

From: [Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor](#)
Subject: Additional Evictions Information
Date: Monday, August 2, 2021 9:06:30 AM
Attachments: [Evictions Backlog Strategies.pdf](#)

Dear Judge,

COVID-19 has impacted the ability of many Ohioans to meet their rental obligations. As you may know, your local community action agencies (CAAs) have eviction assistance funds to pay for tenant back rent and utilities, and up to 10 percent can be used for housing stability, including eviction legal fees. Here's a link to the Ohio Developmental Services Agency (ODSA) website, <https://businesshelp.ohio.gov/home-relief-grant.html>, so you can find the community action agency in your area. There are still relief funds available, and I encourage you to pass this information along to litigants in your court. Please note, even if a tenant is evicted, a local CAA may still be able to provide funds to the tenant for housing and as such, it is critical to make these connections for litigants regardless of eviction status.

The [National Center for State Courts](#) has recently created a *Tiny Chat* on evictions which you can find [here](#). In following this link, you'll find a public service announcement video which the National Center will customize for your court, *free of charge*. The video is available in English with subtitles in other commonly used languages. You can then place the video on your court's website for the public's access and viewing.

The National Center also created an [eviction diversion diagnostic tool](#). It starts with an interview that gauges court leaders' appetite for eviction diversion and gathers relevant information about their jurisdictions. The final product is a document that provides them with guidance, best practices, and information about other, similar eviction diversion programs. It also offers advice on how court leaders might cooperate with legal aid and rental assistance and presents them with a model eviction diversion program structure that they can implement.

Additionally, the [Ohio Access to Justice Foundation](#) is connecting local courts with the mediators that were trained on evictions pursuant to Temp.Sup.R. 2.01. If you are interested in hosting an evictions mediation pilot program to assist with your backlog, please contact Sophia Chang, the Statewide Pro Bono Director for assistance in obtaining a mediator. Ms. Chang's email address is schang@ohiojusticefoundation.org or she may be reached by telephone at 614-715-8568.

Also, I want to remind you of the Supreme Court's [Evictions Report and Recommendations](#) which was issued in July of 2020. This report offered recommendations on handling the expected influx of eviction cases resulting from the pandemic. In the report, one of the recommendations was to build capacity in mediation services and to implement settlement weeks. Further resources are available in the Report, including a sample Landlord-Tenant and Evictions Mediation Framework. Additional considerations for courts include:

- Providing rental preservation information for tenants
- Providing stability information for landlords
- Adopting case management strategies for handling court backlogs
- Adopting a local rule on virtual hearings and accessibility to the public

- Implementation of an online dispute resolution platform (see the Supreme Court's pilot program at [ODR platform](#))

Lastly, attached you will find a new Supreme Court publication, *[Evictions Backlog Strategies](#)*, which will provide guidance on how to tackle a burgeoning eviction caseload.

I appreciate all the effort and energy that you and your staff have provided to litigants during the pandemic. Unfortunately, it looks like we may not be out of the woods yet.

Stay safe and God Bless.

Sincerely,

Maureen O'Connor
Chief Justice