

Tenant Legal Services in the Nine-County Bay Area

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

The Bay Area Housing Finance Authority (BAHFA) commissioned the Bay Area Eviction Study to better understand the current eviction landscape across the region as part of its mandate to advance affordable housing across production, preservation and protections (the “3 Ps”).¹ The research team collected and studied data from county Superior Courts, sheriff’s offices, local agencies (as available by jurisdiction), the California Judicial Council and legal service organizations. Tenant legal services organizations provided in-depth data through a survey, and other tenant-serving organizations provided information through interviews from across the region. The findings are organized into multiple regional and local reports and an interactive data tool that are available on the BAHFA website.

As revealed in the companion report **Evictions in the Nine-County Bay Area**, the study found that the rates of court evictions have returned to or surpassed pre-pandemic levels in eight of the nine counties. Such formal evictions are only part of a broader landscape of housing instability that encompasses both court proceedings as well as informal evictions.

Given the complexity of housing law and accelerated pace of eviction proceedings in California, both tenants and landlords can benefit from legal representation to navigate the legal eviction process.² Nationally, approximately 4% of tenants and 83% of landlords are represented in eviction cases.³ Available regional data indicate that Bay Area tenants have significantly lower representation rates than landlords as well.⁴ Understanding the ecosystem of tenant legal services, and where more support is needed, is one component of advancing strategies and programs to help prevent displacement in the Bay Area.

About This Report

This report examines the landscape of tenant legal services (TLS) in the Bay Area and its capacity to meet tenants' legal needs when facing eviction and other housing security and quality issues. The focus on tenant legal needs is driven by the large gap in tenant representation rates compared to landlords in eviction cases. This is the first-known project to survey tenant legal service organizations in each of the Bay Area's nine counties about their capacity and services.

The report begins by defining TLS and providing a brief background into how these services are administered. Then, it reviews the coverage of services — the extent to which legal service organizations exist and have the capacity to serve clients — across the region. The third section looks more closely at the depth and quality of services: Once a tenant has reached out to a service organization, what level of services do they receive, and what programmatic decisions do organizations make to maximize their impact given capacity constraints? The final section examines the dynamics of sector-wide staffing challenges that impact sustainable service delivery. The conclusion describes areas for further research. More details on program models and staffing levels are included in the appendices.

Key Findings

Overall, this report found that the Bay Area's nonprofit tenant legal services sector is strained. There are gaps in the coverage of services across the region due to insufficient attorney capacity, limited local investments, and challenges hiring and retaining staff:

- In each county, there are not enough TLS attorneys to represent every household facing an eviction lawsuit. Legal aid providers estimate that a manageable eviction caseload per year is 40–50 cases per attorney; from July 2023–June 2024, the Bay Area averaged 166 eviction filings per TLS eviction defense attorney.
- Service gaps are particularly pronounced in some Bay Area counties, with notably higher-than-average levels of eviction filings per available attorney in Contra Costa (328 filings per attorney), Solano (447 filings per attorney) and Santa Clara (480 filings per attorney).
- City and county funding has emerged as an important resource and driver of TLS capacity, and investment levels vary widely across the region. Notably, of the three largest cities between July 2024 and June 2025, San Francisco budgeted approximately \$21 million, Oakland budgeted approximately \$1.5 million and San José budgeted approximately \$655,000.
- Nearly every TLS provider surveyed reported challenges with staff recruitment and retention due to a combination of modest pay and high stress, further constraining organizational capacity to serve tenants.

The study also found that resource-constrained providers triage the type and level of services they offer. As a result, some low-income tenants facing eviction are not able to receive legal services at all, while others receive a limited set of triaged services.

- Of the approximately 20,810 clients who received some form of TLS in 2023, nearly three-quarters (73%) received only a brief service or consultation, and the remaining 27% received some form of representation.⁵
- On average across the region, providers reported that 68% of their services were dedicated to clients facing an active eviction lawsuit given the urgency and impact of evictions. Based on limited capacity, tenants with other issues related to housing rights and stability may be referred elsewhere, given a lower level of service than they need or not served at all.

Methods

The study team designed and administered a survey in summer 2024 to the 26 legal service organizations that provide most tenant legal services in the Bay Area and received a 92% response rate.⁶ The survey asked each organization a series of almost 50 questions about the scale, scope, capacity and impacts of their services in each Bay Area county where they provided TLS, including but not limited to eviction-related services. This report details the most significant findings of that survey. TLS attorneys in eight of the nine counties reviewed a draft of the report for accuracy.⁷

To compare conditions across counties, which differ by size, demographics and percentage of renters, this report standardizes data about number of households served, the number of TLS staff and funding according to the number of low-income renter households in each county as reported in HUD's Comprehensive Housing Affordability Survey (CHAS). This study focuses on lower-income households because TLS providers are generally restricted by their funders and/or driven by their mission to serve lower-income clients.⁸ Other regional standardization criteria are used where possible — for example, to determine the number of eviction filings per available TLS attorney per county. Because data collection and tracking practices vary across organizations and geographies, any attempt to regionally standardize the data will have limitations. The methods used in this report are offered as a first step toward enabling a regional, comparative analysis of tenant legal services and should be interpreted alongside other local data for appropriate context.

While these findings provide an in-depth review of TLS across the Bay Area that contributes first-of-its-kind data to the field, this research was limited to self-reported data from TLS organizations. To ensure TLS-reported funding data aligned with local government sources, BAHFA contacted jurisdiction staff to validate the local funding information reported by TLS organizations and was able to verify the accuracy in nearly every city and county. The research team did not conduct a full budget analysis of each legal aid organization, nor an analysis of all local resources available for other non-legal housing services, such as tenant/landlord mediation or fair housing

counseling and testing. If local agency staff specified that funds were used for non-legal housing purposes in a budget, they were omitted. Given these nuances, data about local government funding for TLS should be interpreted as approximate figures for July 2024–June 2025.

Finally, this report describes the landscape of services and their perceived benefits, according to surveyed providers, but it does not attempt to independently evaluate their efficacy.

Tenant Legal Services in the Bay Area

About Tenant Legal Services

Throughout this report, the term tenant legal services (TLS) is used to encompass a range of free legal support for rental housing issues. These services can include educating tenants about their rights, assessing and seeking remedies when tenants' rights are violated, and responding to and defending against court evictions. Depending on their needs and the local availability of services, tenants may receive legal advice, brief/one-time services or some form of representation (characterized by more extensive services). These service variations are explored in the "Types and Levels of Service" section of the report.

Throughout this report, the terms **court eviction**, **eviction case** and **eviction lawsuit** are used to distinguish evictions that occur through a legal process from those that occur "informally" or outside of the legal system. Statutorily, eviction lawsuits are known as unlawful detainers or UD's.

Tenant legal services are intended to improve renters' housing outcomes such as helping tenants remain in their homes, address habitability violations and/or avoid homelessness when they are required to move out. For example, in an eviction case, TLS attorneys can negotiate "pay and stay" agreements that allow renters to remain in their home as long as they resolve any underlying issues and pay rent going forward. Alternatively, TLS attorneys can help to negotiate "move out" agreements, which typically include additional time to move and a clean eviction record, increasing the chances that a tenant is able to find suitable replacement housing.

In the Bay Area, TLS are provided primarily by a patchwork of mission-driven and nonprofit legal service organizations.⁹ While there is wide variation in the focus and capacity of TLS providers across the region, there is at least one provider in all nine Bay Area counties. Some are dedicated tenants' rights organizations with a mission specifically to defend tenants in eviction cases, such as Eviction Defense Collaborative in San Francisco. Others serve specific populations (e.g., seniors, people with disabilities) and provide TLS along with legal services on other issues such as public benefits, employment and healthcare. Providers generally only practice in a specific county or counties and do not provide services to residents in other jurisdictions, with a few limited exceptions.

