Overview of Achievements

Housing Conservation Coordinators, Inc. (HCC) is a 50 year old community based legal services organization that was founded to “advance social and economic justice and fight for the rights of poor, low-income and working individuals and families.” Over its history, HCC has largely focused its comprehensive services on housing-related matters, including preventing displacement, accessing public benefits, and preserving the limited stock of affordable housing. HCC has expanded its services over the past two decades to provide a wider range of legal support to lower income residents. HCC’s services now include assistance with immigration matters, consumer protection and elder law to help stabilize the lowest income households. In October of 2019, HCC launched its Older Adult Program to provide more comprehensive legal services to older adults, aged 62+, who reside along the West Side of Manhattan. During the pandemic, this proved to be an important addition as many older residents needed the additional support and access to services.

During this fiscal year, HCC assisted 5,068 low income households in Manhattan, including full representation in 127 matters; in-depth advocacy to 91 households, and advice/counsel to 924 households; secured monetary benefits and savings, including helping 20 tenants receive $299,778.61 in rental arrears through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program; provided Community Legal Education benefitting 2,508 individuals, which included: tenant rights’ education for 16 tenant associations (1,128 total attendees), community groups (210 total attendance), 101 tenant leaders, community workshops on various legal issues benefitting 569 community members, and 500 legal education brochures distributed; Pro se workshops benefitting 417 attendees at HCC’s 16th Annual West Side Tenant Conference, which was held virtually due to the continued COVID 19 pandemic, 101 individuals through clinics, and 29 attendees at Know Your Rights Trainings and Workshops on various legal issues, especially issues effecting tenants during the COVID-19 pandemic, another 871 received Self-help printed materials; and referrals to legal and social service providers benefitting 4,330 families.

Population Served: Low Income Populations

Area Served: New York County

Total IOLA Grant: $137,500

Staffing Full Time Equivalents:
- Total Staff: 23
- Lawyers: 14
- Paralegals: 3
- Other: 6
Overview of Achievements

In addition, HCC’s website continued to be a source of information while many residents continued to be isolated in their home and was viewed by 24,862 unique visitors, with self-help referrals accessed by 2,943 people and an additional 595 downloads of issue based reports.

HCC is based on the west side of Manhattan and primarily serves the neighborhoods of Clinton, Upper West Side (UWS), and parts of Chelsea in New York County and includes Manhattan Community Planning Boards 4 and 7. Since 2017, HCC is also one of city-wide providers in New York County’s Housing Court as part of the Universal Access to Council Program – providing full representation to those eligible NY County residents being evicted by their landlords, including those residents of the New York City Housing Authority. HCC continues to provide community intake to residents who live in our catchment area (34th Street to 100th Street, 6th Avenue to the Hudson River) whose incomes are below the poverty level. Until the eviction moratorium ended in January 2022, many residents received legal advice on their mounting rental arrears and applications for rental relief. During the final quarter of fiscal year, the lifting of the eviction moratorium brought an avalanche of eviction filings in Housing Court for non-payment of rent. Additionally, in the past decade, HCC’s catchment area has experienced a striking increase in seniors needing assistance to remain safe and independent in their own homes. COVID-19 vaccine availability in 2021 allowed for HCC staff to safely conduct more in-person intakes and home visits with older adults who have been disproportionally impacted by the isolation brought on by the pandemic.

Direct Legal Services: Cases

Immigration:
HCC represented an immigrant domestic violence survivor who was suffering from depression after he left an abusive citizen husband. Following years of physical abuse and hospitalizations due to routine beatings from his husband, the client finally sought help. A scared and anxious man, Mr. M, originally from Chile came to HCC after his abusive husband would not sponsor him to live legally in the United States. Mr. M’s final straw with his abusive spouse was after he beat him severely. He spent several nights in a Florida hospital due to the assault. Mr. M was threatened and stalked by his husband after he fled. HCC filed a Violence Against Woman Act (VAWA) petition with immigration authorities to allow him to remain and legally work in the United States. Mr. M’s VAWA petition was finally approved, and he plans on becoming a proud U.S. citizen.
Direct Legal Services: Cases

**Housing:**
HCC represented a long-term tenant of a rent stabilized apartment in a Supreme Court proceeding for eviction and damages. An infamous Hell’s Kitchen landlord started the case back in 2016, but even before that, the tenant had come to HCC seeking assistance on a nonpayment proceeding and obtaining repairs. In 2014, HCC attorneys discovered that the apartment was not included on the certificate of occupancy for the building and thus the landlord was not entitled to collect rent from that tenant. The landlord and tenant entered into an agreement providing for the landlord to do the work to legalize the apartment. Shortly after the Supreme Court case was commenced, the court, based on HCC’s motion, dismissed the landlord’s claims for eviction. However, the landlord’s claims for use and occupancy remained pending, and the landlord had still failed to legalize the apartment.

