



The ZERO TO THREE State Policy Team frequently provides technical assistance (TA) and consulting to state/community policymakers, agency staff, advocates and public-private groups to support them to identify and make progress on policy/system goals that will support families with young children. When TA/consulting activities or products may be helpful to additional states and communities exploring similar issues, we adapt them for a broader audience using this template.

TA/Consulting Topic(s): Eviction prevention for expectant parents and families with infants and toddlers.

TA/Consulting Description: To support state teams participating in the [Thrive from the Start](#) State Capacity-Building Initiative, the ZERO TO THREE State Policy Team brought together national partners to identify policies, programs, and system initiatives that would reduce evictions and housing displacement among expectant parents and families with infants and toddlers.

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Guide to Preventing Evictions and Housing Displacement Among Expectant Parents and Families with Infants and Toddlers

This guide offers a menu of options for advocates and administrators interested in changing state laws, court rules, administrative practices, and funding priorities to prevent evictions and housing displacement among expectant parents and families with infants and toddlers.

This guide intentionally includes displacement from housing that goes through the courts as part of a formal eviction process and displacement that happens without court involvement. Displacement of any type can precipitate homelessness or long-term housing instability. In this document, the term ‘eviction’ is used to describe the court-based formal process of removing a renter from a housing unit, and ‘displacement’ is used to describe other forms of housing loss.

This guide has five sections:

1. [Why expectant parents and families with children ages 0–3 need targeted protection from evictions and housing displacement](#)
2. [Court and legal eviction prevention options](#)
3. [Community-based eviction and homelessness prevention programs](#)
4. [Access to rental assistance and income supports](#)
5. [Building partnerships](#)

Why expectant parents and families with children ages 0–3 need targeted protection from evictions and housing displacement

Families with children are at the highest risk for formal eviction of any group. More than one in ten children 0–4 in renter households face an eviction filing annually.¹ The unique economic and health risks associated with childbirth and the early years of life put expectant parents and families with young children at significant risk for eviction and housing displacement. These factors include:

- **Early family formation and informal housing arrangements.** Young parents, especially first-time parents, may be living with family or friends, living without a formal lease, or just beginning to form an independent household. These families are at risk for housing displacement as their families grow but policies focused only on formal eviction filings may miss these families entirely.
- **High costs of infancy and toddlerhood:** Families with very young children face intense cost pressures, including child care costs and limited access to child care subsidies, medical costs, and lack of savings. After paying for housing, renters with earnings under \$30,000 per year have a median of just \$210 left over each month.² These pressures can turn small rent arrears into eviction risk.
- **Health-related housing displacement:** Families may leave unsafe housing because of lead hazards or other substandard conditions, especially when medical providers advise that children cannot safely remain in the unit. Reporting unsafe conditions can also lead to landlord retaliation.
- **Preterm birth and special care needs:** Research shows that families with infants born at low birth weights, preterm births, or with NICU stays are more likely to experience future evictions.³

Evictions have health and economic consequences that reverberate for years. Families who have an eviction filing on their record face difficulty securing stable housing afterward.⁴ The stress and disruption of eviction negatively impacts employment, mental health, and predicts early mortality.⁵ Expectant parents and families with infants and toddlers face unique risks after evictions, including:

- **Child welfare exposure.** Housing instability can trigger child protective services involvement or increase risks of family separation.⁶
- **Birth risks.** Research has found that having an eviction filed during pregnancy is associated with lower birthweight, higher risk for infant mortality, and higher risk for preterm birth.⁷

¹ Nick Graetz, Carl Gershenson, Peter Hepburn, Sonya R. Porter, Danielle H. Sandler, Matthew Desmond. A comprehensive demographic profile of the US evicted population. *Proc Natl Acad Sci.* 2023;120(41). doi:10.1073/pnas.2305860120

² Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. *The State of the Nation's Housing 2026*. Harvard Graduate School of Design & Harvard Kennedy School; 2026. www.jchs.harvard.edu/state-nations-housing-2026

³ Schwartz GL, Leifheit KM, Berkman LF, Chen JT, Arcaya MC. Health Selection Into Eviction: Adverse Birth Outcomes and Children's Risk of Eviction Through Age 5 Years. *Am J Epidemiol.* 2021;190(7):1260-1269. doi:10.1093/aje/kwab007

⁴ Benfer E. The Scarlet E: Confronting the Life-Altering Consequences of an Eviction. Eviction Lab. 2026. Accessed October 5, 2026. <https://evictionlab.org/the-scarlet-e-confronting-the-life-altering-consequences-of-an-eviction/>

⁵ Emily A. Benfer. Housing is Health: Prioritizing Health Justice and Equity in the U.S. Eviction System. *Yale J Health Policy Law Ethics.* 2024;22(2). https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4852182

⁶ Chandler CE, Austin AE, Shanahan ME. Association of Housing Stress With Child Maltreatment: A Systematic Review. *Trauma Violence Abuse.* 2022;23(2):639-659. doi:10.1177/1524838020939136

⁷ Himmelstein G, Desmond M. Association of Eviction With Adverse Birth Outcomes Among Women in Georgia, 2000 to 2016. *JAMA Pediatr.* 2021;175(5):494-500. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2020.6550



- **Children listed on eviction filings.** Children may be named in eviction filings, risking future housing stability for the children once they become adults.
- **Intersections with subsidized housing and child care:** In project-based developments that co-locate child care, losing housing can also mean losing child care, intensifying employment and income instability.

