

EVICTED: DEVELOPING HUMANE POLICY



AN URBAN RESEARCH AND RESOURCE CENTER, INC. (URRC) RESEARCH PROJECT
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Eviction presents serious policy concerns for local governments that often must ensure a balance between various community interests. The right of the landlord to remove from her premises a



tenant that fails to pay rent or conduct themselves appropriately is generally the owner's fundamental right as the property owner. But often the tenant who is being evicted is only a step away from homelessness, a major concern of most urban municipalities. The trauma of homelessness is felt by the tenant but often impacts children.

Many claims for eviction in the Harris County area are filed in the Justice of the Peace courts, with an overwhelming number of those being in the Justice

of the Peace Court for Precinct 7.

The entire eviction process in Harris County residential communities can last from a few days to several months. Texas eviction laws require a landlord's strict compliance with legal procedures before moving to evict an unwanted tenant and the law places the burden of proving entitlement to eviction on the landlord. That seems fair. But in a county that suffers from a lack of affordable housing options, fairness may not be enough, indeed the apparent fairness may be anything but.

The URRC has embarked upon an eviction research program in collaboration with Harris County in a way that collects and provides perspective to eviction data. Our researchers will compile evictions-related data that includes the numbers of eviction claims filed as well as the numbers of evictions that actually occur each year in Harris County. This preliminary data will be used to assess the needs of the county, its landlords and its tenants in a thoughtful and meaningful way. Our study contemplates being able to identify not only the number of households that face eviction, but to identify which households are at greater risk of post eviction homelessness. We will work to determine the age of the at risk persons targeted for and impacted by evictions and homelessness.

With a long-term goal of housing stability, our researchers will gather the available information, provide objective analysis, evaluate programs, laws and interventions in place, and offer policy changes where appropriate. We will work with all stakeholders involved from the public sector housing authorities to tenant organizations, landlord and private sector associations and policy making bodies.

Judge Jeremy Brown, Harris County Justice, Precinct 7 has identified an extended team of experts to work on the project for an estimated two years, with preliminary actions along the way. We expect this project to have significant impact on how evictions and the aftermaths are treated in Harris County.

