

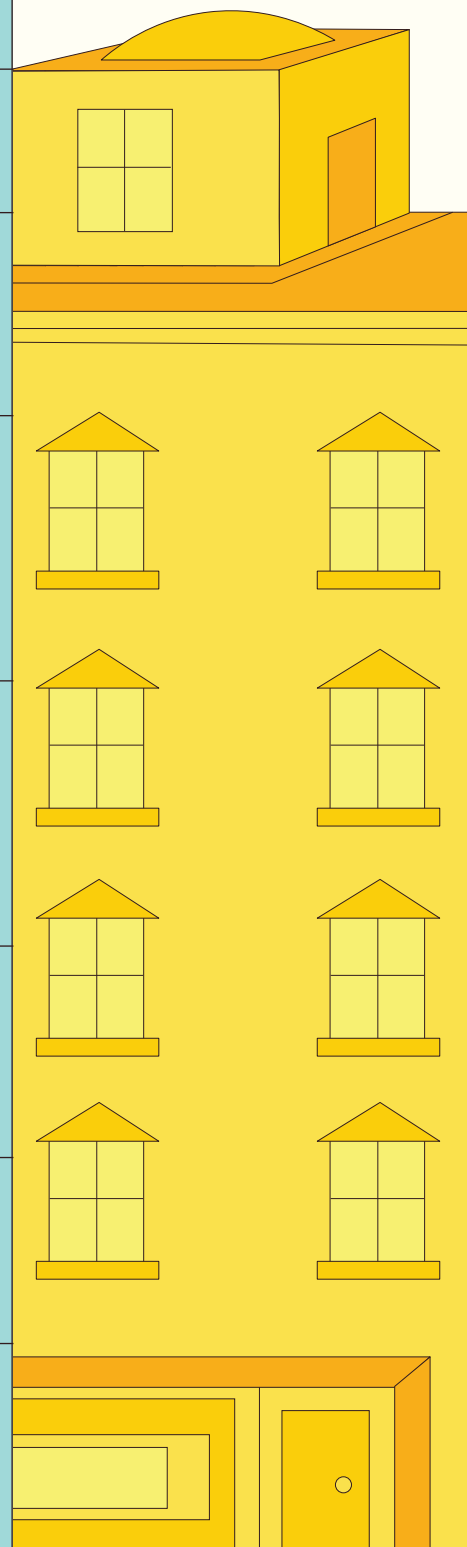


# Advancing Racial and Health Justice Through a Right to Counsel for Tenants:

**A Primer for the Public Health Field**

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# Overview

A safe and stable home is the foundation for a healthy life,<sup>1</sup> yet this cornerstone of good health remains out of reach for many.<sup>2</sup> New local and state laws that guarantee a right to counsel for tenants facing eviction (“RTC” or “right to counsel”)<sup>3</sup> offer a promising opportunity to address this challenge and related racial and health disparities.

This primer starts by reviewing what right to counsel laws are and how they can advance racial and health justice. In short, establishing a right to counsel can help more households remain stably housed — particularly low-income households and those disproportionately impacted by historical and ongoing discriminatory policies and practices. Guaranteeing legal representation to tenants facing eviction may also help to identify and address unhealthy housing conditions in tenants’ homes. Furthermore, right to counsel laws can play an important role in the growing tenants’ rights movement by helping people who rent their homes exercise their housing rights and advocate for additional protections — both individually and collectively with their neighbors.

It follows with steps public health practitioners<sup>4</sup> can take to enhance the potential of right to counsel efforts to advance racial and health justice. Public health practitioners can support policy development, make the public health case, and support the leadership of tenants impacted by eviction. They can also support full and equitable implementation of enacted right to counsel laws by establishing cross-sector partnerships to address community members’ housing challenges, strengthening community outreach and referral networks, and training stakeholders on the connections between housing, health, and equity.



<sup>1</sup>This resource uses the phrase “right to counsel” to specifically refer to laws that establish a right to counsel for tenants facing eviction. For information about efforts to establish a right to counsel in other types of civil cases, see Roumiantseva, M. Patching the Patchwork: Moving the Civil Right to Counsel Forward With Key Data. *J. Civ. Rts. & Econ. Dev.* 2023;36(2):199-234.

<sup>4</sup> Public health practitioners include government officials in health departments and related agencies, as well as staff at public health nonprofit organizations, foundations, and schools of public health. Specific examples include epidemiologists, public health nurses, code enforcement officers, community health workers, public health educators, and public health researchers.

# What is a Right to Counsel?



*Going through an eviction case and losing one's home can threaten employment and financial stability, school performance, social and political connections, and access to healthcare.*

Broadly, a right to counsel refers to a government-funded guarantee of legal representation. While a right to counsel is guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution to individuals in criminal cases that may result in their incarceration, the Supreme Court has not recognized an equivalent constitutional guarantee in civil cases, even those in which basic needs such as shelter are at stake.<sup>5</sup> However, all states have established a right to counsel in certain types of civil cases.<sup>6</sup>

Tenant right to counsel laws, which may be adopted by states or local governments, specifically guarantee legal representation for people who rent their homes and are facing eviction. While some of the details of right to counsel laws differ by jurisdiction, they all include a few essential elements:

- Tenants covered by the law are guaranteed legal representation in eviction cases
- Tenants covered by the law are entitled to full legal representation, which means all legal advice, advocacy, and assistance required to provide the best possible outcome for a particular case
- Any criteria for eligibility are objective (e.g., income or presence of children in the household) and not subjective (e.g., the merits of the household's case as assessed by a legal services provider or court)
- This guarantee is passed into law and funded by a state, county, and/or local government

Right to counsel laws may also guarantee tenants legal representation in other types of court or administrative cases in which a renter household's home or the habitability of that home is at stake, such as housing subsidy termination hearings.<sup>7,8</sup>

