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# Housing and Conciliation Court Self Help Clinic

First Year Evaluation

2010

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## **Acknowledgments**

The implementation of the Self Help Clinic was made possible by the following individuals:

- Michael Upton, Court Manager, Second Judicial District Court
- Sara Schwebs, Staff Attorney, Minnesota Justice Foundation
- Ramsey County Law Library Staff: Sara Galligan, Michael Florin, Paul Singh, and Patrick Wallace
- Keri Zehm, Research Analyst, Second Judicial District Court

Additionally, we would like to recognize the pro bono attorneys and the Minnesota Justice Foundation student volunteers for donating their time and expertise to pro se litigants.

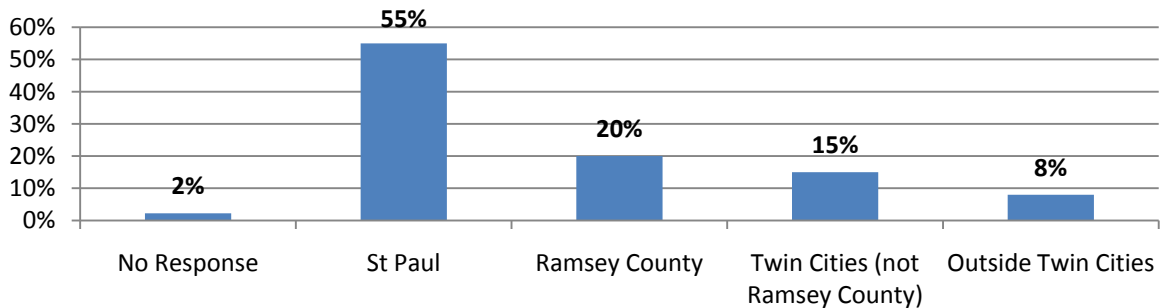
## Program Description

In July, 2009 the Second Judicial District, the Ramsey County Law Library, the Ramsey County Bar Association, and the Minnesota Justice Foundation collaborated to create a legal clinic to assist pro se litigants with Housing and Conciliation Court cases. The clinic is staffed by law students and volunteer attorneys. The law students assist with the intakes and the volunteer attorneys provide consultations. The goal of the clinic is to help visitors become more prepared when they come to court and/or to provide them with appropriate information so that they can make informed decisions on whether to continue the issue in court. The clinic is located in the Law Library on the 18<sup>th</sup> floor of the downtown courthouse. Visitors are seen on a first-come, first served basis on Tuesday afternoons from 1-4 pm.

## Intake Form

There were 349 intakes completed from July, 2009 to September, 2010. A majority of the visitors (75%) were from Ramsey County and more than half (55%) were from the city of St Paul.

### Location



### Demographics

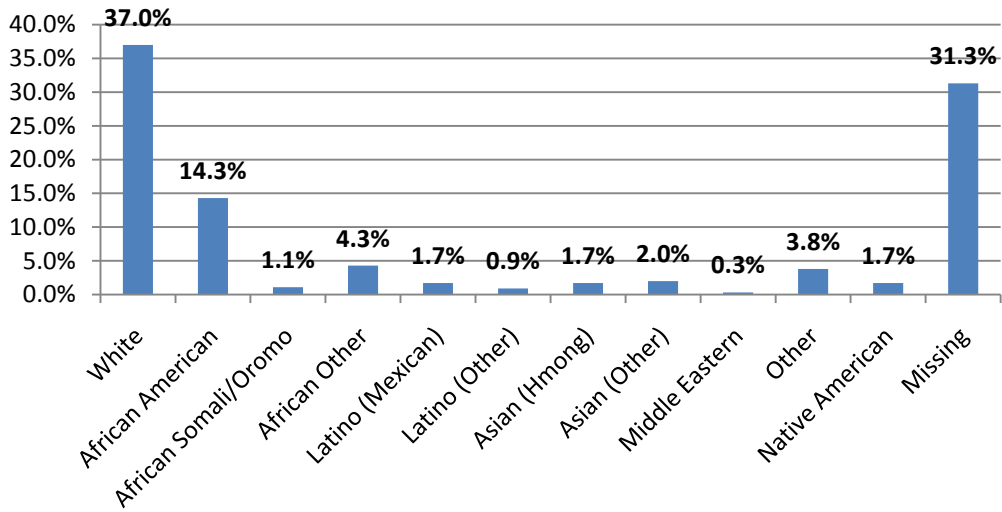
Most of the visitors to the clinic were U.S. citizens and there were no differences based on gender. More than one-third (37%) were white; however, race was missing in nearly a third of the intake forms. However, providing demographic information is optional.

