

# Evictions in the Era of COVID-19



## A LOOK AT EVICTION FILINGS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

APRIL 2020 – JUNE 2020

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progress

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community

*Committed to leading and  
coordinating efforts to seek  
justice in civil legal matters  
for lower income Virginians*

# VPLC



The statewide support center for legal aid in  
Virginia providing support in

*ADVOCACY*

*TRAINING*

*LITIGATION*

on the civil justice issues faced by  
low-income Virginians

# Court filings snapshot – Pending cases



- 11,112 unlawful detainer cases pending through August 24<sup>th</sup> (statewide)
- 9383 unlawful detainer hearings scheduled in July
- "Eviction Hot Spots" (at least one week with >100):
  - Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, Prince William
  - Chesterfield, Henrico, Richmond City
  - Petersburg
  - Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, VA Beach
  - Montgomery, Roanoke

*Source: Code Hampton Roads*

*These numbers severely undercount the potential evictions because of federal eviction moratorium through late August.*

# Unlawful Detainer Cases Week of 6/29



- 1685 cases heard statewide (35% - 584 – filed on or after 4/1/2020)
- 287 default judgments entered against tenants
- 547 cases were continued
- Total rent judgments combined = \$1,484,599
- Average rent judgment = \$5728
- Landlords can amend on court date for amount owed that date
- Unclear how much of total is for non-rent (ie late fees, attorney's fees and court costs)

○ Source: Code Hampton Roads

# City of Richmond Close Up



- 2212 pending unlawful detainers as of 6/26
- Locations of evictions by zip code:
  - Southside:
    - ✦ 23225 – 552 UDs; 40%White , 47%Black, 8%Latinx
    - ✦ 23224 – 477 UDs; 14%White, 65%Black, 15%Latinx
  - Central:
    - ✦ 23220 – 172 UDs; 57%White, 31%Black, 3%Latinx
  - East End:
    - ✦ 23223 – 262 UDs; 17%White, 76%Black, 2%Latinx
  - Northside:
    - ✦ 23227 – 278 UDs; 42%White, 50%Black, 2%Latinx
    - ✦ 23222 – 229 UDs; 14%White, 80%Black, 2% Latinx
- ✦ Source: RVA Eviction Lab

# City of Richmond Close Up



- Majority white West End - No zip code has more than 17 pending unlawful detainers
- 61% of all rental units are in large, multifamily properties (> 25 units)
- 77% of all eviction judgments were in these large properties
- 10 owners with highest volume of judgments (excluding RRHA) responsible for 39% of judgments but hold only 17% of property
- Only 13% of rental units are owned by an owner holding one rental unit

Source: RVA Eviction Lab

# Richmond Redevelopment & Housing Authority



- Covered by federal eviction moratorium in CARES Act
- Non-payment evictions frozen since November 2019
- Cannot lawfully send termination notices until after July 25<sup>th</sup>
- Must send 30-day termination notices for nonpayment of rent pursuant to CARES Act
- Waiver of in person:
  - Recertification of income
  - Housing Quality Standards for Housing Choice Voucher Program

# CARES Act



- Under federal eviction moratorium, no unlawful detainers filed by covered properties until late August
- Approximately 28% of rental units covered by CARES Act (including public housing, federally subsidized and any housing with a federally backed mortgage)
- 2.7 million rental units in Virginia
- Approximately 756,000 rental units covered by federal eviction moratorium



# Eviction Legal Helpline



- Run by Virginia Poverty Law Center, funded by private donations
- Has not been broadly advertised yet
- 833 – NO EVICT – Please share!!
- Recent significant increase in calls to ELH about:
  - Unlawful evictions
  - Evictions from extended stay hotels and motels

# Questions Raised



- Are most residential evictions in Virginia conducted by larger landlords, as in the City of Richmond? If so, how does that affect policy?
- Why do evictions disproportionately harm Black Virginians? What policies can change this?
  - “Neighborhood racial composition is a significant factor in determining eviction rates, even after controlling for income, property value and other characteristics.”
    - RVA Eviction Lab, <https://cura.vcu.edu/media/cura/pdfs/cura-documents/GeographiesofEviction.pdf>

# Eviction Legal Helpline



- **2020 Calls to ELH:**
  - January – 51
  - February – 37
  - March – 50
  - April – 86
  - May - 112
  - June. – 105
  
- **833-NO EVICT**

# Thank You



The Virginia Poverty Law Center is a non-profit committed to serve the needs of low-income Virginians. The work of the center is supported by individual and corporate donors and through lawyer's IOLTA accounts. If you would like to find out how to give to our general or specific efforts, please contact us at [donate@vplc.org](mailto:donate@vplc.org)