The stakes in an eviction case (which is the civil legal proceeding that landlords must initiate to legally evict a renter household) are extremely high for tenants. Going through an eviction case and losing one's home can threaten employment and financial stability, school performance, social and political connections, and access to healthcare.<sup>9-11</sup> An eviction may also make it difficult for a household to access high-quality housing and related economic opportunities, both immediately and in the future, because the record of an eviction case may be included on a tenant's credit report for up to seven years and remain publicly accessible through a court database for even longer.<sup>12,13</sup>

Numerous studies have documented that people who have been evicted — or even threatened with eviction — are more likely to experience negative health outcomes, including depression, anxiety, low birth weight, lead poisoning, and premature death.<sup>14-17</sup>

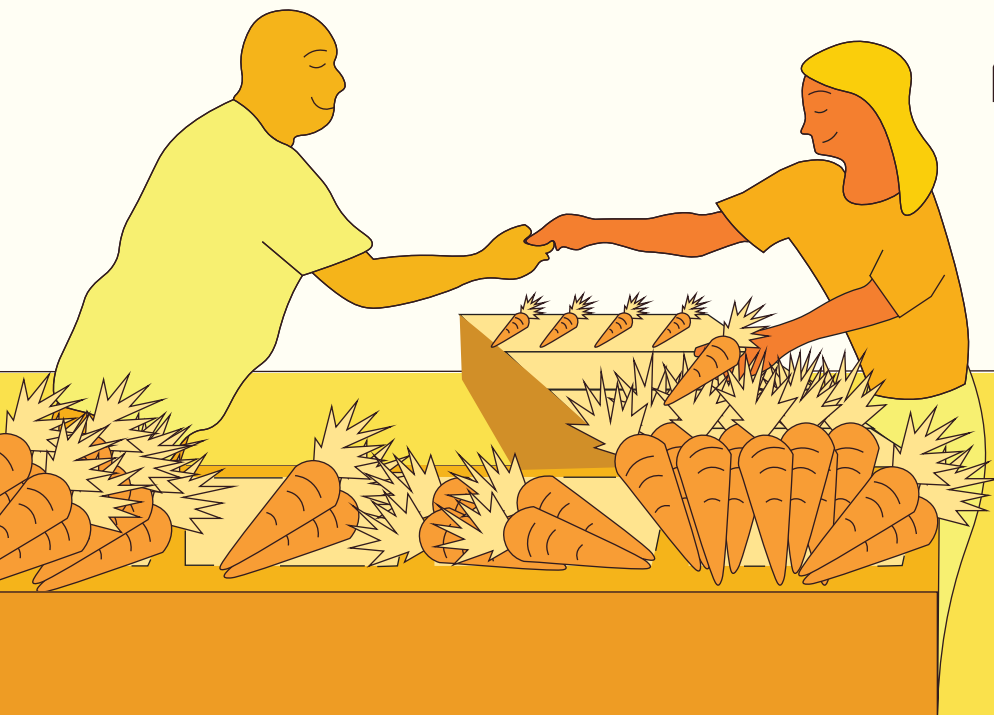
Despite these stakes, on average, only 3% of tenants in eviction cases have an attorney, as compared to 83% of landlords nationwide.<sup>18</sup> Without a lawyer, tenants rarely succeed in defending themselves from eviction.<sup>19, 20</sup> This is in part because legal defenses to eviction involve the application of a complex set of laws and procedural rules, and because these cases move fast — after receiving a summons, tenants may have as little as two days before the hearing.<sup>21, 22</sup> When tenants do manage to respond to the case in time and appear in court, the hearing may last less than 90 seconds.<sup>23</sup>

Once a right to counsel law is enacted, the jurisdiction establishes a program to implement the law. Program administration is typically led by a government agency or nonprofit organization and the legal services organizations that will provide the legal representation.<sup>24</sup>

New York City was the first jurisdiction nationally to guarantee a right to counsel for tenants in 2017.<sup>25</sup> Since then, the movement to establish this right has grown rapidly. As of 2023, 17 cities, one county, and four states have enacted right to counsel laws.<sup>26</sup>

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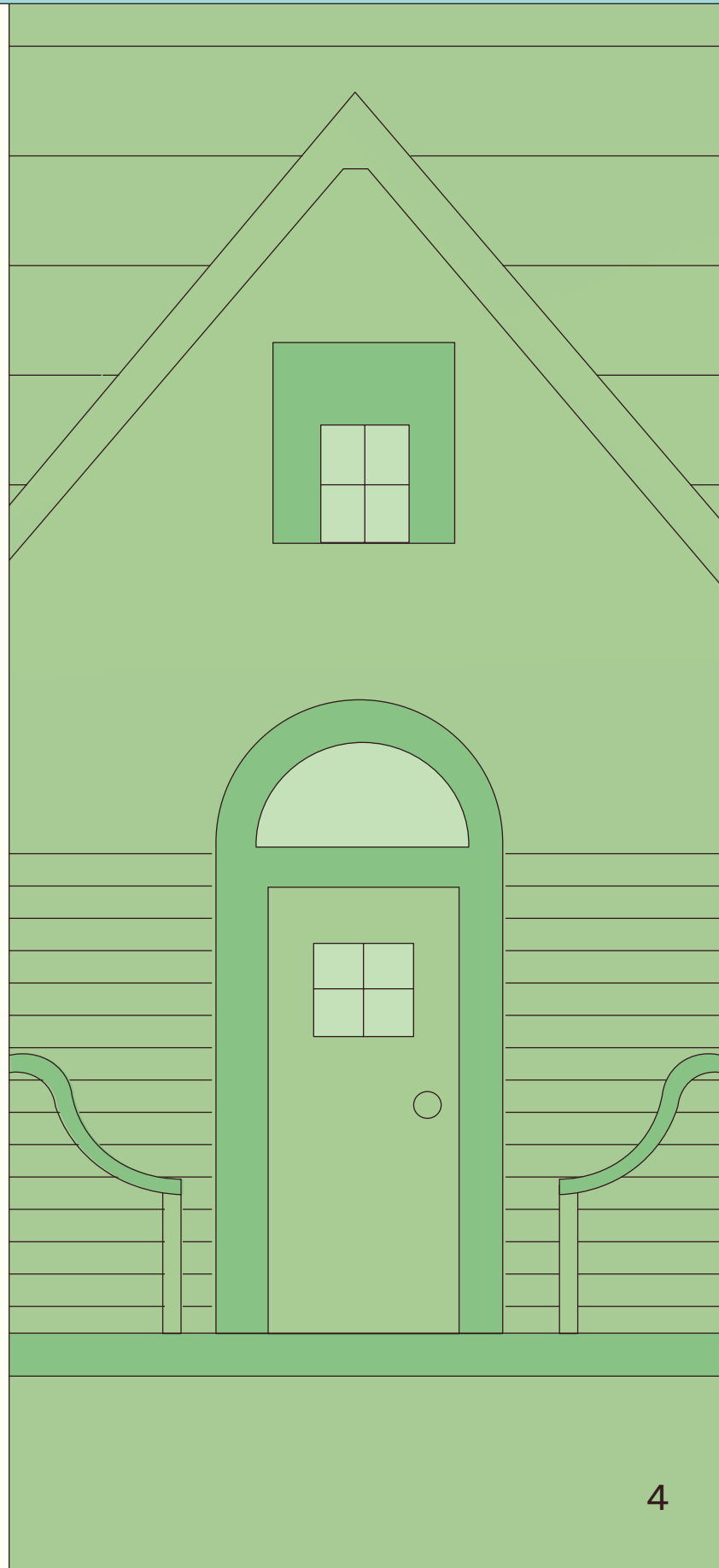
*As of 2023, 17 cities, one county, and four states have enacted right to counsel laws.*