Tenant Legal Services Coverage

One of the fundamental research questions of this study was to determine the extent to which legal service organizations exist and have the capacity to serve clients across the Bay Area. When a tenant is seeking help, are there tenant legal services organizations and staff available to provide any level of services? To quantify the ability and capacity of TLS providers in each county to meet the demand, the survey administered to legal service providers asked about three metrics:

- 1. The number of households served.**
- 2. The number of attorneys and other staff available to provide legal services.**
- 3. The local city and county investments in tenant legal services.**

Households Served Relative to the Need

Across the Bay Area, approximately 20,810 households received TLS support in 2023, ranging from brief or one-time services to some form of representation.¹⁰

To estimate the number of households served relative to those who might need services, the study compared the total served to the number of low-income renter households in each county. The purpose of this standardized rate was to enable comparison across counties; it should not be interpreted in isolation as the true percentage of tenants in need who receive services, as not every low-income renter household will need tenant legal services.

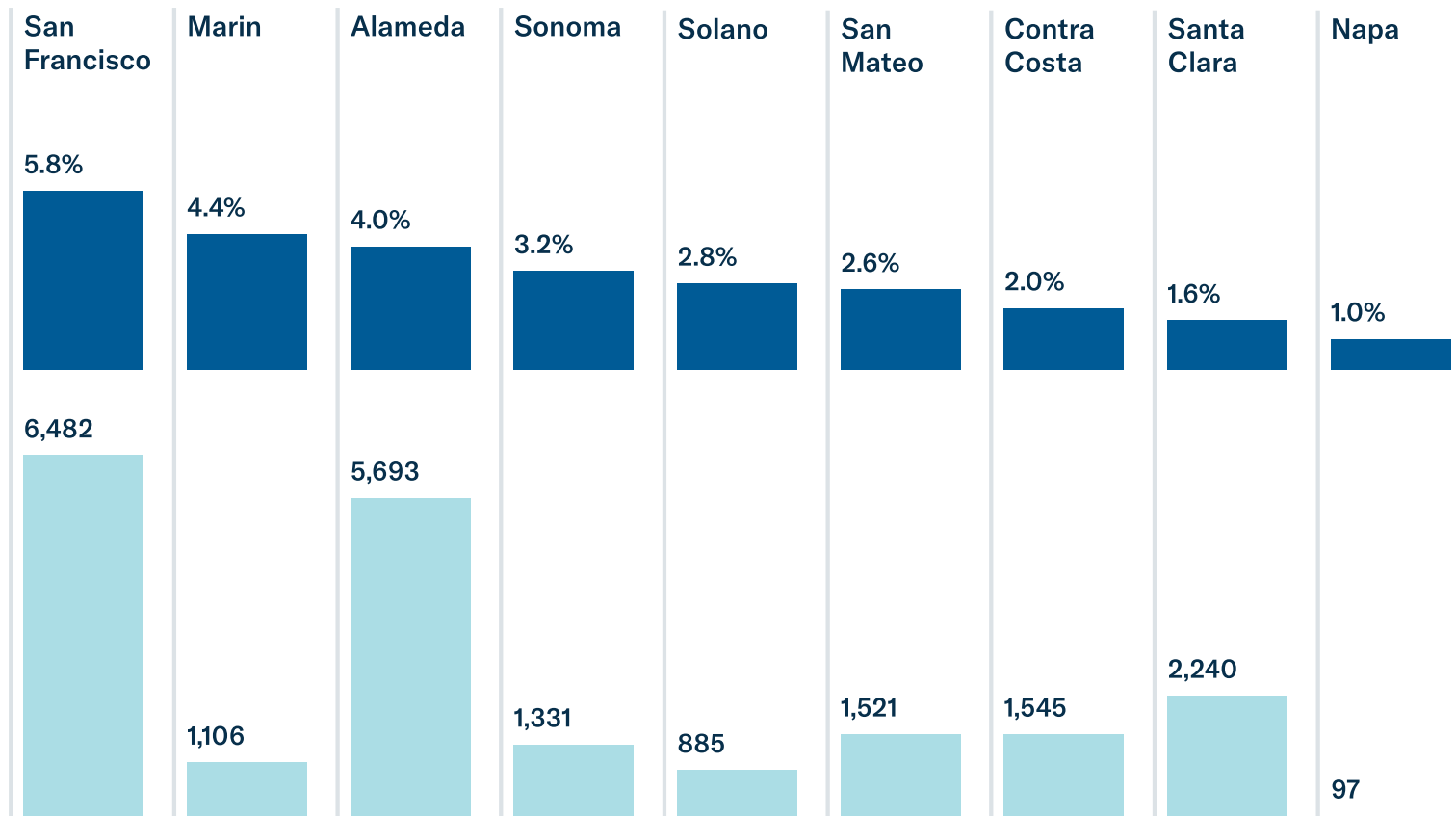
San Francisco featured the highest number and rate of lower-income households served (Figure 1), likely because it is the only jurisdiction with a tenant right to counsel in eviction cases combined with significantly higher levels of public investment. Marin and Alameda counties had the second and third highest rates of low-income renter households served. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Santa Clara and Napa counties had the lowest rates of low-income renter households served.

FIGURE 1

Estimated Percentage of Low-Income Renter Households Served by TLS Providers: 2023*

Sources: BAHFA Survey of TLS Providers, HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data based on 2017–2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

■ % of Low-Income Renter Households Served
■ Total Number of Renter Households Served



*Respondents were asked to provide an estimated number of households served per year as of summer 2024. These estimates likely represent an estimate for 2023, the year prior to when the survey was administered.

Attorney and Staff Capacity Relative to the Need

The research explored two ways of thinking about staff capacity relative to need. The first looks at attorney capacity specifically for eviction cases, where the data are adjusted to show a ratio of eviction filings per attorney to allow for cross-county comparison. The second examines overall staff capacity (attorneys and non-attorneys), shown as a ratio of TLS staff to low-income renter households. Low-income renter households were used for the second analysis to include the broader potential pool of tenants seeking services with any housing-related issues, such as habitability issues or assistance negotiating changes in a lease, in addition to eviction lawsuits.

While attorneys are essential to tenant legal services, most providers also employ a range of non-attorney personnel, including intake coordinators, paralegals and social workers (see Appendix B for a detailed breakdown of staff roles and numbers by county). Providers reported that such non-attorney personnel are an important complement to lawyers, increasing the depth and efficacy of litigation services, enhancing capacity of providers to take on legal issues other than eviction (e.g., habitability, discrimination, etc.), and providing wraparound support to clients.

Attorney Capacity to Represent Eviction Cases

By absolute numbers, San Francisco had the most full-time equivalent staff attorneys and managing attorneys who represent tenants in eviction cases (41.5), followed by Alameda (24.3) and Contra Costa (11). The remaining counties, including Santa Clara, all had fewer than 10 attorneys, and Napa only had one. **When compared to the volume of evictions, there was a significant gap between eviction filings and the numbers of TLS attorneys involved in eviction defense in every county (Figure 2).**

The disparity in attorney availability between counties means that where a renter lives may impact their likelihood of receiving needed legal services when facing eviction. Another potential implication is that the county where a TLS attorney is employed may impact the need to triage services and the stress of their working environment. TLS providers who responded to the survey consistently shared that they consider approximately 40-50 eviction representations per year to be a manageable caseload for an attorney.

In 2024, San Francisco was the only county that approached this balance of staffing for eviction-related services.¹¹

The gap between attorneys and the estimated need was particularly large in Contra Costa, Santa Clara and Solano counties, which had among the highest volumes of eviction filings in the region. Santa Clara County had almost 50% more eviction filings than San Francisco, but only one-fifth the number of TLS attorneys who can represent tenants in eviction cases. Based on these data, tenants in Santa Clara were approximately seven times less likely to receive representation from a TLS provider in an eviction case than those in San Francisco.

