

# Indiana Eviction Task Force Final Report January 18, 2022

courts.in.gov

## Table of Contents

Report	3
• Overview	
Meeting Summary	
Information on Emergency Rental Assistance Programs	
Information on Eviction Case Filings	9
Overview of Outreach	11
Information on Pre-eviction Diversion Program	12
Ongoing Barriers and Challenges	14
Recommendations	15
Conclusion	19

## **Overview**

On September 13, 2021, the Indiana Supreme Court <u>established the Indiana Eviction</u> <u>Task Force</u> to make recommendations regarding a state-wide pre-eviction diversion program and effective distribution of emergency rental assistance to landlords and tenants.

The members appointed to the task force include:

Hon. Robert R. Altice, Jr., Judge, Indiana Court of Appeals, Task Force Chair Hon. Jennifer DeGroote, Allen Superior Court Hon. Kimberly Bacon, Marion County Small Claims Court - Lawrence Township Mag. Kathleen Belzeski, Lake Superior Court – County Division Two Brandon Beeler, Indiana Legal Services, Inc. Christine Hayes Hickey, Rubin & Levin Jacob Sipe, Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority Patrick Price, Office of Management and Budget Brian Spaulding, Indiana Apartment Association

The task force acknowledges the time and contributions of several Office of Judicial Administration staff for providing ongoing support and expertise: Mary DePrez, Janelle O'Malley, Kathryn Dolan, Michelle Goodman, and the Office of Communication, Education, and Outreach team.

## **Meeting Summary**

Since submission of the <u>interim report</u> on October 18, 2021, the task force held seven meetings:

- October 28, 2021
- November 8, 2021
- November 29, 2021
- December 9, 2021
- December 16, 2021

- January 7, 2022
- January 13, 2022

The task force continued to focus on communication and outreach strategies, emergency rental assistance information and program criteria, emergency rental assistance application processes and procedures, including identifying wait times and bottlenecks in the process, court filings and procedures, and the implementation of Indiana's Pre-Eviction Diversion Program.

The task force received updated information from Indiana's emergency rental assistance programs through informal dialogue with task force members, questionnaires seeking information from each program, and program presentations during the December 16, 2021, meeting. The task force is grateful for the willingness of the programs' points of contact to provide this much-needed information.

## **Information on Emergency Rental Assistance Programs**

The 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act provided Indiana with <u>Emergency Rental</u> <u>Assistance Funds (ERA) through the U.S. Department of Treasury</u>, also referred to as <u>ERA1 funds</u> which are available for distribution through September 30, 2022. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 provided Indiana with what is referred to as <u>ERA2</u> <u>funds</u> which are available for distribution through September 30, 2025<sup>1</sup>.

The U.S. Department of Treasury <u>publishes numerous reports online</u>, including monthly compliance reports on the disbursement of ERA funds. The <u>November 2021 monthly</u> <u>compliance report</u> shows that the combination of Indiana's ERA programs provided 48,024 households with a total of \$158.7 million in direct assistance from ERA1 funds and 885 households with a total of \$2.7 million in direct assistance from ERA2 funds between January 1, 2021, and November 30, 2021.

The Indiana program information compiled by the task force was used to track and compare program progress and data, as shown in the snapshot charts below:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> An overview of the U.S. Treasury eligibility criteria and limitations for these funds is included in the task force's <u>interim report</u>.

