

# Community Legal Aid

A non-profit law firm serving the legal needs of low-income individuals and families in central northeast Ohio



[www.communitylegalaid.org](http://www.communitylegalaid.org)

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## This landlord wants 80% fewer evictions

*guest article by Cheryl Stephens and Kelly Barr, East Akron Neighborhood Development Corporation*

We have a radical vision for our community: that evictions drop by 80% in the next two years. In Akron, that would mean instead of 760 evictions in a given year, we'd see 150.

As landlords, eviction is a necessary part of the gig. We have had to avail ourselves of eviction as a legal tool for someone who simply isn't paying, or who is damaging property, or who has broken the terms of their lease. We know that will never fully go away.

But eviction isn't -- and shouldn't be -- the whole of what being a landlord is about.

Our goal as landlords is to provide people with quality housing. This is especially true at East Akron Neighborhood Development Corporation, where we operate as a mission-driven non-profit landlord. We want to see people housed. In fact, we want to see people become homeowners.

When you come at the issue of eviction from that perspective, it changes the tone of the conversation. Most tenants are not trying to get out of paying their rent. They just want a nice place to live. We shouldn't govern for the outliers.

And let's just say: landlords don't want evictions, either. It negatively impacts not only our bottom line, but also how effectively we can provide service and support to our tenants. It costs money to

turn units -- money we would rather spend paying our staff, making repairs, and purchasing more properties that we can offer to those looking for a good home.

These are our responsibilities as landlords, and it's critical to our relationship with our tenants. When tenants don't get the kind of repairs they need, they become convinced that the landlord doesn't care about the unit, and they may stop caring, too. That's a huge problem, because we depend on our tenants to call us when a third party has damaged our properties in some way (dumped trash, graffiti, etc.). These are the things that can diminish the safety and quality of life for our entire community.

Eviction should be a last resort, because it has lasting consequences. It can be a permanent stain on someone's record. Even when it was just a small problem, even when it was filed and then dismissed by the court, it can cause a family long-term pain, showing up every time they apply for housing in the future.

Offering a pathway to get those records expunged would give people who have gotten on the right path a fresh start. We offer a similar pathway for people with credit problems. It doesn't happen overnight, but having a low credit score once doesn't bar you from lending possibilities forever. And one mistake, or one moment in time, shouldn't keep you from safe, affordable housing forever, either.

We must find a way to reduce -- significantly -- the number of evictions in our community. We have a personal goal of 80%. If each one of us had our own variation of that, imagine where we would go.

*This article is part of Legal Aid's "Big Ideas" series.*

#### SIDEBAR:

Help create the future of housing in our community. We invite the whole community to join us for Akron's first Eviction Prevention Summit on April 28th.

[Learn more](#)

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