



**VOLUNTEER
LAWYERS**
PROJECT

Landlord Volunteer Toolkit

Toolkit

1. _____ Introduction
2. _____ Landlord Volunteer Opportunities
3. _____ Case Studies
4. _____ Help Spread the Word
5. _____ Get Involved
6. _____ Contact Us



1.

Introduction



Who We Are

The Volunteer Lawyers Project's Landlord Advocacy Program is a team of attorneys, paralegals, and law students from all segments of the community working together to serve lower income small landlords throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Mission

To increase equal access to justice for eligible homeowner landlords by delivering high quality pro bono legal services in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

*Our partnerships with Justice Bridge and Hampden County Legal Clinic may be able to provide low-cost services or other resources to landlords who do not meet the criteria for our free services

Values

- Preserve and protect meaningful access to justice for our clients.
- Prioritize our programs based on the needs of the populations we serve and the capacities of our staff.
- Promote diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunity in the delivery of legal services.
- Strive to have a staff that is reflective of the community we serve.
- Foster constructive collaboration between our staff and board, and those who serve our clients.

When Our Work Began

In October 2020, the Volunteer Lawyers Project joined the statewide program formerly known as the COVID Eviction Legal Help Project (CELHP for short). Our purpose is to help low-income small landlords facing a housing crisis by providing high quality assistance.

What We Offer Our Clients

- _____ Free legal assistance
- _____ Financial assistance application support
- _____ Educational materials and resources
- _____ Free advice from experts

What We Offer Our Volunteers

- _____ Opportunity to practice housing law outside of the courtroom
- _____ Mentorship from senior law partners and seasoned staff attorneys
- _____ SJC Pro Bono Honor Roll, Pro Bono hours reporting and MCLE discount vouchers

2.

Landlord Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteer Programs and Services

— DOCKET OUTREACH

- Review docket listings and identify qualified unrepresented landlords who have matters pending in court
- Participation available immediately
- Training will be provided

— FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE APPLICATION SUPPORT (FAAS)

- Assist landlords with applying for mortgage and utility assistance
- Gather necessary documents from landlords to submit with their Emergency Housing Payment Assistance application
- Regularly check in with the RAA for updates on the applications

— UPSTREAM SERVICES

- Contact pro se litigants via telephone and/or email to inform them about available programs and services
- Participation available immediately
- Training will be provided

— LIMITED ASSISTANCE REPRESENTATION (LAR)

- Opportunity to represent parts of a case rather than the entire case. For example, provide general legal advice, assistance with starting an eviction action, the preparation and serving of a Notice To Quit, or a Summons and Complaint, or a mediation, or assistance responding to discovery requests
- Training video available

— ONE-ON-ONE LEGAL ADVICE (1-ON-1)

- 15-minute consultation with client in a virtual and secure workspace through a virtual platform called Legal Squirrel
- Training video available

— EDUCATION & TRAINING AMBASSADOR

- Craft educational trainings and materials on topics that are important for small low-income landlords and the attorneys who serve them
- Present crafted topics via pre-recorded trainings and live webinars
- Feature your name and work in VLP's training library shared with major legal and social service organizations throughout the state

Who You Will Be Helping & Why

Who are our clients?

- Homeowners who live in and rent out one or more units of their home
- Homeowners who meet specific median household income ranges
- Homeowners at risk of foreclosure or bankruptcy

Why do we help them?

- Our homeowners rely on pensions and moderately priced rental income to pay bills, maintain property and keep their mortgage up to date
- They are often elderly, English is often a second language
- They lack access to resources