# How Do Right to Counsel Laws Advance Racial and Health Justice?

Right to counsel laws help to redress historical and current inequities in housing stability, housing quality, and tenant-landlord power. Structural racism and discrimination result in housing instability for many Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) communities by limiting opportunities for quality employment, affordable homeownership, and access to other means of building wealth and economic stability;<sup>27-29</sup> forcing many Black and Latine households to live in unsafe housing; and driving eviction and health disparities.<sup>30-32</sup>

BIPOC women-headed households,<sup>33, 34</sup> people with disabilities,<sup>35</sup> immigrants,<sup>36</sup> LGBTQIA+ individuals,<sup>37, 38</sup> and people with low incomes<sup>39</sup> experience the greatest health impacts of our housing and legal system's shortcomings. For instance, tenants with disabilities face elevated landlord discrimination, harassment and retaliation; Black and Latine households are more likely than White households to live in substandard housing conditions that threaten health; and Black women and children are at the greatest risk for eviction.<sup>43, 44</sup> Moreover, because of the systemic racism and other systems of oppression that are built into our political, legal, and economic institutions, those households targeted by these injustices also often have less power to advocate for laws and policies to address disparities.<sup>45</sup>

A right to counsel can address these inequities and advance racial and health justice through a few key pathways, including housing stability, better housing quality, and tenant empowerment.



## A Right to Counsel Helps Keep Tenants Stably Housed

By guaranteeing legal representation to tenants, a right to counsel can improve housing stability. Evaluations of right to counsel laws implemented in jurisdictions such as New York, San Francisco, Cleveland, and Connecticut, as well as other studies evaluating the impact of providing legal representation more broadly, confirm that ensuring tenants are represented helps people stay in their homes and avoid displacement.<sup>46</sup> When tenants either do not want to or cannot stay in their units, attorneys can help tenants obtain more time to move, avoid being forced out by a sheriff,<sup>47</sup> reduce the amount of money they owe, limit the impact of an eviction on future housing opportunities (in jurisdictions where such redress is available), and secure rental assistance and public benefits that can support long-term housing stability and positive health outcomes.<sup>48-50</sup>



### FOR EXAMPLE:

A study of New York City's right to counsel found that 84% of tenants facing eviction who had a lawyer were able to remain in their homes.<sup>52</sup>

Tenant representation also reduced the monetary amount awarded to landlords.

In the long term, research suggests that establishing a right to counsel reduces the number of eviction cases that landlords file.<sup>53</sup> By reducing evictions and improving housing stability, a right to counsel may also help keep social and political networks intact; support childcare, elder care, transportation, and security; and encourage residents to engage in their communities to collectively improve socioeconomic and health conditions.<sup>54-56</sup>

### FOR EXAMPLE:

An evaluation of Cleveland's right to counsel found that 93% of those represented avoided an eviction judgment or involuntary move.<sup>51</sup>

“ *By reducing evictions and improving housing stability, a right to counsel may also help keep social and political networks intact; support childcare, elder care, transportation, and security; and encourage residents to engage in their communities to collectively improve socioeconomic and health conditions.*



## A Right to Counsel Can Help Identify and Address Unhealthy Housing Conditions

In addition to mitigating the direct harms of eviction, a right to counsel may help to identify and address unhealthy housing conditions. Individuals and families at risk of eviction often also struggle with housing conditions that threaten their health and safety, such as water leaks, pests, mold, lead paint, inoperable heating or cooling systems, and structural deficiencies.<sup>57-59</sup> This is because tenants facing eviction are overwhelmingly low income, and low-income tenants are often forced to live in substandard housing that is rife with these kinds of health issues.<sup>60</sup> Evaluations of Connecticut's and Cleveland's right to counsel, for example, found that 59% and 80% of tenants served by each program respectively had at least one defective housing condition inside their homes.<sup>61</sup>

Housing defects pose serious and long-term threats to health<sup>62</sup> and are often a tenant's main dispute in an eviction case.<sup>63-</sup><sup>66</sup> Despite how common and consequential defective conditions are, however, few tenants in eviction cases are able to properly raise legal defenses regarding housing defects or related retaliation.<sup>67</sup> For example, a study of New Jersey eviction cases found that only 0.2% of tenants attempted to argue that they had a defense based on the landlord's failure to maintain the home in a habitable condition.<sup>68</sup> When tenants do raise condition-based defenses in eviction cases, they are much less likely to succeed without the assistance of counsel.<sup>69</sup> A New York City study found that tenants with counsel were nine times more likely to receive a rent abatement due to repair issues.<sup>70</sup>

“ Evaluations of Connecticut's and Cleveland's right to counsel, for example, found that 59% and 80% of tenants served by each program respectively had at least one defective housing condition inside their homes.

