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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

The Legal Aid Society Launches Emergency Response Team to Aid New Yorkers Evicted or Facing Eviction Within 24 Hours

(NEW YORK, NY) — The Legal Aid Society today [announced](#) the launch of its new Emergency Response Team (ERT), a dedicated unit of attorneys, supervisors, and paralegals who will provide rapid, high-impact legal assistance to New Yorkers who have been evicted or are facing eviction within 24 hours. The team expands Legal Aid’s capacity to intervene in the most urgent housing crises, protecting vulnerable families from displacement and homelessness.

Every day across New York City, hundreds of low-income families arrive in housing court — often within hours of losing their homes — desperately seeking immediate legal help. The Emergency Response Team is specifically designed to meet this moment. The team files emergency court papers to halt evictions, prevents landlords from renting out units while a case is pending, stops the removal of a tenant’s belongings, works to restore tenants to their homes whenever possible, and even cover rental arrears.

“For tenants facing eviction, a single phone call can be the difference between maintaining stability or losing everything,” said **Emma Salas, Citywide Director of the Emergency Response Team at The Legal Aid Society**. “The Emergency Response Team ensures that no family is left alone in that critical moment. This is life-changing work that interrupts the pipeline to homelessness.”

Since beginning operations in June 2025, ERT has intervened in 170 emergency housing cases across four boroughs, benefiting 361 individuals. During its first year, ERT prevented or reversed the loss of housing in 111 cases, with 59 additional cases still pending. The team also secured nearly \$2 million in housing-related assistance, primarily through One-Shot Deals and other emergency rental assistance programs. Legal Aid is now formally announcing ERT, which is funded by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, and expanding its staffing to meet the growing need for rapid-response legal assistance for New Yorkers facing eviction or the loss of their homes.

Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Commissioner Barbara C. Guinn said, “Helping low-income families in New York City facing housing crises avoid eviction and remain stably housed is critical to our work to reduce homelessness and support family well-being. The launch of The Legal Aid Society’s new Emergency Response Team will provide vital legal assistance to tenants when they need it most, helping them avoid eviction, remain in their homes whenever possible, and even cover rental arrears. OTDA is proud to provide funding for this important new program and grateful to Governor Hochul for her steadfast commitment to providing New Yorkers the support and resources necessary to maintain stable housing.”

The ERT receives most of its referrals through The Legal Aid Society's Housing Justice Helpline, which handled nearly 18,000 calls from primarily low-income tenants over the past year — a number that continues to grow. To meet rising demand, Legal Aid is expanding the Helpline with additional paralegals and supervising attorneys to streamline intake, identify tenants in crisis, and quickly connect the most urgent cases with ERT.

The ERT will also include a dedicated attorney to combat source-of-income discrimination, a persistent and illegal practice that prevents low-income New Yorkers — particularly those with vouchers — from securing permanent housing. The unit will work aggressively to hold landlords accountable and ensure that tenants can use the subsidies designed to keep them safely housed.

The Emergency Response Team will support more than 600 cases annually, representing tenants facing immediate eviction, assisting with rental arrears applications, restoring access to subsidies, and intervening to stop illegal lockouts or marshal-executed evictions.

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The Legal Aid Society is a nonprofit law firm that exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For 150 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities.

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