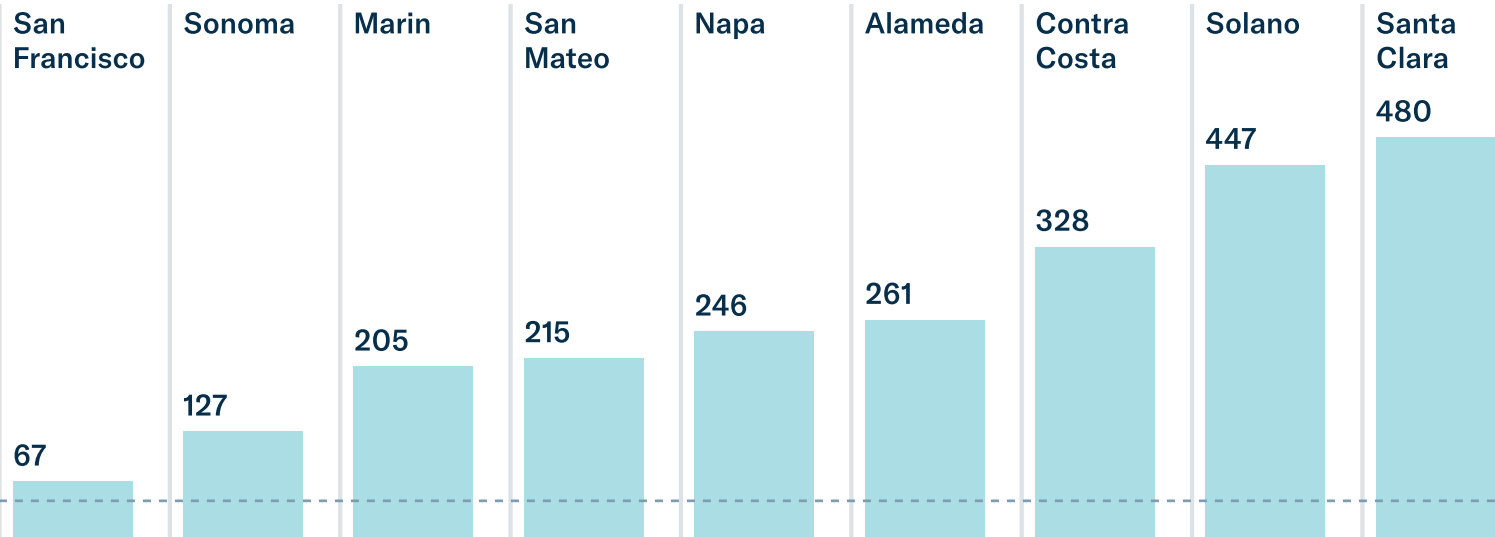
FIGURE 2

Eviction Filings per
TLS Attorneys Who
Represent Tenants in
Eviction Cases: July
2023–June 2024*

Sources: BAHFA Survey of TLS Providers, California Judicial Council

*Respondents were asked to provide the number of full-time equivalent attorneys who represent tenants in eviction cases on staff at the time of survey administration in summer 2024. California Judicial Council data on the eviction filings were used for July 2023–June 2024.

----- Recommended client load



Staff Capacity to Provide TLS Broadly

The gap in available support persists when the analysis is expanded to include all TLS staff (including non-attorneys) and is standardized across counties by calculating the ratio of staff per low-income renter households (Figure 3). Counties fell into roughly four tiers regarding staffing ratios when accounting for both attorney and non-attorney staff:

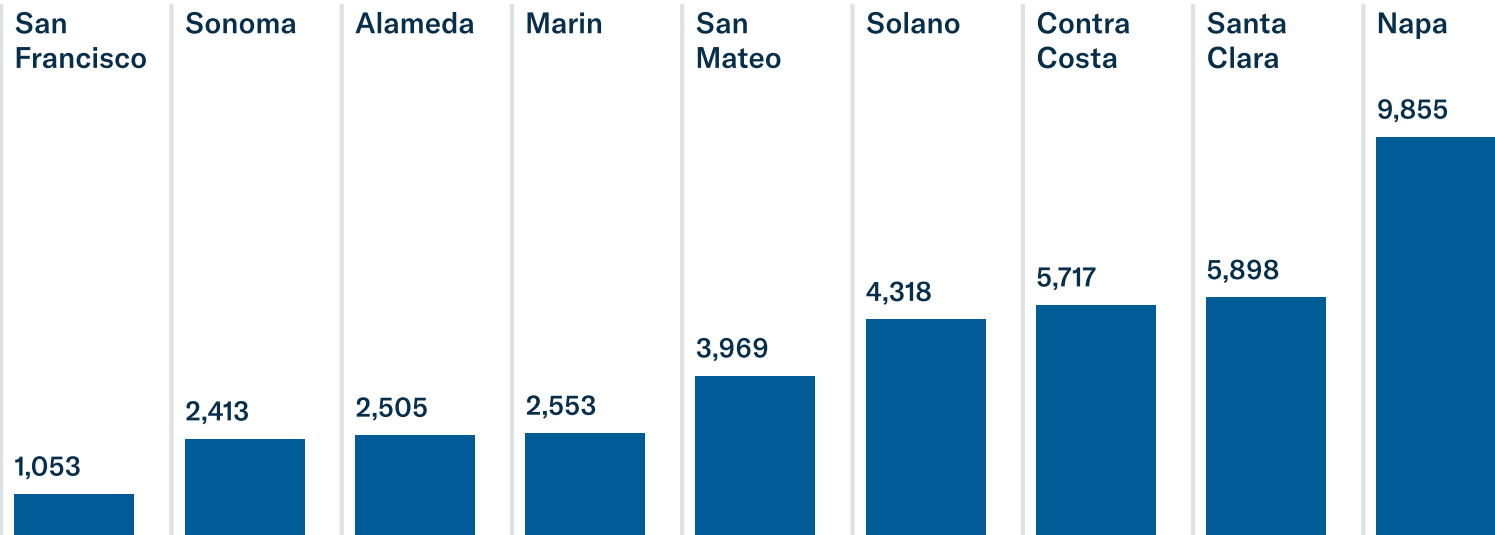
- 1. **San Francisco:** approximately one TLS staff per 1,000 low-income renter households
- 2. **Sonoma, Alameda, Marin:** approximately one TLS staff per 2,500 low-income renter households
- 3. **San Mateo, Solano, Contra Costa, Santa Clara:** approximately one TLS staff per 4,000–6,000 low-income renter households
- 4. **Napa:** approximately one TLS staff per 10,000 low-income renter households

FIGURE 3

Low-Income Renter Households per TLS Staff (Attorneys and Non-Attorneys): 2024*

Sources: BAHFA Survey of TLS Providers and HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data, based on 2017–2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

*Respondents were asked to provide the number of full-time equivalent employees on staff at the time of survey administration in summer 2024.



Local Government Investments in Tenant Legal Services

Local government funding has emerged in the field as an important driver of TLS capacity given the limited number, scale and potential instability of other funding sources. Many TLS providers receive baseline funding from the California Bar Association, and three receive funding from the federal Legal Services Corporation. Providers reported that these baseline funds are not sufficient to meet community needs, and therefore they seek additional funding through local government grants and philanthropic contributions.

The TLS survey asked each provider to list the funds they received from local government sources to provide legal services related to evictions, fair housing violations, rent increases, and other “upstream” issues, like habitability and harassment. These data were shared with staff from each of those cities and counties to verify accuracy. The research team did not conduct a full budget analysis of each legal aid organization, nor an analysis of all local resources available for other non-legal housing services, such as tenant/landlord mediation or fair housing counseling and testing. If local staff verifying these budgets specified that funds were for non-legal housing services, they were omitted. These data reflect approximate local investments for July 2024–June 2025.

FIGURE 4

Estimated Local Government Investment in TLS per Low-Income Renter Household: July 2024–June 2025

Sources: BAHFA Survey of TLS Providers, with approximate verification provided by local government staff; and HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data, based on 2017–2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



As shown in Figure 4, San Francisco contributed by far the most local funding toward tenant legal services, which appears correlated to the higher attorney and overall staffing ratios shown in Figures 2 and 3. San Francisco budgeted almost \$21 million between July 2024–June 2025 for eviction defense and other housing legal services, which amounts to an estimated \$188 per low-income renter household.¹² All other counties contributed substantially less per low-income renter household, and Santa Clara, San Mateo, Solano and Napa counties trailed with the lowest investments.

Funding in the region’s three largest cities varied widely from July 2024–June 2025: San Francisco budgeted approximately \$21 million, Oakland budgeted approximately \$1.5 million and San José budgeted approximately \$655,000.

