C. In Stout’s experience, Cleveland Legal Aid is a national leader in eviction right to counsel innovations, including but not limited to exploring interventions that are complementary to RTC-C, advocating for the sustainability and expansion of RTC-C, and embracing a data-informed approach to managing the capacity of RTC-C attorneys and non-attorney staff. Cleveland Legal Aid has also made an effort to engage the landlord community in Cleveland to learn more about their perspectives, challenges, and opportunities to collaborate. Specifically, Cleveland Legal Aid has engaged with two large local landlords / housing providers on the topic of eviction filing prevention.

In December 2023, Rocket Community Fund invested \$1.25 million to create the Cleveland Eviction Defense Fund in support of RTC-C.³ The strategic partnership between Cleveland Legal Aid and Rocket Community Fund is centered on providing legal representation, advocacy, and rent assistance to Cleveland residents. Additionally, Stout understands that mediation services and virtual proceedings continue to be available for residents facing eviction in Cleveland.

RTC-C Assists Clients Who Disproportionately Identify as Female and Black. Since RTC-C began in July 2020, more than 4,500 eligible Cleveland tenant households have been assisted by RTC-C. The tables below show the number of households, individuals, and children that have been assisted by RTC-C and select RTC-C client characteristics.⁴

³ <https://www.rocketcommunityfund.org/2023/12/05/rocket-community-fund-invests-1-25-million-to-launch-cleveland-eviction-defense-fund/>

⁴ The metrics in the table are for all RTC-C clients with closed cases and who received any service level (e.g., extensive service, counsel and advice).

Population	July 2020 – December 2024	2022	2023	2024
Client households	4,517	1,035	1,234	1,051
Individuals ⁵	13,285	3,799	4,519	3,034
Children ⁶	8,202	2,376	2,822	1,853

Client Demographic / Characteristic	July 2020 – December 2024	2022	2023	2024
Female identifying	82%	82%	84%	82%
Non-white identifying	84%	84%	86%	85%
Hispanic identifying	8%	8%	9%	7%
Female and Black or African American identifying	61%	60%	63%	60%
Households with at least 1 child under age 6	61%	62%	61%	61%
Presence of disability in the household	54%	55%	57%	56%
Client is currently employed	53%	56%	56%	56%
Of clients who are currently employed, those employed full time	54%	52%	57%	56%
Client lives in public or subsidized housing	12%	11%	10%	16%
Client has been living in their home for less than 1 year	56%	51%	65%	62%

⁵ The total number of individuals counts individuals who were served by RTC-C multiple times only once.

⁶ The total number of children in households counts individuals who were served by RTC-C multiple times only once.

Figure 1 shows race, ethnicity, and gender statistics for all RTC-C clients since July 2020 compared to Cleveland’s overall population. RTC-C clients are disproportionately female and Black or African American compared to Cleveland’s overall population. These metrics are consistent with Stout’s observations in other jurisdictions where it has or is evaluating eviction right to counsel (or similar) programs.

