

# Tenant Advocate Project

GIPC Race and the Legal Process Working Group  
*Pro Bono Legal Services Team*

The City of Indianapolis has partnered with Indiana Legal Services, Neighborhood Christian Legal Clinic, and Indianapolis Legal Aid Society to expand the **Tenant Advocate Project (TAP)**.

**GIPC is collaborating to connect attorneys willing to provide pro bono legal assistance with TAP.**

The COVID-19 pandemic—along with existing pervasive barriers to economic opportunity—has had a devastating impact on members of Indianapolis’ Black, brown, and other marginalized communities. Because the inability to be stably housed is an increasingly significant threat to health, evictions and housing issues have become a flashpoint during the pandemic.

In June 2020, GIPC launched a pro bono initiative through its Race and the Legal Process Working Group to address the **pressing need for immediate, short-term legal assistance** to Indy’s most vulnerable residents. The landscape has been constantly changing since then, with state and federal eviction moratoria being issued, extended, struck down by the courts, and reinstated.

While other programs like the Tenant Legal Assistance Project and Eviction Avoidance Project aim to intervene prior to an eviction hearing, TAP serves as **final, last-minute support** for those who may not have taken advantage of the City’s preventive programs. TAP pilot clinics began in Lawrence and Warren townships in early August 2021, and volunteers, including GIPC Executive Director Beth White, have answered the call to help.

## How it works

Tenant advocates and volunteer attorneys, in collaboration with legal aid organization staff, consult with tenants facing eviction who come to court lacking legal representation.

Advocates and volunteer attorneys may connect tenants to the **IndyRent** program, provide legal advice, and/or offer to negotiate with landlords on tenants’ behalf.

## The basics

WHO: Volunteer attorneys

WHAT: Limited representation for tenants facing eviction in need of legal advice

WHERE: Participating Marion County small claims courts

## Find out more

**Attorneys** | See *Addendum*.

**Renters** | Apply for rent assistance at [indyrent.org](http://indyrent.org) or call the City’s Tenant Hotline: 317-327-2228.

Using federal CARES Act funds, the City of Indianapolis Rental Assistance Program (**IndyRent**) can provide up to 12 months of rent—back or forward—to eligible Marion County residents struggling to pay rent due to the pandemic. Renters will need to provide income and unemployment information (if applicable). Landlords must agree to participate in order for renters to receive assistance.

# Tenant Advocate Project | Addendum

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Below are details for **attorneys interested in providing pro bono legal assistance** through the Tenant Advocate Project (TAP), a partnership between the City of Indianapolis, Indiana Legal Services, Neighborhood Christian Legal Clinic, and Indiana Legal Aid Society.

## The details

### How much time should volunteer attorneys expect to commit?

Dates may vary based on the court, but a session typically lasts **3 hours**. Volunteer attorneys are asked to stay for the duration, if possible. The limited legal relationship ends after the pre-hearing consultation (see below for more on this).

### What about potential conflicts of interest?

Parties sign a **Notice of Limited Representation form**, which is provided by the legal aid organizations. In addition, this clinic qualifies under Indiana Rules of Professional Conduct Rule 6.5 (“Nonprofit and Court-Annexed Limited Legal Services Programs”), which applies the conflict rules only if the attorney knows of the conflict in advance.

### What is the basic agenda for a TAP session?

Prior to and during the court proceedings, tenants facing eviction are asked if they wish to consult with an attorney before appearing in court. Those answering “yes” are directed to a room for this purpose.

Volunteer attorneys provide free legal assistance in an **advice-only structure**—i.e. they do not appear in front of the judge, and the attorney-client relationship ends after the pre-hearing consultation (of which both the attorney and client are made aware).

Using prepared questions, the attorney will discuss any possible procedural or substantive defenses to the eviction. Legal aid organization staff are available to join the discussion or answer questions as needed. Advice given to clients is based on the information available. The attorney may prepare a checklist for the client’s use in court to either present their case or request a continuance.

## Sign up today

Lawrence Township Small Claims Court | [bit.ly/3AXDJT9](https://bit.ly/3AXDJT9)

Warren Township Small Claims Court | [bit.ly/382BRT4](https://bit.ly/382BRT4)

Other participating courts | Complete our sign-up form—[forms.gle/yhBby9EujU6QeiFy6](https://forms.gle/yhBby9EujU6QeiFy6)—to be connected to a TAP partner, or reach out to them directly using the info below.

**Indiana Legal Services**  
**Neighborhood Christian Legal Clinic**  
**Indiana Legal Aid Society**

[indianalegalservices.org](https://indianalegalservices.org) or 317-631-9410  
[nclegalclinic.org](https://nclegalclinic.org) or 317-429-4131  
[indylas.org](https://indylas.org) or 317-635-9538