



City of Boulder

2021 Eviction Prevention and Rental Assistance Services Annual Report

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Program Overview

[Ordinance 8412: Legal Representation Provided in Cases of Eviction](#) was

approved by Boulder electors in November 2020 and the Eviction Prevention and Rental Assistance Services (EPRAS) Program was implemented in January 2021. The program helps meet the needs of community members facing a potential eviction through legal services, rental assistance and mediation. This program is funded through an excise tax paid by landlords on each property they operate with a rental license. The EPRAS Program is part of the city's Community Mediation and Resolution



Center which works with community partners to provide landlord-tenant mediation across Boulder County and maintains resources for landlords and renters.

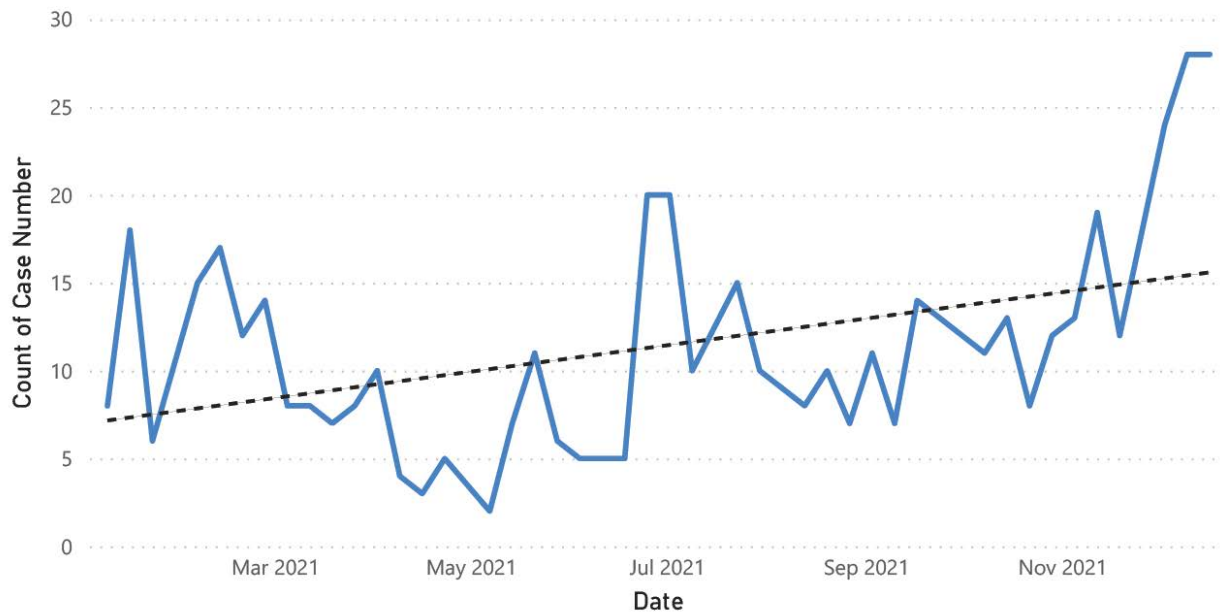
Since the inception of the EPRAS program, EPRAS staff, mediators from the City of Boulder and Longmont Mediation Services and contracted attorneys from Bridge to Justice have supported tenants at all stages of the eviction process. Tenants eligible for the program who are facing an eviction have different avenues to access the program; they can contact EPRAS directly through the online form, email or phone, or they can contact Bridge to Justice directly. Staff prioritized implementation of the program components (e.g., outreach, rental assistance, navigation, mediation, legal services) at the start of 2021 and then focused on refinement of the data collection and setting up the Tenant Advisory Committee as the year progressed.

Eviction Trends

Many federal, state, and local actions, undertaken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, have provided useful tools to aid in the prevention of evictions. Although all protections have now expired, rental assistance provided through the Coronavirus Relief Fund, American Rescue Plan Act, and the Emergency Rental Assistance Program have enabled renters who lost income or employment to remain housed and this funding continues to be a critical support to ensure housing stability in our community. Although many financial supports are available, tenants who find themselves at eviction court may not have qualified for the rental assistance, may not have accessed rental assistance, or the cause for the eviction action may be due to a lease violation unrelated to rent.