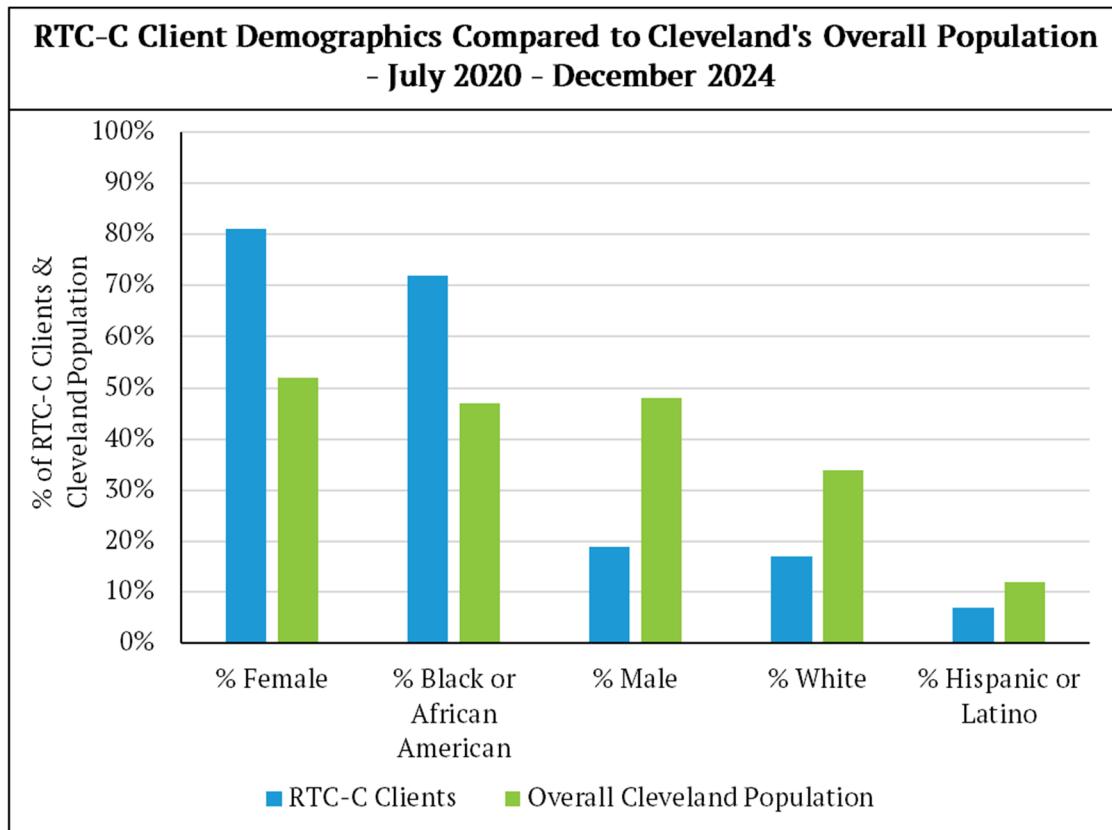


Figure 1

RTC-C Identifies and Responds to Poor Housing Conditions. RTC-C clients continue to frequently indicate the presence of defective conditions in their homes. In 2024, approximately 80% of all RTC-C clients indicated they had defective conditions in their homes. This is consistent with Stout’s evaluations of eviction right to counsel programs in other jurisdictions in recent years where between 50% and 80% of clients indicated the presence of defective conditions in their home. In 2024, approximately 54% of RTC-C clients who indicated the presence of defective conditions in their home said they wanted to move. This is the first time since 2021 that RTC-C clients who indicated the presence of defective conditions in their home were more likely to want to move than stay.

Figure 2 shows the intersection of the presence of defective conditions indicated by the tenant and whether an RTC-C client wants to stay in their home. In the figure below, each year is divided into two segments: “No Defective Conditions” and “Yes Defective Conditions.” These segments are further divided into responses (Yes or No) indicating whether the client wants to stay in their home. For example, the green bars in the “Yes Defective Conditions” segment represent the percentage of clients who indicated there were defective conditions in their home and wanted to stay. The blue bars in the “Yes Defective Conditions” segment represent the percentage of clients who indicated there were defective conditions in their home and did not want to stay.

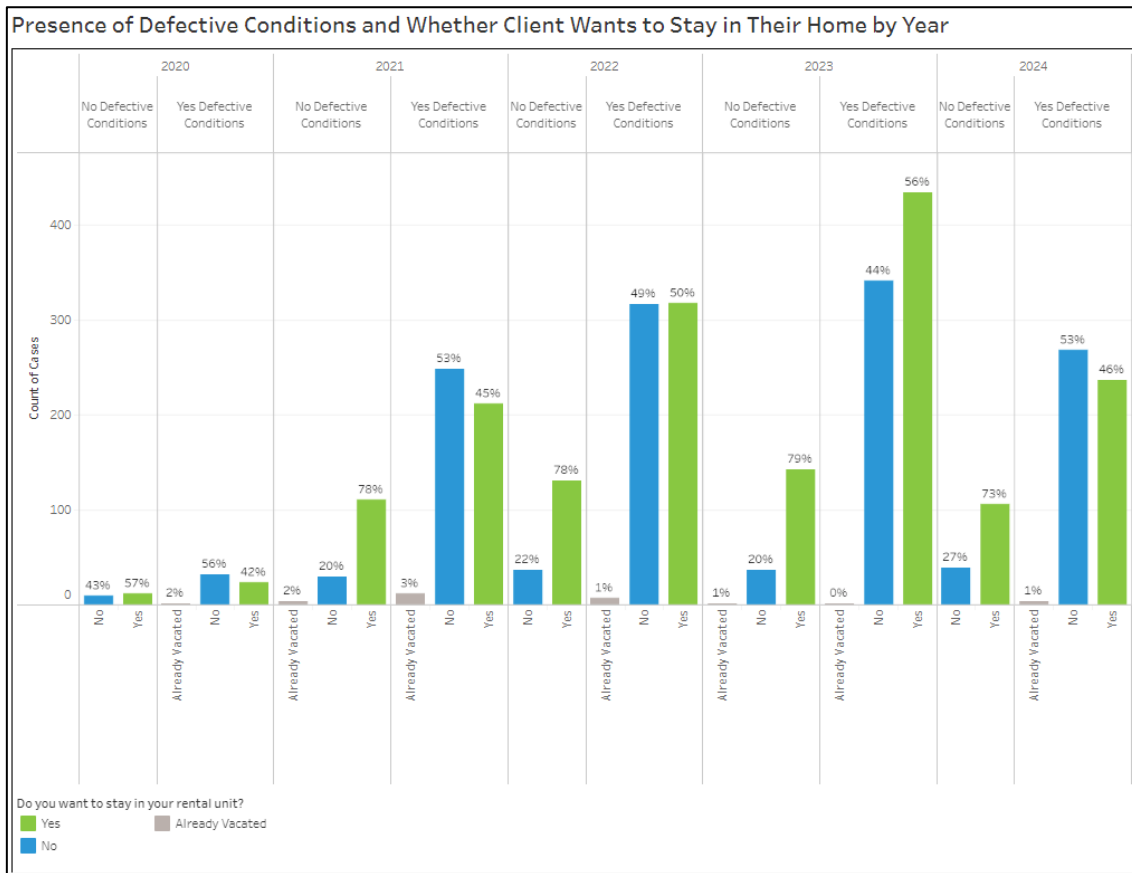


Figure 2

As demonstrated above, there was a consistent increase in the percentage of RTC-C clients indicating there are defective conditions in their home, and they want to stay in their home from 2020 (July through December) through 2023. The annual changes are:

- In 2020 (July through December), approximately 43% of RTC-C clients indicated there were defective conditions in their home and wanted to stay.
- In 2021, approximately 46% of RTC-C clients indicated there were defective conditions in their home and wanted to stay.

- In 2022, approximately 51% of RTC-C clients indicated there were defective conditions in their home and wanted to stay.
- In 2023, approximately 56% of RTC-C clients indicated there were defective conditions in their home and wanted to stay.
- In 2024, approximately 46% of RTC-C clients indicated there were defective conditions in their home and wanted to stay.

