

Milwaukee County Right To Counsel Project Update

EvictionFreeMKE
Free legal help and more to stop evictions.

Presented By:



What We'll Cover Today

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Project Background

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Legal Aid Society Update

Section 3:

INPOWER Update

Section 4:

Stout Evaluation

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United Way Reflection

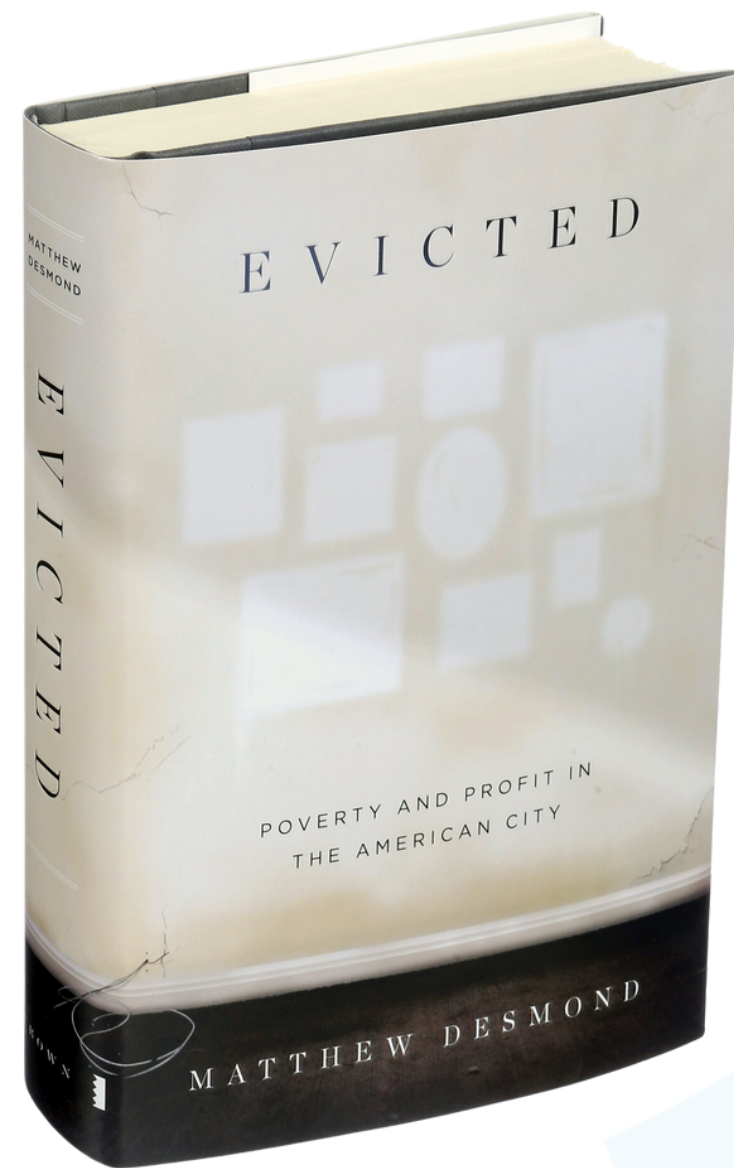
Q & A

Section 1:

Project Background



The State Of Evictions In Milwaukee



EvictionFreeMKE History and Overview

- March 27, 2020: Governor Evers issued Executive Order #15, placing a 60-day moratorium on most evictions through May 26, 2020
- Summer 2020: Evictions spike in Milwaukee County
- September 4, 2020: CDC issues order for federal eviction moratorium
- Fall 2020 and Winter 2021: Legal Aid confers with City of Cleveland, government, philanthropy, landlords regarding a Right-to-Counsel (RTC) public/private partnership
- June 24, 2021: Milwaukee County Board approves Resolution 21-506 for RTC
- August 26, 2021: CDC Order ends
- September 2, 2021: Eviction Free MKE launch



EvictionFreeMKE

Free legal help and more to stop evictions.



Legal Services



Community Outreach & Engagement



Data & Evaluation

With Fiscal & Capacity Support Provided By:



Section 2:

Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee Update





The Legal Aid Society is one of the nation's oldest continuously operating public interest law firms. We are here to provide free legal assistance to qualifying Milwaukee County residents.

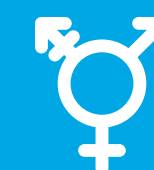
Legal Issues We Focus On



Guardian
Ad Litem



Eviction Defense
& Guidance



LGBTQ+ Rights
& Representation



Health & Wealth
Planning



Consumer &
Bankruptcy



Civil Rights &
Representation

What is EvictionFreeMKE?

EvictionFreeMKE is supported by the Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee team of lawyers dedicated to supporting families with legal services at no cost. Families are able to receive help with appearances, interpretations, and resolutions.