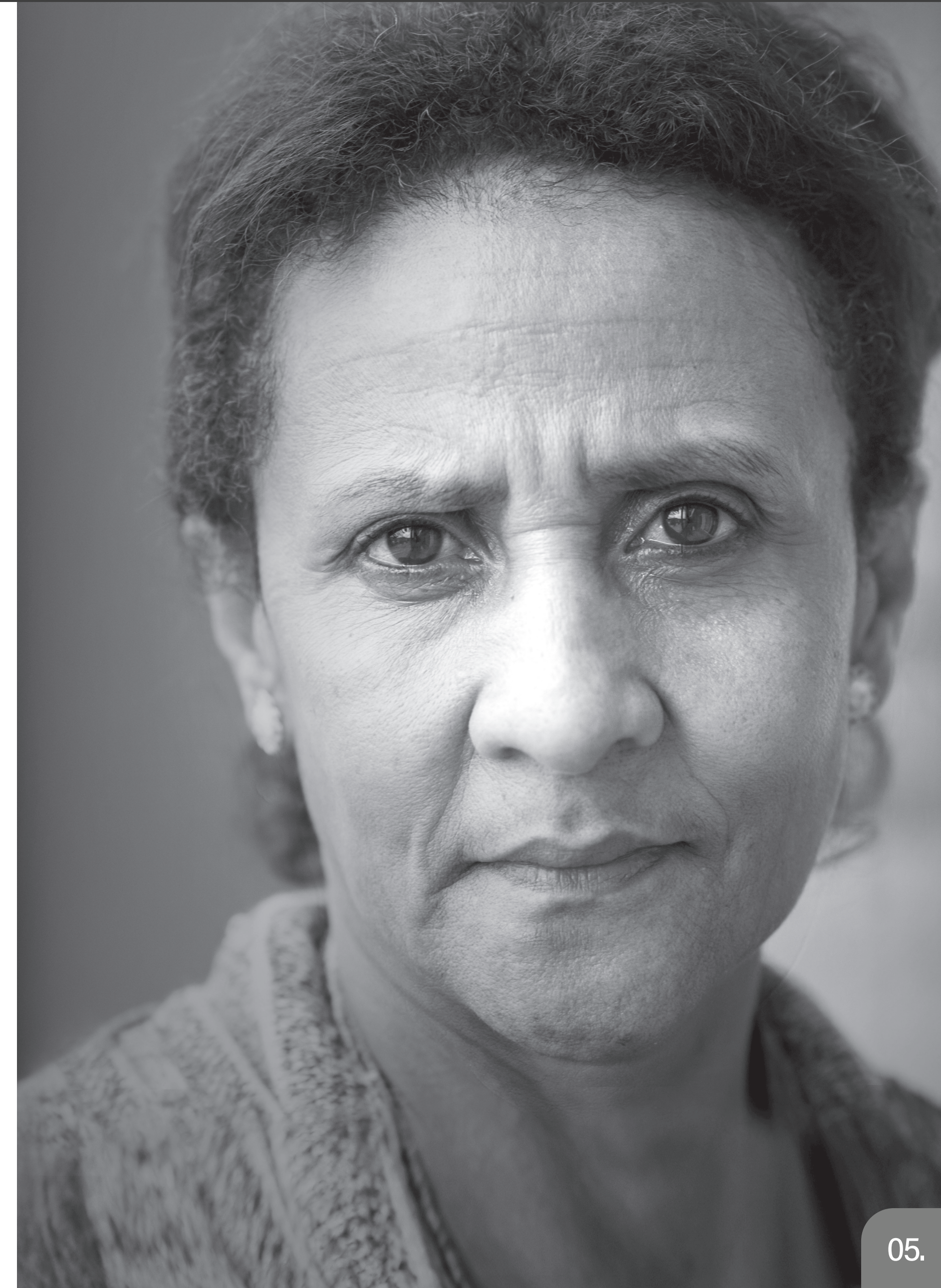
VOLUNTEER TODAY



Sign up

Landlord Eligibility Standards

- They must live in and rent out part of their multi-family home
- They must meet our income criteria
 - For free services, their household income must be at or below 200% of the federal poverty line.
 - The value of their home does not count towards the household income



3.