These unique circumstances and risks should focus policy attention on expectant parents, infants, and toddlers facing eviction and housing displacement. The menu of options below provides universal and targeted approaches to eviction and displacement prevention to help stabilize housing for expectant parents and families with infants and toddlers.

Court and legal eviction prevention

This section focuses on preventing evictions through intervention at the courts, by increasing legal protections for tenants, and improving enforcement mechanisms.

Court-based procedures & governance		
Policy or Program	What it does	Resources and Examples
Right to counsel	Guarantees tenants legal representation in eviction proceedings.	<i>Eviction Right to Counsel Guide</i>
Access to advocates	Courts can streamline access to legal help by consolidating eviction hearings to one day or offering assistance from trained community members and paralegals.	<i>How local leaders are stemming the eviction crisis</i>
Pre-filing eviction diversion	Resolves tenant-landlord disputes before filing an eviction. Programs must include access to an advocate, rental assistance, and an alternative to court like mediation. Participation in eviction diversion should be mandatory prior to filing an eviction.	<i>Philadelphia's mandatory eviction diversion program</i> <i>A Framework for Court-Based Eviction Diversion</i>
Tenant education and information	Courts can provide clear signage, SMS messages to alert tenants of upcoming hearings, explanations of the eviction hearing process in multiple languages, and other methods to help inform and educate tenants.	
Flexible financial assistance	A large proportion of eviction filings are due to nonpayment of rent. Financial assistance can immediately resolve these issues.	<i>The pandemic-era Emergency Rental Assistance program paid back rent to prevent evictions.</i> <i>Policy Levers to Improve Housing Stability for PN-3 Families</i>
Evidentiary standards	Courts can require that landlords must demonstrate the evidence with full documentation for their claim prior to filing an eviction.	<i>Top State Judge Tightens Rules on Debt Collection - The New York Times</i>



Laws and policies that reduce eviction filings		
Policy or Program	What it does	Resources and Examples
Limit filings for small arrears	Bans eviction filings for nonpayment of small amounts of rent. Localities can use local arrears data to set appropriate thresholds.	<i>District of Columbia banned nonpayment filings under \$600.</i>
Eviction moratoriums, delays, or bans for special populations or time-periods	Eviction moratoriums can halt evictions during specific periods (such as winter, severe weather periods, or the school year) or for special populations.	<i>Tacoma WA, where having kids can be used as a defense during the school year and evictions during the winter are banned.</i> <i>Oregon delays eviction trials for 90 days for parents of infants with health-related social needs.</i>
Increase eviction filing fees	Raising filing fees can discourage unnecessary or low-dollar filings.	<i>When it's cheap to file an eviction case, tenants pay the price – Eviction Lab</i> <i>Fast & Cheap: The Speed and Cost of Evicting Tenants for Nonpayment of Rent – Legal Services Corporation</i>
Use “clean hands” requirements	Landlords are required to comply with local housing, licensing, inspection, and safety laws before they can file eviction cases.	<i>New York State has a considered a bill to strengthen clean hands requirements.</i>

Laws and policies that increase tenants’ rights in eviction proceedings		
Policy or Program	What it does	Resources and Examples
Right of redemption/right to cure policies	Tenants have a reasonable period to pay back rent, may enter into a payment plan, and evictions may not continue when tenants have addressed the issues that led to eviction.	<i>American Bar Association’s Ten Guidelines for Residential Eviction Laws</i>
Protect the right to be heard	Repeal rent bonds or other requirements that force tenants to pay money before they can appear in court or raise defenses.	
Extend notice periods	Longer pre-filing notice periods give tenants time to catch up on rent, obtain assistance, negotiate with landlords, or address lease issues before an eviction is filed.	
Adopt just cause eviction protections	Landlords should be required to show a legally valid reason for lease termination, including for lease non-renewal.	



Classify families living long-term in hotel/motels as tenants	Families using long-term hotel/motel stays as their primary residence should be protected from eviction by the same laws as other tenants.	<i>How to Address the Increase in Anti-Squatting Legislation – National Housing Law Project</i>
Seal, expunge, and regulate eviction records	Prohibit children from being named in eviction filings. Sealing and expungement prevents landlords from seeing and using eviction records in tenant screening.	<i>Minor Defendants: Kids Are Being Named in Evictions – Shelterforce</i> <i>A 2016 Connecticut bill prohibited children from being named in some eviction records.</i>

