

The Next 25: Innovating in Durham

EVICTION DIVERSION PROGRAM

There are about **900 evictions** filed in Durham a month. Tenants who are evicted face disastrous consequences including: loss of critical housing subsidies, bad credit which can hurt their chances of renting in the future, disruption in their children's education, disconnection from important local community resources, emotional trauma and homelessness.

Launched in 2017, the goal of the Eviction Diversion Program is to keep tenants in their homes and keep their rental records clean. Legal staff work out payment plans with landlords and raise relevant legal defenses to make certain their clients' voices are heard.

In 2017 we helped clients **avoid eviction judgments 80% of the time** and kept **two-thirds of tenants in their homes**.

In 2018, new funding from the City of Durham expanded the program and provided crucial staff at Duke Law and Legal Aid in the form of two Pauli Murray fellows.

The Eviction Diversion program is a partnership between Legal Aid, Duke Law's Civil Justice Clinic, the Durham County Department of Social Services and the courts. Contributing to the collaboration are the North Carolina Bar Association, the City of Durham and the Law Offices of James Scott Farrin.

Why So Many Evictions?

In North Carolina, where the poverty rate is consistently above 10% and there isn't enough subsidized housing to go around, people often don't have enough money to pay rent. Research also suggests that African-American communities are disproportionately affected by high eviction rates.

Hope in a Time of Crisis

*"Hope is a word in a tuneless ditty —
A word whispered with the wind,
A dream of forty acres and a mule,
A cabin of one's own and a moment to rest,
A name and place for one's children
And children's children at last . . .
Hope is a song in a weary throat.
Give me a song of hope
And a world where I can sing it."*

*From "DARK TESTAMENT: VERSE 8"
by activist, poet and Durham icon
Pauli Murray*

DURHAM EXPUNCTION & RESTORATION PROGRAM

A criminal record or suspended driver's license makes it much harder for residents struggling to make ends meet to find work and stable housing. Unable to afford an attorney, the poor suffer worse or longer-term consequences than wealthier, more privileged individuals charged with similar offenses.

Legal Aid addresses this challenge with a multi-faceted approach – the new DEAR program - designed to significantly scale up our community's capacity to expunge records, restore driver's licenses and grant certificates of relief so that everyone can share in Durham's prosperity.

The DEAR program is a partnership between Legal Aid, the City of Durham and the Durham Courts including the DA and Public Defender's office. Contributing to the collaboration are community partners: Duke Law, North Carolina Justice Center, NC Equal Access to Justice Commission, NCCU Law, Criminal Justice Resource Center and Race Forward.

Who We Can Empower

100,000+ Durham residents are likely eligible for expungement. 70% of whom are people of color.

14,000+ Durham residents have a revoked or suspended driver's license due to failure to pay. 80% of whom are people of color.



DURHAM EXPUNCTION & RESTORATION PROGRAM



LEGAL AID
of NORTH CAROLINA