#### U.S. Citizen

Yes	90.0%
No	4.6%
No Answer	5.4%

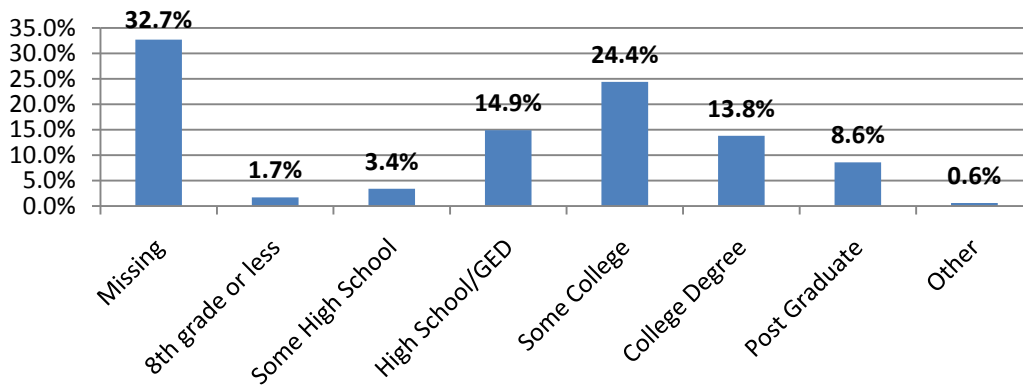
#### Gender

Men	47.0%
Women	47.0%
No Answer	6.0%



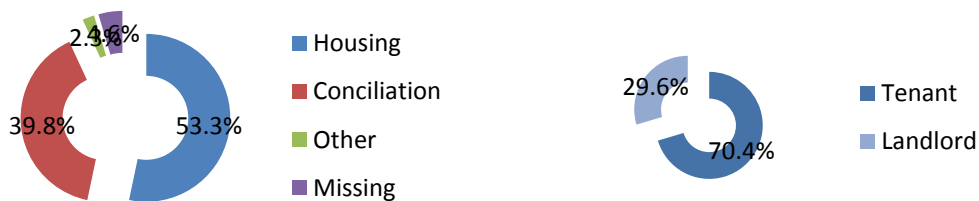
### Education Level

Very few visitors (5.1%) had less than a high school diploma/GED. Similar to race, nearly one-third of the intake forms did not provide education information.



### Case Type

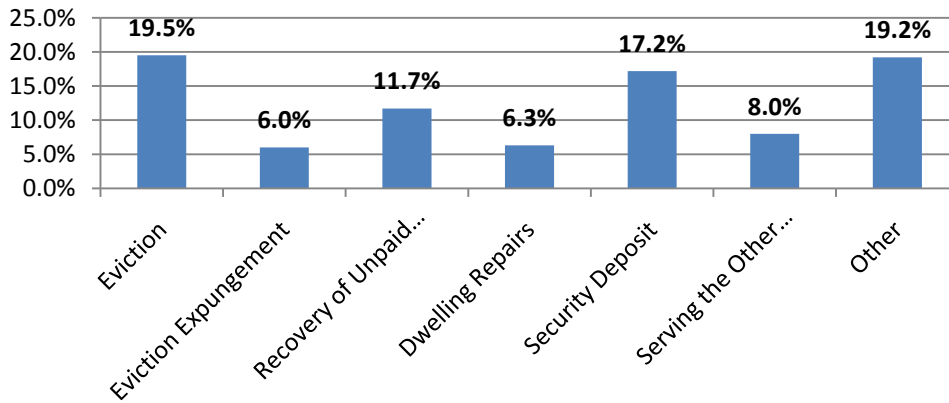
More than half (53%) of the cases were for Housing Court and many of them (71%) were brought to the Clinic by the tenants.