Lawyers representing tenants living with defective housing conditions can help identify these challenges as relevant legal issues and raise defenses related to the landlord's obligations to make repairs. They can also negotiate with landlords and work with code enforcement officials to ensure that all necessary repairs are completed, which is essential to ensuring tenants' housing is truly safe and stable.<sup>71</sup>

In addition, as more tenants are represented by attorneys, right to counsel programs can help collect and track defective conditions information. This information can be shared with local code enforcement officials to help them identify buildings that they should proactively inspect to prevent recurring issues. Guaranteeing a right to counsel to tenants facing eviction can also help reduce the likelihood that code enforcement activity will unintentionally cause displacement.<sup>72</sup>





## A Right to Counsel Can Help Tenants Exercise Their Rights and Build Power

A right to counsel can help empower tenants to exercise their rights and advocate for additional protection by making the playing field between tenants and landlords in eviction cases more equal and by building momentum for future community organizing and power building.<sup>73</sup> The legal representation disparity in eviction cases stacks the odds in favor of landlords. The threat of eviction establishes a power imbalance from the start of the landlord-tenant relationship, often deterring people who rent their homes from seeking to enforce their housing rights out of fear of facing eviction should they speak up.<sup>74, 75</sup>

### *Building Power Among Those Most Affected by Housing Instability Improves Health*

Power is a central building block of health. It shapes which homes and neighborhoods families can live in, whether they have a say in the future of their communities, and whether public policy decisions help keep them and their loved ones healthy.<sup>76-79</sup> Achieving health justice requires reducing existing power imbalances so that the individuals who are most impacted by housing instability have the power to improve their housing conditions and to collectively lead the development of structural changes. Undoing these power imbalances is a crucial step towards a future where everyone has access to safe, stable, and healthy housing.<sup>80, 81</sup>

Many jurisdictions have laws that are intended to protect tenants from being evicted in retaliation for requesting repairs or submitting complaints. However, tenants are unlikely to know about these protections. And even where successful training and outreach keep tenants informed of their rights, they are unlikely to raise legal defenses to eviction without the assistance of counsel, as discussed above. Tenants in jurisdictions with a right to counsel may feel more empowered to ask for the repair of defective conditions that violate the housing code or other health laws, request assistance from public health and code enforcement officials if landlords fail to make requested repairs, and submit complaints to government agencies regarding landlord conduct that violates anti-discrimination laws. An evaluation of New York City's right to counsel law confirms that tenants with this protection feel less afraid and more empowered to ask for what they need from their landlords.<sup>82</sup>

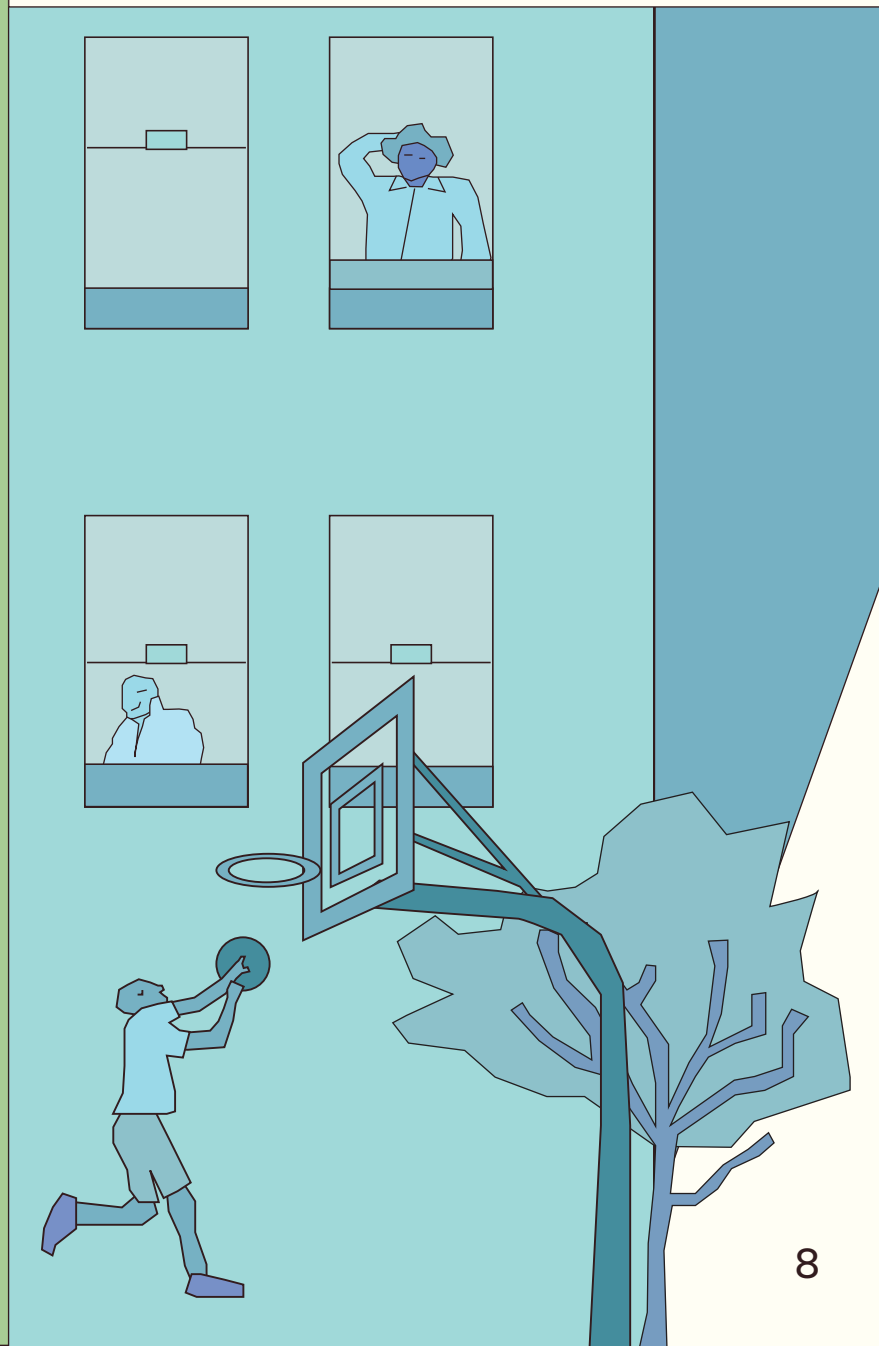
Guaranteeing legal representation to tenants in eviction cases can help to address this power imbalance by ensuring that tenants can raise all available defenses should their landlords choose to file a retaliatory eviction case. In doing so, right to counsel laws may make it safer for tenants who are not yet facing eviction to exercise their housing rights and advocate for additional protections — both individually and collectively with their neighbors. This may also help communities most impacted by housing injustice have greater say in decisions that affect their lives and health.<sup>83-85</sup>

