

# **HOUSING CONSERVATION COORDINATORS**

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**2023 – 2024  
Report**

# OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Housing Conservation Coordinators, Inc. (HCC) is a 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.” HCC provides comprehensive services on housing-related matters, including preventing displacement, accessing public benefits, and preserving the limited stock of affordable housing, immigration matters, consumer protection and elder law to help stabilize the lowest income households.

During this fiscal year, HCC assisted 6,100 low income households in Manhattan, including full representation in 234 matters; in-depth advocacy to 75 households, and advice/counsel to 1,145 households; provided Community Legal Education benefitting 2,355 individuals, which included: tenant rights’ education for 30 tenant associations (538 total attendees), community groups (69 total attendance), 90 tenant leaders, community workshops on various legal issues benefitting 300 community members, outreach to 1,358 individuals; Pro se workshops benefitting 342 attendees at HCC’s 18th Annual West Side Tenant Conference, and 604 attendees through workshops and clinics, another 1,345 received Self-help printed materials; and referrals to legal and social service providers benefitting 2,799 families.



**Service Area:** New York

**Population Served:**  
General Low-Income Population

**Staffing Full Time Equivalents:**

Total Staff: 21	Lawyers: 13
Paralegals: 5	Others: 3

## DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES

**Housing Case:** HCC represented Ms. H, an older adult, who lived in a Rent Stabilized co-op with a roommate. The roommate was the tenant of record of the apartment, and Ms. H had no familial relationship to him. He passed away and the landlord started an eviction proceeding against Ms. H. In addition to the case against her, Ms. H also required serious spinal surgery which complicated appearing in court as well as physically moving herself.

HCC was able to buy time in court so that Ms. H could safely recover from surgery and find alternative housing. HCC also assisted in helping expedite her application for senior housing, which was ultimately approved. Though she was able to secure a new place, she was unable to afford moving costs. Our social worker stepped in to secure funding for her move and connected her with SNAP benefits renewal assistance. Ms. H is now a lot more at ease and fully moved into her new safe, and affordable apartment.

**Housing Case:** HCC represented Mr. C in a holdover proceeding and an appeal regarding the issue of whether the apartment had been substantially rehabilitated and therefore properly deregulated. The case lasted for about 5 years in duration. Our initial representation was on an appeal brought by the landlord based on our client's successful motion for summary judgement.

When the case got sent back to Housing Court, HCC litigated the matter with filing motions and discovery and engaged in settlement negotiations over the 5 years. In the Fall of 2023, Mr. C decided to move out and received \$140,000 in exchange as well as five years' worth of free rent.

**Immigration Case:** Ms. M and her husband sought assistance from HCC's immigration unit after they fled Venezuela. The family, which includes a toddler and a young child, were threatened with bodily harm for their political beliefs, and left their country fearful that they would lose their lives to the violence occurring there.



