



Legal representation prevents evictions, homelessness in Hennepin County

Report from legal service agencies shows drastic difference when tenants are represented

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. – Low-income tenants have a powerful ally in Housing Court: attorneys who will represent them when they cannot otherwise afford a lawyer.

According to a study by Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid and Volunteer Lawyers Network, tenants who have an attorney on their side fare far better than their unrepresented counterparts.

“In an extremely tight rental housing market, an eviction record can mean the difference between sleeping in a bed or on the street,” said Muria Kruger, Housing Program Manager for Volunteer Lawyers Network. “Just 6 percent of tenants without attorneys leave court with a clear record, compared to 73-78 percent of represented tenants.”

Some further highlights of the report, which studied Hennepin County Housing Court cases from the first half of 2018, include:

- Fully represented tenants are four times less likely to use homeless shelters, representing yearly shelter cost savings of more than \$231,000.
- Unrepresented tenants are 4-5 times more likely to face the worst possible outcome of an eviction case: the abrupt, forced removal from their homes by sheriff's deputies.
- Nearly 80 percent of Legal Aid/VLN clients in Housing Court are people of color, and many are single mothers and first-time renters.
- If an eviction is granted, represented tenants receive twice as much time to move out, allowing more time to make other living arrangements.

This report comes on the heels of Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey's announcement of the More Representation Minneapolis program, a partnership including VLN and MMLA. This program aims to recruit 25 new volunteer lawyers and increase the amount of time VLN volunteers spend on housing cases by 20 percent. To date, 12 major law firms have agreed to support the initiative with new volunteer lawyers.

Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid is a non-profit law firm that works in pursuit of helping Minnesota's most vulnerable citizens gain access to their basic rights for safety, shelter, food, health care and education. For more information, please contact Luke Grundman at 612-746-3640 or lgrundman@mylegalaid.org

Volunteer Lawyers Network is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that which provides civil legal services to low-income people through volunteer attorneys. For more information, please contact Muria Kruger at 612-752-6647 or muria@vlnmn.org.