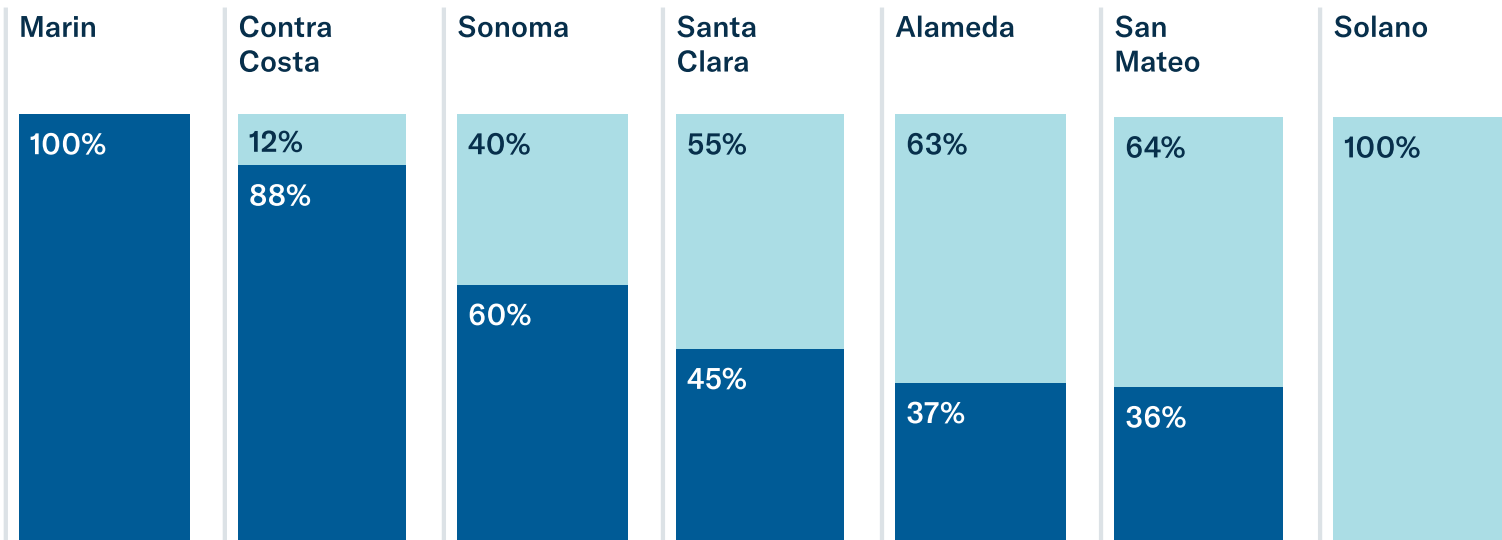
FIGURE 5

Percentage of Local Government Investment in TLS from Cities and Counties: July 2024–June 2025

Source: BAHFA Survey of TLS Providers, with approximate verification provided by local government staff

San Francisco was omitted because there is no distinction between city and county. Napa was omitted because there is no local government funding for TLS.

■ % of Investment from Counties ■ % of Investment from Cities



Counties and cities are both important contributors to tenant legal services regionally. On average, county funds represented approximately 51% of local contributions and city funds represented 49%. There was substantial variation across the region: There was no city funding in Marin, and at the other extreme, there was no county funding in Solano. There was neither city nor county funding for tenant legal services in Napa County.

According to TLS providers, the gap in staff capacity shown in Figures 2 and 3 reflects the lack of financial resources to hire and support sufficient attorneys and other staff. TLS providers reported that funding increased dramatically during the pandemic with one-time federal grants but that this support has now waned. TLS providers reported that this fluctuation, combined with the limited dedicated funding streams available for TLS, has made it hard for organizations to build durable, well-staffed and effective legal aid programs.

“The current tenant need is greater than we can handle with current staffing levels. The state and county have both recently ended funding streams that were supporting our housing program, which has left us unable to replace staff when there is turnover.”

— San Mateo County provider

Barriers to Services for Undocumented Residents

Providers reported that undocumented residents face compounding barriers (e.g., limited-English proficiency, limited knowledge of their rights or the legal system) to access support when faced with eviction. When undocumented residents do seek out tenant legal services, they are not always eligible given their status.

Three of the region's TLS providers (approximately 12% of all providers) restrict services based on immigration status because they are funded by the federal Legal Services Corporation (LSC), which generally bars them from providing legal assistance to undocumented residents.¹³ Depending on location, federal eligibility criteria may severely limit the ability of undocumented residents to receive tenant legal services.

"Farmworkers and undocumented/mixed status households are underserved due to a lack of trust and fear of seeking help, language barriers (i.e., indigenous languages), concern that they may be ineligible, and lack of familiarity with us despite our outreach efforts."

— Sonoma County provider

Undocumented residents in Napa and Solano counties generally cannot receive free eviction-related legal services because all TLS providers who conduct eviction defense are LSC-funded.

There is at least one TLS provider who can serve undocumented tenants with eviction cases in every other county. Alameda and San Francisco counties have the highest capacity to serve undocumented tenants.

Barriers to Services in Geographically Isolated Areas

Multiple providers identified geographic isolation as a driver of inadequate services among specific populations. Providers in Sonoma, Marin and San Mateo counties identified that the more rural coastal areas of their counties are underserved, and that it is hard to conduct effective outreach to these more dispersed communities. Providers in Alameda and Santa Clara counties also identified the more rural areas and areas disconnected from public transportation in their counties as underserved. Because people in rural areas are more likely to access services online than go to an in-person location, providers shared that seniors, people with limited-English proficiency, and others who have difficulty using technology and live in rural areas are at a particular disadvantage for accessing help.

"Coastal farmworker communities are significantly unrepresented. These communities are geographically isolated from the offices of legal services providers and have limited access to technology to receive services remotely."

— San Mateo County provider

Types and Levels of Service

To go beyond the baseline existence and capacity of tenant legal aid organizations, this section examines the types and levels of service a tenant may receive once they locate services, and what factors determine that service level. Analysis of survey responses indicates that there are three key factors that determine whether or not a tenant will receive the type and level of services they need:

1. **The types of cases prioritized** by the TLS provider.
2. The resources available to provide the appropriate **level of services**.
3. **The strength of the TLS ecosystem** in the county where the tenant seeks services.

Each of these factors is described in further depth below.

Types of Cases Prioritized

Given the urgency and prevalence of court evictions, most TLS providers described prioritizing tenants in eviction proceedings; across seven of the nine counties, providers reported that 68% of their services were dedicated to clients facing an active eviction lawsuit (see Figure 6). In most counties, the focus on supporting tenants in active eviction lawsuits results in deprioritizing other issues related to housing rights and stability, including

matters that may precede — and could prevent — eviction filings.¹⁴ In those cases, tenants may be referred elsewhere, given a lower level of service than they need or not served at all.

