



Maryland Access to Counsel in Evictions Program

**Fiscal Year 2023 Report
(July 2022 – June 2023)**

Submitted by



MLSC

MARYLAND LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

IOLTA - INTEREST ON LAWYER TRUST ACCOUNTS

**August 2023
Final**



Introduction

In 2021, the Maryland General Assembly created the Access to Counsel in Evictions program (“ACE”) via HB 18/Ch. 746 and designated Maryland Legal Services Corporation (“MLSC”) as the administrator. MLSC is a legislatively created nonprofit with a mission to ensure low-income Marylanders have access to stable, efficient and effective civil legal assistance through the distribution of funds to nonprofit legal services organizations. The General Assembly created MLSC concurrently with the Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts program, and in fiscal year 2023 MLSC provided funding to 38 nonprofit organizations serving Marylanders across the entire state.

HB 18/Ch. 746 provided parameters for ACE, including tenant eligibility, implementation timing and prioritization, case types applicable for legal representation, and tenant outreach and education. It also created the ACE Task Force and the ACE Special Fund, as well as the following reporting requirement:

“On or before August 31 each year, MLSC shall report to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly:

- (1) The number of covered individuals provided legal representation during the previous fiscal year;*
- (2) Information on and metrics evaluating case outcomes; and*
- (3) A summary of the engagement and education of tenants.”¹*

Case Statistics and Outcomes

The following data represent ACE cases closed during FY23. From these closed cases, the legal services providers helped Maryland residents receive more than \$420,000 in housing judgments and avoid more than \$3.52 million in direct costs.

Type of Eviction	Cases
Failure to Pay Rent	3,539
Breach of Lease	108
Tenant Holding Over	264
Subsidy Termination	20
Other	42
Total	3,973

County of Client Residence ²	Cases
Anne Arundel County	663
Baltimore City ³	525
Baltimore County	1,071
Caroline County	49
Dorchester County	40
Frederick County	68
Kent County	29
Montgomery County	396
Prince George's County	1,093
Queen Anne's County	12
Talbot County	25
Other Maryland	2
Total	3,973

¹ MD Code, Real Property, § 8-907

² MLSC is phasing in ACE over a three-year period, with a statutory goal of full implementation by October 1, 2025. The statute requires MLSC to prioritize funding services in jurisdiction that designated their own funds for eviction prevention legal services. In this first year, the jurisdictions in this table were designated for Phase 1 expansion of legal services.

³ Does not include more than 450 cases closed under Baltimore City’s Right to Counsel in Evictions program, which is separately funded by the City.



Case Outcome	Cases ⁴	People Directly Affected
Prevented eviction from public or subsidized housing	159	396
Prevented eviction from other housing	1,054	2,683
Prevented termination or denial of housing subsidy	11	16
Delayed eviction, providing time to either pay-and-stay or seek alternative housing, thus preventing disruptive displacement	1,093	2,545
Prevented denial of public/subsidized housing tenant's rights	6	6
Avoided or obtained redress for illegal or unfair charges by landlord	67	168
Overcame denial of tenant's rights under lease	5	19
Enforced rights to decent, habitable housing	22	50
Obtained reasonable accommodation	1	3
Preserved or restored access to personal property	3	6
Obtained repairs to dwelling	7	23
Obtained cash-for-keys, relocation assistance or other tenant settlement	9	19
Obtained other benefit for tenant	30	67
Obtained advice or counseling (client may have declined full representation)	993	2,208
Obtained representation in litigation or administrative proceeding	537	1,286

Tenant Outreach and Education

MLSC has selected seven community groups to perform tenant outreach and education. Outreach and education efforts were purposefully staggered behind the expansion of legal services so that legal providers could establish their services and ensure their capacity to serve new tenants referred by the outreach providers. Outreach contractors met in quarter 4 of FY23 to plan, develop shared messaging, and share best practices. The contractors will be using a variety of outreach methods – including door-knocking, tabling at community events, digital marketing and more – to inform tenants of their rights and of the existence of the ACE program. Contractors will focus their outreach on Phase I jurisdictions to begin the program, expanding to Phase II once the legal services are established.

Even though outreach efforts launched in quarter 4, contractors have already reached a significant number of tenants. Through both targeted efforts and outreach at established community events, they provided information to more than 12,600 tenants. The contractors have also established or strengthened relationships with the legal services providers to offer know-your-rights presentations and streamlined referrals.

⁴ Some grantees report more than one benefit per case for some cases.