## Expanding Tenant Protections Improves Health

Right to counsel laws offer an important pathway for empowering the communities most impacted by housing instability. But that power extends only as far as the underlying framework of legal rights and protections provided to renting households, and their equitable enforcement. Public health organizations should also support tenant organizing and tenant-led campaigns in support of other policies (and their equitable enforcement) that would expand their rights and access to safe, stable, and affordable homes.

Depending on the jurisdiction, these policies may include additional changes to eviction laws, such as prohibiting evictions without a just cause<sup>86</sup> and reforming procedural rules that impact the speed and consequences of eviction cases.<sup>87</sup> They may also include, for example, laws that protect tenants' right to organize;<sup>88</sup> limit permissible rent increases;<sup>89</sup> establish rent escrow programs,<sup>90</sup> rental licensing requirements, and proactive code enforcement;<sup>91</sup> and reduce the discrimination that people who have had contact with the criminal legal system face when looking for housing.<sup>92</sup>

For additional information on the benefits of establishing a right to counsel and policy design recommendations, see [\*\*No Eviction Without Representation\*\*](#) (2022) and [\*\*Addressing America's Housing Crisis: Three Local Policy Solutions to Promote Health and Equity in Housing\*\*](#) (2022).



# How Can Public Health Practitioners Support the Development of Right to Counsel Policies?

“Public health practitioners are powerful “insider” advocates for policies like a right to counsel.”

Public health practitioners see both the foundational role housing plays in supporting positive health outcomes and how health can be harmed when that foundation is jeopardized. They help families address health hazards in their homes through lead and asthma prevention programs, for example, and conduct research to help local governments understand the health benefits of housing stability. Public health practitioners can draw on their insights into the connection between health and housing, as well as their experience working with community members, to support the development of equitable and effective right to counsel laws. Steps that public health practitioners can take include the following:

## 1) Support Policy Development

Public health practitioners are powerful “insider” advocates for policies like a right to counsel. For example, public health department staff can work with other agencies, such as planning, housing, and community development departments, to identify community needs and, depending on lobbying restrictions, work with elected officials to propose legislation.<sup>93</sup> Health department staff in units focused on reducing health disparities, advancing racial justice, and promoting Health in all Policies (HiAP) may be particularly well suited to support equitable policy development.<sup>94,95</sup> Public health practitioners can also support related community engagement efforts, convene interested parties to learn more about right to counsel laws, and serve as a liaison between government officials and right to counsel coalitions.<sup>96</sup>

### FOR EXAMPLE:

In the spring of 2023, the American Public Health Association, the de Beaumont Foundation, and the National Collaborative for Health Equity helped to bring local stakeholders together to develop plans to advance the establishment of a right to counsel in nine jurisdictions by supporting the [Advancing Racial and Health Justice: Through Right to Counsel for Tenants Facing Evictions Solutions Sprint](#) as part of the Healing Through Policy initiative. This program was led by Results for America, the National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel, PolicyLink, and Human Impact Partners, with additional expertise from ChangeLab Solutions. For more information about this Solutions Sprint, see page 17



## 2) Make the Public Health Case

Presenting housing as a health issue is one of the most persuasive ways to promote housing justice policies.<sup>97-99</sup> Public health department staff working in areas ranging from health equity to epidemiology can conduct and identify research that provides data on the impact of housing stability on health and why a right to counsel can be an important public health intervention. Public health nonprofits, foundations, researchers at academic institutions, and associations like Public Health Awakened can also be strong spokespeople for the public health benefits of a right to counsel.<sup>100</sup>

Working in coordination with community members and community power building organizations,<sup>101</sup> public health practitioners can develop op-eds, reports, and public testimony highlighting how a right to counsel can support public health efforts to increase housing stability and achieve health equity.

### FOR EXAMPLE:

During Philadelphia's and Connecticut's right to counsel campaigns, public health practitioners and medical providers submitted testimony and published op-eds in support of the jurisdiction's proposed RTC law.<sup>102</sup> In Connecticut, health care workers also submitted a sign-on letter in support of allocating funding for the law.<sup>103</sup>

“ Presenting housing as a health issue is one of the most persuasive ways to promote housing justice policies.”