	IHCDA	City of Fort Wayne	Elkhart County	Hamilton County	Lake County	Marion County	St. Joseph County	
Date of submission	1/7/2022	1/14/2022	1/18/2022	1/6/2022	1/12/2022	1/13/2022	1/6/2022	
Total ERA1 funds directly awarded by U.S. Treasury	\$334,787,853 available for client benefits	\$8,096,205.50	\$6,178,131.60	\$10.1M	\$14,500,000	\$28.8 M	\$8,138,842	
Total Distributions (paid and obligated funds) to date of ERA1	\$93,638,329.44	\$12,980,305.46	\$2,725,042.51 (does not include obligated funds)	\$7,334,644.71	\$22,355,280.78	\$57.5 M	\$6,784,575.94	
Number of households receiving rental assistance to date from ERA1 funds	17,105	4,339	475	1,854	2,846	19,267	1,906	
Total applications received under ERA1 program	36,487	9,024	522 (only includes fully completed applications)	3,534	6,985	33,105 (includes recertifications)	4,249	
Total applications approved (including paid and obligated funding) under ERA1 program	18,269	5,075	475	2,106	3,213	21,849	1,950	
Total applications still under review for ERA1 funds	7,220	32	0	99	2,407	4,236	1,202	
Distributions and application information above includes sub-grant awards	No	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	
Have you started ERA2 distributions	No	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	

	IHCDA	City of Fort Wayne	Elkhart County	Hamilton County	Lake County	Marion County	St. Joseph County
Date of submission	1/7/2022	1/14/2022	1/18/2022	1/6/2022	1/12/2022	1/13/2022	1/6/2022
Total ERA2 funds from U.S. Treasury	\$247,992,268 available for client benefits	\$6,406,148.50	None	\$7.9M	\$4,600,765.20	\$33.5 M	\$6,439,884.80
Total Distributions (paid and obligated funds) to date of ERA2	N/A	\$2,562,459.40	N/A	\$599,773.67	Data for ERA2 distributions and applications are included in the aggregate information with ERA1 data above	N/A	Data for ERA2 distributions and applications are included in the aggregate information with ERA1 data above
Number of households receiving rental assistance to date from ERA2 funds	N/A	880	N/A	170	Data for ERA2 distributions and applications are included in the aggregate information with ERA1 data above	N/A	Data for ERA2 distributions and applications are included in the aggregate information with ERA1 data above
Total applications received under ERA2 program	N/A	This is included in the aggregate information with ERA1 data above	N/A	172	Data for ERA2 distributions and applications are included in the aggregate information with ERA1 data above	N/A	Data for ERA2 distributions and applications are included in the aggregate information with ERA1 data above
Total applications approved (including paid and obligated funding) under ERA2 program	N/A	This is included in the aggregate information with ERA1 data above	N/A	170	Data for ERA2 distributions and applications are included in the aggregate information with ERA1 data above	N/A	Data for ERA2 distributions and applications are included in the aggregate information with ERA1 data above
Total applications still under review for ERA2 funds	N/A	This is included in the aggregate information with ERA1 data above	N/A	0	Data for ERA2 distributions and applications are included in the aggregate information with ERA1 data above	N/A	Data for ERA2 distributions and applications are included in the aggregate information with ERA1 data above

IHCDA <u>publishes weekly rental assistance progress reports</u> concerning IERA households served, funds spent, and dollars obligated throughout Indiana. In addition to the above information, IHCDA also approved a sub-grant award to Marion County on August 18, 2021, for \$91,454,708 so the IndyRent Program could fund up to 12 months of assistance instead of only three months of assistance to qualified households. Also on September 23, 2021, IHCDA awarded sub-grant requests to the City of Fort Wayne in the amount of \$6,600,000, Lake County in the amount of \$19,000,000, and St. Joseph County in the amount of \$3,300,000 to continue assistance in those communities. Additional sub-grants are in process to the City of Fort Wayne in the amount of \$6,300,000, and to Lake County in the amount of \$6,000,000. This results in a total of \$132,654,708 in sub-grants provided from IHCDA to these local programs to ensure existing and recertified applications are being adequately funded.

Indiana's ERA programs, in accordance with federal requirements, have provided payments for past due rents as well as future rents to aid in stability for those households. These resources were made available to eligible applicants whether or not an eviction case was filed. Those tenants and landlords that were proactive in accessing these resources were able to avoid the time and costs of filing an eviction case.