Intake

- **Dedicated hotline and phone service:** (414) 892-7368 (RENT)
- **Website:** EvictionFreeMKE.org
- **Mail:** Daily informational letters to households in eviction pipeline
- **Outreach:** Door to outreach and lit drops

Outcomes

- **Tenant representation:** Increase from 3% to 15 to 25% since project's inception
- **Households served:** 6,000+ households assisted with services since September 2021 launch
- **Intake:** Approximately 80% of applicants qualify for services (income at or < 200% of FPG)
- **Eviction Prevention:** Approximately 75% of program tenants avoided eviction per goals

Collaboation / Outcomes

- **Landlord/Tenant Advocate Symposium:** September 29, 2022 tenant symposium - hosted by Legal Aid – moderated by Neil Steinkamp of Stout
- **Apartment Association of Southeastern Wisconsin:** November 21, 2022 presentation by Legal Aid to Apartment Association of Southeastern Wisconsin members on Eviction Free MKE and areas for common ground
- **National Platform:** May 6, 2023 ABA Equal Justice Conference panel presentation on Eviction Free MKE and the power of data presented by Legal Aid, Stout, Inpower

Section 3:

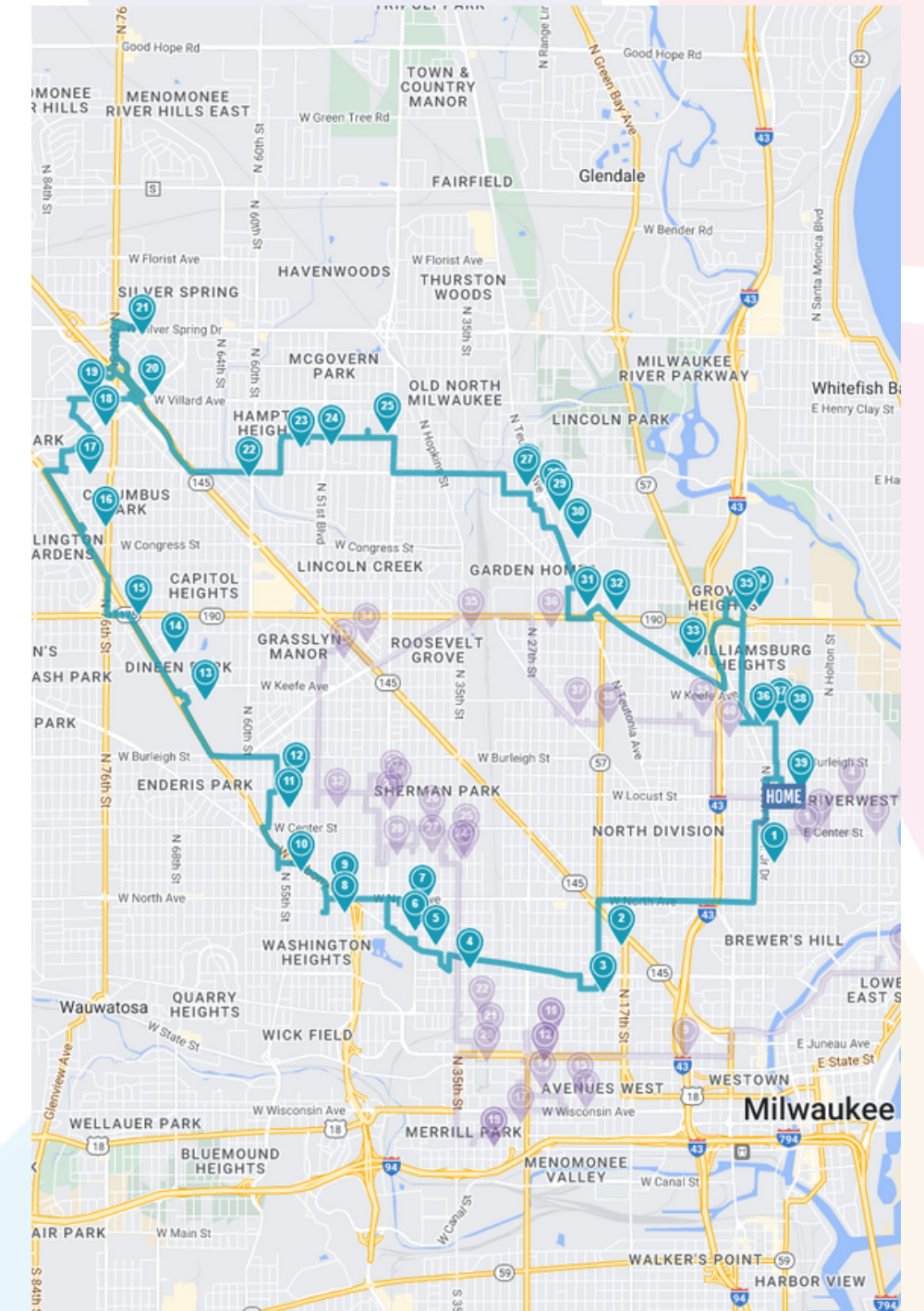
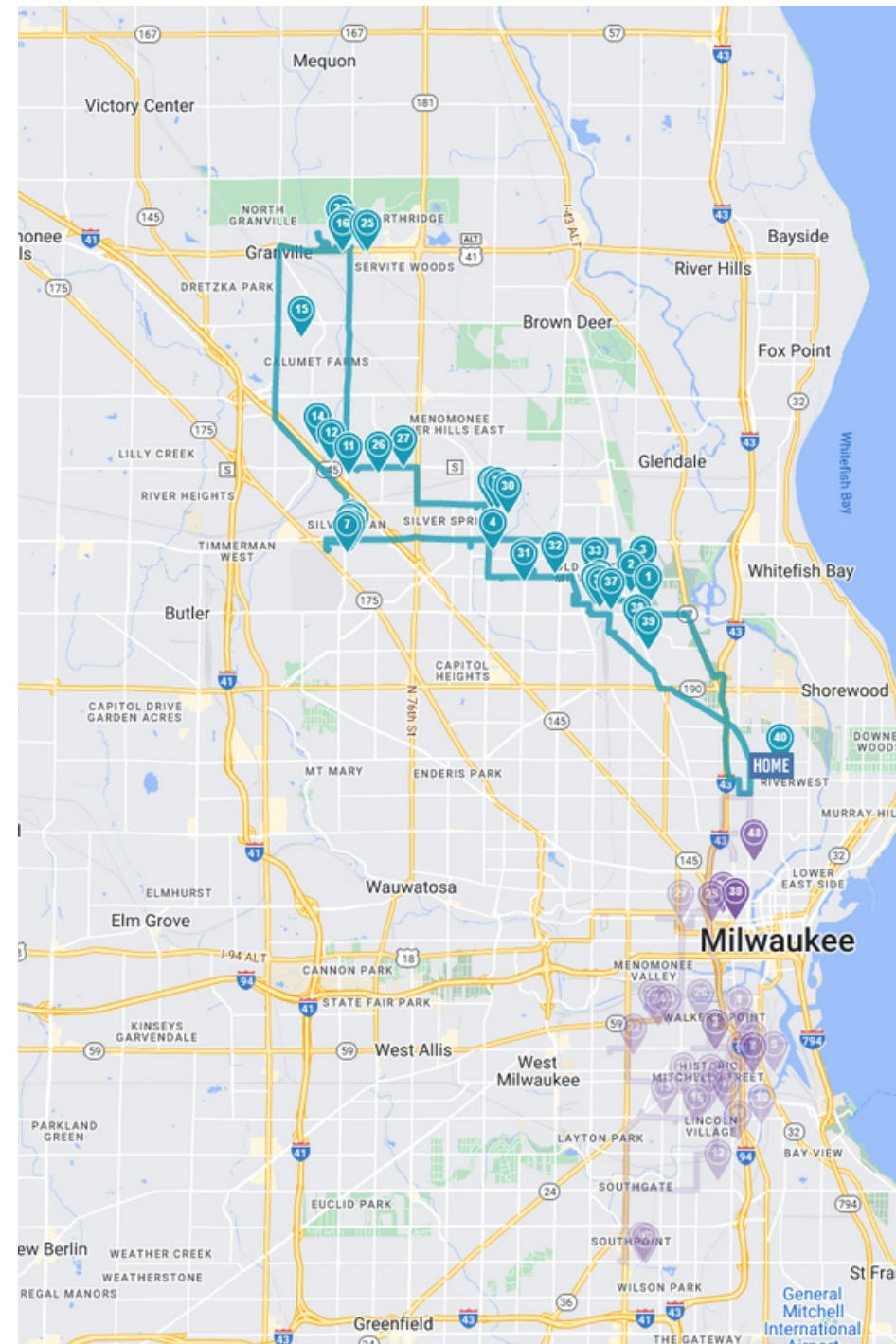
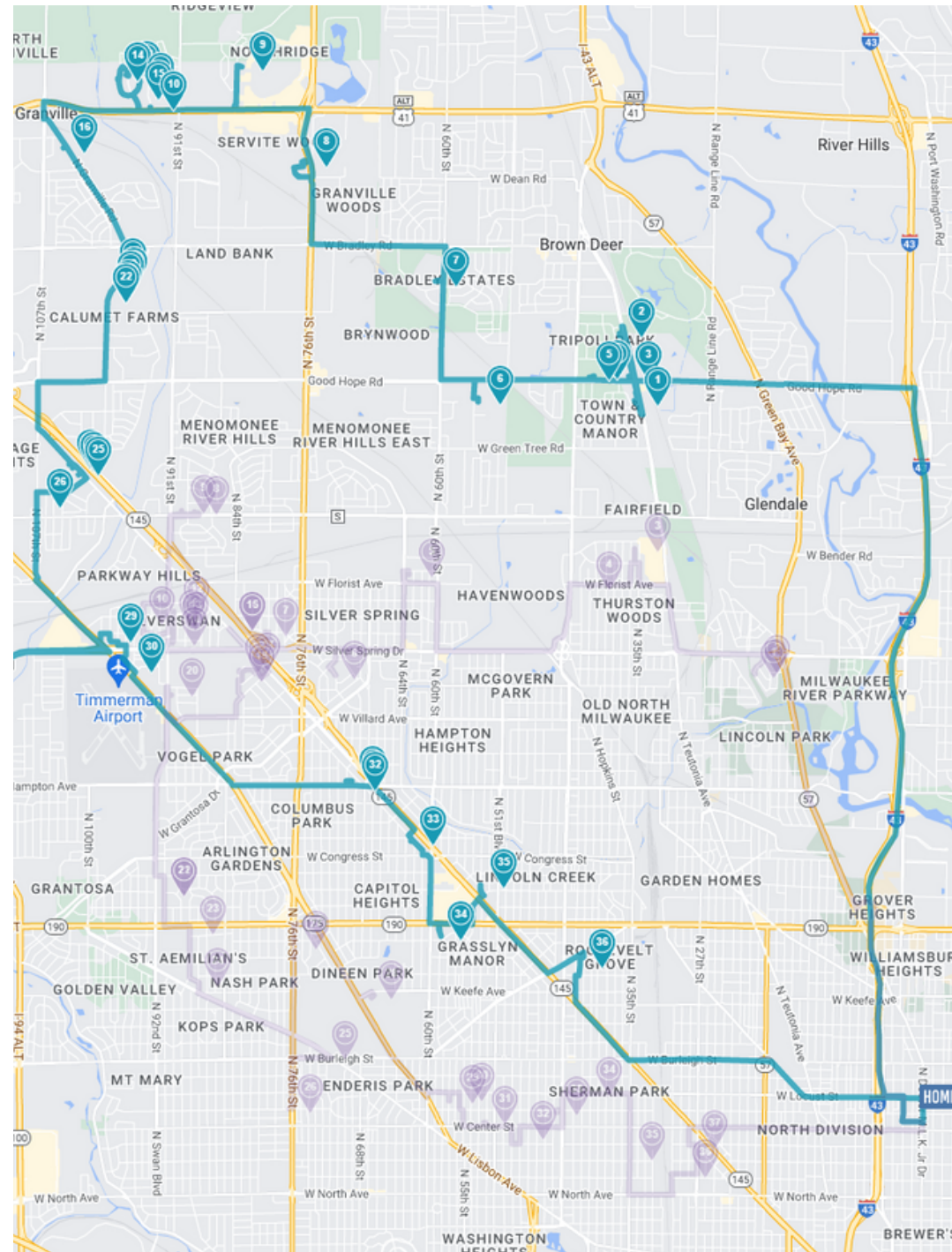
INPOWER Update