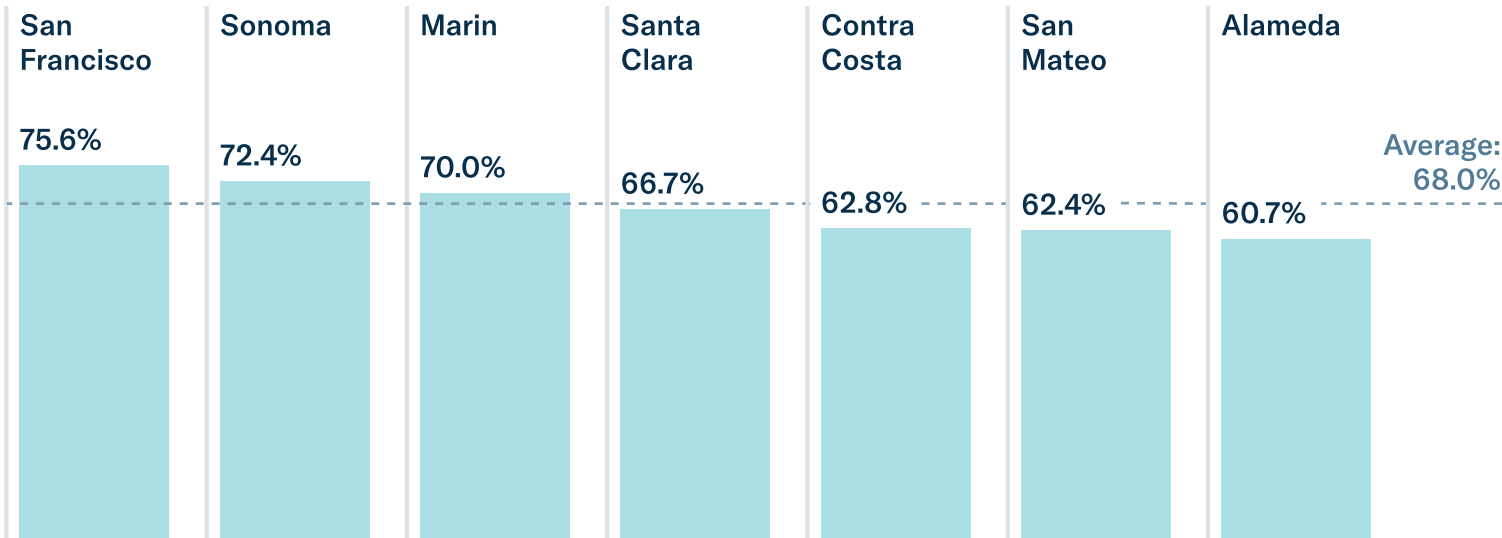
“Being in an unprecedented eviction wave makes it hard to prioritize cases other than evictions.”

— Alameda County provider

FIGURE 6

Estimated Percentage of Countywide TLS Capacity Dedicated to Clients With Eviction Cases: 2024

Sources: BAHFA Survey of TLS Providers
Napa and Solano counties are omitted from this analysis because their legal service organizations did not provide data in response to this survey question.



Level of Service Provided

Of the approximately 20,810 households who received some kind of TLS in 2023, providers reported that 27% received some form representation and 73% received a “consultation” or “brief service.”¹⁵ Consults and brief services include providing legal advice; reviewing and helping tenants respond to notices and contracts; drafting letters; and providing other short-term, limited assistance. Representation services may include representing a tenant in mediation or negotiations aimed at avoiding the filing of an eviction case, representing a tenant in subsidy termination proceedings and/or defending against an eviction case.

Nearly every TLS provider reported a higher demand for services than they could meet with their current financial and staff capacity. Providers reported navigating this constraint by triaging which clients receive services and adjusting the breadth and depth of their services to try to reach the most clients possible.

Triage of Cases

One way providers navigate this constraint is to use additional criteria to triage cases and determine the level of service they will provide a given tenant. While not every tenant seeking services needs full-scope representation, limited provider capacity means that some tenants may receive a lower level of service than would be most appropriate for their needs. Across jurisdictions, providers reported three common prioritization criteria:

- **Merits of the Case:** Providers tend to consider whether a tenant has a meritorious case — one with strong evidence and viable defenses — as these are the most likely to benefit from TLS.
- **Impacts of Services:** Providers tend to consider whether a case is particularly urgent or high stakes. They often prioritize eviction cases that are close to a judgment and involve a high likelihood of tenant displacement. They also consider whether the consequences of losing the case will be particularly severe for the client. For example, providers may prioritize cases that will result in the displacement of large numbers of residents and/or children, or lead to the loss of a rent stabilized or affordable unit or a rental subsidy.¹⁶
- **Capacity for Self-Representation:** Providers tend to consider whether the tenant will face a particular burden or not in trying to assert their rights without representation. This often means prioritizing senior, disabled and/or limited-English proficiency tenants as well as tenants with especially complex cases.

In San Francisco, prioritization decisions are governed by the tenant right to counsel program. San Francisco's tenant right to counsel providers are required, as a group, to provide full-scope representation to any tenant facing a court eviction — regardless of income, grounds for eviction or merits of the case — unless there is a systemwide lack of capacity.¹⁷

Breadth and Depth of Services

Providers also reported trying to meet the need for TLS with limited resources by strategically adjusting the breadth and depth of services. One way that they do this is by prioritizing lighter-touch services, such as consults and brief services, which are less resource-intensive than representation. In Solano County, for instance, Legal Services of Northern California focuses on assisting tenants at the notice stage to try to resolve tenant/landlord problems before they turn into eviction cases, which often

require more extensive services to address. Even when providers do agree to represent a tenant, they may target their services to specific parts of a case by signing on for limited-scope representation. As a contractual relationship, limited-scope representation is less extensive than full-scope representation, in which an attorney agrees to represent a tenant until the underlying issue is resolved, regardless of the amount of time that it takes.

In the Bay Area, some providers seek to maximize breadth by employing a service delivery model that enables limited-scope representation or brief services to many tenants in one place at one time. This model can take various forms depending on the capacity of TLS providers and the local context. For example, some tenant legal services organizations offer “clinics,” where a team of attorneys and other support staff are regularly available at a particular time and location to provide limited assistance to any eligible tenant who walks in with a legal problem. A variation on this model is a clinic for mandatory settlement conferences. These conferences are court proceedings at which judges have scheduled all upcoming eviction cases for in-court settlement negotiations before the cases can proceed to trial. In some counties, attorneys will appear in housing court each week to support any unrepresented tenants in their settlement negotiations. In these clinic models, TLS staff may offer services to tenants during the specified hours of the clinic — serving a large number of tenants for a limited duration. More information about the variations in service delivery models, including clinics and mandatory settlement conferences, is provided in Appendix A.

Strength of County Tenant Legal Services Ecosystem

In counties with multiple TLS providers, organizations have a greater ability to collaborate and refer clients to one another if they are unable to serve a particular person (e.g., due to lack of capacity or the client’s immigration status). Conversely, if a renter is seeking services in a county like Napa or Solano counties with few TLS providers and low staff capacity, they will have few to no alternative options if the existing TLS providers cannot serve them.

In counties with multiple TLS providers, coordinated intake and referral systems may enhance service delivery even further. In Alameda County, several providers share a proactive peer-to-peer referral system, which allows any provider to conduct a basic intake for a tenant, even if they cannot serve them, and then seamlessly relay that data to a provider who can. San Francisco’s tenant right to counsel providers use a similar system, with referrals coordinated by the Eviction Defense Collaborative. Providers reported that organizations benefit from reduced redundancy and streamlined transfers of client data.¹⁸ They also reported that tenants benefit from a “no wrong door” approach, which makes it easier to access services, and systemwide efficiencies, which increase the chances that they will be able to receive services.

Staff Hiring and Retention Challenges

Interrelated with TLS capacity issues, providers across the Bay Area reported that limited total budgets, year-over-year budget insecurity, and the mental stress of the work make hiring and retaining staff difficult. In response to the survey, providers rated the lack of public and philanthropic funding and challenges hiring and retaining attorneys as the top barriers to serving more households.

Many providers shared that their staff experience a high emotional toll from their day-to-day work, especially amid the increase in eviction filings across the region post-pandemic. They described their work as “traumatizing,” “stressful” and “grueling” because of the intense pace of eviction litigation and the human suffering they witness. Large caseloads due to low staffing and high community needs also contribute to this strain, and providers reported that the combination leads to high rates of burnout and staff turnover. The stress TLS providers reported is common throughout the social services sector among frontline workers.¹⁹

“Staff vicarious trauma is at an all-time high.”

— Marin County provider

Staff turnover and limited recruitment potential are also driven by modest staff salaries. Compensation for starting TLS attorneys qualifies as low income throughout the region, ranging from approximately \$71,000 in Alameda County to \$85,000 in Marin County, with other counties' rates falling in between.²⁰ While these salaries may increase with more experience, income bands for staff attorneys top out in the \$100,000 range at the highest paying TLS providers — which still qualifies as low income in some counties.

These salaries contrast sharply with what attorneys could earn at for-profit law firms. According to the American Bar Association, the median salary for first-year law firm associates in 2023 was \$200,000 nationally, rising to an average of \$307,500 by an attorney's eighth year of employment. The San José area ranked number one in the country for highest average wages

“It is hard to find attorneys who can afford to work in legal aid.”

