

Legal Action of Wisconsin: Eviction Defense Project opens, providing free civil legal aid

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Legal Action of Wisconsin launches new program to help stabilize housing for families facing eviction in Dane County

MADISON- Legal Action of Wisconsin has successfully launched its new Eviction Defense Project (EDP), which seeks to reduce housing instability for extremely low-income individuals and families in Dane County. Housed at the Dane County Courthouse, EDP provides tenants facing eviction with access to free civil legal aid and on-site, limited scope, representation.

“We’ve all seen that eviction is getting more attention in the media,” said Heidi Wegleitner, Legal Action of Wisconsin attorney. “With the EDP, we hope to stabilize housing for individuals and families who are facing the trauma of an eviction.”

The epidemic of evictions has received national attention over the last few years through the award-winning book, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, by Matthew Desmond, a sociologist at Princeton University and a recipient of a MacArthur “Genius” Grant. The book chronicles the lives of landlords and tenants in Milwaukee neighborhoods and the often devastating impact of housing instability on Milwaukee families. Desmond has recently published nationwide data on the eviction crisis via Princeton’s Eviction Lab: <https://evictionlab.org/>

In Dane County, UW Professor Revel Sims and his students have found similar patterns: <https://gobigread.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/06/EvictedInD>

[aneCounty_final.pdf](#)

Desmond's and Sims' work shows the downward spiral of poverty, joblessness, and homelessness that often results from evictions.

A close collaboration between Legal Action and others made the Dane County EDP possible: volunteer attorneys from throughout Dane County; the Tenant Resource Center; UW Law School's Neighborhood Legal Clinic; Dane County; and the City of Madison.

How to Get Help: We strongly urge Dane County tenants facing eviction to contact attorney Heidi Wegleitner (608-620-2002 or hmw@legalaction.org) or paralegal Rebeka Pritchett (608-620-2014 or rpg@legalaction.org) *before* their first Tuesday court date. Tenants may also visit the EDP in-person at the Dane County courthouse on Tuesdays. Arrive at least 30 minutes before your hearing time to request help from our volunteer attorneys.

The Eviction Defense Project is housed at the Dane County courthouse:

215 S Hamilton St
Basement level
Tuesdays, beginning at 8:30 a.m.

EDP's free civil legal aid is provided by volunteer attorneys and law students and may include brief legal advice, assistance negotiating settlement with landlord, assistance preparing court documents, and in-court representation.

How to Volunteer to Provide Legal Assistance: Attorneys who are interested in becoming a volunteer at the Eviction Defense Project are encouraged to contact attorney Heidi Wegleitner hmw@legalaction.org All civil legal aid provided through the EDP is limited in scope and duration. Please contact the EDP with any questions or requests for additional information.

Legal Action of Wisconsin: Legal Action of Wisconsin is a non-profit law firm which provides free representation on civil legal problems to low-income individuals in 39 southern Wisconsin Counties.