



# Serving Those Hit Hardest During the Pandemic

Oct 2020 Newsletter

## LAWM Helps Establish Eviction Diversion Programs

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in collaboration with the Michigan State Bar Foundation and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, LAWM secured a short-term grant to **expand our eviction work for vulnerable families**.

Our expansion includes establishing eviction diversion programs (EDPs), which connect families to rental assistance, facilitate payment plans with landlords, and provide more legal aid if needed. In all five LAWM offices, our advocates now liaise with the courts and Housing Assessment and Resource Agencies (HARAs) to coordinate service, meet with tenants facing eviction (at Zoom hearings or in-person at the court), and deliver free legal help to eligible clients. See [LAWM's resources on EDPs and other COVID topics here](#).

### Attorneys: want to help us keep families in homes?

We're doing everything we can to meet client need, but we need your help. Make a difference right now with LAWM's Eviction Diversion Pro Bono Initiative. You don't need housing law experience. We will train you! Join us as a pro bono volunteer, representing clients to seek rental assistance, negotiate fair payment arrangements, defend against evictions, and navigate new CDC eviction moratorium guidelines. Here's how to be part of the solution:

- Contact our Pro Bono Supervising Attorney, Noah Joseph: [njoseph@lawestmi.org](mailto:njoseph@lawestmi.org), 616-608-8056.
- We'll train you and support you with continuing technical assistance and on-demand resources.

Thank you for contributing your time and expertise!

Help for a Family Facing Eviction

As so many local families confront **extraordinary financial challenges**, we are honored to assist those who could lose their homes through eviction. “The Joneses”—mom, dad, and five children—contacted us about their eviction case. Mr. Jones works in construction. In any normal springtime his hours and pay would ramp up significantly, but in the pandemic his work dried up as economic activity came to a near halt. Mrs. Jones had given birth to the family’s youngest child in January, and was reluctant to return to work immediately for fear of exposing her baby to COVID-19. By June, both parents found new jobs, but the spring downtime had caused them to fall behind on rent.

When the Joneses contacted us about their pending eviction, **we helped them navigate the court process and secure financial assistance through the eviction diversion program.** The program covered some of their arrears, and LAWM staff negotiated an affordable payment plan with their landlord to get back on track. With this vital help during tough times, the Joneses caught up on rent, kept a roof over their children’s heads, and this working family staved off the trauma of falling into homelessness.

## Scaling Up to Meet the Need

We’re grateful that we could add 14 new staff members to meet escalating client-community needs amidst the pandemic. Thanks to temporary CARES Act funding through the Legal Services Corporation and the State of Michigan, our new team members **immediately increase our capacity to help clients.** New staff have hit the ground running in each of our five offices, serving clients mainly on eviction diversion and unemployment insurance issues.

We welcome: Jonathan Browning (COVID Response Attorney), Aaron Bainbridge, Meg Bauer, Tyler Braun, Christina Coffman, Michael Drake, Alex Henry, Rebecca Johnson, Keegan McCorry, and Andrew Villanueva (COVID Legal Fellows), and Karen Atkinson, Tresa Johnson, Tessa Phillips, and Mary Wagner (Eviction Diversion Program Legal Assistants)! Some of our new staff are pictured below.



Support our work!