

PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS OF EVICTIONS: MODELING THE COSTS FOR LANDLORDS, TENANTS, AND SOCIETY

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BACKGROUND

In the United States, more than 13% of renters experience a formal or informal eviction in their lifetime¹. Forced moves contribute to a decline in job status, mental and physical health, material possessions, safety, social networks, housing aid, and neighborhood stability². Previous research has explored the risk factors, causes, and costs to those burdened by evictions. However, the costs of evictions incurred by all stakeholders involved in the process of evictions and homelessness remain largely unexplored. The homeownership rate in New Haven is less than 30%, and more than 52% of households are 'cost-burdened,' meaning more than 30% of income "is spent on housing costs associated with owning or renting a home."³ Thus, this project set out to analyze the contributing burdens of costs within New Haven, Connecticut.

METHODS

We performed key stakeholder interviews with staff at local homeless shelters (n=2), legal assistance associations (n=3), apartment-based social workers (n=4), a court mediator (n=1), community officials (n=2), and two previously evicted tenants (n=2). Semi-structured interview guides were developed, specific to participants' role in the eviction process. Convenience sampling resulted in respondents identified by via personal or professional connections, cold-calling, and emailing stakeholders in New Haven, or by advertisement of the ongoing study.

OBJECTIVES

We aimed to create a comprehensive framework of costs incurred to tenants, landlords, and localities through the process of eviction. We also aimed to map service provision and utilization for previously-evicted individuals.

KEY FINDINGS

- Nine cost categories were identified through existing studies and analyses of the interviews we conducted: (1) Provision of Counsel; (2) Affordable Housing Replacement; (3) Homeless Shelters; (4) Unsheltered Homeless; (5) Services for children (education, juvenile justice, welfare); (6) Provision of Welfare and Social Services to Adults; (7) Unenforced Rent Laws and Regulation; (8) Excess eviction cases due to uncontested landlords; and (9) Formal eviction logistics. Future research assessing and analyzing costs will work to ascertain monetary amounts associated with each category.
- Greater communication and collaboration between entities involved in providing services throughout the eviction process would help legal and social service organizations more efficiently achieve shared goals. Interviews indicated divergent understandings of the processes of eviction and homelessness, and called for collaboration to meet the goals of providers and the needs of at-risk individuals.
- The pathway framework (Figure 1) shows the complexity of the eviction process in New Haven.

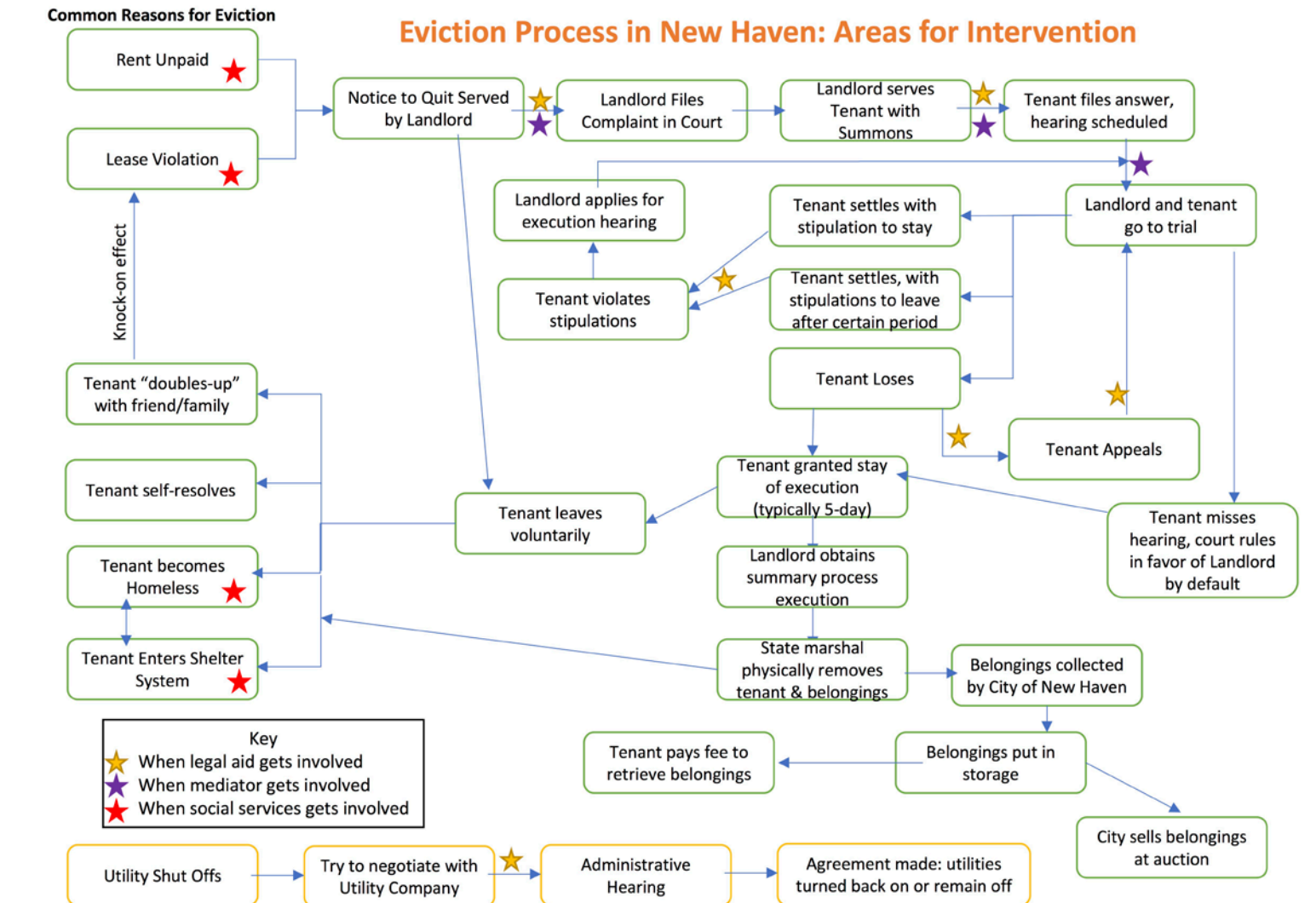
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through our work this semester, we captured a number of perspectives of parties who are affected by the eviction process. Additionally, utilizing both prior research and the insight from our interviews, we identified unique city-wide categories of costs during the eviction process. In future studies, the framework outlined by our team could be used to identify key points at which costs are incurred by the various stakeholders, and to develop targeted interventions within New Haven.

LIMITATIONS

Time and feasibility constraints necessitated completing only one-to-two interviews per particular 'stakeholder perspective.' As such, our data collection and analyses did not reach complete saturation, and future studies should aim to interview landlords, judges, and state marshals, among other stakeholders. Ultimately, our project just begins to scrape the surface of identifying factors in a cost framework for evictions. Future cost analysis will benefit from a systematic approach, additional subject area knowledge, and familiarity and access to networks of stakeholders in the locality of interest.

Figure 1. Pathways of the formal and informal process of eviction in New Haven Connecticut. Stars denote where interventions take place according to data gathered from this current project.



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