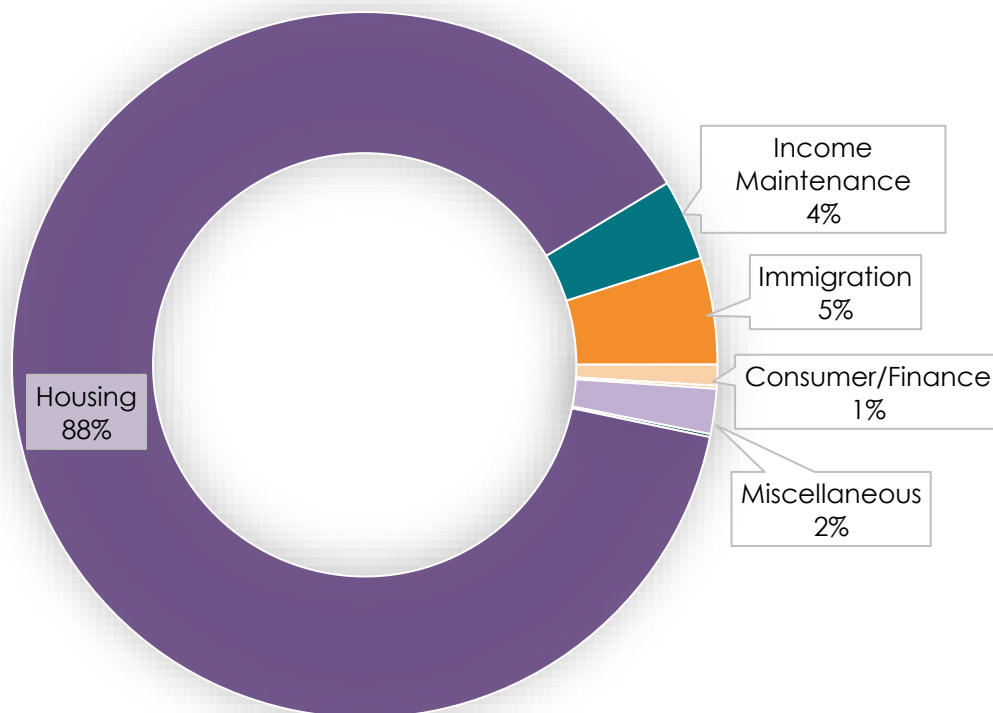
2,414

people  
benefited  
from

1,454

legal cases  
closed

# CASES BY LEGAL PROBLEM AREA



With no money for transportation, the family undertook the arduous journey on foot, traveling over mountains and through deserts. To avoid starvation, the family survived on Ms. M's breastmilk. Reaching Mexico, rather than finding a safe haven, the family was kidnapped by gangs and beaten. They were held for 4 days while their kidnappers demanded money from the family in Venezuela. The extended family in their homeland was able to pool their limited resources to secure the release of the family. Thousands of miles later the family completed their harrowing journey and reached New York.

Based on their date of entry to the United States, HCC's staff knew this family qualified for Temporary Protective Status (TPS). HCC's attorney and paralegal completed and filed both the TPS paperwork and applications for work authorization documents. While this young family works on filing an asylum application, the TPS will allow them to safely remain in the United States and work to feed and support their children.

Ms. M, her husband and their young children are no longer living in fear of the violence that surrounded them in Venezuela, and they are thankful for the help and support they received.

## OTHER LEGAL-RELATED SERVICES

HCC provided Pro Se Assistance and Community Legal Education to 4,646 individuals.

**Pro Se Assistance:** a) On December 2, 2023 HCC hosted its 18th Annual West Side Tenant Conference in-person at Fordham Law School. The Conference included 9 workshops led by trained professionals and plenary sessions on issues facing tenants. The workshops were attended by 342 tenants; b) HCC staff also conducted Know Your Rights Trainings to 193 attendees; c) HCC reached 26 constituents through partnership with local city council members' clinics and another 385 individuals through walk-in assistance; d) an additional 1,345 received Self-help printed materials.

**Community Legal Education:** a) Tenant Associations; HCC continued to organize tenant 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 2023-24 reporting period, HCC assisted 30 tenant associations, holding tenant meetings for a total of 538 attendees; and b) Community Groups (69 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 about their rights and

# 2,291

people  
benefited  
from

**Pro Se  
Assistance**

# 2,355

people  
benefited  
from

**Community  
Legal  
Education**

# 1,626

people  
benefited  
from

**Web-Based  
Assistance**

remedies; c) outreach to 1,358 individuals); d) HCC staff held presentations attended by 300 community members on topics ranging from housing court, Rent Guidelines Board, and landlord harassment; e) We provided 90 tenant leaders with information to combat harassment, eviction, and hold landlords accountable for repairs.

## EXAMPLES

**HCC's Protect and Preserve Affordable Housing (PAPAH) Project:** Throughout the fiscal year, HCC facilitated a series of workshops on the rights of tenants living in buildings receiving 421-a tax abatements. These workshops were held in collaboration with staff from the offices of local elected officials. These meetings were preceded by both in-person and online outreach to hundreds of 421-a tenants whose abatements were sunseting, targeting community members often vulnerable to misinformation and harassment from unscrupulous landlords. The informational workshops were followed by dozens of individual meetings with tenants, answering specific questions about lease issues and the affordability of apartments. Finally, these workshops led to the creation of three tenant associations which further organized tenants living in affordable units in 421-a buildings to advocate for repairs and other rights.

**The Annual West Side Tenants' Conference:** On December 2, 2023 HCC hosted its 18th Annual West Side Tenant Conference in-person at Fordham Law School. The Conference featured 9 workshops on important tenant issues: Older Adult Resources, Legal Tools to Obtain Repairs (like rent strikes, HPs, and 7As), the statewide political landscape around tenants' rights, immigration rights, stopping illegal short-term rentals, how to organize your own tenant association, and HUD tenant rights). The Conference also featured talks from elected officials including State Assembly Housing Chair Linda Rosenthal, Borough President Mark Levine and Senator Chuck Schumer. Tenants were further connected with neighborhood-wide organizing around tenant rights through the grassroots community group HCC supports, the West Side Neighborhood Alliance.

**Organizing for Tenant Rights:** On February 24, HCC organized and held a rally in Hell's Kitchen against proposed rollbacks to rent stabilization, and for Good Cause Eviction. Over 60 tenants attended and were educated not only about their rights as they currently stood, but also about potential changes to be aware of. This rally sparked an increase in advocacy, as a dozen tenants from this rally further joined a rally to stop rollbacks to rent stabilization in Albany on March 19. Also, in attendance in February were our a few of our state representatives from our local district.