Stout observes similar trends related to the increasing percentage of clients who want to stay in their home despite the presence of defective conditions in other eviction right to counsel jurisdictions.⁷ Feedback from tenant attorneys and rental property owners across the country indicate that this trend is likely a result of the lack of alternative housing for tenants facing eviction and the recognition among eviction right to counsel clients that if they were forced to move (even from a home with defective conditions) they may experience homelessness. The consequences of a forced move on RTC-C clients are particularly acute given the presence of children in the household. Of RTC-C clients who indicate they want to stay in their home, approximately 70% indicate they have nowhere to go if they were forced to move. Of RTC-C clients who indicate they do not want to stay in their home, approximately 36% indicate they have nowhere to go if they were forced to move.

RTC-C Leverages Rent Assistance, When Available. Throughout the country and in Cleveland, attorneys representing tenants in eviction proceedings have shared concerns about the lack of sufficient rent assistance, particularly for tenants without legal defenses and in communities where rents (and utilities) are increasing faster than wages and where vacancy rates are low. Tenant attorneys and counsel for rental property owners communicated that efficiently and effectively resolving (and in certain circumstances preventing) cases without legal defenses can be challenging in the absence of sufficient rent assistance.

RTC-C attorneys have guided clients through a patchwork of rent assistance programs that vary substantially in their processes for application and the disbursement of their funding. As of December 2, 2022, new applications for federal emergency rental assistance were no longer accepted by CHN Housing Partners. In April 2023, Cleveland City Council approved a \$5 million post-pandemic rent assistance program to be administered by CHN Housing Partners over 3 years.⁸ Cleveland renters with household

⁷ Stout's independent evaluation reports in other jurisdictions can be found at <https://www.stout.com/en/services/transformational-change-consulting/eviction-right-to-counsel-resources>

⁸ Astolfi, Courtney. "Rental assistance 2.0: Cleveland tests out post-pandemic aid for renters." April 2023.

incomes at or below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) would be eligible for financial assistance with security deposits and their first 3 months of rent.⁹

In March 2024, Step Forward’s Home Relief Assistance Program, which provided rent and utilities assistance, stopped accepting new applications.¹⁰ Toward the conclusion of the program, Step Forward prioritized applicants with scheduled eviction hearings.¹¹ Stout understands the limited remaining rent assistance available in Cleveland has more restrictive eligibility requirements, such as CHN Housing Partners’ Family Stability Initiative, requiring indication of financial hardship and having a child in the household.¹² Additionally, Benjamin Rose’s Housing and Financial Wellness Team assists Cuyahoga County residents over the age of 55 with household incomes at or below 80% AMI with accessing rent assistance, and priority is given to households at risk of eviction or utility shut-off.¹³

The remaining forms of rent assistance in Cleveland are operated through Continuum of Care providers (CoC).¹⁴ The eligibility requirements include: (1) an existing relationship with a CoC provider; (2) proven financial hardship due to the COVID pandemic; (3) household income at or below 80% AMI; (4) at least 1 member of the household faces immediate risk of homelessness (e.g., an eviction notice or unsafe living conditions); and (5) the household has not received more than 17 months of previous COVID-related rent assistance since March 2020.¹⁵ This financial assistance is only available for past due rent, first month’s rent and security deposit, utility payments, \$50 in late fees, and temporary hotel stays.¹⁶ These requirements result in rent assistance being deployed as a response to potential imminent homelessness or housing instability as a result of eviction rather than a preventative resource that could be leveraged to avoid an eviction filing.

RTC-C Assists with Avoiding Disruptive Displacement and Helping Clients Achieve Their Goals. In 2024, approximately 90% of RTC-C clients received extensive service, and approximately 10% received counsel and advice. The level of service proportions observed in 2024 are consistent with those observed since RTC-C launched in July 2020. Of the 90% of RTC-C cases where the client received extensive service in 2024, Cleveland

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Step Forward concludes Home Relief Assistance Program. Step Forward. March 19, 2024.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² <https://chnhousingpartners.org/housing-and-community-services/avoid-foreclosure-eviction-copy/>

¹³ Rental Counseling and Assistance, Benjamin Rose. <https://www.benrose.org/programs-and-services/help-assistance/rental-counseling-assistance/>.

¹⁴ EDEN Assistance Programs. <https://www.edencle.org/assistance>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Legal Aid assisted clients in achieving approximately 80% of all their case goals. In 2023, Cleveland Legal Aid assisted clients in achieving approximately 82% of all their case goals. The decrease in the percentage of goals achieved is primarily due to a decrease in the goal achievement rates for “prevent eviction or involuntary move” and “secure rent assistance.” Cleveland Legal Aid indicated the decrease in availability of rent assistance, long wait periods for rent assistance, and clients having received maximum amounts of rent assistance are factors contributing to the decrease in the goal achievement rate for these goals. It is important to appreciate that in circumstances where a client may not be able to achieve their stated goal, Cleveland Legal Aid attorneys often assist clients in securing other case resolutions that minimize the likelihood of the client experiencing disruptive displacement.¹⁷

The table below shows the 5 most common RTC-C client goals, with the frequency of the goal being achieved, the number of clients with the goal, and the percentage of clients with that goal since RTC-C launched in July 2020 and for cases closed in 2024.

