



Aligning Emergency Rental Assistance with Other Eviction Prevention Interventions

Emergency rental assistance (ERA) can prevent a significant share of evictions, but it will not unilaterally address all evictions or every case of housing instability. Cities and their partners should therefore work to align ERA programs with other eviction prevention interventions to comprehensively and strategically address evictions taking place at the local level.

With the overarching goal of meeting a wide range of individual needs and circumstances, cities should develop additional eviction intervention programs or policies that complement and enhance local ERA initiatives. By applying a racial equity lens in deploying a suite of targeted programs, cities will be able to address the root causes of evictions.

This brief offers a menu of possible eviction prevention interventions — including both programs and policies — for cities to consider as complements to an ERA program.

This resource was developed by the [National League of Cities](#) and the [Stanford Legal Design Lab](#) based on partnerships with the five city participants of the [Emergency Rental Assistance Technical Assistance Program](#). Additional resources for local governments implementing or refining an ERA program can be found at nlc.org/resource/emergency-rental-assistance-toolkit.

Beyond ERA: Eviction Prevention Programs, Policies and Resources

Cities can rely on a variety of eviction prevention programs, policies and resources to complement local ERA programs. These include the following:

Eviction Diversion

Eviction diversion programs bring together a range of services and supports that aim to divert landlord-tenant disputes away from an eviction filing or court proceeding. A holistic eviction diversion program may include rental assistance, mediation, and access to legal representation and other supportive services. To achieve the greatest impact, eviction diversion services should be available — or mandated — prior to an eviction being filed in order to reach households and landlords before they have hit a crisis point.



TIP: Consider forming a local Eviction Prevention Taskforce. Members should span both governmental and community-based service providers and stakeholders. The taskforce should meet regularly (e.g., monthly) and with a clear agenda that covers newly available data, insights into the local eviction landscape, program or benefit updates, funding opportunities, and areas of concern. Participants can explore and document how households are falling through gaps in the local support service network. The taskforce can also work to achieve consensus and clarity among participants about what supports are available, how to provide effective client referrals, and how to improve collaboration on these issues across the city.

Eviction Mediation

Eviction mediation is an alternative to filing or prosecuting a court-based eviction. With assistance from a neutral and trained mediator, landlords and tenants can reach mutually agreed-upon terms to resolve a potential eviction dispute. An eviction mediation program establishes a more equal balance of power between the landlord and tenant, increases communication between the parties, facilitates agreement on additional payments to the landlord as appropriate, diverts eviction cases away from overloaded court dockets, and can preemptively prevent an eviction record for the tenant.



TIP: Landlords may be more likely to participate in eviction mediation if cities and their partners emphasize that ERA funds can be used to assist eligible tenants in making payments.

Eviction Navigators or Housing Navigators

Eviction or housing navigators are non-lawyers who help tenants navigate an eviction or housing challenge by guiding them to appropriate financial and legal resources. These navigators are often equipped to connect tenants to both government and community-based assistance depending on a household's unique needs and eligibility criteria. Navigators can also help tenants understand their rights and responsibilities during an eviction, while providing emotional support during a challenging and often traumatic time.

Eviction Record Masking, Sealing or Expunging

Having a record of an eviction — even in cases where an eviction filing was dismissed — can present an enormous challenge for tenants in accessing future housing. To limit who can access an individual's eviction records, cities may look to mask, seal or expunge eviction filings and eviction court order histories. City policies may establish a period after which the court record of an eviction filing or judgment will be sealed (e.g., immediately expunging the record if a case is dismissed or if the tenant won, expunging after a tenant complies with all terms reached in a court agreement, expunging after three years if no other evictions are filed against the same party, etc.). Cities also can prohibit leases from requiring that a sealed eviction record be disclosed.

“Just Cause” Eviction Laws

Cities may require landlords to have a “just cause” or “good cause” when evicting a tenant. A “just cause” for eviction can mean that the tenant has not paid rent, has damaged the property, or has violated the terms of the lease. However, just cause policies also can protect tenants against arbitrary, retaliatory or discriminatory eviction filings by assuring that landlords have a valid legal reason for filing.