# IMPACT CASES

## Impact Case #1, 486 9th Ave, New York, NY

**10018:** At 486 9th Ave, tenants have seen mice, roaches, and other pests; mold; broken down and defective apartment appliances; trash bins not being provided for resident waste; proper egress not being provided for escape from fire in the building; broken and missing smoke and carbon monoxide detectors; exposed electrical wiring; lack of proper heating and hot water in apartments and more.

With the support of Housing Conservation Coordinators, the residents of these buildings created a tenants' association. In August 2023, the 486 9th Ave tenants' association filed a group HP action. In November 2023 we won an order from the judge to correct all HPD violations found within the building. Subsequently, in January 2024 we secured a stipulation with the landlord to continue working to resolve remaining issues at 486 9th Ave, enforcing the rights of 18 households in the building to decent, habitable housing.

## Impact Case #2, 438/440 W.45th Street, New

**York, NY 10036:** The tenants of 438/440 W. 45th Street have dealt with a litany of repair issues which include: outages of heat and hot water; leaks in pipes, ceilings, and radiators; rats and other pests; broken down appliances; trash removal and cleaning of common spaces not being provided; and generally deteriorated conditions throughout their apartments and buildings. The owner of these buildings, Daniel Ohebshalom, was named the #1 "worst landlord" in NYC by the Public Advocate's Office in 2022 and 2023.

With the support of Housing Conservation Coordinators, the residents of these buildings formed a tenants' association and began to push back against the negligence of their landlord. In July and September of 2022, the tenants of 438 and 440 W. 45th Street respectively filed group HP actions. Through foreclosure, Maguire Capital Group became the new owner of the buildings

## All Impact Cases

- 104 W 83rd Street - HP - Repairs
- 225 West 23rd Street - HP - Repairs
- 307 W 39th St - DHCR Tenant Complaint
- 307 W 39th St - HP - Repairs
- 356 West 56th Street - Supreme Court
- 438 W 45th Street - HP - Repairs
- 440 W 45th Street - HP - Repairs
- 447 West 37th Street - DHCR LL Application
- 449 West 37th Street - DHCR LL Application
- 486 9th Ave - HP - Repairs
- 544 West 49th Street - DHCR LL Application
- 544 West 49th Street - HP - Repairs

in July 2023, but the bad conditions remained. After around a year and a half of rent strike, the tenants won around \$140,000 dollars in rent waivers through stipulations secured in court in December 2023. The stipulations also contained an agreement for the landlord to fix all the outlined conditions above and more where they live.

**Impact Case #3, 104 W. 83rd Street, New York, NY 10024:** Tenants at 104 W. 83rd have also faced a variety of serious issues in their building under the ownership of Daniel Ohebshalom. These include roaches, rodents, and bees; broken intercoms; defective appliances; water leaking through the building roof, cleaning of common spaces not being done; and generally deteriorated conditions throughout their apartments and building.

We worked with them to file a group HPD action in March 2023. In May 2023, we won an order to correct all open HPD violations in the building. Through organizing and legal action, we were able to improve services in the building for 18 families and obtain repairs in apartments that tenants needed for years.

## TECHNOLOGY

June 2024 will mark 5 years of 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.

Our Grants Administrator is currently part of a LegalServer working group with our Leap Coalition partners which is providing HCC with insight in how other organizations utilize LegalServer and also to collaborate on how we can better utilize the system to serve our coalition goals of providing services city-wide to our client base.

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.

HCC's updated website utilizing the WIX platform - <https://www.hcc-nyc.org/>. allows visitors to seek appointments or referrals directly with us. Additionally, a visitor can sign up for our mailing list as well as find an events page and blogs with the latest news.

## IOLA TECHNOLOGY GRANT

HCC is grateful for the opportunity to utilize the majority of the \$10,000 Technology Grant to supply our conference room space with equipment to hold hybrid meetings, both internal and external. During the pandemic, we found that video/zoom access brought accessibility to many people in the community who could not attend meetings in person, and it provided us with the opportunity to find ways to make meetings more accessible, especially for our community members who engage in tenant association meetings and the West Side Neighborhood Alliance.

It has also enhanced our ability to operate internally by allowing staff who are unable to be present in the office on a given day or Board members who can't attend a board meeting in person to participate via zoom. Without the grant, HCC would not have had the funding for this project.

A small portion of the grant was used to pay for the equipment and vendors to set up the system and the remainder was used to offset the annual premium of cyber insurance which HCC purchased during this fiscal year as a new policy.

## PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

**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 2023-24, 207 clients were assisted with legal advice at HCC's Monday night legal clinic. During the past fiscal year, the Monday Night Legal Clinic continued to be staffed remotely by HCC attorneys and pro bono volunteers.