¹⁷ Stout uses the phrase “disruptive displacement” to capture outcomes of cases beyond “winning” and “losing” and “evicted” or “not evicted.” For example, there may be circumstances where tenants did not have a formal eviction writ of restitution executed against them and therefore were not displaced but still have experienced disruption in their lives because of just the eviction filing and/or eviction proceeding. There may also be circumstances where a tenant needs to move but having access to legal counsel and being represented by a lawyer during the eviction proceeding minimizes the disruption that the move may have had on the tenant’s household. Stout has found the phrase “disruptive displacement” to be helpful in demonstrating the variety of circumstances tenants experience and the impact of counsel in assisting with navigating a complex, high-stakes legal proceeding. Local advocates may use alternative terminology to describe the outcomes of cases and the impacts to tenants.

Goal Metrics for RTC-C Clients from July 2020 through December 2024				
Client Goal	Frequency Goal Was Achieved	# of RTC-C Clients with Goal ¹⁸	# of RTC-C Clients with Goal Achieved	% of RTC-C Clients with Goal ¹⁹
Prevent eviction or involuntary move	85%	3,770	3,186	84%
Secure 30 days or more to move	89%	2,102	1,863	47%
Secure rent assistance	76%	1,302	985	29%
Mitigate damages	94%	749	705	17%
Secure monetary relief	94%	360	340	8%
Goal Metrics for RTC-C Clients from January through December 2024				
Client Goal	Frequency Goal Was Achieved	# of RTC-C Clients with Goal ²⁰	# of RTC-C Clients with Goal Achieved	% of RTC-C Clients with Goal ²¹
Prevent eviction or involuntary move	80%	992	792	94%
Secure 30 days or more to move	86%	585	506	56%
Secure rent assistance	63%	221	139	21%
Mitigate damages	95%	75	71	7%
Secure monetary relief	92%	48	44	5%

In addition to being asked about their goals during the intake/interview process, clients are also asked if they want to stay in their home. Since July 2020, approximately 55% of clients indicated they want to stay in their home, and in 2024, approximately 52% of clients indicated they want to stay in their home. The following table shows the percent of clients who want to stay in their home by year.

Do You Want to Stay in Your Home?			
Year	Yes	No	Already Vacated
2021	51%	46%	3%
2022	55%	44%	1%

¹⁸ Clients can have more than 1 goal for their case.

¹⁹ Total will be greater than 100% because clients can have more than 1 goal for their case.

²⁰ Clients can have more than 1 goal for their case.

²¹ Total will be greater than 100% because clients can have more than 1 goal for their case.

2023	61%	39%	0%
2024	52%	47%	1%

While the frequency with which clients had the goal “prevent an eviction or involuntary move” did not vary depending on whether the client wanted to stay in their home or move, the frequency with which clients stated other goals varied. Clients who wanted to stay in their home were more likely to report the goal of “securing rent assistance” (approximately 49%, compared to approximately 20% who did not want to stay in their home), while clients who did not want to stay in their home were more likely to report the goal of “mitigate damages” (approximately 21%, compared to approximately 17% of clients who wanted to stay in their home).

Since RTC-C launched in July 2020 (and in 2024), approximately 53% of clients had legal defenses in their case. RTC-C clients, regardless of whether there were defenses in their case, were typically seeking assistance with achieving similar goals.²² Overall, the frequency with which Cleveland Legal Aid assisted clients in achieving their goals does not differ materially by whether there are defenses. RTC-C clients who had the goal of preventing an eviction or involuntary move *and* had defenses were more likely to have their goal achieved (83%) compared to clients with the same goal but did not have defenses (78%).

In the context of eviction and housing stability, low rental vacancy rates can create challenges for tenants when trying to secure alternative housing if they need to move, including needing more time to move. The rental vacancy rate – the percentage of rental units that are vacant or unoccupied – in the Cleveland-Elyria metropolitan statistical area ranged from approximately 6% to 8% between 2012 and 2019.²³ In 2024, the rental vacancy rate was 4.9%,²⁴ which is approximately 30% lower than the U.S. metropolitan area average of 7%.²⁵ A rental vacancy rate less than 5% is often considered a low vacancy rate.²⁶ The rental vacancy in each of the past 5 years was:

- 2020 – 5.5%
- 2021 – 3.6%
- 2022 – 3.2%
- 2023 – 5.6%
- 2024 – 4.9%

²² The 3 most frequently cited goals were “prevent eviction or involuntary move”, “secure time to move (30 days or more)”, and “secure rent assistance.”

²³ United States Census Bureau. American Community Survey.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey/Housing Vacancy Survey, October 29, 2024.

²⁶ “A Guide on Vacancy Rates and the Housing Market.” US Lending Company.

RTC-C Creates Public Economic and Fiscal Benefits. Stout estimated the cumulative fiscal impacts that Cleveland and Cuyahoga County likely realized as a result of RTC-C from July 2020 through December 2024. It is important to appreciate that RTC-C, like other eviction right to counsel programs Stout is evaluating, is often assisting tenants who are experiencing complex circumstances. These circumstances often include but are not limited to substantive legal issues, challenging personal circumstances, serious consequences that could arise from disruptive displacement (such as homelessness), and a variety of complex disputes with rental property owners. These circumstances can require publicly funded social safety net responses if tenants were to experience them. Since Stout’s 2022 independent evaluation report, it has quantified new areas of fiscal impact in other jurisdictions where it is conducting evaluations of eviction right to counsel programs. These new areas of fiscal impact are related to educational attainment for children, employment stability, responses to unsheltered homelessness, a reduction in crimes related to a lack of shelter, and incarcerating people experiencing homelessness.