### What is your claim/lawsuit about?

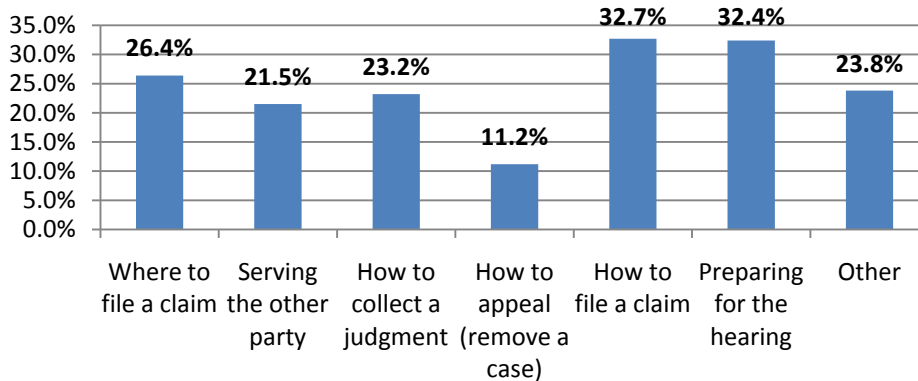
The most common reasons for Housing Court were Evictions, Security Deposits, and “Other.” Example of issues from the “other” category include: preparing a new lease, obtaining items from the rental location, motor vehicle accident, tenants who are harassed.

#### Housing Court



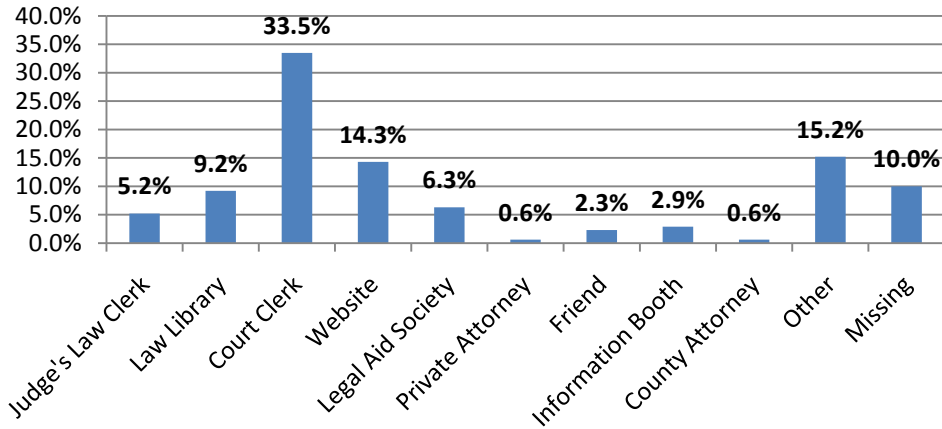
#### Conciliation Court

The most common reasons for Conciliation Court were How to file a claim, preparing for the hearing, and where to file a claim. Examples of issues from the “other” category include: harassment issue, tax issues, recovery of property after a divorce, and responding to a complaint.



**How did you hear about the HCC Self-Help Center?**

There were multiple ways that visitors heard about the Self-Help Center. Examples of the “other” category include: previous visitor, form attached to eviction notice, newspaper, Hennepin County, flyer, and Southern MN Regional Legal Resources.



**Interpreter needs**

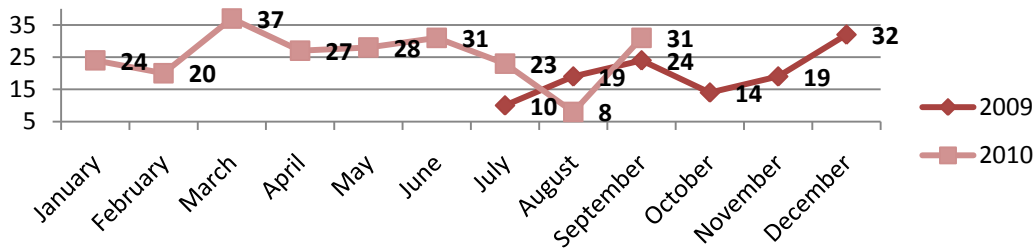
There were only three visitors who indicated that they needed an interpreter (<1%). However, it is not clear as to whether the Clinic is promoted in non-English venues.