After years of litigation, in November 2021, the Court finally issued a decision dismissing all of the landlord’s claims for rent or use and occupancy because the subject apartment was not included on the certificate of occupancy. The tenant remains in her affordable apartment awaiting the landlord’s attempts to legalize the apartment and amend the certificate of occupancy.
Other Services: Overview

HCC provided Pro Se Assistance and Community Legal Education to 3,926 individuals.

**Pro Se Assistance:** On December 4 and 5, 2021 HCC hosted its 16th Annual West Side Tenant Conference virtually on Zoom. The Conference included 6 workshops led by trained professionals and plenary sessions on issues facing tenants. The workshops were attended by 417 tenants throughout the two conference days. HCC staff also conducted 3 Know Your Rights Trainings via zoom to 29 attendees to provide up to date information to tenants about the status of eviction moratoriums and rent relief programs. HCC reached 25 constituents through partnership with local city council members’ clinics and another 76 individuals through a Tax clinic. An additional 871 received Self-help printed materials.

**Community Legal Education:** Tenant Associations; HCC continued to organize tenants building-wide to collectively challenge improper practices by building owners. Tenants are first given an overview of tenant’s rights in rent regulated housing before the specifics of the building situation are discussed. In the 2021-22 reporting period, HCC assisted 16 tenant associations, holding 143 tenant meetings for a total of 1,128 attendees. Community Groups (210 attendees): HCC staff provided virtual trainings for community groups, including the West Side Neighborhood Alliance (WSNA) membership meetings as well as tenants living in buildings organized through the Stabilizing NYC coalition, to educate community residents on a range of issues facing the community. The Stabilizing buildings are targeted specifically to educate tenants in buildings owned by the “worst landlords” in NYC, like Steve Croman, about their rights and remedies. HCC staff held 19 presentations attended by 569 community members on topics ranging from covid scams, cluttering issues, affordable housing and the 421-a tax benefit program, and workshops on elder abuse. We provided 101 tenant leaders with information to combat harassment, eviction, and hold landlords accountable for repairs. We distributed 500 legal education brochures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of People who Benefitted from Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Legal Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Se Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Assistance</td>
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7,464 People Benefitted by Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation
Other Services: Technology and Other Innovations

In June of 2019, HCC pivoted to utilizing LegalServer for our case management system. We continue to refine and improve the methodologies to better reflect and report the work that we do. In September 2021, our new Grants Administrator joined with excellent knowledge about LegalServer, which has provided greater support in perfecting our reporting methodologies.

HCC engages Just-Tech, a technology and IT services organization experienced in and committed to providing high-quality IT support for small legal service nonprofits, and as a result, HCC receives an annual grant through Microsoft Azure. This year, we have also conducted upgrades to our Firewall and instituted multi-factor authentication for all of our users to enhance our cybersecurity from attacks. The HCC team is working on launching a new website in the current fiscal year.

Other Services: Trainings

HCC promotes leadership development and training for all staff. During the FY 2021-22 FY, HCC Staff virtually attended regular internal trainings conducted annually by our own HCC attorneys, advocates and organizers on subjects related to lease renewals, and succession rights to vicarious trauma and public speaking. These are crucial trainings for newly hired staff. HCC staff regularly attend trainings conducted by Housing Court Answers on Housing related matter and the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development on issues relating to organizing tenant associations. Our Director of Organizing participated in the Organizing Academy held by the Center for Community Leadership – a 6-month program.

As a member of Leap, a coalition of 18 legal services providers in NYC, HCC staff regularly attend regular Leap trainings on issues related to both housing law as well as other civil matters outside of our usual practice areas. HCC attorneys and paralegal/advocates take full advantage of attending these trainings. HCC Supervising Attorneys also lead trainings for coalition partners on various areas of housing law. During this past fiscal year, HCC held a 2 part Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training with Healing Equity United, in order to provide more internal awareness about how we work with each other and our clients.

As part of the DOVE Initiative in NYC – a partnership with Safe Horizons, HCC sends each attorney and intake worker to regular trainings on Domestic Violence o both assess and advise clients who may be at risk of domestic violence and/or elder abuse. In addition to attending trainings, HCC’s staff attorneys and organizers conducted trainings at the 16th Annual Tenant Conference on topics such as Public Housing, Benefits for Seniors and Affordable Housing and How to Form a Tenant Association. HCC’s Executive, Associate Director and Board members attend appropriate trainings and workshops at the Lawyers Alliance on Board Development, Not for Profit Management and Charitable Fundraising.
**Impact Cases**

**Group Case:** HCC’s legal and organizing team worked together to fight for adequate ventilation in two buildings in Chelsea in the middle of a global pandemic. In May 2021, HCC filed an HP proceeding against Akelius Realty and its agents in Manhattan Housing court on behalf of a group of nine (9) tenants living in 225 West 23rd Street and 220 West 24th Street seeking an order to fix the inadequate ventilation in the buildings, among other things. The tenants’ complaints were supported by 29 HPD violations, including five (5) class “C” violations “to abate the nuisance consisting of unopenable window obstructing natural ventilation” and twenty-four (24) violations class “A” for installing windows “floor to ceiling without meeting minimal standards for ventilation and fall protection.”