— Alameda County provider

for attorneys in 2023, closely followed by the San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward area in fourth place.²¹ To contextualize these salaries further, 71% of law school students graduate with debt, and the average graduate owes \$130,000.²²

Due to these challenges, TLS providers reported spending significant energy continually recruiting, onboarding and training new staff. Because recent law school graduates make up the bulk of new recruits, significant time is needed to train new attorneys. One provider from San Francisco explained that based on the job market, their organization usually hires attorneys with under two years of experience and who typically need six to 12 months of training before they can take on their own cases.

Finally, providers reported that more seasoned lawyers tend to move on to higher paid and lower stress roles, leading to a loss of institutional knowledge. These staffing dynamics further disadvantage organizations and those seeking services, as housing law is complex and requires experience to navigate, especially in counties where there are many cities with their own local policies and procedures. The time spent on recruitment, hiring and training compounds the staffing capacity issues described in the previous sections of this report. Providers emphasized that supporting the TLS workforce is foundational to providing the services tenants need to understand their rights and maintain housing stability.

Conclusion and Areas for Further Research

This research provides a strong grounding in system-wide and county-specific issues that constrain tenant legal services in the Bay Area. Meanwhile, the need for these services is great. As described in the companion report, **Evictions in the Nine-County Bay Area**, evictions met or exceeded pre-pandemic rates in all but one county from July 2023–June 2024, and the prevalence of nonpayment as the cause for eviction illustrates the severe economic challenges many households face.

Tenant legal services are just one intervention among many housing policies and programs that seek to address the Bay Area’s longstanding challenges with affordability and displacement. It was beyond the scope of this study to evaluate the effectiveness of tenant legal services compared to other interventions or to evaluate the impact of other regulatory approaches on the need for or efficacy of tenant legal aid. For example, this study did not evaluate tenant protection policies such as rent stabilization or just cause for eviction, which have emerged as part of a local and statewide policy response to the lack of affordability and prevalence of evictions. Further research on the variations and impacts of anti-displacement policies across the Bay Area would serve as an important complement to this report, as the ability of tenant attorneys to affect case outcomes may relate to the strength of the underlying legal protections available for them to enforce.

Another opportunity for further research relates to the broader ecosystem of programs and services that frequently complement tenant legal aid, such as rental assistance. Nearly every provider surveyed as part of this study cited the importance of rental assistance to help tenants facing eviction due to nonpayment (see Appendix A for more information). Providers also described that resources for rental assistance are waning in the wake of state and federal COVID-19 funding. Local and national research has underscored the importance of rental assistance as a tool for eviction and homelessness prevention,²³ including research showing the efficacy of Santa Clara County’s homelessness prevention system.²⁴ Bay Area policymakers and funders would likely benefit from a comparative analysis of rental assistance and other homelessness prevention programs across the region.²⁵ Further research into these programs, including how to enhance their integration with tenant legal services, would help equip decision-makers with more information to support low-income tenants.

Appendices

Appendix A: Design and Service Delivery Models for Tenant Legal Services

The stages of the legal eviction process are governed by a mix of local, state and federal laws, depending on the type of housing and county court procedures. The strategies of the Bay Area's TLS providers are designed to intervene at key points in this process, varying to account for the local policy and program environment and to maximize limited available resources. This appendix details the variety and availability of different TLS interventions across the region based on survey responses by and interviews with providers.

Outreach and Connection to Services

Providers reported that outreach offers tenants critical resources and information before a crisis. If tenants know that they have rights — e.g., a right to habitable housing, a right to a trial in an eviction case — then they may be less likely to “self-evict” when a landlord threatens them with eviction through a written or verbal notice or other behavior that could lead to informal eviction. Additionally, if tenants know where to receive assistance in the event of an eviction summons, then they are more likely to respond within the tight timeline (10 business days) to avoid a default judgment.

Most TLS providers across the region (86% according to results from the survey used as part of this study) engage in some form of outreach. Outreach activities often include “know your rights” trainings and the distribution of self-help guides with instructions that tenants can use to respond to an eviction notice or summons on their own. Better-resourced organizations engage in proactive marketing and communications, such as tabling at community events, flyers, social media, mailers, text blasts, news and radio advertisements, and ads on public transit.

TLS providers reported that they often partner with trusted community-based organizations who work with specific populations like immigrants and formerly incarcerated people to reduce barriers those groups may otherwise face in accessing services.

Across the region, providers reported that direct calls and emails are the main ways that tenants access their services. The next most prevalent access points are referrals from other service providers and walk-in/drop-in clinics. The least prevalent means of access are referrals from official sources like the courts, municipal rent programs and 211.

Tenant Legal Clinics

Clinics are regularly scheduled opportunities for tenants to learn about their rights, ask legal questions and receive brief services. Clinics generally occur at a particular time and location (including some virtual clinics), where multiple clients can be served at the same time by a team of attorneys and support staff. In a resource-constrained environment, many providers considered clinics to be an efficient way to offer breadth of services that can assist as many clients as possible.

Some legal clinics are designed to support tenants with “upstream” matters, such as repairs and harassment, in ways that may prevent the eviction process from ever starting. Other clinics are designed to allow for targeted intervention at key stages of the eviction process, such as responding to an eviction summons to prevent a default. Tenant legal service providers may also use their clinics to conduct intakes and identify tenants who are in need of and eligible for more extensive services.

Across the Bay Area, an estimated 57% of TLS providers run either walk-in/in-person or drop-in/online clinics. In Napa County, there are no clinics. In Solano and Sonoma counties, there are online fair housing clinics but no clinics from eviction defense organizations. The remaining counties all feature one or more clinics. Providers underscored that for clinics to be effective they must be accessible to tenants; several best practices identified by practitioners include allowing tenants to access services without an appointment, offering in-person clinics to enable participation by tenants who do not have reliable internet access and locating clinics in areas that tenants can easily reach.

Walk-In/Drop-In Clinics: Almost all counties have at least one walk-in or drop-in option. In Solano and Sonoma counties, clinics are focused on fair housing rather than eviction-related issues.

- **In-Person Clinics:** Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties all feature one or more in-person clinic options. In the North Bay, Marin is the only county with an in-person clinic.
- **Geographic Access:** The accessibility of in-person clinics is a function of geographic distance and transportation options. Counties in the Bay Area differ dramatically by size and geographic features (e.g., bodies of water, mountains). Figure 7 shows the disparities in clinic density across counties, which in some cases is exacerbated by differences in transportation options and population density.

FIGURE 7

In-Person TLS Clinics by Geographic Area: 2024

Sources: BAHFA Survey of TLS Providers, US Census Bureau
Three organizations did not respond to this survey question, yielding a possible slight undercount.

County	Organizations that Provide In-Person Clinics	Number of Clinic Sites	Land Area (mi ²)	Land Area per Clinic (mi ²)
San Francisco	4	10	47	5
Alameda	3	7	737	105
Contra Costa	3	5	717	143
San Mateo	1	3	449	150
Marin	1	1	520	520
Santa Clara	2	2	1,291	646
Napa	0	0	752	—
Solano	0	0	822	—
Sonoma	0	0	1,575	—

Eviction Notice-Stage Services

Nearly all evictions in California are required to start with some form of written notice. At the most basic level, providing TLS at the notice stage prevents self-eviction and helps tenants understand their substantive and procedural rights. TLS providers reported that many vulnerable tenants do not understand the language in an eviction notice, which may be written in technical jargon and/or in their non-native language. Similarly, providers reported that some tenants are unaware of their right to a court eviction process and instead move out upon receiving an eviction notice — even if the notice is legally invalid. Clinics and other interactions with TLS providers at the notice stage can help tenants to identify their rights and options, including how to cure a breach of lease or address any underlying issues that led to the notice, and thereby prevent the situation from worsening into a court eviction.

Providers reported that intervention at the eviction notice stage can save resources, reduce stress for tenants and landlords, and create more favorable outcomes for all parties. Because eviction cases move quickly, TLS at this stage can help begin settlement negotiation and applications for rental assistance in ways that may resolve the case. If a case does proceed to court, providers reported that engaging at the eviction notice stage can help to prepare a tenant for a fast-moving procedure.

