NNIP Camp Atlanta, May 11, 2018

Session 3 – Evictions

Led by Leah Hendey, Urban Institute

Notes by Kelley Hanni

Present: Layla Bellows (Atlanta), Rachel Weinstein (New Orleans), Mingming Zhang (Houston), Kristen Murray (Twin Cities), April Urban (Cleveland), Stephen Sills (Greensboro), Megan Brown (Hartford), John Killeen (Durham), Denise Groesbeck (Pinellas County), James Neal (IMLS)

***Framing:***

Brainstorm a concept for a cross-site project on evictions. What we can do more collectively to address the issue and think about some concepts we can shop to some funders what have you done locally. What are barriers to other cities that don’t have the data or a program. How were partnering with advocacy groups?

***The session started by discussing people’s experience with*** [The Eviction Lab](https://evictionlab.org/) ***and what their thoughts were***

LH – We (DC) don’t have great eviction data.

AU – Our local legal aid office has wanted help with evictions and we’ve focused on quantifying the cost and how to fund the right to counsel. We’ve spent time trying to see what happens to people post-eviction. But without funding it can be difficult. We’re looking to find a way to do a court docket survey of people facing eviction (that day).

MB – I’m always surprised by people wanting to talk.

SS – In North Carolina local advocacy groups approached and they dove into the data. We scraped a month of case files – 1,200 files in one month that were entered into a database (looking at 2016 data). We then followed up with calls with the 200 available numbers and did 20 in-depth interviews. This has produced a 3 year grant and we’ve assembled a landlord advisory group. We found that the number one evictor was public housing, second was section 8. So there are a few things that we’re working on:

* We want to put pressure on the court for an eviction diversion plan – we’re looking at court programs in Michigan and other places.
* Rental assistance – landlords have told tenants to look into that, but there is a small window (10 days) to process an agreement. So we’re working to create an algorithm to catch people that fit the specific profile.
* Legal aid looking to create a drop-in clinic.
* The overall goal is to identify key downward pressure to put on landlords

JK– What might be useful points of entry? We have a lot of data: Civic records, civic process, court access (vcap, acis – NC specific). We often ask sheriff’s department about notifications. And since the data is updated each day, can also get information at the point of eviction. We rely on the eviction lab data and use it as a point to discover:

* What is missing?
* What are the areas with the biggest volume?
* What types of properties and financial operations?
* What is the risk for those investing and where are those transactions are occurring?

These questions could point to where evictions are happening.

DG – We have a program in our country for rental assistance. If you get assistance you are linked to a navigator. What we’ve found is that there is 1.) Rapid rehousing 2.) They need some navigation (we provide 45 days) 3. Chronic homeless occurs. Our role in funding is at the preventative end. We don’t work with group #3, but there is a lot of work to be done with the first 2 groups.

RW – looking at the eviction lab New Orleans was low compared to a lot of other cities, seems like all the info isn’t there. One issue in New Orleans is that houses are passed down through generations and are not done legally so when assistance is needed or there is a disaster they don’t have the paperwork and that leads to blight and evictions.

KM – There was some quantitative work in the Twin Cities and the county. They worked with about 70 people that have been evicted and about 30 landlords. This has sparked some other projects. Resource navigators have helped track how people move through the system.

DG – So what about the data? Where do you make a difference? Can you begin to see from the court record data is that person chronically homeless?

AU – We have a housing court; all proceedings go through that. In our case the judge is willing to share data. It is Interesting to look at how the different court systems make an impact.

JK – What we’ve done so far that have improved the community is an eviction diversion program that filters based on rent thresholds. So far, the program has been really successful.

AU – Our legal aid program is restrictive about who they can help. There is selection bias.

JK – We do have people that want to advocate, which has made the diversion program successful. The Human Relations Office at Fair Housing gets a lot of calls. People often don’t fall into specific class and don’t get helped.

MB – When tracking racial disparities in eviction the theory is that is you can make that case and then you can screen people out when they’re on the private market.

JK – That is a weak spot. It’s almost always black women with children.

SS – They don’t want policing to come out of fair housing. Even when there is good actionable evidence the restrictions around fair housing makes if difficult.

LH – Are there other information needs for advocates?

AU – Is there more activity to get more responsive courts in your community? For us, there are practices where if you’re at court because you’re getting evicted, you need to be put on the rental registry. Or if your house has a code violation you can’t go to eviction court until that is resolved first.

SS – We’ve got ties to housing and health but more recently we’re looking at previously incarcerated people with addiction. They’re being evicted at the front tail of using and then they’re not able to find housing once they come out of reentry.

AU– So much research focuses on families and children, but we lose all of these other people we may not know/learn about. Who else is vulnerable?

LH – What is the main age?

JK- Who we see show up in court is primarily older black women. But that is also us making assumptions. We just got results back from the Durham County Health Assessment. One question, “have you or a family member experienced eviction or displacement in the last 12 months” covered about 6% of people.

SS – We’re also thinking about gentrification. How come Greensboro has a higher rate of evictions when housing markets are lower. Perhaps because of gentrification and pushing those people out?

JK – Rural areas have some of the highest rates, why is that? Possibly historical segregation problem, landlords are mostly white, not a lot of alternatives, systemically persistent eviction, and bad conditions. We also see higher rates around military bases. There needs to be a focus on finding out where all of the rental assistance programs are happening. Sometimes its people in the community and churches, but where is the fundraising?

LH – in Dc there isn’t really anywhere to send people [to find affordable housing quickly] and maintaining a list of places can be difficult.

SS – Is there a market-based solution? Landlords pay into a pool and get reimbursed. Reduces savings on the turnover. It’s helpful to have market rates to help make that argument.

DG – A bay area apartment group ran a program that helped fund a position who would work with landlords. They served as a navigator who worked with the landlords and then helped get tenants set up with essentials. We found that the landlord groups were receptive to this because evictions are expensive for them.

LH – Are there certain neighborhood characteristics that you’ve found in mapping evictions?

MB – The paperwork often lags. If you increase or lose income you get behind because your paperwork hasn’t been processed.

JK – The record part is important. A person’s record gets used to show that they are a risky tenant. How to show that these people are a part of a difficult system or if they’ve held their rent for code enforcement, etc. can be really difficult.

MB – We actually mapped people that won their cases.

AU – We’re trying to link eviction data to homeless data. The problem is that you don’t have shared indicators and missing data.

JK – One thing to do is improve statewide court data.