In typical years, eviction filings at the Boulder courthouse are around 1,000 per year. With eviction protections and financial supports in place to support tenants through the pandemic, eviction filings remained low at 392 for 2020 and 557 for 2021. However, eviction filings have steadily increased (see chart below) and are now in line with pre-pandemic levels. As we enter 2022, we expect a return to typical rates of eviction.

Count of Case Number by Date



First Year Snapshot

- EPRAS team formed, and legal services contract initiated with Bridge to Justice.
- 390 tenants contacted EPRAS to access services before or at court.
- Evictions prevented in 63% cases at eviction court, a 26% increase compared to pre-EPRAS.
- Tenant Advisory committee was seated and began quarterly meetings.
- \$168,536 in rental assistance distributed to 82 households.
- July 2021 ordinance update included clarifying language and program enhancements.
- Researched and created a more robust mechanism for data collection in preparation for 2022.
- Application of the racial equity tool to assess services and avoid disproportionate impacts on people of color community members.

EPRAS Services

To initiate services, a tenant can contact the EPRAS team, either prior to court or at court. The coordinator assesses the tenant's situation to determine which combination of services (mediation, legal or rental assistance) may be utilized to best assist the tenant. There may be circumstances when rental assistance is sufficient to resolve the situation, or the tenant simply needs legal guidance at court to fully understand their options. However, in many instances, a combination of services is the most effective. In 2021, 390 tenants contacted EPRAS to access services either before or at court.



At court, the EPRAS team observed 501 cases. Of these, 88 cases were known to be city of Boulder residents. EPRAS staff attempts to reach all city of Boulder residents who are on the docket which presents some challenges since there is limited contact information available. EPRAS was able to reach 68 tenants on the eviction docket and connect them with services.

Legal Services Program

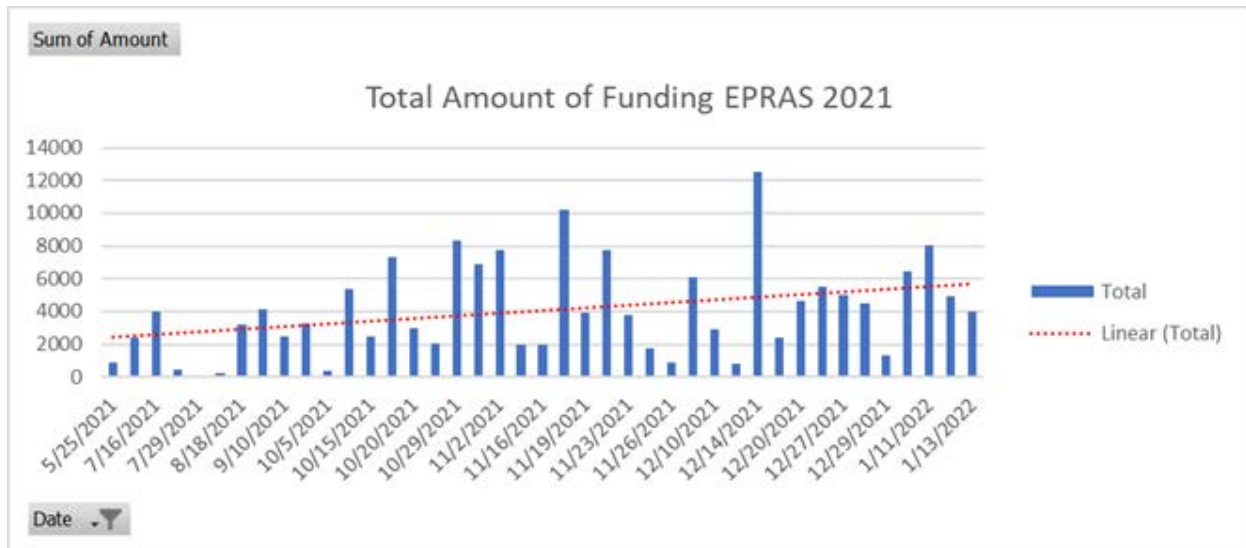
The city of Boulder has contracted with [Bridge to Justice](#) to provide legal services to tenants at all stages of an eviction process. Bridge to Justice relies on current staff and four contract attorneys with extensive housing experience to interview, refer, advise, represent and negotiate for tenant clients.