Eviction Trials and Settlement Negotiation

Trials are rare across the legal spectrum, and eviction cases are no exception. Providers reported that nearly all eviction cases (other than those resulting in default judgements) are resolved through settlements. Through a settlement negotiation, attorneys can achieve better terms for their clients whether the tenant is able to stay or must leave their home.

- **Creating “Pay and Stay” Agreements:** For evictions caused by nonpayment of rent — the most common cause of eviction — attorneys may be able to negotiate repayment plans that allow tenants to stay in their homes and enable landlords to receive the rent owed. Furthermore, tenant attorneys can ensure that tenants understand their obligations under such agreement, increasing the likelihood that tenants comply to the benefit of both parties.

- **Providing “Soft Landing” Terms for Move-Out:** If a tenant wants or needs to move, attorneys can often negotiate for more time to move out, permanent masking of the eviction record, a neutral reference and in some limited cases, relocation assistance. These conditions are meant to give the tenant a better chance to find suitable replacement housing and avoid homelessness.

In the Bay Area, a number of providers leverage limited-scope representation to increase the impact of their resources by providing same-day services at mandatory settlement conferences, a day when all the upcoming eviction cases are scheduled for a settlement negotiation as a prerequisite for trial. Mandatory settlement conferences are often considered co-beneficial for legal service providers and courts as they reduce costly and lengthy trial caseloads.

San Francisco has both broad and deep service offerings, likely due to its higher level of funding and tenant right to counsel. Almost all non-defaulted tenants in San Francisco facing eviction receive representation and about 75% receive full-scope representation. The remainder receive limited-scope representation at mandatory settlement conferences.

The availability of this service model depends on two distinct but related questions. The first is whether the local Superior Court mandates some form of settlement conference for eviction cases.²⁶ If so, the second question is whether local TLS providers are available to assist tenants at the settlement conference. Notably, while Solano County requires settlement conferences, the local eviction defense organization reported that they do not have the resources needed to provide same-day services to unrepresented tenants.

The Law Foundation of Silicon Valley previously operated a legal clinic at settlement conferences in Santa Clara County, but it was discontinued due to a decline in funding and post-pandemic staffing.

Tenant legal services at mandatory settlement conferences are currently only available in Alameda, Marin, San Francisco and San Mateo counties. Alameda, Marin and San Mateo providers offer full-scope representation to a smaller percentage of clients than San Francisco and provide limited-scope representation to most tenants who are unrepresented at their mandatory settlement conferences. Providers in these counties reported that this approach allows them to balance intensive, full-scope cases that lead to better outcomes with high-volume, light-touch services that help as many tenants as possible. With fewer resources than those in Alameda County, providers in Marin and San Mateo counties stretch their capacity further by recruiting **pro bono** private attorneys to assist tenants at mandatory settlement conferences.

Impact of Breadth Versus Depth on Case Outcomes

While light-touch programs like same-day services at mandatory settlement conferences allow providers to have a mitigating impact on as many cases as possible, data from several TLS providers shows that tenants who receive full-scope representation are 39% more likely to remain in their homes than tenants who receive limited-scope representation.²⁷

Providers in counties without mandatory settlement conferences do not have the same opportunities to efficiently reach unrepresented tenants on the same day in court. In Sonoma County, providers estimated that they served about one-third of the tenants who did not default. Contra Costa County providers reported serving slightly fewer.

Providers shared the consequences of not having adequate attorneys to represent tenants when they are attempting to negotiate settlements in court:

“We have seen unassisted tenants regularly waive basic due process rights and sign agreements that they do not understand, both of which cause tenants to be at higher risk of homelessness.”

— Alameda County provider

Rental Assistance and Nonpayment Eviction Cases

Most eviction cases are filed due to nonpayment of rent. Providers reported that rental assistance, when available and accessible in the short timeframe needed for eviction proceedings, is an important tool to help resolve nonpayment cases and keep tenants in their homes.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, significant funds from the federal government for emergency rental assistance made these resources available in every county for the first time. Providers said these resources prevented a “tsunami” of nonpayment evictions and displacement during the

pandemic when many people experienced the health impacts of COVID-19, lost jobs or had hours cut. Emergency rental assistance programs reduced or removed rental debts that would have otherwise been insurmountable while making landlords whole. However, these resources have waned and at the time of this report's publication face potential further cuts in the state and federal budgets.

To the extent that nonpayment evictions are rooted in fundamental economic conditions, providers acknowledged that a more holistic approach is needed — one that goes beyond legal services to include direct rental and other forms of financial assistance, income supplementation through public benefits and/or workforce development, and increasing the supply of permanently affordable housing to enable low-income renters to live more independent and financially stable lives. As referenced in the conclusion of this report, rental and other forms of assistance were not the focus of this research and therefore would be a potentially useful area for future inquiry.

Appendix B: Tenant Legal Services Staffing in the Region

Almost two-thirds (61%) of TLS staff across the Bay Area are attorneys, with a range of non-attorney support staff to complement the role of lawyers. While the availability of these non-attorney staff varies across jurisdictions, providers reported that they help increase attorney capacity and create a more holistic approach to supporting low-income tenant needs. These non-attorney roles include:

- **Outreach and Intake:** Outreach and intake staff augment and streamline the work of attorneys by informing residents about their rights and available resources and getting tenants scheduled for more in-depth legal counsel or services. These roles exist mainly in Alameda and San Francisco counties.
- **Legal Support Staff:** Law fellows, attorneys-in-training and paralegals assist attorneys in providing legal services and representation. These roles are most prevalent in Marin, San Francisco and San Mateo counties and least prevalent in Napa and Santa Clara.
- **Social Services:** Social workers and client advocates help tenants access services meant to promote stability and preserve housing, such as rental assistance and mental health services, and — if needed — relocate to new housing. These roles exist primarily in Alameda, San Francisco, Santa Clara and Sonoma counties.
- **Research and Policy Advocacy:** Policy specialists advocate for public policies and programs meant to promote housing stability for large numbers of renters through a system-wide rather than client-by-client approach. While one or more TLS providers in every county use staff time for policy analysis and advocacy, only two organizations, Legal Aid of Marin and Legal Aid of Sonoma County, dedicate positions to this work.

FIGURE 8

Number of TLS Staff by Role: 2024

Sources: BAHFA Survey of TLS Providers

Respondents were asked to provide the number of full-time equivalent employees at the time of the survey administration in summer 2024.

County	Managing, Supervising, or Directing Attorneys	Staff Attorneys	Paralegals	Social Workers	Policy Advocates	Other	Total Staff	% Attorneys / % Non-Attorneys	Attorneys Who Represent Tenants in Eviction Cases
Alameda	12.2	22.8	6.0	1.0	0.0	15.0	57.0	61% / 39%	24.3
Contra Costa	1.5	10.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	13.5	85% / 15%	11.0
Marin	1.3	2.7	3.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	9.0	44% / 56%	2.0
Napa	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	100% / 0%	1.0
San Francisco	17.5	49.0	22.0	7.5	0.0	10.0	106.0	63% / 37%	41.5
San Mateo	4.1	4.8	4.7	0.0	0.0	1.0	14.6	61% / 39%	7.3
Santa Clara	2.5	9.7	0.3	2.5	0.0	9.0	24.0	51% / 49%	8.5
Solano	1.0	4.2	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.2	72% / 28%	4.2
Sonoma	2.3	6.7	2.0	4.0	1.0	1.0	17.0	53% / 47%	7.0
All Counties	42.5	110.7	42.0	15.0	3.0	36.0	249.2	61% / 39%	106.8

