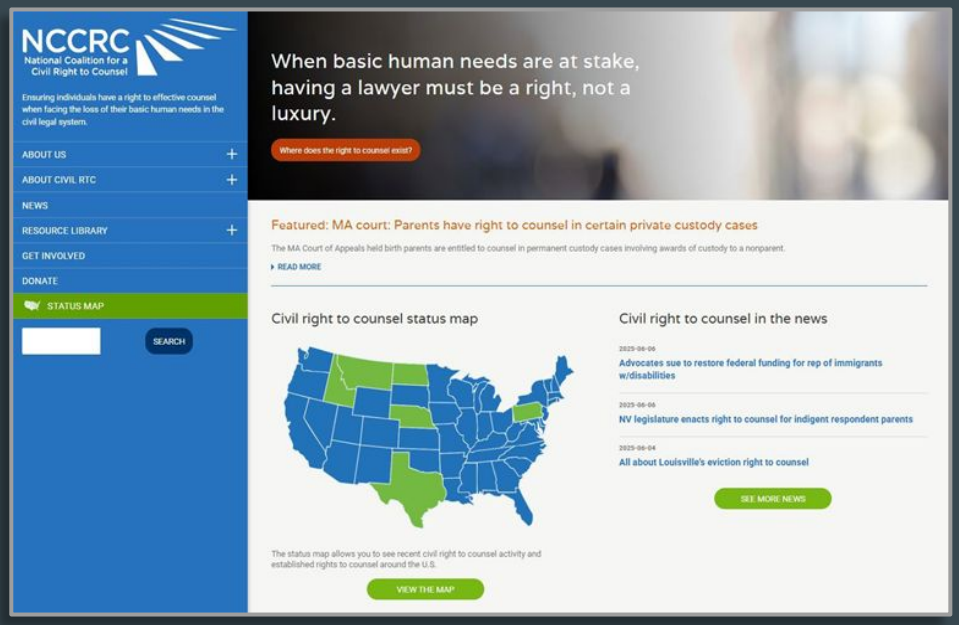
NCCRC
National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel
Project of the Public Justice Center

TENANT RIGHT TO COUNSEL

Supporting Housing Stability Among Families with Young Children

November 18, 2026

National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel (NCCRC)



Find us at
www.civilrighttocounsel.org

We work to ensure people have a right to counsel in civil cases about basic needs.

1,000+
participants & partners

47
states

THREE STRATEGIES

Technical Assistance	Education & Outreach	Research

Partnering with Thrive from the Start to support 10 state cohort exploring housing landscape / supporting prenatal to 3 (PN-3) families

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AGENDA

Overview

Tenant right to counsel

Panel

TRTC and Supporting Housing Stability Among Families with Young Children

Questions

Please use the Q&A to ask questions

RTC = right to counsel

TRTC = tenant right to counsel

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Tenant Right to Counsel (TRTC)

Explained

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Tenant Right to Counsel

A law that guarantees *full legal representation* to *eligible* tenants and is government funded.

WHAT IS A RIGHT TO COUNSEL?

Codified	Government funded
Full representation	Objective eligibility criteria

- Covers **eviction cases at minimum**
- May cover additional cases (affirmative, subsidy terminations, etc.)
- Not implemented all at once → need for careful rollout (pipeline, funding)

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Why do we need TRTC?

Enables tenants to enforce existing legal rights and protect needs	• Evictions impact most basic needs: housing, health (physical & mental), employment, education, child custody • Cases are complex (Procedural requirements, federal and state law overlay, amount owed in dispute) • Available defenses (technical, warranty of habitability)
Promotes systems change	• **Representational disparity: 4%** tenant rep v. **84%** landlord rep (on average, nationally)
Advances racial equity and economic justice	• Guarantees legal assistance in systems that disproportionately impact, harm and are biased against people of color and people experiencing poverty

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Why do we need TRTC for families?

Most **common age** to be evicted in America is **between birth and 19.**

Families with children make up **40% of people being evicted**.

