

Tool 3.1

RTCNYC Coalition

Who we are:

We are made up of law schools, legal services organizations, tenant advocacy groups and tenant organizing groups. We are working together to achieve justice in our city's housing courts so that the housing courts are a place of fairness, justice and equity. We do not support forced displacement that can and should be prevented and we believe that safe and affordable housing is central to our city's future. We are working on establishing a right in the City of New York for New Yorkers to be represented in housing court by licensed, qualified and experienced providers, when they go to housing court to defend their rights. While we work with elected officials, our coalition is independent.

Who can be a member:

Any organization that does direct advocacy and/or organizing around issues of housing and displacement in NYC and is committed to building tenant power in NYC. Members are asked to send a representative (staff, leader or member) to monthly planning meetings and to help coordinate events. Members have decision-making power.

Who can be a supporter:

A supporter can be an individual or an organization that cannot commit time or resources to the regular meetings or planning of events, but supports the Coalition's goals. Supporters can come to event, help advertise events and in general offer public support for tenants' right to have an attorney to defend themselves in housing court. Supporters do not have decision making power.

How we make decisions:

Decisions are made by general consensus at our monthly meetings. We agree that we will defer to membership based organizations on questions about campaign plans and membership participation (like press conferences, etc.) recognizing that membership groups will do most of the work

Decisions that directly impact the lives of tenants:

The Coalition is committed to engaging tenant groups and tenants about issues that directly affect them. While some tenants and tenant groups may not be official members of the coalition, we recognize that we need their expertise to move forward with important decisions, including the legal services model proposed by the Coalition. We will therefore hold brainstorming sessions/forums and/or public forums to ensure this happens.

For the development of the Legal Services Model specifically, we will: hold a brainstorming session/forum for tenants and tenant groups that we will do wide outreach for in order to maximize tenant participation. We will ask key tenant groups to attend and to go back to their members in order to give us further input on the model.

Coalition Structure:

The Coalition has 3 Committees:

Research and Data Committee: This committee is responsible for working to gather data to show the real impact that evictions have on tenants and the overall health of our city (human rights, race, gender, age, disability, school performance, health, crime, affordability, neighborhood stability). This committee is currently (January 2015) working on putting together a report from our forum as well as working to put together a counter-report to IBO's (Independent Budget Office) report. We want to show that Right to Counsel ("RTC") is a good investment and saves the city money.

Community Organizing Committee: This committee is dedicated to developing the overall campaign strategy for the RTC campaign and is specifically focusing on getting more base-building groups to the table at meetings, gathering tenants' stories and profiles, coordinating actions and events that highlight the crisis such as targeting certain landlords as the face of the system.

Legal Services Model Committee: This committee is responsible for bringing together the various legal services providers (who have expertise in tenant representation and who largely would stand to benefit from RTC) with community-based organizations and tenant advocates. This committee is tasked with drafting a proposal of what RTC could look like if we could envision and realize our ideal model.

In an effort not to have too many meetings, the Coalition meetings are 2-3 hours, where at least half of the time is spent in committee break out groups. The Coalition meets monthly (sometimes more often as needed). Right now we are meeting in the morning but we might need to potentially explore meeting once every 2 or 3 months in the evening. The other time is spent on report backs and general business items. Committee chairs are responsible for attending all Coalition meetings, preparing for the breakout groups, compiling notes and sending the notes to the Coalition Coordinator. The Chairs are responsible also for doing work in-between the meetings to make sure the work of the committee gets done and is ready for the next meeting.