



HOUSING STABILITY LEGAL ADVOCATE INITIATIVE: PROGRAM UPDATE



OVERVIEW

Housing instability disproportionately impacts lower-income community members, the vast majority of whom are renters. For lower-income community members, **housing is simply unaffordable**. In Arizona and Utah, there are about 30 affordable housing units for every 100 extremely lower-income renter households, and more than 70% of extremely low-income renters are paying more than half of their income on rent. For severely rent-burdened households, one emergency or **unexpected expense could result in eviction, displacement, and homelessness**.

Legal services can mean the difference between maintaining housing or suffering the **severe and long-lasting effects of eviction**. i4J's project proposed reform of unauthorized practice of law restrictions in Utah and Arizona to support Housing Stability Legal Advocates (HSLAs): community members from the non-profit social service sector who obtain HSLA certification in the course and scope of their social service work, and **embed limited-scope legal advice related to housing issues** in the delivery of their social services.

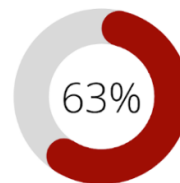


Project Problem Statement:

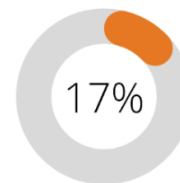
Create more opportunities for low-income renters to receive legal help and advice regarding housing stability by expanding the network of trained legal service providers beyond lawyers.

The Justice Gap for Housing-related Legal Problems in the Low-Income Community:

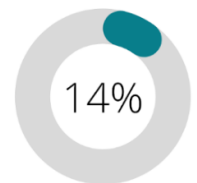
LEGAL PROBLEM HAD A
SUBSTANTIAL IMPACT



SOUGHT LEGAL
HELP



RECEIVED LEGAL
HELP



*As of the start of this project.



OBJECTIVES

1

Provide legal advice to low-income community members upstream

2

Expand roster of community-based advocates empowered to provide free legal assistance

3

Demonstrate for other states exploring UPL reform how non-market driven innovations can be embedded in re-regulation models



OUR PROCESS

01

Investigation

Understand the housing instability landscape through observation and robust, cross-sector engagement, focusing on Maricopa County, AZ and Salt Lake City, UT.

02

Engagement

Engaged with subject matter experts, organizations, and community members. Conducted interviews with diverse stakeholders to understand housing instability from multiple perspectives.

03

Mapping

Mapped connections between system actors and identified possible areas of opportunity and barriers in the system.

04

Ideation

Brainstormed ways to legally empower those facing housing instability, and prioritized possible interventions based on feasibility and impact.

05

Prototype & Test

Created a low-fidelity, tangible model of the proposed initiative, engaged the community in providing feedback, and revised the initiative to better meet community needs.



SCOPE OF HSLA SERVICES

1 ISSUE SPOT FOR HOUSING INSTABILITY AT INTAKE

A primary goal of HSLA services is to interface with and assist people experiencing housing instability before their housing problem becomes a civil legal problem, when tenants have the cognitive capacity to seek services and problem-solve. If a HSLA identifies a legal problem, the HSLA can provide early-stage legal advice and problem-solving assistance.

2 HELP TENANTS PROBLEM-SOLVE BEFORE A HOUSING ISSUE GOES TO COURT

HSLAs screen for legal defenses and take an advocacy role in negotiating with property owners/managers on behalf of tenants. HSLA participation shifts the power imbalance, leading to more fair interactions between tenants, property owners, and legal professionals.

3 GIVE LEGAL ADVICE REGARDING ENGAGING WITH THE CIVIL LEGAL SYSTEM

By understanding the procedural rules and requirements of eviction proceedings, as well as the timelines involved, HSLAs are positioned to advise tenants faced with an eviction notice regarding the eviction process and timeline, completion of forms, and the best way to participate in their case.

4 ASSIST TENANTS AFTER AN EVICTION

HSLAs are trained to understand judgment implications, and to assist tenants with post-judgment procedures, help them reduce damages, and provide next steps. HSLAs provide holistic care by providing social services coupled with legal guidance.

Project Status:

On January 18, 2023, the HSLA pilot was authorized by the Arizona Supreme Court (now [Administrative Order No. 2024-34](#)). The Order permits HSLAs to sit at counsel table during court hearings to advise and assist clients, and interact with judicial officers during hearings. On March 9, 2023, the Utah Supreme Court authorized the HSLA Initiative through [Standing Order 16](#). CBOs wishing to train their employees as HSLAs will apply for authorization through the Utah Supreme Court's Office of Legal Services Innovation. After providing training, i4J will continue supporting participating CBOs with legal mentoring and assistance in complying with regulatory requirements. The Utah Standing Order does not permit HSLAs to participate in court proceedings.