**Have you talked with an attorney about this matter yet?**

Only 18% of the visitors indicated that they had talked with an attorney prior to visiting the Clinic.

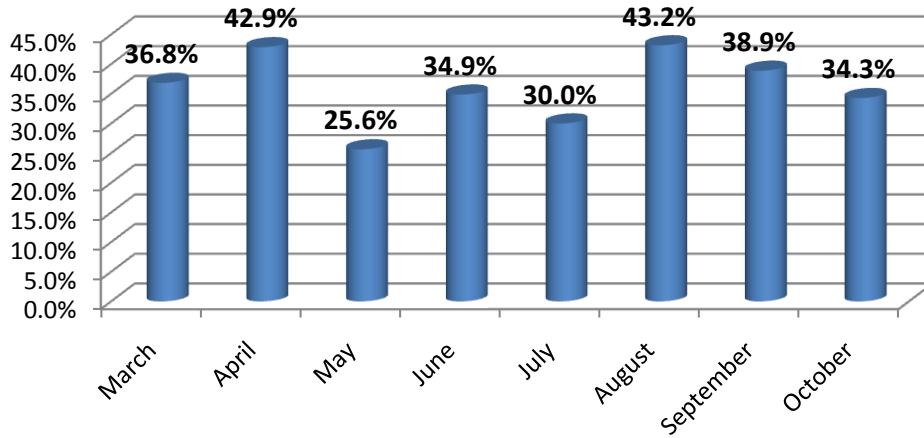
**Court Visitors**

In 2009, there were 118 users of the Self Help Clinic and there were 229 from January to September, 2010.



### Court Filings

One goal of the clinic is to prevent unnecessary filings in the court by helping visitors make informed decisions about their issues. In March, 2010, data were collected on the number of visitors who filed a case after visiting the clinic. Overall, less than half of the visitors file a case in court.

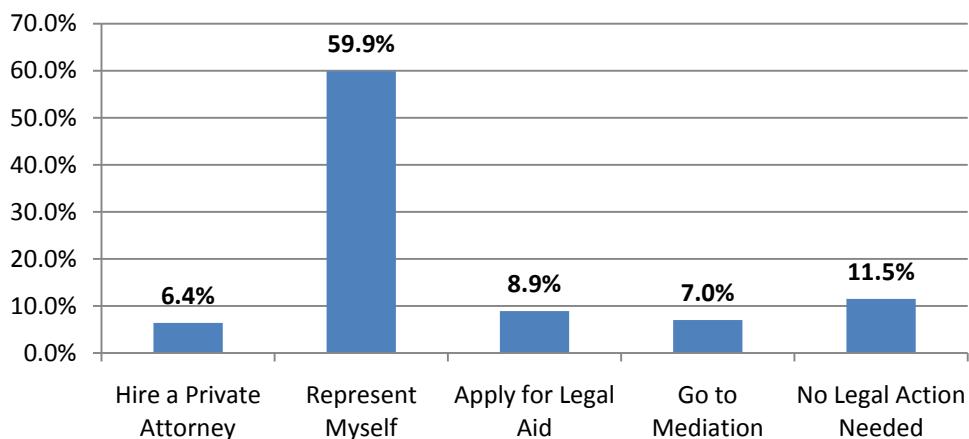


## Client Surveys

There were 157 visitors who completed surveys about their experiences. Overall, they provided positive feedback.

Did the lawyers answer your questions?	
Percent who answered "yes."	87.9%
Did you understand the lawyer's answers?	
Percent who answered "yes."	93.6%
Do you have a better understanding of your legal rights in this situation?	
Percent who answered "yes."	89.8%
After meeting the lawyer, do you know what steps to take to resolve your legal issue?	
Percent who answered "yes."	87.3%

### How did you decide to resolve your legal issue?



Were you told about other services that might be helpful?	
Percent who answered "yes."	70.1%
Would you tell a friend or family member about this service?	
Percent who answered "yes."	94.9%

### Open Ended Responses

#### What could be done to improve this public service?

[Would suggest] to friends that this is a very good public service
Advertise more publicly.
Allow more time to review case.

