

# Homelessness, Housing, Mental Health Task Force

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April 5, 2023



# Meeting Purpose:

Learn about the support services available in the courts and legal systems for homeless individuals who are justice involved.

# About Us

- The Oklahoma Access to Justice Foundation serves as a convener, collaborator, and advocate to increase meaningful participation in a civil justice system that is fair and accessible to all.
- We work with legal, judicial, and community partners to increase the availability of public legal information, advocate for fairer housing laws, and ensure legal services providers have adequate and meaningful support.



# Services in Tulsa

- **What is going well with the court/legal system in Tulsa?**
  - The creation of the Social Services Hub in August 2021 stands as a national example of coordinated eviction response.
  - Including the Social Services Hub flyer with the court summons has increased court attendance and service uptake.
  - We are seeing record levels of tenant representation (though there are still gaps).
- **How can the court/legal system improve in Tulsa?**
  - Holding landlords to the same court standards as tenants (must be present).
  - More proactive education on tenant rights/landlord responsibilities.

# Recommendations

## How can the City help to more effectively support an individual who is experiencing homelessness?

- We must update our state landlord-tenant laws to provide basic protections against retaliation and offer meaningful access to enforcing habitability standards.
- The City can and should continue to convene stakeholders across the housing and social services spectrum to ensure coordinated and well-funded responses.
- The City should explore upstream solutions to preventing homelessness before it starts, such as investing in universal tenant representation in eviction proceedings, adequate funding for domestic violence services, and creating accessible housing for Tulsans who have faced criminal justice involvement.

# About Us – Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma

- LASO provides free civil legal help to qualifying persons
- Eviction, Domestic Violence, Discrimination, Consumer Protection, Benefits, ID
- The Justice Gap
- Special Services Docket, Women's Justice Team, Women In Recovery
- Point of Crisis; attorneys located at MLP and MHOK sites

# Services in Tulsa

- **What is going well with the court/legal system in Tulsa?**
  - Special Services Docket**
  - Tulsa County Cost Docket**
- **How can the court/legal system improve in Tulsa**
  - Defendant should be able to apply with SS Docket**
  - SS Docket should be more frequent/flexible**
  - DPS should be at the SS Docket**
  - LASO presence in other specialty dockets**
    - Mental Health, Veterans, Drug Court**

# Recommendations

**How can the City help to more effectively support an individual who is experiencing homelessness?**

- Policy changes in local ordinances and/or state laws.
  - Civil Right To Counsel
- Convening among community partners and broader public.
- Financial resources for programs, services, staff, etc.
  - Low Barrier Shelters
  - Affordable Housing
  - Animal Care services for the Homeless
  - Medical Legal Partnerships
  - Transportation – Free Bus Ride to Court!

# Panel Discussion

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**Katie Dilks**, Executive Director – Oklahoma Access to Justice

**Eric Hallett**, Statewide Coordinator of Housing Advocacy – Legal Aid Services

**Gerald Hofmeister**, Municipal Judge – City of Tulsa

**Komron Takmil**, Assistant City Attorney III – City of Tulsa

**Nathan Rhea**, Program Director – JusticeLink Oklahoma

**Jacob Beaumont**, Director of Criminal Justice Initiatives – Tulsa Housing Solutions



# Services in Tulsa

- What is the single most important item you want to share with the task force?
- What community partners or city departments do you interact with to assist when needed?
  - What is going well?
  - What improvements are needed?
- How does your organization address the various needs of people experiencing homelessness?
  - What is going well?
  - What improvements are needed?

# How can the City help to more effectively support an individual who is experiencing homelessness?

- Policy changes in local ordinances and/or state laws.
- Convening among community partners and broader public.
- Financial resources for programs, services, staff, etc.