The local programs have worked diligently to help provide the needed assistance and cooperate with numerous local partners, including the local courts, in accomplishing their mission. Four of the local programs presented program information to the task force in addition to the snapshot information above. Here are key points from those presentations:

- City of Fort Wayne:
  - Program has continued to work with three local partners on intake and application processing
  - Assistance provided has included: rent arrears, forward rent, utilities, and attorney fees.
  - Established an eviction intervention team to provide more case management and a housing navigator
  - Worked closely with the Indiana Legal Services on cases moving through the courts
- Hamilton County:
  - Program partners with township trustees to process applications and twenty-two area partners
  - Program requires anyone who has received \$8,000 in assistance to complete a six-hour, online good tenancy course before applying for additional assistance.
- Lake County:

- Program partners with township trustees and other organizations on application processing
- Assistance provided has included: rent arrears, forward rent, utilities, and attorney fees.
- St. Joseph County:
  - Program initially worked with seven local partners, but currently works with four local partners for processing applications in addition to the county teams processing applications and all program payments
  - Assistance provided has included: rent arrears, forward rent, utilities, internet, housing stability services, and attorney fees on ledgers.

In addition, the task force receives frequent updates regarding the Marion County program, which is continuing to add staff to shorten application processing times, has embedded navigators into the small claims courts to aid with application completion and issue resolution, and has enhanced information flow with the Office of Judicial Administration to identify applications with cases moving through the courts. In addition, one of Marion County's program partners offers financial literacy and homeownership education as an available service to those receiving assistance at that location.

Over time, some local programs ceased accepting new applications, specifically Elkhart County on October 1, 2021, Lake County on January 1, 2022, and St. Joseph County on January 14, 2022. IHCDA began receiving new applications from these additional locations to ensure assistance is still available to those in need. This results in Indiana having four active programs at the writing of this report.

#### New Initiatives to Support Renter Services Statewide

During the work of the task force, IHCDA looked for opportunities to address the needs identified within these discussions concerning the variations in access to housing navigators and legal aid services, as well as the need for assistance with ERA applications. Acting on the task force's recommendations to improve these services in Indiana, IHCDA issued RFPs in October to use a portion of its ERA 2 allocation to close these gaps within our state and in December 2021, the Board of Directors for IHCDA embarked on two new partnerships with the Indiana Community Action Association and the Indiana Bar Foundation, Inc.

The Indiana Community Action Association will receive \$15 million to provide housing counseling and case management services, including housing navigation services to assist individuals who have been evicted, are facing eviction, or experiencing homelessness to find new rental housing and to apply for IERA rental assistance through their established network of non-profit service providers.

The Indiana Bar Foundation will receive \$13.1 million to provide legal services to renters regarding eviction prevention and mediation between landlords and tenants. These services will include legal advice and representation and referrals. This program will also install kiosks in courtrooms and community organizations to provide access for clients to legal navigators, forms, and virtual legal guidance across the state.

In addition, IHCDA is working with these new partners and other stakeholders to collaborate on additional grants to further assist in closing other financial gaps for parties, such as plaintiff/landlord attorney fees.

These new, collaborative efforts will improve work across the state to prevent homelessness, promote housing stability, and provide access to services in a more systematic manner.

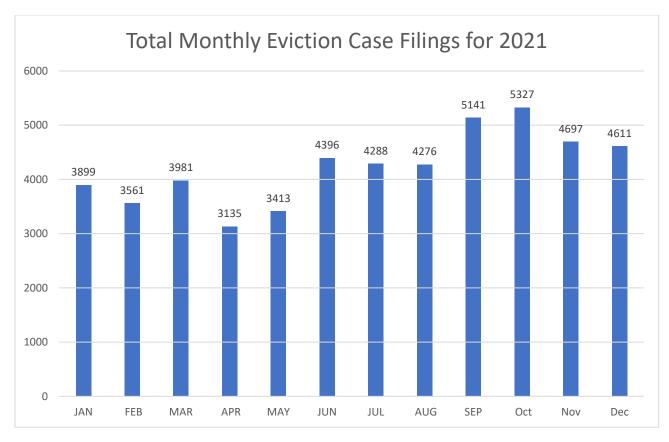
## **Information on Eviction Case Filings**

