

Overview

The Harlem Community Justice Center is a neighborhood-based community court committed to bridging the gap between the court and community to achieve fairness and systematic equity in housing, community health, and access to justice. We believe the community should have a voice in addressing its problems and defining justice, we and seek to empower communities to transform the systems that serve them.

Access to Justice

■ The Courthouse

The Harlem Community Justice Center is in East Harlem. It contains a wide range of programming and supportive services as well as branches of Housing Court and Small Claims Court. Our housing court's jurisdiction covers nearly 30,000 units of both privately owned and public housing in zip codes 10035, 10037, and the Jefferson, Taft, and Taft Rehab New York City Housing Authority developments. Our small claims court has jurisdiction over northern Manhattan above East 97th Street and West 92nd Street.

■ Housing Help Center

Our Housing Help Center seeks to address housing instability, prevent evictions, and empower tenants with information on their rights and court procedures. Located in the courthouse, Help Center staff assist residents navigating the court system and help them access to needed resources. Housing instability is linked to overarching social issues such as poverty, economic and educational inequality, and racial disparities. Safe, affordable housing remains an unmet need for a significant portion of our population, such as the elderly, the disabled, victims of abuse and families living

at or below the poverty level. The Help Center works to provide community members the tools they need to advocate for themselves, obtain apartment repairs, and prevent eviction and litigation. In 2020, the Help Center assisted residents with 222 annual reviews to keep their rent affordable.

Youth and Community Programming

■ Harlem Youth Impact

The program provides restorative, peer-facilitated diversion programming. Youth Impact members work in paid internships to facilitate peer-led diversion, develop and pilot projects to create community change, and address the underlying issues causing youth contact with the criminal legal system. Restorative circles are facilitated by youth members to resolve cases diverted from the traditional court system. The circle process allows referred youth to share their experience and build accountability. Harlem Youth Impact centers youth who have been directly impacted by legal systems with the belief that those who have been most impacted are most able to lead, develop meaningful solutions, and engage their peers. Individual support, mentorship, and educational opportunities ensure that members are supported to move towards their individual goals. In 2019-2020, 152

youth were supported through our Youth Impact programming.

■ **Men's Empowerment Program**

The program offers culturally relevant and trauma-informed programming to young Black and Brown men ages 17 to 25 in East and Central Harlem. Our trauma-informed approach encourages young men of color to challenge cultural and societal norms related to mental health and masculinity and begin to identify life goals for themselves that are not hindered by their lived experiences of trauma. The program focuses on healing and creating a cultural shift in thinking regarding how young men of color see themselves and how they can be a resource to their community. In addition, our program work helps them address and break the cycle of trauma in their lives and their communities, created through historical issues of systemic racism and injustices, by strengthening their emotional intelligence. Participants earn stipends for participating in community service projects and a range of workshops and activities designed to prepare them for employment, vocational training or higher education opportunities. Since 2017, the Men's Empowerment Program has served over 225 young men in the Harlem community.

■ **Reentry Services**

The Justice Center is a partner in the New York City Health Justice Network, which serves people returning to the community from incarceration. Our community health worker helps participants overcome barriers to community reintegration by helping them navigate the healthcare system and connecting them to community-based, trauma-informed health and mental health care. In 2020, our community health worker served approximately 100 individuals returning home from incarceration.

For More Information

E-mail: info@courttinnovation.org