Endnotes

- 1 The Bay Area Housing Finance Authority (BAHFA) was established by the California Legislature in 2019. See California Government Code section 64500 et seq.
- 2 Tenants often have three days to “pay” or “cure” a lease violation when they receive an eviction notice. Following the notice deadline, landlords can file an eviction lawsuit with the county Superior Court. Eviction lawsuits are accelerated proceedings that typically move through the court system in a matter of weeks, with a median duration of six weeks (including default judgments) in the Bay Area based on court records. This is significantly faster than other types of court cases, which often take years rather than weeks.
- 3 National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel. (November 2024). [Eviction Representation Statistics for Landlords and Tenants Absent Special Intervention](#).
- 4 The companion report as part of BAHFA’s Bay Area Eviction Study, **Evictions in the Nine-County Bay Area**, attempted to quantify legal representation rates in eviction lawsuits across the region. In San Mateo County, only 4% of tenants facing eviction received full-scope representation compared to 93% of landlords. In San Francisco, the only jurisdiction in the Bay Area with a tenant right to counsel, the discrepancy was lower but still persisted with 45% of tenants represented compared to 96% of landlords. While the quantitative data from other counties was not reliable enough to include in the report, TLS providers consistently reported significant representation gaps for tenants in every county within the region.
- 5 Consults and brief services include providing legal advice; reviewing and helping tenants respond to notices and contracts; drafting letters; and providing other short-term, limited assistance. Due to the way providers reported case data, it was not possible to distinguish between more extensive representation rates that could vary between “limited scope” and “full scope” representation; as such, these different levels of representation are grouped together. Such “representation” services may include representing a tenant in a mediation or negotiations aimed at avoiding the filing of an eviction

case; representing a tenant in subsidy termination proceedings; and/or defending against an eviction case. There is some variation in nomenclature and services offered in each county and by each legal service organization, which is part of the challenge with regional-scale analysis that this study seeks to overcome.

- 6 In certain instances, other statewide groups such as the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment, Disability Rights California, and Housing and Economic Rights Advocates provide support to Bay Area tenants. But since they do not form a core or consistent part of the eviction defense ecosystem in any county, they were not included in this study.
- 7 Contacts in Napa County participated in the survey but did not provide a full review of the findings.
- 8 Most state-funded TLS providers are required to serve clients at or below 80% of Area Median Income, and most federally funded providers are required to serve clients at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. However, there are limited exceptions to this focus on lower-income renters. For instance, certain population-specific providers treat other factors, such as age or disability, as their main eligibility requirement, rather than income. And in San Francisco, the tenant right to counsel program mandates that providers serve any tenant facing eviction, regardless of income. Still, in practice, an estimated 95% of tenants served through San Francisco's program are low-income, and 83% are extremely low-income. See: San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development. (2024). [Tenant Right to Counsel \(TRC\): 2024 Update to Land Use and Transportation Committee](#), p. 13.
- 9 There are some private attorneys who charge a fee for service and law firms who represent Bay Area tenants on a **pro bono** basis. However, they only represent a small percentage of the services available to low-income tenants, so they were excluded from this study.
- 10 Respondents were asked to provide an estimated number of households served per year as of summer 2024. These estimates represent an estimate for 2023, the year prior to when the survey was administered.
- 11 Even in San Francisco, however, tenant legal service providers reported gaps in the availability of services to meet the need. Providers reported that San Francisco has not been able to consistently fund its right to counsel program at the level required to provide full-scope representation to all tenants facing eviction. Further, eviction filings

have continued to increase in the period from July 2024 to June 2025 while funding and staffing have remained flat, meaning that this service gap has likely increased since the survey was administered. Local providers reported that, while they can serve a significant percentage of tenants facing a court eviction, they also must deprioritize non-eviction housing cases and preventative services due to capacity challenges.

- 12 For July 2024–June 2025, San Francisco allocated approximately \$18 million for eviction defense through the tenant right to counsel program and an additional \$3 million for other civil legal services. The latter included funding for both non-eviction housing legal matters, like habitability and harassment, and non-housing legal matters, like worker and consumer issues. Staff were not able to disaggregate the funding for housing legal matters from non-housing legal matters, so the overall funding for TLS from San Francisco represents a slight overestimate.
- 13 There are a few, limited caveats. LSC-funded providers can serve undocumented tenants if the case is directly related to preventing or obtaining relief from domestic violence or other specified crimes. In addition, these providers can serve mixed-status households so long as a resident with status is a named party in the case. However, this rule does not apply if the resident with status is a minor, as is the case in many first-generation immigrant households.
- 14 Across the region, over 75% of providers reported being willing to take on non-eviction cases, which include rental voucher or subsidy issues, rent increase or other rent program matters, discrimination/ reasonable accommodation, habitability, harassment, and retaliation. In practice, however, many providers reported that they rarely take on these cases because their scarce capacity is prioritized for eviction cases.
- 15 See endnote 3 for more information about each type of service.
- 16 Rent stabilized and subsidized tenancies are considered particularly high stakes because, if they are displaced, low-income tenants are less likely to be able to find affordable replacement housing.
- 17 The mandate to provide full-scope representation to every tenant in an eviction case operates at a system scale. But individual tenant right to counsel providers are not required to go against their eligibility guidelines. For instance, if a provider is barred from representing undocumented tenants, then that client will be referred to another provider who can assist them. Furthermore, the mandate only applies

if there is capacity among providers, which, given inadequate funding, there often is not. As a result, Eviction Defense Collaborative uses a vulnerability scoring system to determine who will receive full-scope representation across all tenant right to counsel organizations. Tenants scoring lower may receive more limited legal assistance.

- 18 Client data systems require protections to ensure personally identifiable information is safe, and sharing data requires express authorization from tenants for limited sharing of information with other providers.
- 19 Ratcliff, M. (March 29, 2024). [Social Workers, Burnout, and Self-Care](#). Delaware Journal of Public Health; Lamm, S. & Ausmus, S. (2023). [Vicarious Trauma in the Department of Social Services Human Services Workforce](#). Virginia Department of Social Services.
- 20 Low-income is defined as up to 80% of Area Median Income (AMI) and is based on the midpoint of a specific geography's income distribution, meaning that half of all households in that area earn above the AMI, and half earn below it. In the Bay Area for a four-person household, this ranges from approximately \$91,500 in Solano County to \$149,100 in San Francisco, Marin County and San Mateo County.
- 21 American Bar Association. (November 18, 2024). [Profile of the Legal Profession: Wages](#).
- 22 Hanson, Melanie. (October 1, 2024). [Average Law School Debt](#). Education Data Initiative.
- 23 Fischer, W., Rice, D., & Mazarra, A. (December 5, 2019). [Research Shows Rental Assistance Reduces Hardship and Provides Platform to Expand Opportunity for Low-Income Families](#). Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- 24 Philips, D. and Sullivan, J. (April 2023). [Do homeless prevention programs prevent homelessness? Evidence from a randomized controlled trial](#). University of Notre Dame Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities.
- 25 Numerous efforts are underway across the region to prevent homelessness through targeted financial assistance, legal support and case management. Destination: Home has led this work in Santa Clara County since 2017, and in 2023 the University of Notre Dame published the results of a randomized control trial showing the efficacy of their program. A similar program, Keep People Housed, run by Bay Area Community Services (BACS), has spread from its initial pilot in Oakland to multiple locations throughout the region, and published the results from a program evaluation in 2025 by the University of

Pennsylvania and Stanford University. San Francisco also has a robust homelessness prevention program administered through their housing department and uses the online prioritization tool created by BACS. Many other local rental assistance programs, guaranteed income pilot programs and homelessness prevention efforts have been undertaken throughout the region to help prevent displacement and homelessness; however, many of these programs do not have ongoing funding streams.

- 26** The term “mandatory settlement conference” is not used consistently in the Superiors Courts across all counties; some version exists in some counties with different names and variations in procedure. A key distinction is whether the conference is truly “mandatory” — in some Superior Courts, judges encourage settlement negotiations but without a mandatory conference that serves as a prerequisite for trial.
- 27** The TLS case data demonstrate correlation but do not prove causation. There is a potential that application of prioritization criteria could lead attorneys to offer full scope representation to the “best” cases that are more likely to result in preserving tenancies. This analysis includes data from Alameda and San Francisco counties, and in San Francisco decisions about providing full- or limited-scope representation are not based on the merits of the case. Regardless, these data show that the availability of legal services helps position tenants in meritorious cases to retain their homes.



ASSOCIATION OF BAY AREA GOVERNMENTS
METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Bay Area Housing Finance Authority

Bay Area Metro Center
375 Beale Street, Suite 800 | San Francisco, CA 94105

Tel: 415.778.6700

Email: info@bayareametro.gov

Web: mtc.ca.gov/bahfa