During the pandemic, various moratoria have been in place and either expired or been vacated, each with its own qualifying criteria. Regardless of these restrictions, the courts have continued to be open and receive new case filings, including eviction cases. Prior to January 2021, the majority of eviction cases were filed in the general small claims case category, which includes evictions, contract disputes, debt collections, and other items under a certain monetary claim value. This prevents the task force from comparing information from prior years related to eviction cases. On January 1, 2021, the EV case type was implemented to aid in collecting data specifically for eviction cases going forward. This new case type counts both residential and commercial eviction matters. When a plaintiff files an EV case, they must select whether to file the EV case on the court's civil docket or small claims docket.

The data available on EV cases for courts using the Odyssey case management system is as follows<sup>2</sup>:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> This data is more complete than the data provided in our Interim Report since the remaining counties began using Odyssey during the last quarter of 2021.

- January 1 through June 30, 2021, there were a total of 22,385 eviction cases filed (1,011 evictions filed as part of the civil docket and 21,374 evictions filed as part of the small claims docket). This is an average of 3,730 cases per month.
- July 1 through July 31, 2021 (one month period), there were a total of 4,288 eviction cases filed (167 evictions filed as part of the civil docket and 4,121 evictions filed as part of the small claims docket).
- August 1 through August 31, 2021 (one month period), there were a total of 4,276 eviction cases filed (191 evictions filed as part of the civil docket and 4,085 evictions filed as part of the small claims docket).
- September 1 through September 30, 2021 (one month period), there were a total of 5,141 eviction cases filed (169 evictions filed as part of the civil docket and 4,972 evictions filed as part of the small claims docket).
- October 1 through October 31, 2021 (one month period), there were a total of 5,327 eviction cases filed (178 eviction filed as part of the civil docket and 5,149 evictions filed as part of the small claims docket).
- November 1 through November 30, 2021 (one month period), there were a total of 4,697 eviction cases filed (235 eviction filed as part of the civil docket and 4,462 evictions filed as part of the small claims docket).
- December 1 through December 31, 2021 (one month period), there were a total of 4,611 eviction cases filed (264 eviction filed as part of the civil docket and 4347 evictions filed as part of the small claims docket).



The 2021 statewide eviction case filings total 50,725 cases.

Based on total case filings between January 1 and December 31, 2021, the top ten counties, in ranked order<sup>3</sup>, with eviction cases are:

1.	Marion	6.	Tippecanoe
2.	Lake	7.	Elkhart
3.	Allen	8.	Madison
4.	Vanderburgh	9.	Clark
5.	St. Joseph	10	. Johnson

These ten counties collectively account for 69.79% of the total eviction case filings.

## **Overview of Outreach**

Much of the task force dialogue centered on the need for communication and outreach to parties to seek assistance and understand where to connect to these resources,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The counties listed here are the same as in the Interim Report, but the order of the ranking for St. Joseph and Tippecanoe Counites has changed.

especially prior to filing an eviction case. Ongoing outreach by the Office of Judicial Administration (OJA) has continued via on-line resources and postcards to litigants. As a result of these efforts:

- the <u>courts.in.gov/housing</u> web page, providing a single location to find links to all the current ERA programs, information for the free Landlord Tenant Settlement Conference Program (a.k.a. Fast Track Facilitation), and resources for legal assistance, has received 41,945 visits since the web page launched through January 13, 2022;
- 23,946 postcards<sup>4</sup> to all unrepresented parties in eviction cases and 9,290 emails to all attorneys in eviction cases were sent with the <u>courts.in.gov/housing</u> web page between August 27, 2021, and January 13, 2022;
- maintained pinned Twitter public service announcement to direct those in need to the <u>courts.in.gov/housing</u> web page; and
- distributed press releases on the establishment of the Eviction Task Force (September 14, 2021) and the Supreme Court's Order implementing actions recommended by the Task Force (October 22, 2021).