- Social impact and good cause marketing agency based in Milwaukee's Harambee neighborhood
- We focus on trusted messenger storytelling and outreach to empower individuals to determine their own life outcomes and advance community wellness
- We focus on supporting non-profits, public health, and government

Intentional Outreach



Personalizing Access



“ Hi I'm Evi, the EvictionFreeMKE.org chat buddy here to help you find what you need as quickly as possible.

Answer 2 quick questions to be directed to the best available resource that will

EvictionFreeMKE
Free legal help and court support
Supported by Legal Aid Society
1300 North Lincoln St., Milwaukee, WI 53233

Querido vecino de Milwaukee,

De acuerdo con los documentos del Tribunal de Circuito del Condado de Milwaukee, recientemente se nos notificó que su arrendador ha presentado un caso de desalojo en su contra. En EvictionFreeMKE creemos que "La vivienda es un derecho humano", por lo que no deberíamos tener que pasar por esto solo.

Un desalojo puede dificultar el alquiler en el futuro... por lo tanto, asegurarse de que no se agregue a su registro es nuestra principal prioridad. Si aún no lo ha hecho, es más probable que reciba una carta de "citación y queja" para comparecer (por teléfono o video "zoom") en la Corte en una fecha en un futuro muy cercano. Se requiere que asista a la audiencia programada en la corte porque no asistir resultará en la pérdida de su caso y un desalojo automático.

ENTENDEMOS QUE ESTE PROCESO NO ES CÓMODO NI FÁCIL... PERO LA BUENA NOTICIA ES QUE EL SOPORTE ESTÁ DISPONIBLE Y ESTAMOS AQUÍ PARA AYUDAR.

EvictionFreeMKE cuenta con el apoyo de la Sociedad de Asistencia Legal, incluso si no califico en el pasado para recibir apoyo gratuito, debido a la pandemia y el fin de la moratoria de alquileres, ahora puede calificar.

Si califica, nuestro equipo de abogados lo apoyará sin costo con:

- Representación en el tribunal
- Orientación sobre el proceso
- Alcanzar una resolución rápida con su arrendador

Ya sea que califique o no para el apoyo de EvictionFreeMKE, hay recursos adicionales para los que puede ser elegible, tales como:

- Pagar el alquiler que actualmente debe y hasta más de \$ 3,000 en pagos futuros de alquiler
- Ayuda para hablar con su arrendador
- Transición a una nueva vivienda si es necesario

Para saber si califica para nuestros servicios y obtener más información sobre otros recursos disponibles para usted:



Escanea el código QR con la cámara de su celular.



Visite en línea yendo a [evictionfreemke.org/help](https://www.evictionfreemke.org/help)



Lláme a uno de nuestros especialistas en español: (414) 970-RENT (7368).

EvictionFreeMKE
Supported by Legal Aid Society
1300 North Lincoln St., Milwaukee, WI 53233

Dear Milwaukee neighbor,

According to Milwaukee County Circuit Court filings, we were recently notified that your landlord has filed an eviction case against you. At EvictionFreeMKE we believe that causing it a human right, so you should not have to go through this alone.

Eviction can make it difficult to rent in the future... so ensuring you don't have it added to your record is our top priority. If you haven't already, you will more than likely receive a "notice and complaint" letter to appear (by phone or "zoom" video) in court on a date in your future. It is required that you attend the scheduled court hearing because it will result in you losing your case and an automatic eviction.

NO THIS IS PROCESS IS NOT COMFORTABLE OR EASY... BUT THE GOOD NEWS IS SUPPORTED BY THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY. EVEN IF YOU DID NOT QUALIFY IN THE PAST DUE TO THE PANDEMIC AND RENT MORATORIUM ENDING, YOU MAY NOW QUALIFY & WE'RE HERE TO HELP.

If lawyers will support you at no cost with:

- Representation with your landlord
- or support from EvictionFreeMKE, there are additional resources available to you:

- Pay owed and up to \$3,000+ in future rent payments
- Learn more about other resources available to you:



Call one of our Spanish spoke specialists (414) 970-RENT (7368).

EvictionFreeMKE Connector

9,295 responses

Hello. Hola.

9295 out of 9295 answered

English

Español

Hide question

EvictionFreeMKE Connector

9,295 responses

Please select your zip code.

9138 out of 9295 answered

53209	1k resp.	11.1%
	811 resp.	8.9%
	638 resp.	7%
	638 resp.	7%
	592 resp.	6.5%

EvictionFreeMKE Connector

9,295 responses

Which of the following describes you best?