- "It's children": ability to understand what's happening, added stress for parents
- More impact through a single case depending on family size
- Children are at highest risk of experiencing / being affected by eviction
- Effects of eviction and moves (voluntary / forced) on school
- Impact on birth outcomes
- **Cleveland: 11,804** children served between July 2020 and December 2025

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TRTC Enactment

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
NYC	San Francisco, CA Newark, NJ	**Cleveland, OH** Philadelphia, PA	Boulder, CO Baltimore, MD	Denver, CO Kansas City, MO **Louisville, KY** Minneapolis, MN Seattle, WA Toledo, OH ***States***: WA, CT, MD
2022	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**	**2026**
Detroit, MI New Orleans, LA	Jersey City, NJ St. Louis, MO Westchester County, NY ***States***: MN	**Columbus, OH** LA County, CA ***States***: NE	LA City, CA **Bozeman, MT**	Nashville, TN

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TRTC Movement Growth

Sampling of other cities/states exploring TRTC

- Akron, OH (pilot)
- Allentown, PA
- Atlanta, GA
- Birmingham, AL (pilot)
- Boston, MA (pilot)
- Dayton, OH (pilot)
- Guilford County, NC
- Long beach, CA (pilot)
- Milwaukee County, MN (pilot)
- Pittsburgh, PA
- Richmond, VA (pilot)
- San Jose, CA
- Santa Monica, CA
- Tulsa, OK (resolution + pilot)

Results with Tenant Right to Counsel

Staying in the home

88%	Toledo
86%	Maryland
84%	NYC
63%	San Francisco
56%	Washington State
46%	Detroit
34%	Denver

Reducing money judgments

$845k	Baltimore
$5M	Maryland
85%	NYC, reduction in rent amounts

Avoiding eviction record

4%	Boulder

More time to move

100%	Detroit
99%	Louisville, with enough time to find other housing
88%	Cleveland
30%	New Orleans

Avoiding homelessness

92%	San Francisco
1,515	Louisville (children)

Find links to the studies and reports with these stats on our website: www. civilrighttocounsel.org/resources/organizing_around_right_to_counsel/

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Systemic and Jurisdictional Benefits

TRTC is "a **total game changer**" that resulted in **"a complete shift in the landscape."**

- Increased coordination between service providers
- Changes to court and judicial behavior
- Helps put tenants in position to advocate and seek further systemic changes.
- Jurisdictional cost savings

Sources:

- *Emily Benfer et al, A Descriptive Analysis of Tenant Right to Counsel Law and Praxis 2017–2024, https://bit.ly/3OiHHs1*
- *Stout's Eviction Right to Counsel Resource Center - Cost-benefit analyses and evaluations*

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Tenant Right to Counsel

Supporting Housing Stability Among Families with Young Children

John Pollock (Facilitator)
Coordinator
National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel
Public Justice Center

Matthew Vincel
Managing Attorney
Housing Practice Group
Legal Aid Society of Cleveland

Olive Nakano Sohn
Elected Vice President
Bozeman Tenants United

Kate Leifheit
Social Epidemiologist
UCLA's Fielding School of Public Health

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Cleveland's RTC program

- **11,804 children** served between July 2020 and December 2025
- **3,222 households** (or 60%) served had **a child under 6** in the household
- Stout estimated that between July 2020-December 2025:
  - **9,053 children** avoided disruptive displacement and remained residents of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County due to RTC-C
  - **3,949 households** avoided disruptive displacement and remained in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County (**approximately 45%** of RTC-C households have at least **one child under age 6**)
- Stout estimated **of 80 RTC-C clients who had the lead paint in their home remediated**, there were approximately **95 children age 6 or under**.

Source: Stout's Independent Evaluation of Cleveland's Eviction Right to Counsel Annual Report for the Period January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025 Report Date: January 29, 2026

Resources

National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel
NCCRC's website with civil RTC status map, resource library, and major developments.

Eviction Right to Counsel: A Comprehensive Guide
NCCRC's online guide for advancing and implementing TRTC.

Enacted Eviction Right To Counsel And Eviction Defense Programs
Parameters of existing tenant RTC laws, including Bozeman and Cleveland.