OJA began work with a communication firm to further enhance outreach to those who need rental assistance or settlement conference opportunities even before an eviction case is filed. While this outreach campaign will continue to evolve over time, it will encompass a social media campaign aimed at both landlords and tenants, a website promoting the availability of federal funds, facilitators, and diversion programs. The outreach campaign will include video testimonials along with radio advertisements, billboards, and bus advertisements targeting the areas in the state with the highest eviction rates.

## Information on Pre-eviction Diversion Program

On October 22, 2021, the <u>Supreme Court ordered</u> the implementation of the Preeviction Diversion Program in Indiana, effective November 1, 2021. The program is designed to ensure the parties know of the available resources, provide an additional avenue for parties to access these resources before an eviction is ordered, and provide

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> A sample of the postcard text is included in the task force's interim report.

status conferences to monitor parties' compliance with program requirements. The complete set of program materials can be found in the appendix of the <u>interim report</u>.

The program consists of a mandatory advisement to the parties at the first hearing on the availability of ERA funds, the free facilitation program, and legal assistance programs. If the parties agree to participate in the diversion program, the case is marked confidential, and the court provides a case management order to the parties with the future hearing dates and the tasks necessary to stay in compliance with the program, and the eviction case is stayed for 90 days. If a violation of the program is found by the court, after a hearing, the case can proceed at the next scheduled conference date and will no longer be considered confidential. If the parties maintain compliance with the diversion agreement, then the case remains confidential even after the case concludes.

As an added feature, households participating in the Pre-Eviction Diversion Program can apply to the IHCDA's rental assistance program as an alternative to applying with a local emergency rental assistance program in their area.

Between November 1, 2021, and January 13, 2022, 127 cases entered the diversion program.

The task force members reported on their local experience with implementing the diversion program. Here is a summary of their feedback:

- Counties where local emergency rental assistance (ERA) programs were already
  meeting the needs of landlords and tenants (efficiently processing applications,
  providing as much financial support for households as allowed, etc.) have seen
  less interest in the Pre-eviction Diversion Program since their agreements already
  are meeting most of the goals set out for the Pre-eviction Diversion Program.
  These counties noted they are working with their stakeholders to include the Preeviction Diversion Program as a part of the agreements to gain the ability to
  make the cases confidential thereby maximizing the benefits provided by the Preeviction Diversion Program.
- One court has identified the need for additional education for the parties and attorneys to better understand the value of the program and the benefits to garner greater participation in the Pre-eviction Diversion Program and one key factor is the ability of the judge to explain the program thoroughly to ensure parties are making more informed decisions about participation.

• Courts with access to on-site program providers for both emergency rental assistance and legal aid have seen greater willingness to participate in the Preeviction Diversion Program and have seen an increased ability to address any application issues in a more efficient manner.

Courts with cases participating in the Pre-eviction Diversion program are seeing dismissals because of the connections made between parties and ERA providers in curing the underlying issues of non-payment of rent. Each landlord and tenant helped by participating in the Pre-eviction Diversion Program is a success for those specific parties and providing one more avenue to make these critical connections is a win for our state.

## **Ongoing Barriers and Challenges**

The task force's work has continued to develop a broader understanding of the range of issues and challenges facing those who are involved in eviction matters. The complexity of the issues involved, varied access to services, and the multi-layered processes make it even more difficult to provide quick fixes that benefit all parties involved.