9007 out of 9295 answered

I have already been served with an eviction, have a court date, and need free legal support.	6.3k resp.	69.5%
I feel I am going to be receiving an eviction notice or need help avoiding one.	2.2k resp.	24.1%
I am looking for information to better understand my rights in the eviction process as a tenant.	579 resp.	6.4%

Outreach & EFMKE Data

3.5M

**Market
Impression**

65K+

**Website
Visits**

15.5K+

**Evi
Uses**

10K+

**Doors
Visited**

Section 4:

Stout Evaluation





- Global investment bank and advisory firm specializing in corporate finance, valuation, financial disputes, and investigations.
- Expertise in strategy consulting involving a variety of socioeconomic issues, including issues related to access to justice and the needs of low-income individuals and communities.
- Premier expertise analyzing data from and evaluating the potential impact of eviction-related programs, including but not limited to eviction rights to counsel, eviction diversion initiatives (pre- and post-filing), eviction prevention and defense programs, emergency rental assistance, expanded legal representation, and access to brief services.
- Stout has provided eviction-related consulting services or assistance in nearly 40 jurisdictions. Stout is currently serving as the evaluator of eviction right to counsel in Cleveland, Milwaukee, Connecticut, Maryland and Chicago.

Key Findings – September 1, 2021 to December 31, 2022

- EFM attorneys were overwhelmingly able to assist clients in achieving their eviction case goals.
- EFM is often serving the most vulnerable Milwaukee households. EFM clients are overwhelmingly facing complex eviction cases with substantive issues of dispute (substandard housing conditions, disputes regarding repairs and payments, etc.), have a tenuous relationship with the rental property owner and / or face dire consequences if they are not able to effectively resolve the dispute.
- EFM clients typically do not have simple non-payment cases and when they do EFM attorneys seek to promptly resolve these cases with the rental property owner.
- The perspective, experience and feedback of rental property owners and property managers is essential to effective evaluation, program design and an opportunities for continual improvement.
- The percentage of Milwaukee residents facing eviction who were represented by a lawyer has increased over 6x relative to pre-pandemic representation rates.

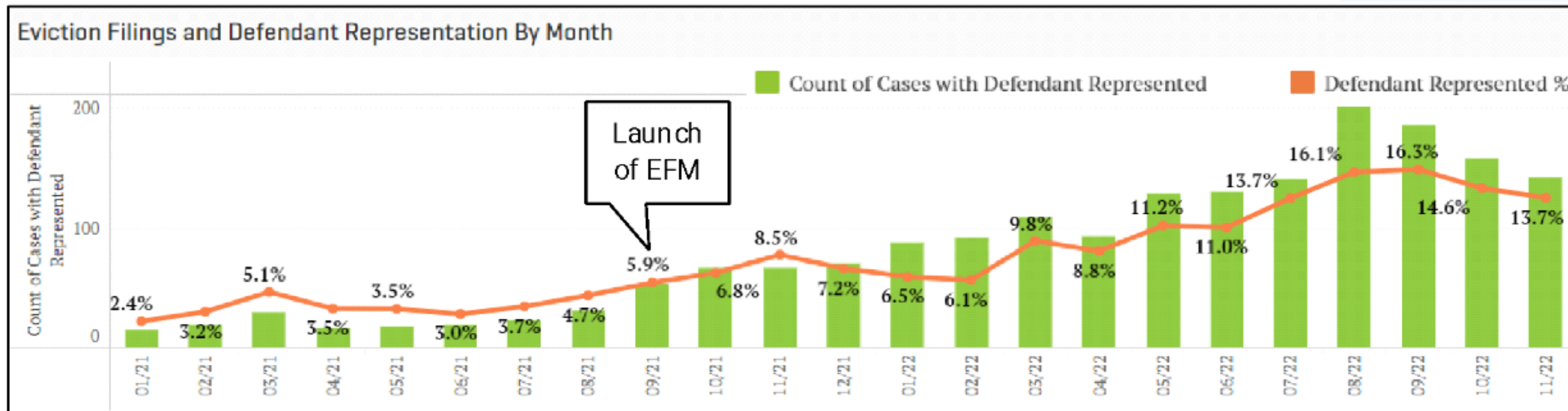
Key Findings – September 1, 2021 to December 31, 2022

- Our preliminary estimates indicate that EFM creates economic and fiscal benefits that likely significantly exceed the estimated cost of providing the services.
 - *EFM is serving approximately 25% of the eligible Milwaukee renter households. This 25% overwhelmingly experiences the complex eviction cases involving dire consequences for their health and well-being that can give rise to the need for social service responses.*
- Emergency rental assistance was crucial to effectively and efficiently resolve certain EFM cases and likely prevented a significant number of eviction filings.
 - *Stout is assisting Community Advocates with an analysis to estimate the amount of sustained emergency rental assistance that may be needed in Milwaukee County post-pandemic.*
- Legal Aid and Legal Action are working to refine data collection to identify where clients would go if they had to move, if clients want to stay in their home (and reasons why or why not), frequency and type of potential defenses, and barriers clients may face when interacting with the eviction ecosystem and civil justice process (e.g., childcare, transportation, employment barriers).

