

AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania

Quality Assurance Report for 2009

Housing Cases

We are always concerned with improving the quality of our services, and proactively created a Quality Assurance Team to internally monitor our performance. Given the attorney's duty of confidentiality to clients, and the sensitive nature of the attorney-client privilege, all quality reviews are done in-house.

To assess the quality of our work, every year we review our housing cases closed between July 1st and September 30th. **We found that of the 40 people who needed legal assistance with a housing matter, we assisted 88% of them through a combination of direct representation, legal advice and referrals.**

Each individual who calls with a legal concern receives a thorough intake interview with a trained paralegal or certified legal intern who handles calls immediately and provides triage for persons in crisis. Each case is then reviewed by the Intake Team (comprised of four attorneys and five paralegals), who determine an appropriate course of action. Sometimes staff will represent the client in court. Other times, staff will help by informally negotiating an agreement with another party, such as a landlord or a mortgage company. Clients who need assistance in a practice area outside our scope of expertise (i.e. medical malpractice, personal injury, criminal defense) are referred to a volunteer attorney. Callers who simply want information on their legal rights receive follow-up phone calls, meetings or written information.

This quality report examines the outcome of all housing cases that were closed in July, August, or September of 2009. "Housing" cases include cases involving: private landlord/tenant issues (evictions and repairs); public housing landlord/tenant issues (evictions and repairs); utilities; and financial real estate.

This survey was performed by Intake Advocate Jacob Eden. Robert Levesque, our database consultant, generated the list of cases closed in the third quarter of 2009. Eden pulled the files for those cases and reviewed each individually. Using the outcome section of our intake form as a guide, but also checking the attached case notes, Eden determined the outcome of each of these cases, compiled the data, and created the report.

In analyzing outcomes, three categories were used:

1. **Represent/Advocate:** This category covers any instance in which a staff member of the AIDS Law Project represented a person in a hearing or contacted any landlord or other third party on behalf of a client.
2. **Legal Advice/Information:** This is the broadest outcome category and includes almost anytime a staff member spoke to a client whether it was to explain a person's rights or to advise a client on available resources.
3. **Referral:** The AIDS Law Project sometimes refers clients to other agencies, organizations, and lawyers if it feels a client would be better served or if a case falls outside of its area of legal expertise.

This quality report was completed on June 23, 2010.

Private Landlord Tenant Issues 27 Intakes

Evictions – 20 intakes

We gave assistance, representation, advocacy, legal information, and/or a referral to 17 people. Three people were unreachable after their initial intake. The breakdown below further explains the types of legal services provided to clients. Some clients may receive more than one type of service.

Referrals

We referred 2 clients. One client came to us through a Prevention Point program and was referred to Community Legal Services (CLS).¹ The other client was referred to a case manager, as well as provided with representation and legal advice.

Legal Advice

Sixteen of the 20 clients received legal advice and/or information. Of these 16, we represented or advocated for 15; one became unreachable.

Representation and/or Advocacy

We represented or advocated for 15 people, either by appearing with them in court or contacting landlords or other third parties on their behalf.

Judgment By Agreement (JBA)

A Judgment By Agreement is a judgment that is negotiated between a landlord (or a landlord's attorney) and our client and a lawyer. Through these agreements our clients can negotiate either more time to vacate a property or have some (or all) of their back rent forgiven. We helped 8 clients enter into JBAs – six forgave either all or some of the client's back rent and three provided clients with more time to vacate (one JBA helped a client do both).

Repairs – 3 intakes

The AIDS Law Project represented/advocated on behalf of and provided information and advice to three clients. In all three cases, the repairs were made.

Miscellaneous – 4 intakes

Four clients came to us with housing-law questions not related to eviction or repairs. We gave legal advice or information to all four of these clients and represented or advocated on behalf of two clients.

Public Housing 4 Intakes

Four clients came to us with issues regarding public housing. Of these, three received legal information and or advice. One became unreachable and two had their issues resolved.

¹ We have a paralegal at Prevention Point Philadelphia twice a week providing criminal-record resolution services for people with HIV and those at risk for HIV. We represent HIV-positive clients with additional legal needs. Clients at risk with additional legal needs are referred to CLS.

Utilities

2 Intakes

The AIDS Law Project advocated and provided information to one client seeking help with a utility shut-off. This client had the utility turned back on and was in safe and affordable housing when the file was closed. The other intake came through the Prevention Point Program and was referred to CLS.

Financial Real Estate

7 Intakes

These cases involved loan modification, probate issues, and other issues involving real estate. We referred three of these cases: one to Philadelphia VIP, one to Philadelphia Bar Association-Lawyer Referral and Information Service, and one to Legal Aid of Southeast Pennsylvania. We represented or advocated for three of these cases and helped clients create affordable plans of action to stay in their homes.