

Coalition Working Groups to Support Implementation and Ongoing Organizing

At our monthly coalition meetings, we break out into small working groups focused on different aspects of our implementation campaign and ongoing Right to Counsel Organizing. These include:

The implementation working group involves dozens of representatives from almost all legal services organizations providing RTC legal representation as well as tenant organizing groups, disability advocacy organizations, and homelessness advocacy groups. This group is focused on ensuring the roll-out of right to counsel reflects that a new right has been created and helps create the necessary culture shift in Housing Court and the tenant community. It also works to ensure that the implementation of RTC, centers the experiences of tenants and maximizes tenant access to legal representation, including for Limited English Proficient tenants and tenants with disabilities. The group stays abreast of implementation challenges and also makes recommendations to Court officials and the City about ways to improve implementation and achieve best practices.

The tenant attorney pipeline working group is made up of various legal services attorneys from across the city. There are about one dozen members of the working group representing several of the metropolitan area law schools as well as a number of the legal services provider organizations. The focus of the pipeline working group is on building a cohort of highly qualified and effective advocates and supervisors to implement the right to counsel. To do this, we have been focusing on promoting greater attention to housing rights advocacy in law school instruction, including promoting more clinical and doctrinal offerings, and changing attitudes in law schools so that becoming a housing rights advocate is seen as an exciting, transformative and desirable career choice. We have also been focusing on the need for excellent supervision so that the provider organizations have the capacity to hire new attorneys for the work.

The tenant organising working group supports and coordinates the work of community based partners to increase tenant education and awareness, develop leaders, evaluate implementation and combat landlord harassment. Organizing groups are targeting distressed buildings for outreach and conducting know your rights workshops in buildings. Each group just conducted successful town hall meetings in each borough, educating tenants about their rights and how they can use RTC as an organising tool. Going forward, groups will be organizing tenant associations to combat landlord harassment and will continue to conduct broad based outreach.

The RTC national expansion working group does not have regular meetings, but involves dozens of members of the coalition who have contacts and relationships with people in the field in other cities. We keep track of the requests for support we get, help coordinate responses, set up calls with other cities and also delegate who can visit groups, go to conferences when possible, etc.