Case Studies

Clients Concerns

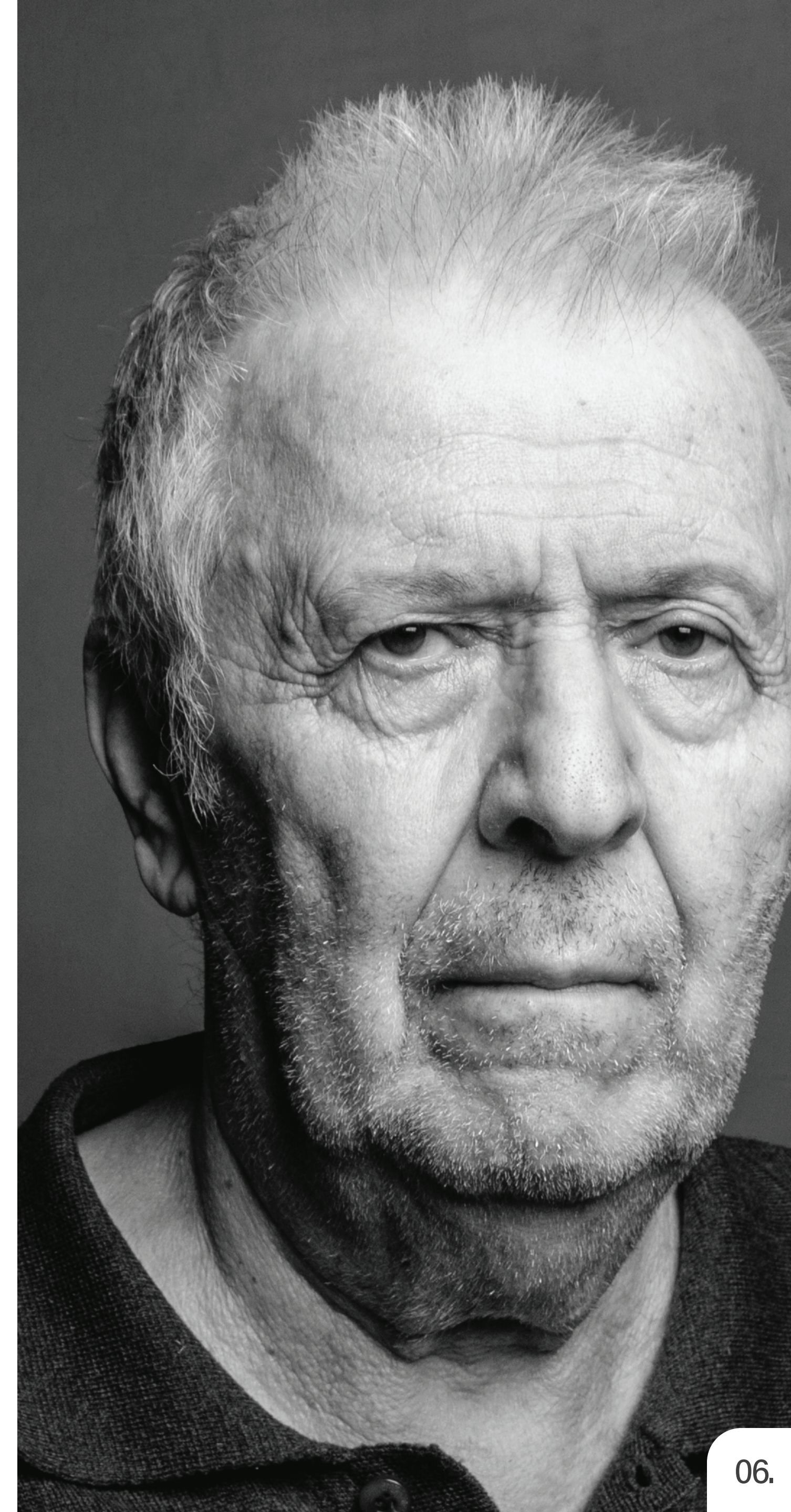
Why does my tenant not have to pay rent but I still have to pay my bills and mortgage?

I don't know where to go to get help as a small landlord.

I have started the eviction process, but I have no idea where to go from here.

I need to make repairs to the property but I cannot get access to the apartment to do the work.

I got a foreclosure notice and now I don't know what to do.



Success Stories

Landlord lives in a duplex with her mother and the Tenant and her family live in the other apartment. After Tenant fell behind in rent, she called the Housing Inspection Department and yet refused to permit the landlord access to make repairs, instead announcing that she intended to own the landlord's home. Tenant made threats to Landlord and to Landlord's mother. At one point, the police were called and issued an order of protection against the Tenant to protect the Landlord's mother. The landlord contacted VLP to seek legal advice.

Outcome: Landlord's mother has an extended order of protection to protect her from the tenant, the court ordered the tenant to permit access so repairs could be made and landlord received one year's rent arrearage from the RAFT program. No eviction action was filed. VLP will continue to represent the Landlord.

Tenant had not paid rent. There were regular visits from police regarding behavior of tenant and tenant's threats to the landlord that he did not have to leave or pay rent. Meanwhile, Tenant was damaging the property, which was confirmed by the Board of Health. Landlord called VLP. Police told her to keep working with VLP.

Outcome: The Board of Health congratulated her when the tenant finally moved out and she was able to make the repairs. All resulted without a need for court action.

Success Stories

Our client is a 48-year old Spanish-speaking landlord. Her husband, who spoke English and handled all communications, recently left the relationship leaving her to deal with the process alone. She felt intimidated, frustrated, and confused.

