EHOC's 2021 Annual Impact Report

Celebrating 30 years of fighting against housing discrimination!

Metropolitan St. Louis Equal Housing & Opportunity Council
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# Table of Contents

- Letter from the ED ........................................ 1
- EHOC and our Impact ..................................... 2
- Counseling Highlights ................................... 5
- Investigation Highlights ................................. 7
- Eviction Defense Highlights ............................ 9
- EHOC 2021 Financials ................................. 10
- Support our Work ........................................ 11
We are both excited and cautious as EHOC expands our programming to be even more responsive to the immediate needs of our community in wake of recent economic changes due to the pandemic.

Over the past 30 years, EHOC has primarily operated as a Fair Housing organization. At its inception, EHOC provided essential advocacy and testing to uncover and address violations of the Fair Housing Act with a team of five people. Today, we help thousands of people all over the Metropolitan area with evictions, addressing environmental justice issues, landlord-tenant disputes, and legal assistance for renters with over 14 staff members.

Temporary government funding has allowed us to more than double our staff with attorneys and client advocates. However, the long-term cost of employee health insurance, inflation administration, overhead and competitive salaries isn't sustainable without generous unrestricted funding.

That is where you come in, by supporting EHOC you can make a difference in our ability to chip away at systemic segregation and discrimination in the Metropolitan St. Louis region at the same time as stabilizing families in crisis in the Metro area. Your gifts will allow us to provide living wages to our staff and give long-term stability to our programming. Thank you in advance for your gifts, endowments, bequeathings, and priceless prayers/thoughts for our continued success in our Mission of equity in housing, economic opportunity, and family wholeness.

Will Jordan, Executive Director
About EHOC

The Metropolitan St. Louis Equal Housing and Opportunity Council (EHOC) seeks to ensure equal access to housing and places of public accommodation for all people through education, counseling, investigation, and enforcement.

Founded in 1992, EHOC is the only private, not-for-profit fair housing enforcement agency working to end illegal housing discrimination in the Metropolitan St. Louis area. We operate throughout Missouri and Illinois.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to highlight EHOC’s key moments in 2021 in fighting against housing discrimination.

We hope this report shines a light on the work locally in St. Louis, MO, as we join forces with the community to eradicate housing discrimination.

Staff

Ch. Will Jordan, Executive Director
Kalila Jackson, Director of Legal Services/Senior Staff Attorney
Katina Combs, Testing Director
Marissa Cohen, Director of Education, Outreach, and Advocacy
Niya Foster, Fair Housing Specialist
Glenn Burleigh, Community Engagement Specialist
Malissa Shaw, Centreville Program Assistant
Kara Duncan, Business/Program Manager

Eviction Defense Program (EDP)
Thomas Pearson, Staff Attorney
Ellie Stitzer, Legal Fellow
Kennedy Moehrs Gardner, Staff Attorney
Keith Rose, Paralegal/Program Specialist
Melissa Pashia, Housing Resource Manager
Clarice Lipsey, Tenant Advocate
Rachel Bowie, Intake Specialist
Emma Grady-Pawl, Intake Specialist
Mintha Thomas, Intake Specialist

Board of Directors

Nate Johnson (President)
Dennis Lavallee (Vice President)
Vernon Mitchell
Aimee Wehmeier (Treasurer)
Gail Brown
Eric Madkins (Secretary)
Ed Wartts
Valerie Bell
Valerie Marion
Sam Henderson
Jeanette Mott Oxford
Ben Bozicevic
Zachary Schmook
In 2021, EHOC...  
ASSISTED 1,124 CLIENTS WITH HOUSING ISSUES

includes eviction prevention, landlord/tenant and Fair Housing intakes

Distributed approximately $45,000 in rental assistance funds to clients in the City of St. Louis in order to maintain or obtain stable housing

EHOC conducted 60 Fair Housing workshops, educating a total of 607 community members and partners

EHOC provided legal information and self-advocacy specific to eviction defense for 460 tenants facing eviction or at risk of eviction
Equal access to housing means everyone will have a place to call home. When people face housing discrimination, that opportunity gets stolen away.

The **Fair Housing Act (1968)** protects people facing housing discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, and families with children ages 18 and under.

For many people, equal access to housing is riddled with barriers like challenges from previous eviction records, and the lack of quality, safe, and affordable housing options.

In 2021, **57% of callers** presented challenges with their landlords, while about **43% of callers** believed they experienced discrimination based on one or more of the protected classes.
When contacting EHOC, callers choose if the call is related to housing discrimination, a landlord-tenant issue, or a threat of eviction. Often, people calling for landlord-tenant issues may also unknowingly be facing housing discrimination.

**St. Louis City vs. St. Louis County**

EHOC operates throughout the Metropolitan St. Louis area. In 2021, over half of the calls were from St. Louis City and County. The "other" callers were from surrounding counties like Jefferson County (2%), St. Charles County (4%), and others like Madison County, and St.Clair County.

Calls from the discrimination hotline are categorized by the type of complaint based on the seven federally protected classes; Race, Color, National Origin, Religion, Sex (gender identity and sexual orientation), Disability, and Family status.

Disability and race discrimination remain the top complaints received locally and nationwide.

**Fair Housing Complaints by the Protected Classes**

**How were they connected to EHOC?**

Our community partnerships are an important aspect of our work! The majority of our clients in 2021 were referred through community agencies!
Our counseling program focuses on **educating and empowering callers** to know their rights and **use self-advocacy tools** with their landlords/housing providers. In some cases, the staff attorney may represent the caller facing housing discrimination. In other instances, we may assist the caller with filing the complaint with HUD or with a state or local agency such as The St. Louis City Civil Rights Enforcement Agency (CREA).

