Toolkit

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Who We Are

The Volunteer Lawyers Project’s Landlord Advocacy 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 and low cost legal services in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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.
1. Introduction

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

- Free or low-cost legal assistance
- Financial assistance application support
- Educational materials and resources
- Free advice from experts

How We Are Different

The Volunteer Lawyers Project is the only program funded by the state to help qualified low-income landlords. We work every day to advocate for the rights of small landlords like you.
How We Can Help

If you are a small landlord in a housing crisis and not receiving rent payments or at risk of losing your home, VLP can help you find options. Through the state’s HAF programs, you may be eligible for money to assist in mortgage or your tenants’ rental payments. VLP is here to advocate for you.

Find out if you are eligible, please call our helpline, or start your online application. You can also visit our website for more information.

Helpline: 857-320-6452 or email Yesenia Carrion @ ycarrion@vlpnet.org
Website: https://vlpnet.org/landlord/
Online Application: http://vlplandlords.com/
or scan the QR code below with your mobile device.*

* Scan the QR code with your mobile device to fill out the

VLP Virtual Assistant form through our partnership with Legal Squirrel. With your permission, Volunteer Lawyers Project will reach out to attorneys in our network and see if one is available to discuss your case. VLP cannot guarantee an attorney will be available, but we will try to find one to discuss your case with you. Any information you share will be confidential.
Landlord Programs and Services

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- FREE LEGAL REPRESENTATION
  One-on-One Legal Advice Clinic
  - Free 15-minute consultation

- FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE APPLICATION SUPPORT
  Help process financial assistance applications
  - Get money to cover your tenant’s unpaid rent
  - Get money to pay for your mortgage payments

- EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS AND RESOURCES
  100% free landlord resources regardless of income
  - Eviction process
    • Navigating Notice to Quit
    • Obligation of being a landlord
  - Upcoming educational clinics
Landlord Eligibility Standards

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

* 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.
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.
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."
Share our posts!

Use hashtags:
#VLP #VLP4Landlords #VolunteerLawyersProject
#SaveOurSmallLandlords

@vlpboston  @VLP_Boston  @vlpnet
Share our posts!

Post copy: Do you need representation in court for an eviction issue and can't afford any? Frequently, the people who need an attorney the most are also the ones who can least afford to pay for one. Call 857-320-6452 to find out your options!

Has COVID-19 impacted your housing situation? Are you worried about legal representation? VLP might be able to represent you for free! Not sure if you qualify? We have resources for everyone in need. Call 857-320-6452 or visit us at http://vlplandlords.com/ to see how we can help you!
Get Involved!

**Volunteer**
We are looking for volunteers to assist us in our One-on-One Legal clinic and provide limited assistance to landlords in need. If you have any other questions about our services or volunteering, please visit our webpage: https://www.legalsquirrel.com/advice_clinics/14/signup?utm_source=redirect_from_vlpnet.

**Educational Events**
If you are a community leader or organizer looking to do educational events and would like more information on our services, please email echorm@vlpnet.org.

**Referral**
If you interact with a low-income client who might benefit from our services, please consider referring them to VLP for our services by emailing echorm@vlpnet.org.

Follow us! @vlpboston @VLP_Boston @vlpnet
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