Allow those with similar issues to sit in with the primary customer's permission, they would have questions answered faster.
Appreciate the service being available.
Available one morning and one evening per week. This service is appreciated!
Bryan was great!
Caring help even when its not a subject you care to deal with.
Change the system.
Continue with the good work in progress.
Cover areas other than Housing and Conciliation (debt collection and district court).
Earlier hours
Everything was great.
Find more lawyers.
Good, Helpful
Great job, very helpful and attentive.
Great service!
Great service!
Great service!
Have an attorney who knows about conciliation court. I knew as much as she did. She wasn't much help. She is a family law attorney. You need a conciliation court attorney to help people.
Have attys show up!
Have brochures and let conciliation judge [... and mediation people ...] know this is available.
Have more attorneys available. It is a great and helpful service. Staff was courteous and respectful.
Huge help!
I don't have enough experience with legal issues so it would be hard for me to have any input on what should be done different.
I feel much better now. Service is good just the way it is.
I was unable to get the help I needed here.
I was very impressed - thank you
I would not change a thing they're helpful and not asking a dime, so who can complain.
it was actually pretty good.
It was helpful!
Keep doing a great job.
Keep it up, thanks!
Keep up the good work; John Mule was very helpful too!
Make is more available, maybe 3x per week, 2x a week with more hours, or set appt.
More available hours.
More awareness that it's available.
More booklets.
More publicity.
More publicity.

More time
My 1st time. It seemed good. Thanks for providing this service.
n/a.
n/a.
Need more lawyers; the wait is long.
No need for improvement
No. Everything was great
none.
Not a thing.
Nothing
Nothing - everyone was great!
Nothing - it was great!
Nothing at this time - she was great!
Nothing I can add - Service was great!
Nothing I can think of.
Nothing, it was great.
Nothing, it's great!
Nothing, it's great.
Nothing, it's help enough that the service is free.
Nothing, Ms. Weber was great and understood issues at hand.
Nothing, thanks.
Nothing.
nothing.
Nothing.
Nothing.
Nothing. Immediate help right away and that was great.
Nothing. Very good service. Thanks you.
Nothing. 9/10 (customer drew 1-10 ranking scale)
Nothing. Atty was great!
Only one attorney showed up, there were supposed to be two. It would be good to impress upon the attorneys the importance of keeping their commitment.
Parking, more attorneys.
Sign up for time slots in advance or on site. Start on time.
Thanks for answering my questions.
The experience was extremely helpful & informative - Thank you!
The service is great. RC website may direct users to room 170 [note from Pat: issue investigated by staff].
They have been helpful, so nothing I would change.
This was helpful
This was very helpful, Thank you!
To want to help all people not just some.

very good
Very helpful - succinct, pertinent advice
very satisfied - thank you!
What a good service, thank you!
Worked fine for me.
Worked fine. No changes suggested.
Worked great.

### Attorney Surveys

Were you able to assist the individuals to your satisfaction?	
<b>Percent who answered "yes."</b>	92.1%
Were the resources adequate?	
<b>Percent who answered "yes."</b>	94.7%
Did you have enough time?	
<b>Percent who answered "yes."</b>	97.3%

### Open Ended Responses

What, if any, changes would you suggest for the Take-Away Form?

Great program. If I come up with anything, I will let you know.
Great service, glad I could participate.
Having the students provide any other resources such as internet links or statutes applicable to individual cases.
I don't have any at this time.
I would like to have factsheets on conciliation court and return of security deposit (from Legal Aid / CLE Project). Less dense, more literacy-appropriate for most pro-se folks.
If it's possible to screen clients by area of law it might help streamline w/ attys familiar with different areas of law.
Limit the services to housing and conciliation court issues specifically.
More publicity.
More resources for divorce & family law problems. I'll help with that & let Sara Galligan know.
None - seems good!
None. Great to have MJF volunteers and support available. Materials look great.
none-yet! First time volunteering.
Provide AG pamphlets in advance of session. Everyone is VERY helpful (students, librarians, etc.)
Recommend having attorneys with experience in the types of law that people are

concerned about.
Seems great so far.
Service looks good.
So far so good.
Things went much more smoothly this week.

Suggestions/Notes

Include RCBA and VLN contact information (referral service).
It was a lot of fun.
None.
None.
None.
None.
Note space for general comments.
Nothing.
Works.