The client's tenant owed her \$14,000 in rent arrears. She had tried unsuccessfully to get her tenant to apply for RAFT. To make matters worse, not only did the tenant smoke inside the unit when they were not supposed to, they would not allow our client access to do repairs. Our client ended up owing over \$20,000 on her mortgage payments. She did not know there was assistance for landlords but was relieved when she was put in touch with a VLP bilingual staff member.

Outcome: Since VLP began representing the client, she was awarded \$10,000 for mortgage payments and \$18,000 in rental arrears. The tenant did not abide by the agreement until a call was made to their attorney. The tenant has since allowed our client to make necessary renovations and repairs. The client is relieved, knowing she will not lose her home.

Clients Testimonials

"Wow! I had no idea there was help for low income, small landlords."

"He is gone and now I can thank you both for your support and hope that all of our march is a march for the better. Love you both!"

"Thank you both for being there. It matters to me like you do not know."

"I felt intimidated, frustrated, and confused until VLP."

4.

Help Spread the Word

Follow us on social media!



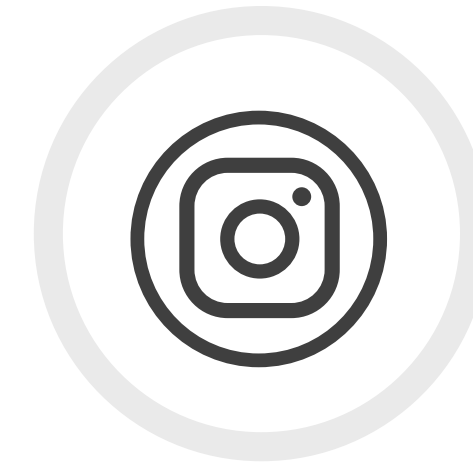
@vlpboston



@VLP_Boston



@vlpnet



@vlpboston

5.

Get Involved!

Volunteer with us!

Why Volunteer?

Many mom-and-pop landlords who provide moderately priced housing for tenants are struggling to collect rent and make mortgage payments. Help prevent deep and lasting harm on the rental market by supporting our small landlords.

Sign up here:

<https://vlpprobono.wufoo.com/forms/save-our-small-landlords-volunteer-signup-form/>

Explore More Opportunities

We have programs that were developed to find, educate, and advise small landlords on their rights and responsibilities, as well as provide assistance and resources—all of which can be done remotely.

Flexible Schedule

We will work with your schedule and your participation can be fully remote. Whether you are a lawyer, law student, paralegal or committed volunteer we may have a program that suits your qualifications and interest. Training and staff support will be provided.

What Our Volunteers Are Saying!



Jared Coltey, Intern at Justice Bridge Legal Center

"Volunteering with the Landlord team has been one of the best experiences of my life, we've been able to help many people through horribly stressful situations. Not only is the program extremely helpful and successful, but the team is also full of truly great people who make volunteering that much more rewarding."



Len Zandrow, Partner Brister & Zandrow

"VLP has been a great partner of ours ever since we launched our law incubator seven years ago. The Justice Bridge community and I personally appreciate the opportunities that we have been given to participate in the Landlord program and the services that we have been able to provide thus far on behalf of modest means landlords of owner-occupied dwellings."



Morjieta Derisier, Esq.
Baystate Law Group

"Volunteering as an attorney is an integral part of our judicial system, money should never be a barrier to quality representation."



Ted Papadopoulos, Esq. Ashton Law

"When presented with an opportunity to help someone in need, seize it! There is no better compensation or reward than the gratitude and thanks from the person(s) you are able to assist."



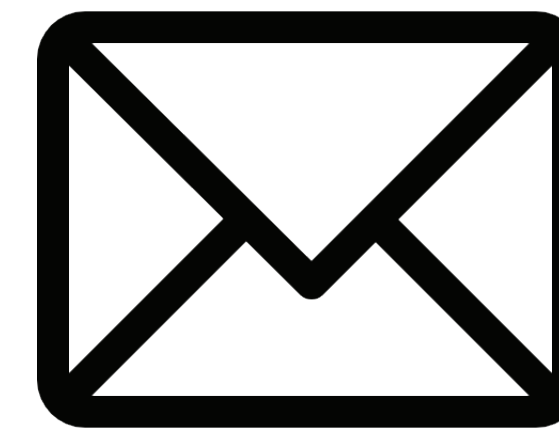
John Carroll, Esq.
Meehan, Boyle, Black
and Bogdanow

"The gift of giving of yourself to others is a gift to yourself. The reward is instantaneous."

For more information:



Website: vlpnet.org/landlord-volunteer



Questions? Email echorm@vlpnet.org