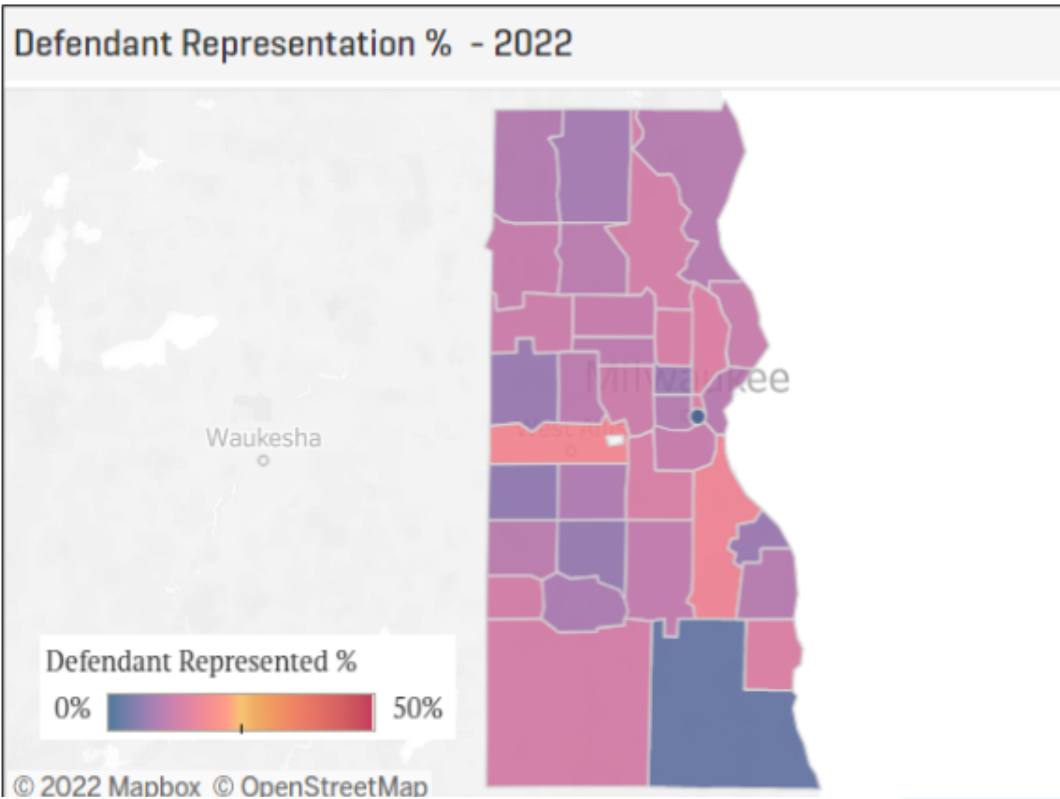
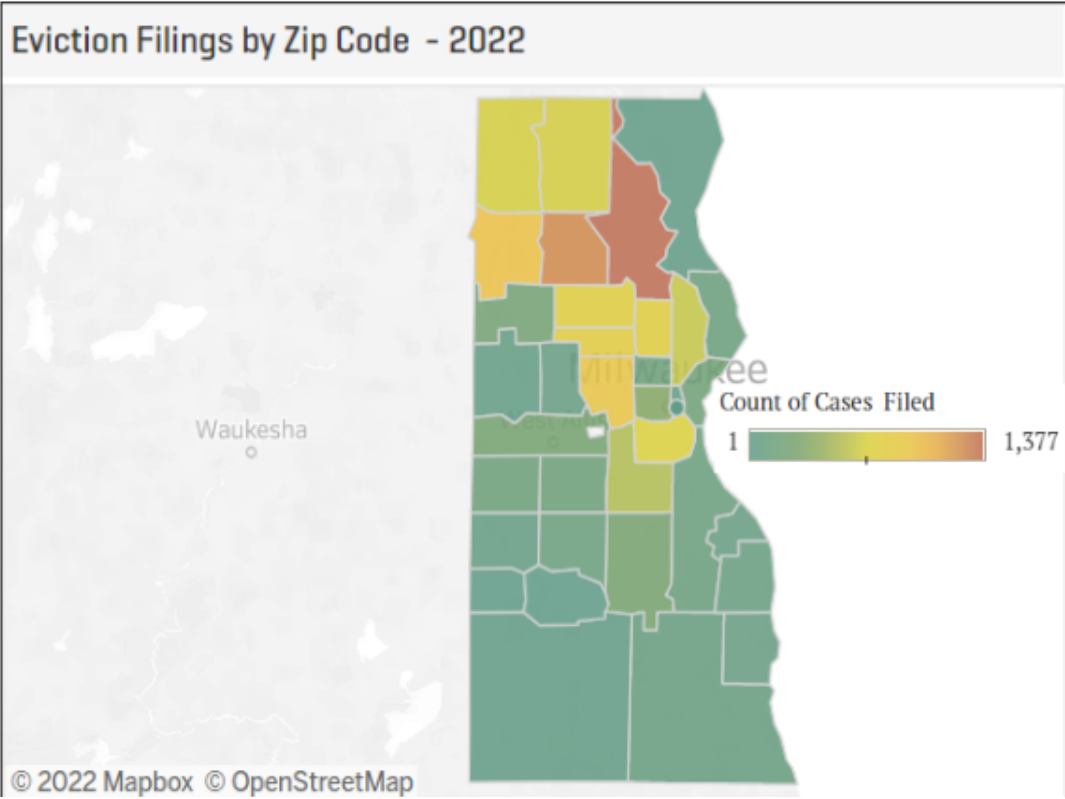
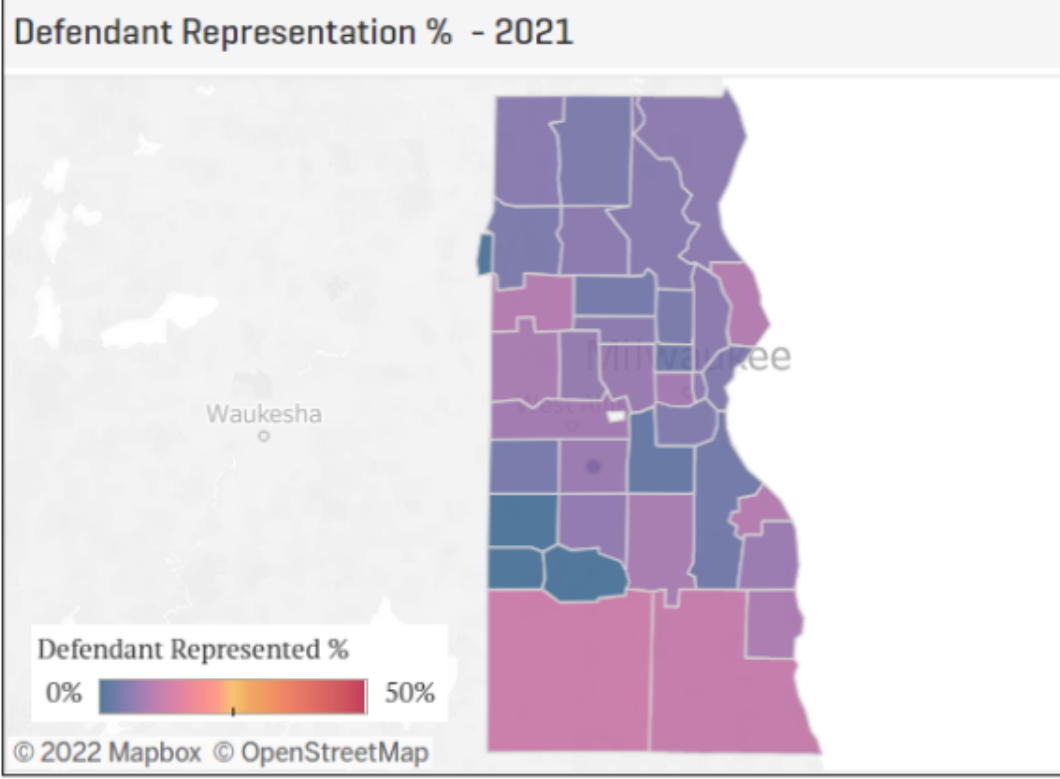
