

Poverty Justice Solutions

Poverty Justice Solutions seeks to close the justice gap by expanding the pool of attorneys available to represent low-income New Yorkers in Housing Court and apply an innovative problem-solving approach to housing court matters across New York City. It is a collaboration among the Robin Hood Foundation, the New York State Unified Court System, the New York City Human Resources Administration, and the Center for Court Innovation.

The Problem

Each year, hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers find themselves in Housing Court facing eviction without the benefit of legal representation. Should they lose their cases, the potential ramifications are far-reaching. Evicted families experience dislocation and, in many cases, homelessness. Housing instability increases the likelihood children will fail in school, contributes to elevated levels of anxiety and depression, and traps families in a long-term cycle of poverty.

Stable housing is the foundation of a family's well-being. Experience tells us that the presence of a lawyer can be the difference between a family keeping its home and being evicted.

How It Works

Each year, Poverty Justice Solutions places 20 recent law school graduates in two-year fellowships as entry-level attorneys with civil legal service providers in New York City. The program underwrites half the cost of their salaries; participating service providers provide the other half. Fellows are full-time employees of their host organizations and receive the training, supervision, and mentoring support provided to all the organizations' attorneys.

Building upon the vision of retired New York State Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman, Poverty Justice Solutions fellows serve on the front lines of the fight against poverty, focusing on eviction prevention and preserving affordable housing. Fellows work exclusively on Housing Court cases, each year collectively serving more than 3,000 families and preventing over 700 evictions.

In addition to managing their caseloads, fellows identify structural issues and barriers to procedural justice in the Housing Court system. Through ongoing trainings and workshops from the Center for Court Innovation, fellows learn strategies for identifying problems in and developing prescriptions for the justice system. The goal is to prevent evictions, stabilize housing, and create lasting systematic change.

Poverty Justice Solutions is overseen by an advisory board chaired by Judge Lippman. The program is operated by the Center for Court Innovation.

For More Information

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