Tenants can contact the EPRAS program as soon as they have received a notice of compliance prior to any formal legal action, however, many tenants engage with services for the first time when they appear in eviction court. The legal team will consider the nature of the situation, reason for the eviction risk and stage in the process to determine how best to advocate for the tenant. In 2021, EPRAS referred **204 clients to Bridge to Justice** to receive legal services to prevent an eviction.

Rental Assistance

For the first half of 2021, the EPRAS program relied on existing local financial assistance agencies, Housing Helpline and Emergency Family Assistance Agency, to support tenants in need of rental assistance. As the eviction moratorium lifted, unemployment benefits expired and wait times for rental assistance grew longer, there was a greater need for an expedited process for tenants to access rental assistance funds to avoid eviction. Towards the second half of 2021, EPRAS developed a rental assistance process, including eligibility criteria and an application process in order to

quickly dispense funds to those facing a potential eviction. As word got out, funding requests steadily increased (see chart below). Since **July 2021, \$168,536 in rental assistance has been distributed to 82 households, an average of \$2,022 per household.**



In recognition that tenants may also seek assistance through existing financial resource centers, EPRAS has strengthened its partnership with the [Emergency Family Assistance Association \(EFAA\)](#) and has directed EPRAS dollars to support tenants seeking assistance through EFAA. Looking forward to 2022, tenants in need of rental assistance will be able to access EPRAS dollars through either agency (EPRAS or EFAA) to facilitate easy access and eliminate barriers for tenants. Tenants facing an imminent eviction will be directed to EPRAS for expedited assistance.

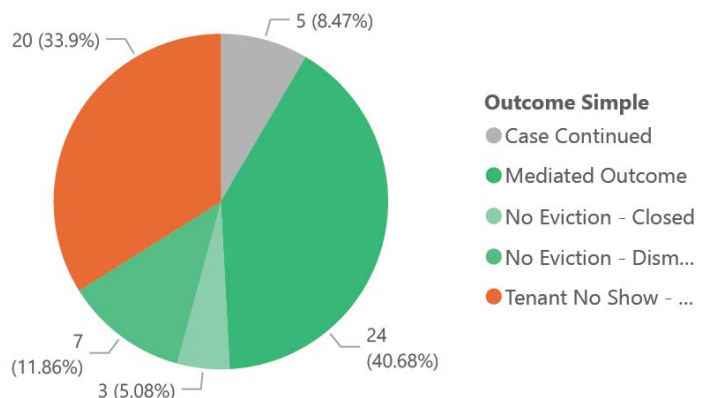
Mediation

In many cases, mediation is a useful tool to reach an agreement between the landlord and tenant in order to avoid an eviction. The parties might agree on a payment plan, how the tenant will address a lease violation, or to develop a timeline for moveout that works for all parties. Mediators are available both prior to court and at court. In 2021, **51 cases were referred to mediation.**

Outcomes

Eviction was prevented in 68 of the 88 City of Boulder cases observed at eviction court. For those case that resulted in an eviction (in orange), the tenant either never responded to EPRAS' attempts to contact or didn't appear in court resulting in a default eviction. If a tenant is unable to remain in their property, EPRAS staff works to connect tenants with community resources to assist in their housing transition.

Observed outcomes for City of Boulder cases



Next Steps

Data collection refinement has been a major focus for the program over the course of 2021. EPRAS staff has worked closely with the Housing Solutions Lab at the New York University Furman Center, a national housing policy and research agency to help revise program metrics, along with the Tenant Advisory Committee's data subcommittee and other EPRAS partners.

In 2022, EPRAS will launch a new streamlined intake form that captures in-person contacts as well as online referrals. EPRAS will also implement a survey to follow up with clients three to six months after they have interacted with the program to better quantify outcomes. The EPRAS team looks forward to compiling more meaningful outcome data that will ensure better assistance for community members at risk of losing their housing. EPRAS also plans to publish a data dashboard about evictions in Boulder that will be available on the [city's website](#).