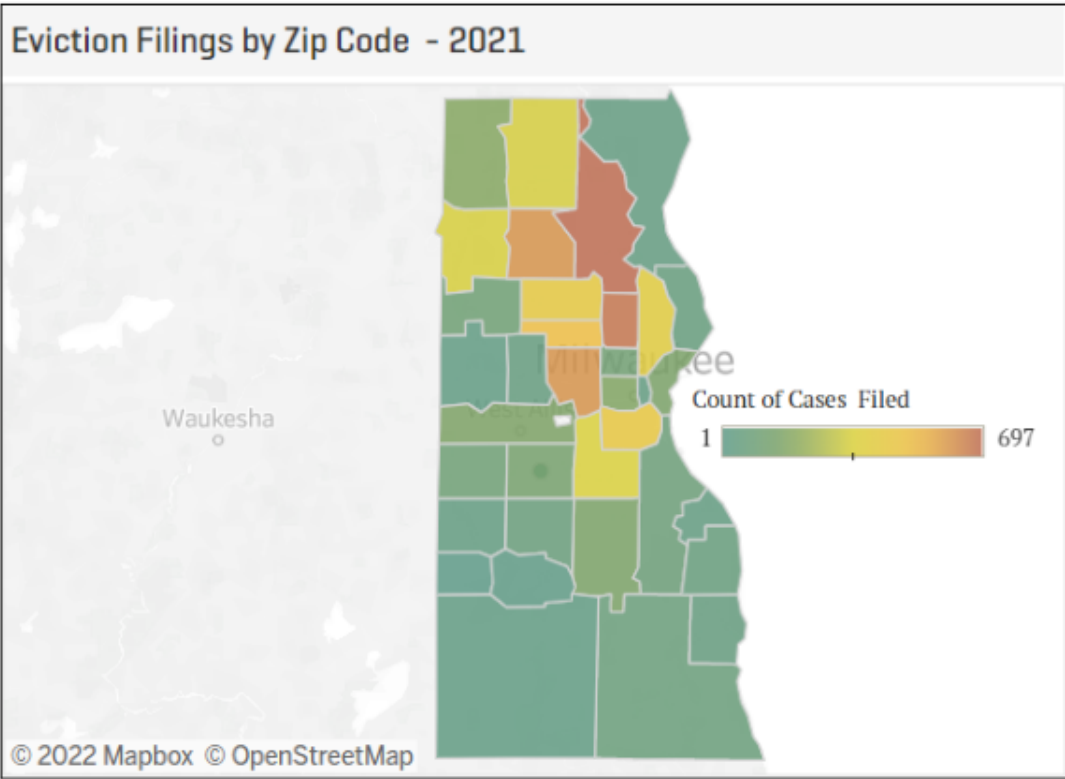
Key Findings – Increase in Representation Rates

