

Repairs Clinic

The Legal Aid Society is looking for assistance from LLM students to support Queens tenants in need of repairs in their apartments. This work is crucial because the Right to Counsel program in Housing Court does cover representing tenants in affirmative litigation to address repairs.

We're looking for students to support tenants in several meaningful interventions including, but not limited to: (1) filing *pro se* HP petitions to sue their landlords to make repairs; (2) filing rent reduction order complaints with the DHCR (the state agency that oversees rent-regulated apartments) to reduce their rents until landlords make repairs; and (3) writing letters to their landlord to demand timely repairs.

Students will meet tenants in the Queens Housing Court, located at 89-17 Sutphin Blvd, where tenants can file *pro se* HP petitions, and, while they wait for the Court to review them, where appropriate, complete rent reduction orders which can then be submitted at the nearby DCHR at Gertz Plaza.

The ideal volunteer is interested in learning the basics about tenant rights, is sensitive to the needs of community members with limited resources, and is able to relate to tenants with a trauma-informed lens. Spanish, Mandarin, or Cantonese speakers are preferred, but language ability is not required. All volunteers will be required to complete a training on how to file a *pro se* HP petition and how to file a rent reduction order.

With this project, volunteers will:

- Work in person under the supervision of an experienced housing attorney;
- Gain experience working with a live or telephonic interpreter, if the volunteer does not speak with tenant's preferred language;
- Interview tenants to assess the conditions in their apartment and whether their apartment is rent regulated;
- Explain to tenants which conditions they have the legal right to have the landlord correct;
- Research current violations online through the HPD website;
- Explain to tenants what their legal options are and the pros and cons of different strategies to secure repairs;
- Support tenants in a combination of calling the City to inspect their apartments, writing letters to their landlords, preparing *pro se* HP filings, and/or preparing DHCR rent reduction orders;
- Assist tenants in serving the paperwork connected with filing HP proceedings;
- Inform tenants as to next steps in litigating their HP proceedings; and
- Assist tenants in filing DHCR rent reduction orders with the DHCR office.

The project involves only *pro se* documentary submissions, with no court appearances and no ongoing representation.

Please consider volunteering to help a tenant in need of repairs with this limited scope legal assistance project. Reach out to Julia McNally (jmcnally@legal-aid.org) and Ameer Master (amaster@legal-aid.org) if you are interested and have questions.