While many households have worked with their landlords and been successful at securing rental assistance, as shown above in the numbers of households receiving assistance, some situations still encounter different barriers and challenges. These common themes were prominent in task force discussions:

#### Landlord Tenant communications:

- Parties not fully aware of current ERA program processes and eligibility requirements
- Refusal to participate in the ERA application process by tenants or landlords, and initially most ERA programs only permitted the tenants to commence the filing of applications
- Refusal of landlords to accept partial payments, ERA payments, or other payments (i.e., Trustee vouchers)
- Tenants' refusal to pay items incurred beyond what is covered by ERA program payments
- Unwillingness to participate in free settlement conference opportunities

#### ERA programs:

- Parties' ability to use technology successfully to apply and upload documents
- Responsiveness of parties to program communications either by email or telephone
- Application errors (e.g., misspelling of party's names, missing documentation or information, incomplete information) delays the ability to match applications to system files and delays processing the applications
- Parties access to timely updates regarding the status of pending ERA applications
- Household caps of 15 months may impact some applicants in the future who will then need other housing stability services and resources

#### Courts:

- Parties not fully aware of the available ERA resources
- Parties failing to appear for court hearings
- Concerns regarding service left at a property actually reaching the parties
- Court processes vary widely and create different paths for similarly situated cases
- Data collection on case outcomes is varied due to missing or inconsistent data entry

Outreach, education, and strong collaborative efforts across the state are critical to addressing these challenges and barriers so that those eligible can access rental assistance, housing stability resources, and legal services in an effective manner to achieve the best possible outcomes for all involved.

#### **Recommendations**

The task force made initial recommendations within its <u>interim report</u>, which are still vital to continuing to support this ongoing work of providing resources to prevent and reduce evictions. Each community has a unique set of resources, and each community needs to work in a collaborative way to continue connecting those in need with available resources (rental assistance, legal services, and settlement conferences) in an effective, efficient manner.

The task force makes the following additional recommendations:

#### Pre-eviction Diversion Program

Based on the experience to date with the Pre-eviction Diversion Program, the task force proposes the following adjustments:

- Clarify that the 90-day program deadline and period of the eviction stay is a maximum time frame, and this period can end earlier if certain program violations occur or if the case is resolved under the diversion agreement
- Add a provision to allow informal agreements between parties to be included in the diversion program by designation in court to permit full benefits of the program to be extended to similarly situated eviction cases
- Continue education efforts to promote the program to allow a more thorough understanding of the components and process
- Clarify that status conferences can be held via remote means to ensure the program is not adding unnecessary costs for court appearances and allow submission of written status reports showing compliance to aid in vacating unnecessary hearings.
- Emphasize the need for both parties to actively work in securing and following up with the service providers being accessed as a part of the program.

#### Court processes

Over time, the task force has continued to discuss the variations among courts regarding processes and procedures, which adds to the complexity of recommending improvements that provide similarly situated parties the same time and opportunities to access available resources. The task force proposes the following steps be taken to improve court processes and procedures:

- Require the first court hearing scheduled on an eviction case be an initial hearing only.
  - The purpose of the initial hearing would be to provide information on the available resources for landlords and tenants, including items such as the Pre-eviction Diversion Program, rental assistance programs, access to legal aid, and settlement conference programs. This additional timeframe would allow all parties the ability to gain this information, to access available resources, and make more informed

decisions regarding the benefits these resources can offer prior to an order for possession.