TRTC and PN3 Families Fact Sheet
NCCRC's fact sheet on TRTC and supporting housing stability for families with young children.

Guaranteed Right to Counsel in Eviction Proceedings
Research brief from Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center on Tenant RTC.

Tenant Right to Counsel and Adverse Birth Outcomes in New York, New York
Leifheit KM, et al., JAMA Pediatr. 2024;178(12):1337–1344. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2024.4699.
Study looking at birth outcomes in zip codes implementing TRTC in NYC.

'If I wouldn't have had them, I would've been lost': Tenant Right to Counsel in Cleveland
Robinson, L., Benfer, E. A., & Keene, D. E. (2026). Housing Studies, 1–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2026.2664154 (2026). Qualitative Cleveland RTC study.

Building the Housing Justice Pipeline: Law Schools' Role in the Right to Counsel Movement
Erica Braudy, et al., New York Law School (2025)

Questions received during the session

Questions	Answers
What are the funding sources for the groups that have TRTC?	Each jurisdiction funds TRTC in different ways. Most use allocations from general revenue of the jurisdiction (either city, county, or state), some are partly funded by private foundations or federal grants, and some have created more creative ways to fund RTC (such as Boulder's taxes on rental licenses, Jersey City's developer fees, St. Louis's short term rental fees, and Maryland's use of the state abandoned property fund). We have a breakdown of all of these sources in the NCCRC's TRTC enacted laws matrix).
Did these conversations start with a few key community stakeholders or through larger strategic community conversations facilitated by a lead organization?	*Answered live.* For historical information about how tenant right to counsel laws were passed in the cities covered in this webinar, visit their pages on our website: Bozeman's Tenant RTC and Cleveland's Tenant RTC.
Other than tenants, are there any key players that must be engaged upfront?	We have more about the stakeholders that need to be involved (legal services providers, community organizers and organizations, policymakers, etc) in the NCCRC's Eviction RTC Guide: Building a lasting coalition.
What was the amount of funding required to start a TRTC Initiative and how many families were you able to serve in year one. How have your numbers and funding dollars changed over the years?	The amount of funding and number of clients served differ in each jurisdiction. We have information about Cleveland's numbers in this slidedeck (slide 13). The latest report on Cleveland is available here (download). Our TRTC enacted laws matrix has the funding allocations (and some of the changes in allocations) for all the enacted TRTC laws. To learn more about funding TRTC initiatives, check out the NCCRC's Eviction RTC Guide: Figuring out funding.

Questions received during the session cont'd

Questions	Answers
What do you think it'll take to study how the social determinants of health for infants/children are positively and negatively affected by TRTC (and similar) programs?	*Answered by K. Leifheit.* There's lots of evidence already showing that TRTC improves housing outcomes. We're working on studies about impacts on healthcare access and I think there's ongoing work looking at effects on family poverty, kids' educational outcomes, etc.
When evaluating the cost-effectiveness of TRTC programs, has there been research comparing their outcomes to alternative eviction-prevention interventions, specifically providing direct emergency rental payments to landlords to resolve outstanding arrears? I'm interested in whether legal representation or direct financial assistance prevents more evictions per dollar spent, and how the two approaches compare in terms of long-term housing stability.	Most of the TRTC cost-benefit analyses have been done by an organization called Stout (whose reports are available on their Eviction RTC Resources page), and these reports haven't compared to alternative eviction-prevention interventions like direct emergency rental payments to landlords. In part this is because rental assistance and tenant representation address problems in different ways. For instance, while a rental assistance program may keep a tenant in the home, it may pay the landlord more than they are entitled to if the landlord has failed to maintain the unit, properly credit rent payments, or done other things that only an attorney would discover. In working to preserve housing stability, an attorney representing a tenant can address habitability conditions in the unit, raise available defenses, and challenge to ensure the amount being sought by the landlord is proper and lawful. An attorney representation program can assist even those who must or desire to relocate by obtaining more time to move, reducing the rent arrears, and working to keep the eviction off the tenant's record.

Thank you!

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