

News Advisory

From the Rhode Island Judiciary



Volunteer lawyers sought for eviction cases

August 6, 2020: The Rhode Island District Court will begin a volunteer lawyer program to assist the court in the adjudication of tenancy and eviction cases, Chief Judge Jeanne E. LaFazia announced.

The program's goal is to provide tenants facing eviction with legal advice at the courthouse in negotiating payment plans, move-out dates, or other tenancy matters just prior to their District Court hearings in what is anticipated to be a surge in cases in early September as certain pandemic-related benefits and assistance expire.

While many landlords have an attorney, the vast majority of tenants facing eviction are not represented by a lawyer, which was true even before the pandemic, Chief Judge LaFazia said.

The volunteer lawyers will serve as "friends of the court" to advise tenants of their rights, describe the process, and provide free advice just before their hearings begins. Under this format, the volunteer lawyers will be able to assist numerous tenants during a half-day shift at the courthouse.

The volunteer lawyers will receive training in landlord/tenant processes and will earn mandatory continuing legal education credits, which are required annually of all active attorneys. While the program was developed in contemplation of a surge in September, it could begin this month if lawyers sign up for the training soon, Chief Judge LaFazia said.

Specific details of the program, which will be of particular interest to attorneys, can be found [here](#).

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