Stout estimates that Cleveland and Cuyahoga County likely realized economic and fiscal benefits of approximately \$35.1 million from July 1, 2020 through December 31, 2024. During the same period, the total expenses associated with RTC-C were approximately \$14.3 million²⁷ resulting in an estimated return on investment of approximately \$2.46. In pre- and post-legislation eviction right to counsel jurisdictions where Stout has evaluated eviction right to counsel programs, pilots, and conducted cost-benefit analyses, the estimated return on investment has ranged from \$2.50 to \$4.80. The economic and fiscal benefits likely realized by Cleveland and Cuyahoga County included:²⁸

- Decreasing the incremental need for housing social safety net responses such as emergency shelter and rapid re-housing – \$11.7 million
- Economic value preserved by retaining Cleveland and Cuyahoga County residents – \$6.6 million
- Sustaining education funding for children in Cleveland Metropolitan School District – \$5 million
- Decreasing the incremental need for out-of-home foster care placements – \$2.6 million

²⁷ The current annual appropriation for RTC-C is \$750,000, less than one quarter of Cleveland Legal Aid’s estimated cost of operating RTC-C in 2024. Cleveland Legal Aid has used a variety of other funding sources, including United Way’s direct support, grants from the City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County, and other sources of support to supplement this annual appropriation.

²⁸ For detailed descriptions of fiscal impact quantification methodologies see Stout’s Independent Evaluations of Eviction Right to Counsel Programs in Connecticut, Chicago, and Oklahoma County and Tulsa County. [Stout Eviction Right to Counsel Resource Center.](#)

- Decreasing the incremental need for Medicaid-funded health care – \$2.3 million
- Fiscal impacts associated with a reduction in crimes related to housing instability– \$2.2 million
- Decreasing the need for responding to unsheltered homelessness – \$1.6 million
- Economic benefits of employment stability – \$1.4 million
- Economic benefits of increased educational attainment – \$1.3 million
- Fiscal impacts resulting from reduced incarceration associated with the criminalization of people experiencing homelessness – \$470,000

Given the consistent year-over-year and cumulative frequency with which Cleveland Legal Aid assists RTC-C clients in achieving their goals and the continued indication from RTC-C clients that they will likely experience disruptive displacement and require a social safety net response if they are forced to move, Stout believes Cleveland and Cuyahoga County continue to realize economic benefits as a result of RTC-C.

Additionally, the number of people experiencing homelessness in Cleveland increased by 0.5% from 2023 to 2024 while the number of people experiencing homelessness in Ohio increased by 3% during the same period.²⁹ RTC-C may be a factor in the smaller increase in the percentage of people experiencing homelessness in Cleveland relative to the statewide increase given the connection between eviction and homelessness.

RTC-C Increases Access to Justice. In prior independent evaluations of RTC-C, Stout estimated that Cleveland Legal Aid likely represented between 60% and 80% of all households in Cleveland that were likely eligible for RTC-C in 2021 and 2022. Overall, including tenants who would not be eligible for RTC-C due to its highly restrictive eligibility criteria, the percentage of all tenants who are represented in landlord-tenant proceedings in Cleveland has increased from approximately 2% to 3% before RTC-C to approximately 16% since RTC-C was implemented.³⁰ This increase in tenant representation is attributable to RTC-C.

²⁹ Based on Stout’s analysis of United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Point-in-Time data.

³⁰ Stout appreciates the Legal Services Corporation’s partnership and willingness to share the court docket data it is collecting. The analyses presented in this section were enabled by LSC’s data collection processes.

Figure 3 shows the quarterly trend of defendant/tenant representation in Cleveland from 2019 to September 2024. The green bars show number of landlord-tenant filings in Cleveland where the tenant was represented, and the orange line shows the percentage of landlord-tenant cases filed where at least 1 defendant/tenant was represented. Data from the fourth quarter of 2024 is excluded as complete data related to defendant/tenant representation for these months is not yet available. The docket data does not always reflect representation by legal counsel in the same month of the filing.

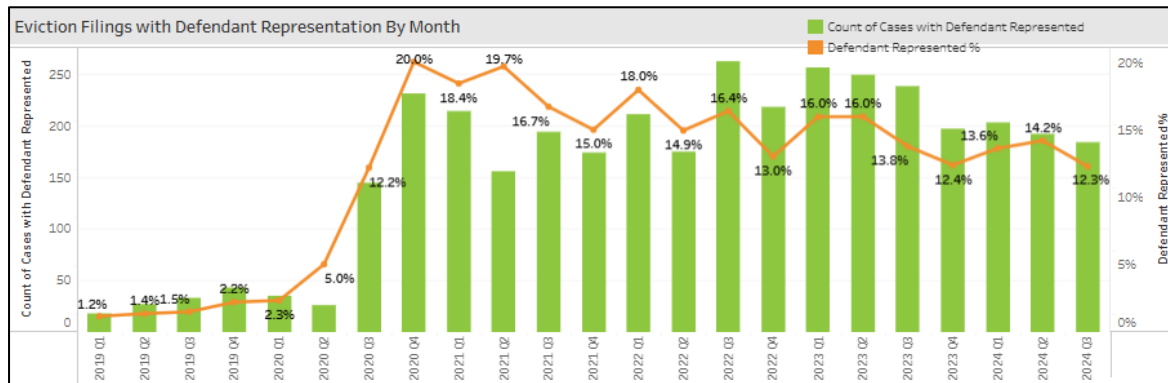


Figure 3

In late 2023, Cleveland Housing Court shortened the time between the filing of an eviction case and the first hearing from 30 days to 21 days. This shorter period may have resulted in fewer tenants contacting Cleveland Legal Aid for assistance before their first hearing, thereby decreasing opportunities for RTC-C screening.

