Community Mediation & Eviction Diversion
The Eviction Landscape in Pgh

- Approximately 5,000 evictions are filed in the City of Pittsburgh every year
- Landlords win judgement in roughly 85% of these cases at the Magisterial District Court level
- An eviction filing- even if the tenant wins the case, stays on their record and impacts future housing options
- The vast majority of evictions are filed against tenants paying less than $1,000/month in rent.
- 1/3 of the cases are filed against those paying less than $500/month in rent
- Evictions are costly to landlords, detrimental to tenants, and erode a strong sense of community
Mediation offers a neutral third-party model to resolve conflict.

Mediation gives equal time and weight to both parties, unlike the court process which favors landlords.

The proposed model would be free to landlords and tenants, incentivizing them to try mediation before filing for eviction.

Similar programs in other cities consistently have an 80-90% success rate.

Mediation would not happen in a vacuum— we have to wrap in referrals for other forms of assistance.
Where has this worked?

- **Cambridge, Massachusetts** utilizes CDBG funds for housing mediations (most of them are before an eviction is filed and prevent eviction)- 90% success rate

- **Baltimore, MD** piloted mediation in housing court and had an 81% success rate

- **Palo Alto, CA** utilizes community mediation to resolve all levels of housing disputes- from rentals to homeowner and condo associations- with an 80% success rate

- **Philadelphia, PA** piloted a pre-eviction filing program in 2019 with Good Shepherd Mediation and is starting a second phase of the pilot in 2020
Key Components of Eviction Diversion

- **Mediation**: a single service provider utilizing a pool of pro-bono, trained mediators who can provide a rapid response to housing conflicts

- **Rental Assistance**: issues with non-payment of rent necessitate a rental assistance fund. This could be coordinated through URA and or a direct referral system to a housing service provider (HSP)

- **Financial Coaching**: Since many financial situations are bigger than a one-time need, utilizing the city’s Financial Empowerment Centers (FEC) would be a helpful addition to services

- **Social Service Supports**: Mediations may bring to light other issues like food insecurity or healthcare issues. A referral system through 211 or DHS would add wraparound supports
How is the program utilized?

- The process could start in multiple ways:
  - Referral through MDJ’s for eviction filings
  - The landlord or tenant voluntarily seeks mediation/eviction diversion and contacts us
  - A landlord or homeowner utilizes mediation as a mandatory step before an eviction
  - Agencies like the Commission on Human Relations refer cases that are out of their jurisdiction to mediation/eviction diversion
  - Housing Authorities may utilize eviction diversion in the first month of issues, instead of filing for eviction
Interested? Find out more:

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