The landlord filed a motion attempting to dismiss the HP proceeding, but HCC secured a fantastic decision from the Court which ordered that the landlord repair the DOB violations, the HPD violations, and the conditions alleged in the petition that are not HPD violations. In that same order, the Judge also dismissed many of the landlord’s defenses.

Months later, the landlord filed a motion seeking an extension of time to correct the violations. The Court extended the deadline to December 31, 2021. However, Akelius Realty failed to comply, and the violations still exist. HCC’s organizing team, along with the tenants, organized a press conference in front of the building which gained media attention and seemed to finally propel the landlord into action. In addition, HCC, on behalf of the tenants, is now asking the Court to hold Akelius Realty in contempt for violating the most recent order to correct. The motion was argued, and HCC is awaiting a decision on the contempt motion.

**Group Case:** In November 2020, there was a severe fire and consequent issuance of vacate orders at the building located at 307 w. 39th Street. At the time two rent controlled and two rent stabilized tenants were living in the building who are now displaced. In December 2020, HCC filed an emergency HP action seeking an order to repair the building and lift both the DOB and HPD vacate orders. The Landlord filed a motion to dismiss based on economic infeasibility which was denied. The landlord subsequently filed an answer with 27 mostly frivolous defenses. In response HCC filed a motion to strike the defenses and moved for discovery on the landlord’s economic infeasibility defense. The Court granted HCC’s motion to strike all but one of the landlord’s 27 defenses and also granted HCC discovery on economic infeasibility. HCC worked alongside pro bono co-counsel to decipher the landlord’s discovery and prepare for trial. After a year of litigation, the landlord filed a bogus motion seeking discovery on their own defense, which was clearly a delay tactic. The judge saw right through it and denied the landlord’s motion. HCC and co-counsel were prepared to go to trial. Finally, on the brink of trial, the landlord agreed that they would repair the building so that the tenants could retain to their long-term homes.
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

Pro Bono Assistance: HCC utilizes pro bono assistance either to provide direct case services or to co-counsel with HCC staff attorneys on cases outside of our area of expertise.

Legal Clinic: HCC conducts a weekly legal clinic for individuals who live outside our catchment area or who fall above our income guidelines for representation and staffs this clinic with volunteer attorneys from the private bar. In 2021-22, 361 clients were assisted with legal advice at HCC’s Monday night legal clinic (285 clients) and Tax Clinic (76 clients). This year due to COVID-19, the Monday Night Legal Clinic continued to be staffed remotely by HCC attorneys and pro bono volunteers.

Non-attorney volunteers: HCC hosts non-attorney volunteers to support our legal and organizing program and maintains a Practice Order in good standing. In the past year, HCC hosted 2 student interns from John Jay College and 6 law student summer interns. In Addition, HCC’s Attorneys teach a Housing Rights Clinic at Fordham law school and provided supervision to 1 law student students during the Spring semester. 8 Volunteer Board members also actively participate in various committees and projects. HCC also hosted lawyers, organizers, advocates and elected officials who conducted seminars at the 16th Annual Westside Tenant’s Conference.

34 Attorneys volunteered 480 hours

9 Law Students volunteered 1,940 hours

35 Other Volunteers volunteered 1,116 hours
Significant Collaborations

In 2021-22, HCC worked in partnership with other legal services providers in New York City to directly enhance individual client services as follows: 1) HCC participated in the Legal Services of the Working Poor (LWSP) Consumer Debt coalition. The Coalition consists of five NYC provider partners (CAMBA, NMIC, Goddard Riverside Law Project and UJC). Each organization conducted its consumer debt intake and referred cases to the coalition for legal representation. Trainings were also conducted for coalition staff. While working remotely with clients, HCC assisted 12 individuals to resolve consumer debt issues through this program and an additional 14 seniors attended a workshop on Identity Theft & Financial Scams, and 2) City-wide coalitions on specific issues: HCC also participated in numerous city-wide coalitions, including Leap (a coalition of 18 independent legal service providers), Stand for Tenant Safety, Illegal Hotels Coalition, Certificate Against Tenant Harassment (CATH); Right to Counsel Coalition; Stabilizing NYC; Real Rent Reform, Housing Justice for All, and the Anti-Warehousing Coalition to keep landlords from holding on to vacant apartments.

Sources of Funding

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<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<td>City and County Funding</td>
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