In 2024, Cleveland Legal Aid attorneys spent an average of approximately 20 hours and a median of approximately 15 hours per extensive service RTC-C case. In 2023, Cleveland Legal Aid attorneys spent an average of approximately 22 hours and a median of approximately 15 hours per extensive service RTC-C case.

Cleveland Legal Aid attributes the year-over-year decrease of 2 hours (10%) per case to: (1) incorporating paralegals into its staffing model and their professional development since 2020; (2) attorneys gaining more experience and effectively collaborating on case reviews, enabling more efficient delivery of services; (3) staffing stability since a significant increase in hiring in 2020; (4) increased familiarity with the courts, its processes and procedures; and (5) leveraging tablets / technology for screening and intake.

The distribution of hours per extensive service RTC-C cases closed in 2024 was:

- 1.1 to 5 hours – 1%
- 5.1 to 10 hours – 16.5%
- 10.1 to 25 hours – 65.4%

- 25.1 to 50 hours – 13%
- 50.1 to 100 hours – 2.7%
- More than 100 hours – 1.4%

Landlord-Tenant Filing Trends. In 2024, there were approximately 5,700 landlord-tenant filings in Cleveland. This is a decrease of approximately 12% from 2023 and approximately 25% lower than landlord-tenant filings in 2019 (i.e., pre-pandemic). Cleveland Legal Aid has indicated the decrease in landlord-tenant filings from 2023 to 2024 could be attributable to small amounts of rent assistance still being available in early 2024 and landlords’ familiarity with rent assistance leading them (and tenants) to access those funds earlier in the eviction process, potentially avoiding certain eviction filings. Figure 4 shows annual landlord-tenant filings in Cleveland from 2011 to 2024.

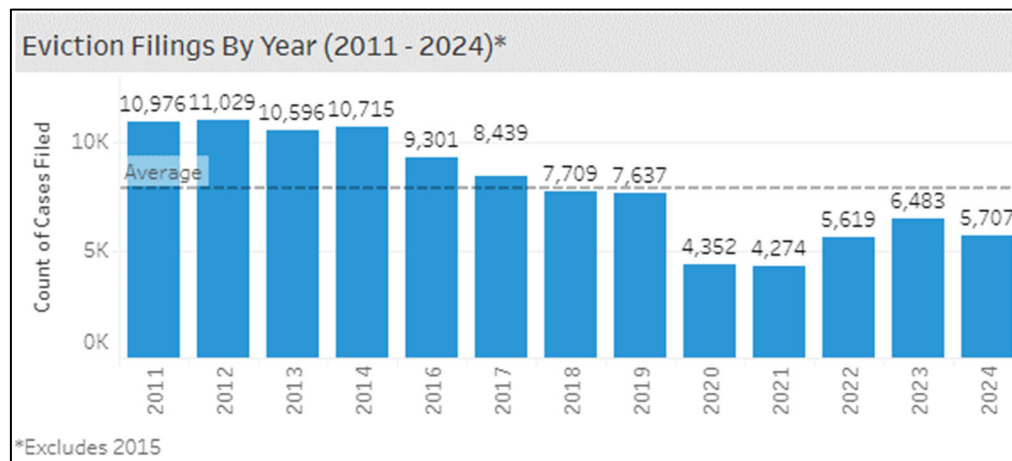


Figure 4

Additionally, Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) has filed 59 eviction cases against Cleveland residents since 2021. In 2019, CMHA filed 502 evictions. Stout understands the 59 filings by CMHA since 2021 were “for cause” (i.e., reasons other than non-payment of rent). CMHA recently notified Cleveland Legal Aid that it will begin filing for non-payment of rent again in the first half of 2025.

Approximately 40% of all landlord-tenant filings in 2024 in Cleveland occurred in 4 zip codes. The percent and number of Landlord-tenant filings in these zip codes were:

- 44102 – 10% (585 filings - primarily Ward 15)
- 44109 – 10% (585 filings - primarily Ward 14)
- 44105 – 10% (570 filings - primarily Ward 12)
- 44120 – 9% (526 filings - Wards 6, 4, and 1)

In 2023, these same 4 zip codes accounted for approximately 42% of all landlord-tenant filings. Between 2023 and 2024, landlord-tenant filings decreased most significantly in 44102 (approximately 25% decrease) and 44120 (approximately 13% decrease). The largest increase in landlord-tenant filings between 2023 and 2024 occurred in 44103, where landlord-tenant filings increased approximately 4%. Figure 5 shows 2024 Cleveland landlord-tenant filings by ward, and Figure 6 shows 2024 Cleveland landlord-tenant filings by zip code.