To make the public health case and inform policymakers about health considerations, public health practitioners can consider collecting and uplifting relevant quantitative and qualitative data related to health, housing conditions, evictions, and related inequalities by race, gender, disability, and immigration status.

Relevant data may include:

- Records of code complaints related to particular properties or landlords
- Records of court evictions and known instances of illegal “self-help” evictions (such as changing the locks or shutting off utilities without legal authorization)<sup>104</sup>
- Case studies and client/patient stories



FOR EXAMPLE:

The RTC NYC Coalition (“RTCNYC”) established a research and data committee responsible for gathering data to show the real impact that evictions have on tenants and the city.<sup>105</sup>

Public health practitioners can also advocate for the regular evaluation of enacted right to counsel laws, and for the inclusion of health-related metrics in the analysis. Requiring thorough evaluation can document the law’s impact, help ensure that the law is implemented equitably, and support the broader right to counsel movement. Metrics related to health, housing quality, and other social determinants of health, for example, can help ensure that the right to counsel is advancing overall community and tenant health. Public health practitioners like epidemiologists and public health researchers often have extensive training on completing evaluations that they can contribute both to the development of a law’s evaluation requirements and implementation of an evaluation plan.

“Public health practitioners like epidemiologists and public health researchers often have extensive training on completing evaluations that they can contribute both to the development of a law’s evaluation requirements and implementation of an evaluation plan.”

FOR EXAMPLE:

Researchers from the Yale School of Public Health and Yale School of Medicine are leading the qualitative component of an evaluation of Connecticut’s new RTC law. They are evaluating the impact on community level health, economic security, and housing stability, and on identifying ways to improve program performance and address unintended consequences.<sup>106,107</sup> While Connecticut’s right to counsel law requires the administering entity to submit an annual report on outcomes, it does not specifically require the inclusion of qualitative methods or the study of health metrics.<sup>108</sup>



### 3) Support Community Leadership

Right to counsel campaigns and laws are most effective when they put tenants in the driver's seat and support broader movement building to win stable, affordable, and healthy housing. Tenants impacted by eviction, or the risk of eviction, need to be centered in decision-making throughout the development of a campaign to establish a right to counsel. Tenant leadership should continue throughout the implementation of enacted right to counsel laws. In both cases, tenants should participate in and lead community outreach planning, decision-making, and oversight. They should also have access to the training and resources they need to do so powerfully.

Public health practitioners working in local health departments and their non-profit partners often have deep roots in the communities where they work. Community health workers in particular<sup>109</sup> are often part of their community's fabric and leadership.

Public health practitioners can support the leadership of community members impacted by eviction by:

- Designing and conducting proactive, multi-lingual, and culturally relevant community-based outreach to engage community members in the development of a right to counsel coalition
- Helping to establish RTC coalition structures that center the leadership and expertise of tenants impacted by unsafe housing conditions and housing instability in decision-making processes
- Developing trainings and providing the resources tenants need to develop their leadership skills and lead decision-making bodies
- Informing stakeholders of the importance of including structures for engaging tenants directly impacted by evictions, incorporating their feedback, and requiring their oversight of implemented RTC laws<sup>110</sup>

“ Tenants impacted by eviction, or the risk of eviction, need to be centered in decision-making throughout the development of a campaign to establish a right to counsel.

#### FOR EXAMPLE:

RTC NYC made decisions by consensus across its broad membership, but agreed to defer to membership-based organizations led by tenants on decisions about campaign strategy and within the Steering Committee.<sup>111</sup> The Los Angeles Renter's Right to Counsel Coalition<sup>112</sup> hosts monthly trainings for tenant leaders to assist them in developing their understanding of relevant issues and leadership skills.<sup>113</sup>

#### FOR EXAMPLE:

Boulder and Kansas City's right to counsel ordinances include tenant oversight committees.<sup>114, 115</sup> In Maryland, the law includes funding for tenant education and outreach funding.<sup>116</sup>

#### FOR EXAMPLE:

The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership contains a framework that can be used to analyze existing engagement approaches and move towards deep community ownership over right to counsel campaigns and laws.<sup>117</sup> Sections 3.1 and 3.2 of RTC NYC's Right to Counsel Toolkit also provide guidance on how to structure tenant-led coalitions and leverage the power of institutional members, such as public health organizations.<sup>118</sup>

# How Can Public Health Practitioners Support Equitable Implementation of Right to Counsel Laws?

In jurisdictions that have already enacted right to counsel laws, public health practitioners can also help support full and equitable implementation by engaging in cross-sector collaboration and training:

## Establish Cross-Sector Partnerships to Address Challenges Related to Housing Stability, Housing Quality, and Health

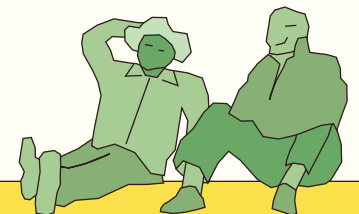
Public health practitioners can help establish strong partnerships and standardized practices between the following groups:

- Government agencies responsible for enforcing laws related to housing quality standards
- Legal services organizations responsible for providing tenants with the legal representation required by a jurisdiction's right to counsel law
- Health care or public health staff who are treating or supporting patients with symptoms related to the quality and stability of their homes, and
- Community groups that work with tenants to address unhealthy housing conditions

In particular, government agencies responsible for enforcing laws related to housing quality standards, such as local public health and code enforcement departments, can establish simple procedures for right-to-counsel attorneys to:

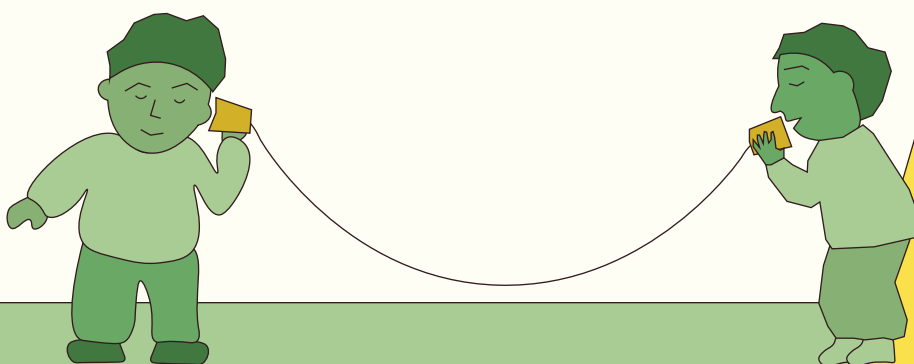
- Request the inspection of their clients' homes and copies of related reports
- Subpoena documents or agency staff for evidentiary hearings and trials
- Communicate and meet with government agencies to share information and develop joint strategies to address eviction and housing quality issues

Working together, public health and code enforcement officials, health care providers, and right-to-counsel attorneys can identify and resolve both the medical and legal aspects of community members' housing challenges.



### FOR EXAMPLE:

In Philadelphia, health care teams at a Federally Qualified Health Center and a pediatric care center collaborate with Community Legal Services, one of the legal organizations providing legal representation through the city's right to counsel, to address the housing challenges impacting patients' health.<sup>119</sup>



## Strengthen Community Outreach and Referral Networks

Community health workers, home visitation staff, asthma and lead abatement program teams, and other public health practitioners, along and with their colleagues in code enforcement, medical, and social service roles, can help connect households to right to counsel programs and build community awareness of this available resource by:

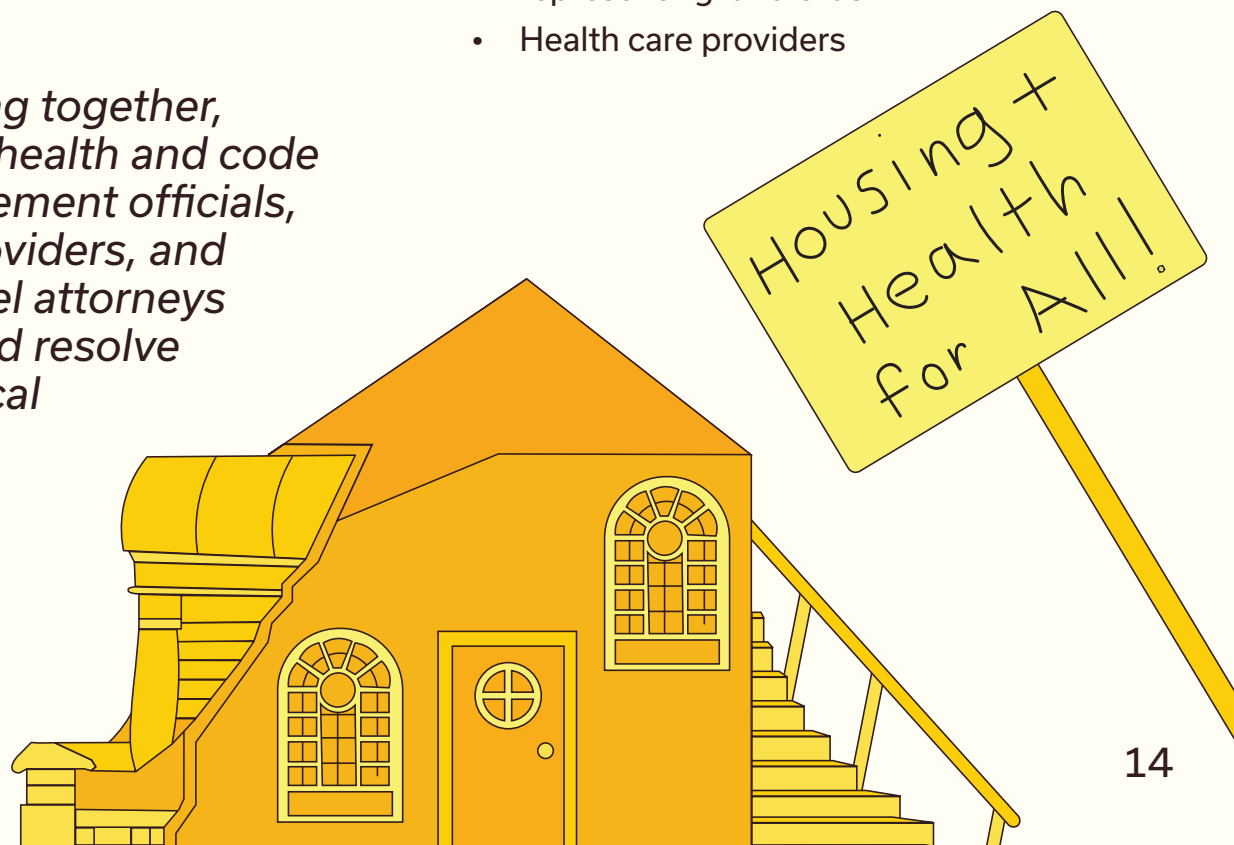
- Screening patients for housing instability and potential eligibility for legal representation pursuant to a right to counsel law
- Establishing a system to refer community members to the right to counsel program and other relevant legal and housing assistance services
- Including information about their jurisdiction's right to counsel law and updates on how the law is being implemented (e.g., a phase-in by zip code) in their communications with the public

**“** Working together, public health and code enforcement officials, health care providers, and right-to-counsel attorneys can identify and resolve both the medical and legal aspects of community members' housing challenges.