In 2021 EHOC received a call from a resident of **Lincoln County MO**, that identified as a **person with a disability**. Prior to calling, he made multiple requests to his landlord for a handicapped parking spot due to mobility issues. After months of asking and not seeing any results, he **contacted EHOC in October 2021** and explained the obstacles he faced while accessing his home; e.g. uneven ground, loose gravel, and no handrails in common areas. After our enforcement team spoke with him, they informed him of his Fair Housing rights and wrote a letter to the landlord on his behalf. Under the Fair Housing Act, housing providers must allow **reasonable accommodations and modifications** for a person with a disability.

The letter requested a **reasonable accommodation for a handicapped parking spot and to install handrails**. A month later, EHOC received a call from the landlord stating both requests were granted and completed. After following up with the caller to confirm, the case was successfully closed with a positive outcome!

*The landlord may deny a request that creates an unreasonable administrative or financial burden, but must offer other alternatives to accommodate the individual.*
The Testing Program is a method used to uncover housing discrimination. This method uses a controlled procedure to expose differential treatment in the quality, content, and amount of information or services given to home-seekers by landlords, real estate agents, leasing agents, and lenders. Volunteer testers are also compensated for their time.

EHOC’s Investigation Department helps show where discrimination is happening toward a specific protected class by conducting investigations in response to complaints and, systemic investigations to proactively prevent housing discrimination from occurring.

EHOC conducted tests in 2021

EHOC recruited Volunteer testers in 2021

Help us expand our reach by signing up to become a tester!!

Testers must be 21 years or older, able to pass a criminal background check, have reliable transportation, and have great writing skills. Reasonable accommodations are made for testers with disabilities. Testers of all backgrounds are needed.

Contact Katina Combs, Testing Director, if you are interested in becoming a tester.

testing@ehoc-stl.org
Investigation Success Story!

In March of 2020, after a survey of newly built apartment buildings in St. Louis, EHOC filed a complaint with HUD because of numerous accessibility issues with the Grand Flats development. Examples of the accessibility issues spotted included the lack of required accessible parking spaces and numerous inaccessible amenities such as the pool, storage lockers, and closets.

Under the Fair Housing Act, all multi-family housing developments built after March 13, 1991, must meet the 7 Accessibility Requirements.

As a result of the complaint filed, The Grand Flats Apartments has agreed to take steps to correct the accessibility issues. It will cost approximately $50,000.00 to bring the property into compliance with the Fair Housing Act. They have also agreed to participate in a Fair Housing Training.

Fair Housing and Accessibility

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The Eviction Defense Program (EDP) began out of the need to address the pending housing crisis many faced due to the pandemic.

The EDP began in the Fall of 2020 when EHOC received CARES Act funds. Since then, the EDP has been providing assistance to people who are facing threats of eviction, support in completing rental assistance applications, assistance with housing searches and relocations, and legal representation in court.

In one case, the EDP assisted someone who contacted EHOC because her landlord threatened to evict her. At the time, her housing voucher (section 8) had been discharged from the program. As a person whose only source of income was a fixed monthly disability check, she was placed in a frightening situation because she knew she could not afford to pay market-rate rent. Because of her disability, she was at high risk for contracting COVID and was unable to work in order to increase her income.

When she called, the EDP team was able to stop the eviction, get her rental assistance, and give her time and assistance with finding a new home suitable for her mobility needs. In collaboration with the Fair Housing team, we were also able to request a reasonable accommodation with her new landlord for her service animal to be allowed.

Afterward, the EDP team provided case management support and assisted with having her voucher successfully reinstated, in addition to receiving utility assistance and other community support. Finally, the EDP provided funds for the security deposit needed to move into her new unit. The Affordable Housing Trust Fund allowed our client not only to avoid eviction— but become stably housed in a rental she can maintain with her current income!
Our 2021 Financials
Because we are careful with your gifts
For more information about EHOC's financials view our 990

How EHOC's Work is Funded
*Total 2021 Revenue: $1,145,449

- Federal Grants: 43%
- MO Local/State Grants: 35%
- Corporate/Business: 7%
- PPP Forgiven: 6%
- Program Fees: 4%
- Foundations: 3%
- Individual Donors: 1%
- IL Local/State Grants: 0%

Largest Areas of Expense:

- Occupancy Expenses: $794,672 (68%)
- Insurance: $74,261 (6%)
- Program Expenses: $54,416 (5%)

Total 2021 Expenses: $1,166,658

Because we are careful with your gifts

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How Can You Support our Work?

Each department at EHOC is crucial to the collective success of our team. Building partnerships with local agencies and providing referrals and advocacy from multiple standpoints is what gives the callers the best outcomes in their own state of crisis. Without the support of our funders, this work would not be possible.

Currently, EHOC is funded primarily through federal HUD funding although we also receive state and local grants, and foundation grants. However, individual donations only make up 1.4% of our revenue. We know to ensure the sustainability of our organization we must increase our private donor pool.

For that reason, we ask you to consider becoming a donor to sustain our work and ensure we see our mission come to fruition:

...that all people will have equal access to housing and places of public accommodation!

Visit our website for more ways to support EHOC: https://ehocstl.org/get-involved/

DONATE ✫ VOLUNTEER ✫ INTERN ✫ EVENTS
Special thanks to...

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