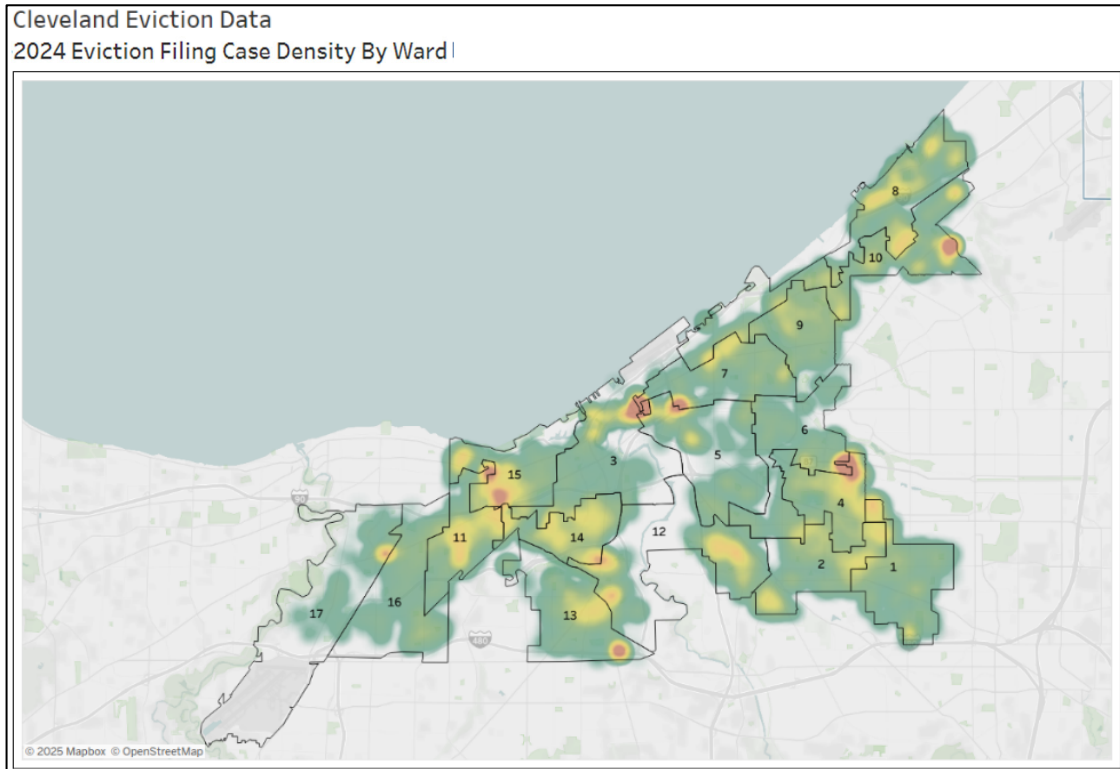


Figure 5

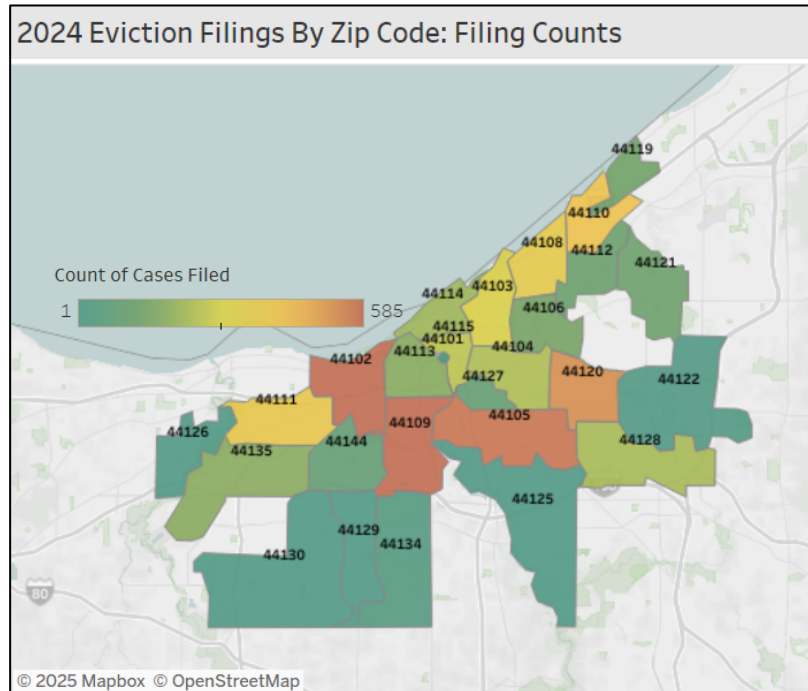


Figure 6

Tenant Education and Outreach. From January through December 2024, canvassers from Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless (NEOCH) made more than 1,200 door-to-door canvassing attempts to reach residents who received an eviction filing. In approximately 31% of canvassing attempts, the canvasser spoke to someone in-person. If no one answered the door, canvassers left behind materials with information about RTC-C and how to contact the canvasser for further information. Approximately 19% of tenants interacting with the canvasser were eligible for RTC-C (i.e. had a household income of 100% FPL or less and had at least one child in the home), which is consistent with metrics reported by NEOCH during 2023.

Cleveland Legal Aid continued to provide presentations (including by partner organizations, City Council members, and other community leaders), materials, and online information (including social media posts) to educate tenants about their rights and availability of RTC-C. Cleveland Legal Aid also continued to operate its Tenant Information Line and its program to have trained volunteers or a staff member appear on every Housing Court docket to provide immediate referrals to tenants eligible for RTC-C.

Themes from Landlord Engagement. Stout has engaged with landlords and their counsel throughout the country. Several themes from these conversations have emerged and are relevant to local eviction ecosystems: (1) the ongoing need for sustained rent assistance and financial support for tenants; (2) most landlords do not want to use the eviction process; (3) better communication between tenants and landlords could assist with

resolving issues before needing to provide notice or file an eviction complaint; and (4) there are opportunities for landlords, landlord counsel, and tenant counsel to collaborate on strategies to avoid eviction filings. These perspectives will be important to consider as Cleveland Legal Aid continues to implement / seek expansion of RTC-C and explores opportunities for complementary services that may assist in avoiding eviction filings and enable effective and efficient resolution of rental delinquency without the need for the costs and disruption of the eviction process.