## Train Stakeholders on the Connections Between Housing, Health, and Equity

Maximizing the impact of right to counsel laws will require that all stakeholders involved in eviction cases, as well as related administrative action (e.g., housing code enforcement and lead abatement cases) and medical treatment, understand the connections between housing, health, equity, and their work. Public health practitioners can help realize this outcome by working with the legal services organizations and non-profit or government entities implementing right to counsel laws to create and deliver trainings on the connections between eviction laws, housing quality standards, and health equity. These trainings could be tailored for:

- Right-to-counsel attorneys
- Judges, court staff, housing inspectors, and other government officials
- Landlords and attorneys representing landlords
- Health care providers





# Ready to Take Action? Consider These Next Steps:

**Find out if your jurisdiction has enacted a right to counsel law and, if so, connect with the legal services organizations providing the representation and the coalition that advocated for enactment:**

- The National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel (“NCCRC”) maintains a [matrix of all enacted right to counsel laws](#) that summarizes their parameters and includes links to additional information about each law.
- CityHealth rates [75 of the nation’s largest cities](#) on policies that can impact people’s health and quality of life, one of which is [Legal Support for Renters](#) (their term for right to counsel). CityHealth awards medals to cities that adopt these policies. Learn what’s happening in a city near you.

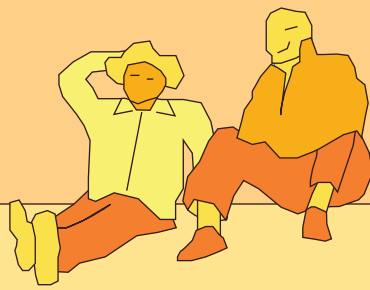
**If your jurisdiction has not yet enacted a right to counsel, find out who in your community is working to advance this right and connect with them to discuss how you can support their work:**

- The NCCRC maintains an [interactive map](#) of activity related to establishing a right to counsel for tenants facing eviction and other types of civil right to counsel laws. You can also [contact](#) the NCCRC for additional information about local campaigns they are tracking and supporting.

**Learn more about right to counsel and housing and health justice:**

- CityHealth, Enterprise Community Partners, and NCCRC’s [Addressing America’s Housing Crisis: Three Local Policy Solutions to Promote Health and Equity in Housing](#) brief features right to counsel (referred to as “legal support for renters”) and includes additional research findings, case studies, and policy design recommendations.
- The NCCRC maintains a page with a [compendium of tenant right to counsel resources](#).
- The Right to Counsel NYC Coalition developed a [toolkit](#) and [other campaign resources](#), including a [webinar series](#) and [documentary](#), based on their tenant-led campaign.
- ChangeLab Solutions’ [Equitable Implementation of Tenant Protections](#) webinar features a presentation and panel discussion on how a right to counsel can support equitable policymaking and ChangeLab’s [Health Justice & the Drivers of Inequity](#) article discusses the health justice framework and links to additional health justice resource.
- Human Impact Partner’s [A Primer on Power, Housing Justice, and Health Equity](#) provides an overview of how building community power can help address housing inequities and improve health, and HIP’s [Housing and Health for All: A Research and Communications Toolkit for COVID-19 and Beyond](#) contains research-based public health talking points for use in housing justice campaigns and communications.

# Acknowledgements



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**ChangeLab Solutions** is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that uses the tools of law and policy to advance health equity.

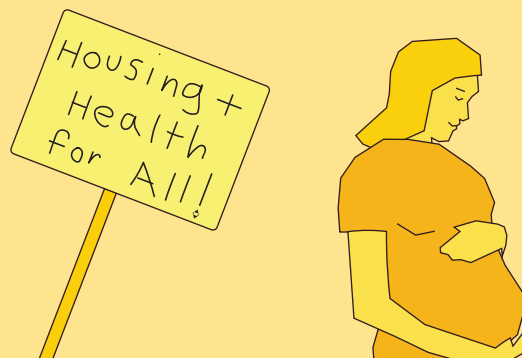
**Human Impact Partners** is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to transform the field of public health to center equity and build collective power with social justice movements.

**The National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel (“NCCRC”)**, a project of the Public Justice Center, works to encourage, support, and coordinate advocacy to establish and implement a right to counsel for individuals facing the loss of their basic human needs, like housing, in the civil legal system.

**PolicyLink** is a national research and action institute advancing racial and economic equity by Lifting Up What Works®.

**Results for America** helps government leaders harness the power of evidence and data to fund solutions that work to accelerate economic mobility and improve lives.

Design by Raina Wellman.



## A Part of the Healing Through Policy Initiative

This resource was produced in partnership with the [American Public Health Association](#) and the [de Beaumont Foundation](#) as part of the [Healing Through Policy Initiative](#). Building on consensus that racism is a public health crisis, Healing Through Policy offers local leaders a suite of policies and practices to move communities from commitment to action for health, racial equity, and justice.

Under Healing Through Policy's [Advancing Racial and Health Justice: Through Right to Counsel for Tenants Facing Evictions Solutions Sprint](#), led by [Results for America](#), [National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel](#), [PolicyLink](#), and [Human Impact Partners](#), with additional expertise from [ChangeLab Solutions](#) and support from the [National Collaborative for Health Equity](#) as part of Healing Through Policy, collaborative teams comprised of government officials, legal aid attorneys, researchers, and community-based organizations from nine jurisdictions learned how to advance right to counsel laws and related policies that promote racial healing and address social inequities. The Healing Through Policy Community of Practice is helping teams to identify, plan for, and execute local practices aligned with the Healing Through Policy suite and the [Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation \(TRHT\)](#)<sup>™</sup> framework developed by the Kellogg foundation.

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- <sup>3</sup> This resource uses the phrase "right to counsel" to specifically refer to laws that establish a right to counsel for tenants facing eviction. For information about efforts to establish a right to counsel in other types of civil cases, see Roumiantseva, M. Patching the Patchwork: Moving the Civil Right to Counsel Forward With Key Data. *J. Civ. Rts. & Econ. Dev.* 2023;36(2):199-234.
- <sup>4</sup> Public health practitioners include government officials in health departments and related agencies, as well as staff at public health nonprofit organizations, foundations, and schools of public health. Specific examples include epidemiologists, public health nurses, code enforcement officers, community health workers, public health educators, and public health researchers.
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