- Both parties should be encouraged to begin the process of accessing ERA programs for rental assistance and actively engage in communications with ERA program staff.
- Parties interested in entering the Pre-eviction Diversion Program at the initial hearing can certainly do so and proceed with those program components.
- Any additional action by the court (possession hearing, etc.) would be at a subsequent hearing scheduled 14 days after the initial hearing. Parties at this next hearing may still agree to enter the Pre-eviction Diversion Program.
- Failures to appear at the initial hearing should be handled as follows:
  - If an unrepresented tenant fails to appear at the initial hearing, then the case can proceed as it normally would at that time (i.e., default judgment (if plaintiff's witnesses are available to testify), set case on contested hearing calendar, etc.)
  - If an unrepresented plaintiff/landlord fails to appear at the initial hearing, then the case can be dismissed.
  - If a party appears by counsel (and the client is not present), then the case will be set for the next hearing 14 days after the initial hearing and counsel will be advised to discuss the Pre-eviction Diversion Program with their client prior to the next hearing. At the subsequent hearing, the court shall still advise the parties on the Pre-eviction Diversion Program prior to proceeding and permit parties to agree to the Program at that time.
- Notice for the initial hearing included in pleadings and court notices must explain the above information to ensure that parties are aware of the goal of the hearing and consequences of failures to appear.
  - Text to include in pleadings and notices should be substantially similar to the following: The first hearing in court will be an initial hearing to provide information to both parties and set the next court date for a hearing on the claims alleged. If a tenant or landlord does not have an attorney and does not appear for

the initial hearing, then the court may enter a default judgment or dismiss the case.

 If implemented, the informational postcards being mailed by Office of Judicial Administration should be updated to include this information as well.

In addition to providing this much needed information, this process can help encourage parties to appear for court knowing there is more time to access resources to help them, especially if parties can access to these resources onsite or via remote means while they are at the courthouse.

- Courts should be open to reasonable requests for continuances of hearings when parties are seeking to participate in the settlement conference program. The willingness of parties to access these services is a key component to helping parties come to a resolution with the help of a neutral facilitator and a reasonable amount of time should be available to allow for access to these opportunities.
- Courts should have navigators to assist parties with addressing challenges and barriers experienced when seeking services and encourage active participation in such services through follow-up contacts.

#### **Best Practices**

In addition to the efforts underway with the Pre-eviction Diversion Program, there are other strategies and practices that can further assist parties who are potentially facing an eviction case or already have a case pending. The task force recommends that courts hearing eviction cases work toward implementing these additional best practices:

 <u>Housing court model</u>: Housing court models are continuing to expand to jurisdictions across the country with great success in connecting tenants and landlords with access to rental assistance, facilitation services, and legal assistance once an eviction case has been filed. Each model has different components and features allowing the local jurisdiction to develop a path to these services that is feasible for their court.

The Lawrence Township Small Claims Court in Marion County began implementing a local housing court model in the fall of 2021. The housing court model commenced on October 1, 2021, providing on-site facilitation services on days when eviction cases were scheduled. The court then incorporated the Pre-eviction Diversion Program authorized on November 1, 2021. The program then began requiring all self-represented litigants to see the court navigator and facilitator on November 25, 2021, to assess if facilitation services would be helpful. The court is still working to increase participation by parties already represented by counsel. Initial feedback has been positive regarding the availability of facilitation services and the case management available from the court navigator in keeping parties connected to rental assistance providers and other services available with the housing court program.

 <u>NCSC Eviction Diversion Resources</u>: In June 2021, the National Center for State Courts released an <u>online tool</u> to assist courts and communities with implementing best practices related to eviction diversion. This resource should be reviewed by local jurisdictions to see what opportunities exists locally to implement these best practice recommendations in a manner that is consistent with Indiana law.

#### Additional Considerations

The task force further recommends a review of current processes for eviction cases and establish state-wide, standard timelines between various stages of the case (e.g., between service and initial hearing, etc.) to bring more consistency and uniformity among the courts processing eviction cases. The task force also discussed concepts related to eviction amnesty procedures and other barriers to future housing (eviction filings impact on future rental applications and credit reports). These topics require more in-depth study and discussion before specific recommendations or proposals can be provided.

### **Conclusion**

The task force is grateful for the opportunity to provide recommendations for improving the processes for those involved in eviction cases. Rental assistance is getting to people who need it, as evidenced by the level of rental assistance distributed, the eviction case filings have remained relatively stable over the last year, and the Pre-eviction Diversion Program provides an additional avenue to connect parties to key resources. We hope that our work continues to enhance access to these much-needed services and will help both tenants and landlords overcome the impacts of the pandemic.