Recommendations

Progress on 2023 Recommendations. Stout’s 2023 independent evaluation of RTC-C included 10 recommendations for continuing to demonstrate the impact of RTC-C and to deepen and refine analyses related to Cleveland’s eviction ecosystem. The table below indicates Legal Aid’s progress toward implementing last year’s recommendations.

Stout’s Recommendation	Status as of December 31, 2024
Continue to be a national leader in how to effectively implement an eviction right to counsel program.	<p>Complete/Ongoing</p> <p>Cleveland Legal Aid continues to demonstrate leadership in eviction right to counsel implementation.</p>
Continue detailed data collection.	<p>Complete/Ongoing</p> <p>Cleveland Legal Aid continues to collect detailed data and share it with Stout monthly.</p>
Develop and launch post-service client survey to understand better the impact of RTC-C on securing medium- and long-term housing stability for clients.	<p>Progress Made/Improvement Needed</p> <p>Cleveland Legal Aid launched a post-service client survey to evaluate outcomes after case closure and anticipates a preliminary analysis of responses in late 2025. Cleveland Legal Aid could supplement or expand this survey to include additional questions to assist in understanding housing stability.</p>
Collaborate with landlords to prevent eviction filings.	<p>Progress Made/Improvement Needed</p> <p>Cleveland Legal Aid is working with 2 large Cleveland landlords to develop a program for pre-eviction filing intervention and mediation for tenants who are behind on rent payments.</p>

<p>Deepen the understanding of defective conditions and the impact of defective conditions on clients and household members, particularly children.</p>	<p>Progress Made/Improvement Needed</p> <p>Cleveland Legal Aid is considering refining data collection related to these topics. Continued investment in the collection of these data elements may further enhance the understanding of RTC-C's impact.</p>
<p>Collect data to further demonstrate the intersection of RTC-C with Say Yes and Lead Safe.</p>	<p>Progress Made/Improvement Needed</p> <p>Cleveland Legal Aid is considering refining data collection related to these topics. Continued investment in the collection of these data elements may further enhance the understanding of RTC-C's impact.</p>
<p>Collect data to identify the frequency of repeat clients.</p>	<p>Complete/Ongoing</p> <p>Cleveland Legal Aid is collecting data regarding repeat RTC-C clients but has not yet analyzed the data to enhance the understanding of RTC-C's impact.</p>
<p>Collaborate with CHN on its tenant relocation program.</p>	<p>Complete/Ongoing</p> <p>Cleveland Legal Aid is finalizing an agreement with CHN to access services for RTC-C clients requiring relocation assistance. Cleveland Legal Aid also collaborated with CHN during 2024 to assist with administering rent assistance for RTC-C clients.</p>
<p>Develop and implement processes and training to enable the strategic use of data collected through RTC-C.</p>	<p>Progress Made/Improvement Needed</p> <p>Stout has supported Cleveland Legal Aid's efforts to use data strategically through the development of management dashboards. Continued investment in processes for periodic review and iterative refinement will be needed to make progress.</p>

Stout offers the following recommendations for 2025:

1. Continue Collaborating with landlords to prevent eviction filings.
 - Feedback from many landlords throughout the country has indicated they do not want to use the eviction process, the eviction process is costly (for landlords and tenants) and avoiding eviction filings would be impactful for both parties. Cleveland Legal Aid could collaborate with local landlords and other community organizations to develop innovative and sustainable programs designed to prevent eviction filings and leverage the opportunity for service intervention as close to rent delinquency as possible. Cleveland City Council’s recent \$1 million investment in the coordination of tenant resources and Cleveland Legal Aid and United Way’s role within the ecosystem could be leveraged for further landlord and local stakeholder engagement to prevent eviction filings.³¹
2. Develop and launch a post-service client survey to understand better the impact of RTC-C on securing medium- and long-term housing stability for clients.
 - Client feedback post-representation may provide insights into external challenges clients are experiencing that contribute to ongoing housing insecurity for RTC-C clients. The survey responses may also inform opportunities for complementary interventions or services.
3. Refine data collection to deepen the understanding of defective conditions, the impact of defective conditions on clients and household members, and to further demonstrate the intersection of RTC-C with Say Yes and Lead Safe.
 - Collection of these data elements could enable innovative fiscal impact analyses to further demonstrate RTC-C’s return on investment as well as how RTC-C clients’ experiences may intersect with other Cleveland initiatives aimed at assisting vulnerable residents.
4. Analyze data to understand the frequency of repeat clients and identify common household / case characteristics among repeat clients.
 - Understanding how frequently RTC-C is assisting clients multiple times, over what time period, and what their case / household circumstances are can inform to what degree RTC-C may be assisting with achieving medium- and long-term housing stability and understanding housing affordability among RTC-C clients.

³¹ <https://www.clevelandcitycouncil.org/helping-cleveland-renters>

5. Develop and implement processes and training to enable the strategic use of data collected through RTC-C.
 - Cleveland Legal Aid has access to hundreds of data visualizations in Stout’s data visualization platform. Using data collected through RTC-C can inform strategic advocacy and demonstrate the impact of RTC-C. To use the data that Cleveland Legal Aid collects to its fullest potential, systems, processes, and training could be further developed and implemented. Regular review and refinement of the data visualization platform, and incorporating the use of data into Cleveland Legal Aid’s organizational processes, is crucial to iteratively refining RTC-C and identifying opportunities to further Cleveland Legal Aid’s strategic goals and collaborations.