EFM Significantly Increased Access to Legal Representation

- Prior to the launch of EFM, approximately 2% - 3% of defendants/tenants were represented in eviction proceedings.
- From September 1, 2021 to November 31, 2022, the monthly defendant/tenant representation rate increased to over 16%.



Key Findings – Increase in Representation Rates



Key Findings – Rental Property Owner Feedback

Qualitative feedback from the rental property owner community continues to be impactful and informative.

- Milwaukee has fostered a uniquely collaborative environment with members of the rental housing ecosystem impacted by eviction and housing instability.
- Throughout Stout's evaluation we sought feedback from rental property owners and their counsel, including at a listening session attended by members of this community, as well as EFM partners and United Way.
- Effective collaboration with rental property owners can identify solutions to housing instability that can expand access to affordable rental housing
- Appreciation that representation for tenants is helpful and a preference for interacting with attorneys rather than a pro se tenant.
- Importance of pre-filing eviction diversion, mediation, and sustained, efficient emergency rental assistance as essential complements to eviction right to counsel programs and the ability to promptly resolve cases.
- Some frustrations with the emergency rental assistance process.

Key Findings – Rental Property Owner Feedback

- Adoption of more stringent and robust tenant screening requirements.
 - *Not as a direct response to eviction right to counsel programs, but rather in response to their experiences during the height of the pandemic.*
 - *Income 3x rent, credit and criminal background checks, employment verification, increasing amounts of security deposits, not renting to tenants with previous filing regardless of the outcome of the case.*
- Certain rental property owners may exit the rental property business, but not necessarily exclusively because of increased tenant representation.
- Tenants, rental property owners, and rental property managers in Milwaukee could benefit from educational information and/or materials.
- Sealing eviction records can be helpful for tenants though rental property owners want access to eviction records for tenant screening and risk assessment purposes – although rental property owners agreed that it would be reasonable for certain eviction records to be sealed.
- Rental property owners, their counsel/agents, Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee, and Legal Action agree there are changes to court processes and procedure that would benefit both rental property owners and tenants.

Key Findings – Potential Fiscal Impacts

EFM likely creates economic and fiscal benefits.

- Stout estimates the total economic and fiscal benefits of EFM to be \$9 million to \$9.3 million from September 1, 2021 through December 31, 2022.
 - Housing social safety net responses - \$2.3 million to \$2.6 million.
 - Foster care savings for children experiencing homelessness – \$2.3 million.
 - Economic value preserved by retaining residency in Milwaukee - \$2.3 million.
 - Sustained education funding for children - \$1.3 million.
 - Cost savings related to Medicaid spending on health care - \$800,000.
 - Total investment in EFM - \$3 million.
 - Estimated return on investment of \$3.00 to \$3.10.
- Benefits and ROI are likely understated but consistent with other jurisdictions.

Key Findings – EFM Client Goals

EFM Attorneys Were Overwhelmingly Able to Assist Clients in Achieving Their Eviction Case Goals

- EFM attorneys achieved over 70% of the most common EFM client goals.

Client Goal	Frequency Goal Was Achieved	# of EFM Clients with Goal [1]	% of EFM Clients with Goal [2]
Prevent eviction judgment [3]	76%	481	62%
Seal eviction record	72%	382	49%
Prevent involuntary move [4]	70%	362	47%
Secure rent assistance	47%	225	29%
Secure additional time to move	42%	153	20%

[1] Clients can have more than 1 goal for their case.

[2] Total will be greater than 100% because clients can have more than 1 goal for their case.

[3] The goal “prevent eviction judgment” indicates EFM attorneys were able to keep an eviction judgment off a tenant’s record.

[4] The goal “prevent involuntary move” is not synonymous with the client staying in their home. It is possible that EFM attorneys prevented an eviction judgment or involuntary move and the client was unable to remain in their home. In these instances, EFM attorneys’ representation can prevent an involuntary move by minimizing the disruption of moving on an expedited timeline, which occurs frequently when tenants are unrepresented. Stout is working with Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee and Legal Action throughout 2023 to assess how frequently clients are remaining in their home.

Ecosystem Observations

EFM has become a national leader in the effective development and implementation of eviction responses

- Legal Aid has presented EFM's impact to national audiences of policymakers, academics and legal services organizations
- Milwaukee stakeholders have developed a uniquely collaborative ecosystem to identify and implement innovations in response to evictions. For example:
 - Rental property owners communicate with EFM partners if a matter presents an issue they believe could have been more effectively resolved using other means
 - Milwaukee Courts collaborated with stakeholders in the development and implementation of recent eviction diversion initiative
 - Milwaukee rental assistance providers are working to develop innovative means of sustainably meeting the needs of rental assistance post-pandemic
 - Rental property owners continually provide guidance regarding the spectrum of issues they face and the variety of responses that may be helpful

Ecosystem Observations

Sustained Impact is Achievable Through this Unique Ecosystem

- Commitment to iterative data collection and evaluation techniques across stakeholders
- Inquisitiveness about the spectrum of circumstances rental property owners and tenants face and the variety of responses necessary to accommodate those circumstances
- Sustained stakeholder engagement and willingness to listen to the views and perspectives of other parties
- These ecosystem elements, and others, lead to the opportunity for continued system change focused on both continual improvement and program adaptation to the changing needs of Milwaukee communities

Section 5:

United Way Reflection





Greater Milwaukee
& Waukesha County

- **Safe and Stable Homes: Ending Family Homelessness**
 - Right to Counsel (EvictionFreeMKE)
 - Family Flex Fund
 - Milwaukee Rental Housing Resource Center



Q&A

The work just started. **Stay connected.**



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