

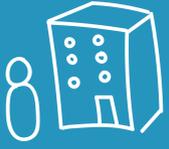
Mobile Legal Aid



When issues arise between landlords and tenants, the scales tilt largely in favor of landlords. This situation is exacerbated for marginalized people, who are more likely to face issues with landlords and therefore have a greater need for assistance. Once an individual has an eviction in their rental history, it can perpetuate a cycle of difficulty in accessing and retaining housing. How can we address this imbalanced relationship between racialized individuals and their landlords, and make that relationship more balanced, empowering marginalized people to meet their needs?



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WHO is it for?

The van is primarily intended to serve racialized individuals who are currently renters. The van will also have some capacity to serve non-racialized individuals (although not the intended primary audience), those who are seeking housing, and landlords.



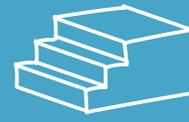
WHY this group?

We learned that racialized individuals are more likely to face issues with their landlords, due to factors such as prejudice and bias, cultural practices, and family structure. Different communities of colour have different specific needs, but we learned that many experiences are broadly shared across communities, and that lack of knowledge and lack of access to resources and services are common barriers to tenant empowerment.



HOW to do it?

We propose to consolidate resources and create a one-stop pop up shop of service provider contacts and referrals, which will remove these barriers through mobile service delivery. This model allows us to rotate in staff from various agencies to meet specific needs, all under the one model of mobile service delivery. It also enables us to deliver 'legal triage' — someone with a degree of legal knowledge (like a law student) who can sit down with someone for 10 minutes and be able to point people to the right process, or the need for further legal advice, etc. Our current prototype is staged, with Stage One delivering information and resources, some degree of legal advice/assistance, and service navigation/connection.



WHAT next?

Stage Two of our prototype would expand the services available through the van to include: direct referrals (which would include a need for knowledge of what needs to escalate, and a potential for follow-up/support); assistance with producing video/photo evidence (for use in documenting and resolving tenant/landlord disputes); and higher capacity for legal advice (whether through onboard service provision or via a video link). Another next step is to test some of the van's capacity to effectively deliver connection to services and resources. Some questions to test include the effect of landlord response to the van on individual attendance, and any negative consequences for tenants after the van attends (which we could test with a follow up survey or similar with those who attend), and whether the van is reaching its intended audience (which we could test by setting clear targets for demographics of who is served through the van, and verify if these are being reached through data logging).



CONSIDER this?

- How to counter unintended effects: retribution, attending van as source of stigma
- How to build stakeholder support: trust, confidence in anonymity
- Where to find funding, staffing
- How to keep staff inside van safe (that is, don't assume will always get a positive response)
- What kind of data/info to track, and how to use that to understand gap, push for change, etc
- Where can the van operate (private property concerns, safety concerns)
- Which organizations would be included, in what roles?
- Who owns this (the van, the insurance, etc)?
- How will our daily/weekly route map look? How will we balance scheduling needs with community needs, etc?

Using This Prototype...

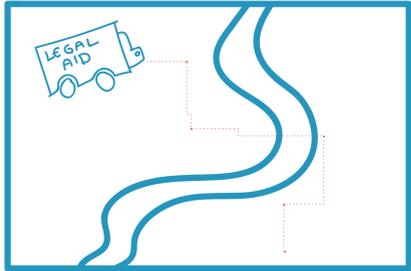
Identify Need

Staff consult with community organizations and community connectors to get ideas about where the van should go.



Create Route

Staff cross-validate these addresses with geo-based data about problem properties, areas of least affordability, vulnerable neighborhoods, etc to create prioritized service delivery routes. This information can be fed into an app; the app can also allow people to request the van (at current location or marked on a map).



Set Up Shop

The van parks and sets up an outdoor area and the inside space. This could be in the parking lot of a housing complex, in a neighborhood with rental units, or at a community locations such as a YMCA/community organization, community league, library or school.



Provide Services and Resources

In addition to the direct provision of services and resources to those who attend the van because they are facing a problem with their landlord, it will also be valuable to provide educational and informative seminars on the importance of establishing inclusive communities. Our members can do this through guest speaking at community events or invitations by community organizations that wish to have an emphasis on developing inclusive low-income housing communities.



Happy Tenant, Happy Town

In addition to creating better outcomes for tenants, we also need to create and value landlord buy-in. We will do this through outreach and education for ALA and CLA; carrying resources on board that explain landlord responsibilities; providing advice/clarification to landlords about their situations; liaising through service providers with landlords who will welcome the van for engagement opportunities.

