

Health Justice Impact Tool (HJIT)©

Current research highlights significant gaps between what eviction laws say and how they are enforced, which results in the inequitable enforcement of housing laws. We developed this tool as a guide for legal stakeholders (legislators, judges, government officials, lawyers, and law enforcement) to follow when creating an equitable housing system.

Combining the community empowerment goals of the Health in Partnership's Root Cause Test¹ and the three principles of The Health Justice Framework (truth and reconciliation; community-driven structural change; and financial supports and accommodations),² this tool provides three steps that legal stakeholders should take to empower marginalized communities, foster their ability to thrive, and distribute resources so they can live in safe, affordable housing.

I. First Step: Truth and Reconciliation

A. To identify laws, practices, and processes in the housing system that foster the inequitable enforcement of housing laws, legal stakeholders must answer the following questions:

1. What laws, practices, and processes are unclear and/or not regularly enforced?
2. Do your laws, practices, and processes permit discretion among enforcement actors?
 - a. How do legal stakeholders make sure that tenants are not harmed by discretionary actions?
3. What laws, practices, and processes provide general protection for tenants, and do tenants have to file a complaint to receive protection?

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4. If you are not sure about the above questions, what more do you need to know and how will you find out?
5. Have you ensured that tenants have the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the housing problems they are facing?

II. Second Step: Community-Driven Structural Change

A. Legal stakeholders must partner with tenants and tenant advocacy organizations.

To start this process, legal stakeholders must answer the following questions:

1. Have you identified tenant advocacy groups and tenants, particularly historically marginalized racial and ethnic minority communities, that have been harmed by the inequitable enforcement of housing laws?
2. Are these tenant advocacy groups and tenants leading the decision-making process for the design and implementation of changes?
3. How do your recommendations and solutions address inequitable housing enforcement barriers for tenants, particularly tenants from historically marginalized racial and ethnic minority communities?
4. How will you implement your proposed community-driven changes in partnership with tenant advocacy groups and tenants?
5. How will you work with tenants and tenant advocacy groups to evaluate these changes?

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III. Third Step: Financial Supports and Accommodations

A. To offset the harm caused by the inequitable enforcement of housing, legal stakeholders should create processes that repair and heal the harms caused by the system, which includes answering the following questions:

1. How will the harms caused by the housing system be repaired?
2. What financial supports and accommodations do tenants need to attain safe housing?
3. Have you provided tenants directly with these financial supports and accommodations?
4. Have you provided tenant advocacy groups directly with financial supports to support tenants?
5. Have you provided legal stakeholders, who represent tenants, with the financial support needed to fully represent and support tenants?

¹ Dominie, W. and Huerta, M. 2025. "The Root Cause Test: A Public Health Guide for Transformative Housing Solutions." Health in Partnership, August 2025, https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/67caf6ff6880dabe1f2342b0/689d1ab81ed73019b54a3a00_Root%20Cause%20Test%20August%202025.pdf (last accessed September 5, 2025).

² Yearby, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-law-medicine-and-ethics/article/social-determinants-of-health-health-disparities-and-health-justice/0554519547E536FC56CBF49ED68A01FE>