Outreach to Tenants and Landlords

Providing information about eviction prevention resources to all relevant stakeholders — including landlords, tenants, courts and community-based organizations — is a critical step. Outreach efforts can take the form of events, paper-based resources, online resources, partnerships, commercials, social media, and public service announcements (PSAs). No matter the outreach method or platform, cities and their partners should seek to reach households with the greatest level of need. Outreach and information sharing should be carried out in top-spoken languages and via community platforms and channels that reach high-risk residents, including those with limited access to the internet or limited English-language proficiency.



TIP: Tailor messaging and materials to the specific audience you are trying to reach. When seeking to engage tenants, employ clear problem and action statements based on the assistance that is available (e.g., “Are you behind on rent? Apply to get your rent and utilities paid.” “Are you having problems with your landlord or facing an eviction? Let a housing navigator help you for free.”). When reaching out to landlords, emphasize the role that landlords play in helping tenants secure rental assistance and the direct benefit to property owners. Leveraging success stories from tenants and landlords who have had a positive experience with a service or assistance program can also be a powerful tool; these “trusted messengers” will often make a stronger case with targeted audiences than a city spokesperson or service provider.

Rental Registry

A rental registry is an information repository set up to effectively enforce life and safety standards and collect property registration information from landlords operating rental units in a municipality. Required information can include apartment building addresses, names and contact information for all owners, and names and contact information for operating managers in all buildings.



TIP: Use property owner contact information and rental unit addresses collected through the rental registry to target eviction prevention resources to both renters and landlords. This information can be used for mailers showcasing the range of services available, including ERA.

Right to Counsel

During court eviction proceedings, landlords typically have an attorney present while tenants do not, which often results in cases being decided in favor of the landlord. Right to counsel programs provide free legal representation services to tenants experiencing an eviction. Enshrining a tenant's right to counsel through local laws and policies can help address the inherent power and resource imbalance in the eviction court process, leading to more balanced court decisions and improved housing security for tenants.

Supportive Services for Tenants

In most cities, tenants have access to a variety of supportive services that can help prevent an eviction and ensure long-term housing stability, including social, legal and financial resources. Supportive services for tenants can include case management, benefits counseling, trauma-informed care and treatment, peer support, access to cash assistance, services for non-English speakers, services for persons with disabilities, healthcare consultations and referrals, employment assistance, and behavioral health services. In addition to providing information and services specific to housing, cities and their partners should work to ensure that tenants are aware of and can access these additional support services.

Suggested Resources

Cities should reference the following resources while developing and implementing eviction prevention interventions that complement available ERA programs.

[Designing for Housing Stability](#)

Released by the Harvard Negotiation and Mediation Clinical Program and the American Bar Association, this report analyzed court-based and court-adjacent eviction prevention and/or diversion programs across the United States to uplift programmatic interventions that have successfully reduced evictions and eviction filings.

[Eviction Innovation](#)

A project of the Stanford Legal Design Lab, Eviction Innovation is a website that profiles current initiatives to address the eviction crisis across the United States. The website provides a database of programs and recommendations to assist governments and nonprofits in the development and implementation of more effective responses to eviction.

[Eviction Prevention: A Guide for Local Governments](#)

This publication, developed by the National League of Cities and the Stanford Legal Design Lab, guides local governments through a step-by-step process and menu of program offerings to develop effective interventions that are responsive to community needs.

[National Center for State Courts Eviction Resources](#)

The National Center for State Courts provides several eviction resources to assist state and local courts with implementing eviction diversion programs or with changing how state and local courts docket and manage evictions. Resources cover topics such as eviction diversion planning, court processes, and resources for attorneys and the public.

[Tenant Protections and Emergency Rental Assistance During and Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

This report from the National Low Income Housing Coalition provides an analysis of tenant protections and emergency rental assistance-related policies enacted or implemented by local and state governments in 2021.

[Tenant Right to Counsel](#)

Developed by National Coalition for Civil Right to Counsel, this webpage provides state and local governments with research and resources on tenant right to counsel initiatives, including talking points and details of right to counsel legislation passed at the city and state levels.