Enforcement processes to improve housing stability		
Policy or Program	What it does	Resources and Examples
Regulate late fees	Ban late fees or provide a grace period before a late fee can be applied.	<i>Survey of State Laws Governing Fees Associated With Late Payment of Rent</i>
Repeal nuisance ordinances	Nuisance ordinances that punish properties or tenants for multiple police calls increase risk of eviction for survivors of domestic violence and other crimes and should be repealed.	<i>I Am Not a Nuisance: Local Ordinances Punish Victims of Crime</i> <i>Nuisance and Crime-Free Ordinances Initiative – NHLP</i>
Prohibit waiver of rights in leases	Leases should not allow tenants to waive notice, court access, or other basic procedural protections in advance.	<i>Colorado prohibits leases that include waivers of rights.</i>
Fund fair housing enforcement	Invest in local enforcement agencies to address familial status discrimination and other housing discrimination affecting families with children.	<i>Fair Housing & Housing for People with Disabilities – NHLP</i>
Strengthen conditions enforcement	Code enforcement, habitability protections, lead hazard remediation, and related enforcement mechanisms are essential because substandard housing can directly endanger infants and toddlers and drive displacement.	<i>Medical-Legal Partnerships can help families address conditions problems that affect their children's health</i>
Protect families from retaliation	Families should be protected when they report unsafe conditions or seek repairs, especially when health providers identify hazards such as lead.	
Prohibit source of income discrimination	States and localities can prohibit discrimination based on source of income, banning landlords from not accepting households receiving rental assistance.	<i>APPENDIX B: State, Local, and Federal Laws Barring Source-of-Income Discrimination</i>
Prevent housing subsidy loss	Public Housing Agencies and subsidized housing owners have flexibility to prevent administrative processes from resulting in subsidy loss. For example, tenants should be allowed extended time to recertify eligibility by	<i>Recertification-Navigating-the-Extenuating-Circumstances-and-Totality-of-the-Circumstances-Standards.pdf</i>



	presenting extenuating circumstances and extended housing search times to find a unit with a Housing Choice Voucher.	<i>Expanding Choice: Practical Strategies for Building a Successful Housing Mobility Program</i>
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Community-Based Eviction and Homelessness Prevention

Community-based eviction and homelessness prevention programs reach beyond the courts to proactively find and assist families at risk of eviction, housing loss, and homelessness. They are an important complement to court-based interventions because they find people who would never show up in court due to barriers to accessing the courtroom or due to living in a housing situation to which tenant law does not apply. The following chart provides four core elements of community-based eviction and homelessness prevention programs.

Core Element	What it does	Resources and Examples
Housing problem-solving and housing navigation services	Flexible services that help families stay in their current housing and navigate to find new housing, as needed.	<i>Building a Homelessness Prevention System</i>
Flexible financial assistance that can both stabilize in housing and re-house	Financial assistance must be flexible to pay to stabilize a family in their current housing and rehouse families that need or want to leave their current housing situation.	<i>Harmonizing Systems to Reduce Eviction and Homelessness: An Environmental Scan of Innovative School-Housing Partnerships</i>
Multi-issue legal assistance when needed, especially tenant law and domestic violence services	Multiple legal issues, not just tenant/landlord law, can upset housing stability.	<i>HomeStart, Boston</i>
Proactive outreach to at-risk tenants and integration into family-serving systems	Housing navigators can be embedded with other social service systems, like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Head Start. Programs should proactively identify at-risk tenants: • Tenants at risk of losing a housing subsidy • Eviction hotspots – high evicting landlords • Tenants living in low-quality housing	<i>Top Evicting Landlords Drive U.S. Eviction Crisis – Eviction Lab</i> <i>Public Housing and the Threat of Eviction – Eviction Lab</i>

Access to Rental Assistance and Income Supports

Fewer families would face eviction if they paid affordable rents and had access to increased income. States should expand rental assistance programs to bridge the gap between going rent and what families with low incomes can afford. States should also consider supplementing family incomes with higher



minimum wages, state earned income tax credits, and state child tax credits, provided in advance so they can assist with rent payments.

Building Partnerships

Building relationships with housing advocates – including tenants, housing coalitions, and lawyers – is the first step toward addressing early childhood evictions and housing displacement. Potential allies include:

- [Legal Aid](#) or other legal assistance organizations like [Apple Seed](#)
- [Tenants Unions](#)
- [Public Housing Authority Tenants](#)

Schools and McKinney-Vento homeless liaisons, hospitals and healthcare providers, homelessness systems (Continuums of Care), home visiting programs, Head Start Collaboration offices, and other early childhood education programs should also be involved in coalition efforts to reduce early childhood evictions.

In partnership with housing advocates, early childhood advocates and programs can support efforts to strengthen eviction prevention strategies by:

- Adding voices of parents to advocacy efforts
- Helping to identify families at-risk for eviction
- Including family serving systems as access/referral points

Early childhood advocates can also lift up strategies that meet the unique needs of expectant parents, infants, and toddlers, such as:

- Protecting children from being named in eviction filings
- Providing assistance to hotel/motel dwelling families
- Targeting families with young children in right to counsel and eviction diversion programs
- Creating community-based eviction and homelessness prevention programs that target expectant parents, infants, and toddlers.