**SCRIE/DRIE Clinic:** HCC collaborates with New York Lawyer's for the Public Interest and the law firm, Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison LLP to conduct a SCRIE/DRIE Clinic for low-income eligible tenants in our community.

**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, 7 law student summer interns, and 4 fall law student interns.

In Addition, HCC's Attorneys teach a Housing Rights Clinic at Fordham law school and provided supervision to 3 law student students during the Fall semester. A 3rd year Fordham Law student also joined HCC on March 4, 2024 as a full time (12 week) Pro Bono Scholar after taking the February Bar exam. Eight (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 18th Annual Westside Tenant's Conference.

**25**attorneys volunteered **123** hours**16**law students volunteered **3,160** hours**26**other volunteers volunteered **779** hours

# SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

In 2023-24, HCC worked in partnership with other legal services providers in New York City to directly enhance individual client services as follows:

**Legal Services of the Working Poor (LWSP) Consumer Debt coalition:** 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. During this fiscal year, HCC assisted 10 individuals to resolve consumer debt issues through this program, and

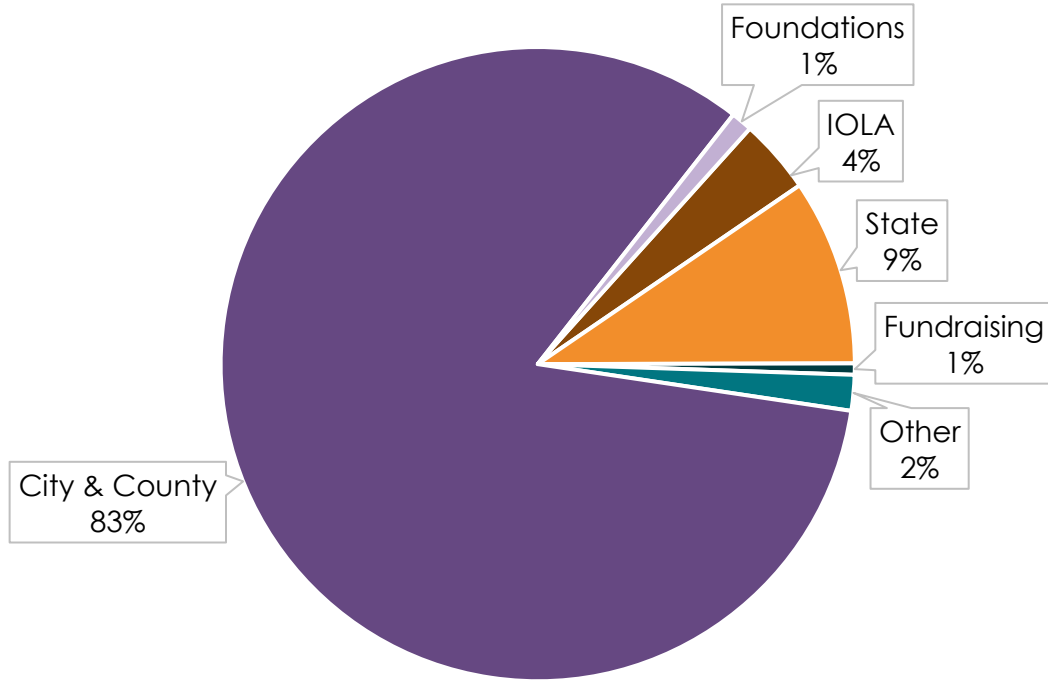
**City-wide Coalitions on Specific Issues:** HCC also participated in numerous city-wide coalitions, including Leap (a coalition of 18 independent legal service providers), Stand for Tenant Safety, Illegal Hotels Coalition, Certificate Against Tenant Harassment (CATH); Right to Counsel Coalition; Stabilizing NYC; Real Rent Reform, Housing Justice for All, and the Anti-Warehousing Coalition to keep landlords from holding on to vacant apartments.

**New York Lawyer's for the Public Interest and Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison LLP:** In June 2023, HCC collaborated with New York Lawyer's for the Public Interest and lawyers from the law firm, Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison LLP to conduct a SCRIE/DRIE Clinic for low-income eligible tenants in our community. HCC attorneys and the Senior Community Resource Coordinator held a training in advance of the clinic and co-conducted the clinic. HCC continued to work with the assigned pro bono attorneys on the cases as the applications were submitted and reviewed by NYC Department of Finance. The clinic is a successful on-going collaboration.

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# CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUNDING

**\$4,342,207**



<b>IOLA Funding</b>	<b>\$165,000</b>
<b>City &amp; County Funding</b>	<b>\$3,613,879</b>
<b>State Funding</b>	<b>\$412,355</b>
<b>Foundations</b>	<b>\$47,000</b>
<b>Fundraising</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>
<b>Other Funding</b>	<b>\$78,973</b>