

THE IMPACT OF THE ACCESS TO JUSTICE INITIATIVE

Initiative funding leads to positive, life-changing outcomes for District residents

- 30+ Initiative grantees keep District residents in their homes, amplify the voices of the most vulnerable, and protect District residents' rights in the marketplace (click for [FY21](#) and [FY22](#) grantees)
- Initiative programs address the fundamentals of life – the roof over your head (*evictions and foreclosures*); family stability (*child custody, child support, education, guardianships, immigration*); personal safety (*protection against abuse*); and financial sustenance (*access to public benefits, protection from unscrupulous debt collectors, ability to file for bankruptcy*)
- For many District residents, the reach of the pandemic will not be 'over' even as the public health emergency abates. They will need continued, uninterrupted legal help. Increased FY23 funding will sustain and grow FY22 investments in housing, domestic violence, family law, immigration, probate, public benefits, and consumer protection, plus innovative approaches like new medical-legal partnerships and community-led, community-based interventions
- The Initiative's one-of-a-kind legal interpreter bank provided 6,000+ telephonic interpretations in 2021 to ensure linguistically appropriate legal services – 2,000 more than a year before
- [Loan repayment assistance](#) means experienced legal services lawyers stay working in our community

The Initiative's expanded investments in housing produce real results

- More than half of Initiative funds target keeping District residents in their homes to promote community stability through a multi-faceted approach to addressing housing insecurity: eviction defense; eviction diversion; foreclosure prevention; addressing mortgage, tax issues; challenging unlawful rent increases, building condition violations, and voucher terminations; & safeguarding low-equity housing cooperatives
- Initiative grantees have expanded their service model to use in-person outreach to reach more tenants and offer both legal and social services, in partnership with other community-based organizations
- Eviction diversion work resulted in stopping 70% of scheduled evictions for non-payment; 44% of other evictions; and 65% overall since September 2021.
- A coordinated phone line launched by Initiative partners in June 2020 has fielded more than 5,000 calls and now is included on pre-court and court eviction notices
- Tenants who receive legal representation through the Initiative have [better outcomes](#); 74% retained possession of the unit; even if they didn't, they had a more favorable settlement and avoided judgment
- [Learn more about how the Initiative promotes housing justice.](#)

The Initiative fosters collaborative, community-informed solutions that work

- Our civil justice system is more efficient and accessible because of the Initiative, which promotes coordination among a network of grantee organizations and other critical community partners. Initiative funding will support a first-of-its-kind Coordinated Intake system in DC – “no wrong door” for District residents with legal needs.
- The voices of District residents are increasingly central to the Initiative's strategic approach; [these perspectives are shared](#) with other key community stakeholders like the courts to inform reform efforts
- Initiative programs promote a more racially equitable civil justice system; the majority of grants target residents in Wards 5, 7, and 8 where nearly 2/3 of District Black families reside

HOW THE INITIATIVE MEETS COMMUNITY NEEDS

With tens of thousands of D.C. residents currently reporting being behind on rent according to U.S. Census survey data, **housing** remains a critical civil justice need. Initiative support for housing-related projects substantially increased in FY22, and offers a wide range of services to District tenants with a common goal: promoting housing stability for low- and moderate-income District residents.

Our community is experiencing a startling spike in the volume and lethality of **domestic violence** incidents. One provider reported a 300% increase in calls for support over the last year. Initiative funding supports a wide range of court- and community-based legal help in this area, with almost double the funding in FY22.

The District received over 250,000 claims for **unemployment** benefits between March 2020 and September 2021 – compared with 37,000 total in 2019. One provider reported receiving 40 times the number of calls for legal help – over 1,000 calls between March 2020 and December 2021 – compared with just 25 in all of 2019. The Initiative funds several programs that pursue direct representation, systemic litigation, and legal education to meet the employment-related legal needs of District workers.

Financial risk and consumer protection concerns have risen significantly during the pandemic; one provider reported a 40% increase in fraud alone. Providers expect an onslaught of collections cases as community members begin to face debt and lose temporary protections. Initiative funding has significantly increased in this area in FY22 to meet this growing need, and providers are developing holistic services that not only defend against legal cases, but offer prevention-based financial counseling to promote economic stability.

Stable families mean a stable community, but thousands of District residents face a wide-range of needs that require legal support. In FY22, the Initiative dramatically expanded its funding to the Family Law Assistance Network, a coordinated project that **supports families** with D.C. Superior Court cases. This adds to support for efforts focused on child support and serving children in complex custody disputes, a growing area of need.

The ability to navigate the **probate** system can, for many families, mean the difference between keeping a multi-generational home in DC or losing that asset and being forced to leave the community they call home. A lack of legal support in probate matters has been a long-standing civil justice gap. FY22 Initiative funding will support newly expanded legal support in this critical area.

The Initiative supports DC's large immigrant community, facing years of marginalization and uncertainty with near constant shifts in legal requirements, through **immigration** legal services, with an increase in FY22.

FY23 FUNDING WILL SUPPORT TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE INVESTMENTS

- \$3M to expand the District's eviction diversion model to prevent eviction (doubling of FY22 funding)
- \$11M to support more eviction-related legal representation (an increase of \$3M from FY22)
- \$16.739M to expand legal programs in other areas of need, including \$1M to support a "no wrong door" coordinated intake and referral system (an increase of \$4M from FY22)
- \$950,000 to fund loan repayment assistance to support District legal services attorneys

To learn more, [contact the D.C. Access to Justice Commission](https://dcaccesstojustice.org/access-public-funding/) or visit <https://dcaccesstojustice.org/access-public-funding/> or <https://www.dcbfoundation.org/>