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ABSTRACT

This project was inspired by the Social Work class Applications of Social Justice and Human Rights in Social Work. As a Global and Community Practice student, and an intern at the Department of Community Affairs agency, I wanted to bring awareness to the growing issue of evictions throughout New Jersey. After working with the eviction office, I found that their biggest concern was around educating tenants of their rights, and local services that are available. To combat these inequalities, I designed an Eviction Prevention Brochure to provide renters their rights as a tenant, their responsibilities, the eviction process, and their local social services.

Problem and Population

There has been an increase of evictions filings after the Covid-19 moratorium ended in 2021. Eviction can be defined as a forced residential move and is now the second highest reason for homelessness. Throughout the U.S. there has been a growing housing crisis that has left millions of people without stable homes and this has also led to racial inequalities.

Studies shows that the Black and brown communities not only have high levels of poverty but are affected most by housing disparities (Census 2022). Data from the Homelessness Update in NJ shows that 61.78% of all single-parent families with a female head that experience eviction were Black or African American (Callahan 2023).

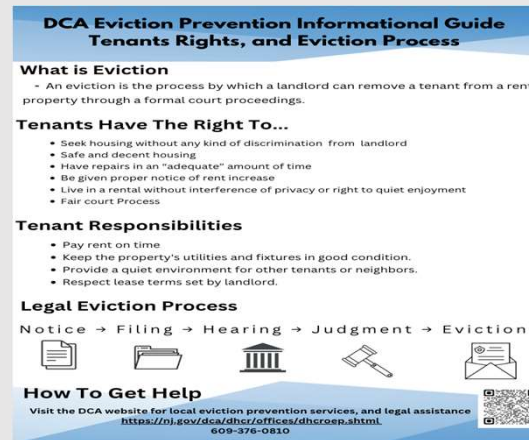
There is a huge inequality with equal access to resources for those who are in the process of being evicted. Firstly, landlords are not required to give a warning to tenants whom they plan on evicting, so most times people find out from the eviction notice telling them they have 30 days to leave the property. Legal paperwork is lengthy and hard to understand, which makes the process difficult to understand. Only 10% of tenants are represented in court during their eviction proceedings. There is a need for tenants to know their rights, the steps of an eviction, and what services are available to provide help.

Site of Intervention

The Office of Eviction Prevention at the Department of Community Affairs, Trenton NJ. Mercer County has a populations of 368k, of which 27.7% are below the poverty level (Census 2022). The issues addressed concern New Jersey community members who are facing eviction from a rental property. The community identifies as 48.8% Caucasian, 20.1% Hispanic, Latino, or multiracial, 19.6% Black or African American, and 11.5% Asian.

Intervention

An eviction prevention brochure was created to provide tenants with their rights, responsibility, the eviction process, and local social services that are available in their county to provide assistance. The brochure is set to be distributed throughout 15 social services in New Jersey, as well as in the Trenton New Jersey court house.



Impact

This eviction brochure will document that uses simple, and understandable words that explain the eviction process, and what a person's next steps are. This can alleviate the stress, and anxiety that comes with the confusion of an eviction notice, and lets them know the options they have available.

In the document they will also be provided a list of local resources that specifically help with eviction-related issues. These services will be organizations that can help people pay back rent, find new housing, or even give them the right to counsel in cases where they need to get to court. With this information included in eviction notices, people will have access to adequate resources, and this can combat the systematic difficulties involved in the eviction process.

Advancing Social Justice and Human Rights

Access to adequate housing and resources which is a human right that often gets neglected. Equal access inequalities affect people throughout the world but within New Jersey, it mostly affects lower middle to poverty-level Black and Brown individuals and families

This is also a human rights violation because everyone has the right to the 6th Amendment that gives someone the right to counsel, which for many evicted tenants, is not always available. Those who are evicted are not given equal access to help and are left with only 30 days to find another home or become homeless.

In this brochure I provide people local adequate resources, and the ability to know their rights as a tenant.

References

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