



# PINELLAS EVICTION DIVERSION PROGRAM

A homeless prevention project of Community Law Program

## What is the Pinellas Eviction Diversion Program?

The Pinellas Eviction Diversion Program is a newly launched initiative offered by Community Law Program (“CLP”) which offers a number of services to low-income tenants impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and their landlords. The Program partners with several agencies including Bay Area Legal Services, Gulfcoast Legal Services, Stetson University College of Law, the Homeless Leadership Alliance of Pinellas, 211 Tampa Bay, Dab Community Services, and Community Development and Training Center (CDAT).

This exciting new program is a “One Stop Shop” for qualifying tenants needing:

- Free legal help
- A neutral third party (mediator) to work with them and their landlord to try to resolve a dispute over unpaid rent
- Help applying for money to pay rent through Pinellas CARES \*(Note: The deadline to apply for assistance through Pinellas CARES has passed, but PEDP can still help tenants whose applications were pending as of Nov. 13<sup>th</sup> follow-up & complete the process)
- Help locating a new place to live (if unable to stay in their current residence)

## Who is Eligible to participate?

Participation in virtual mediation is currently voluntary, so both parties must agree to participate. The Program is open to tenants and landlords currently involved in a court case as well as to tenants and landlords who have a disagreement but neither party has filed anything with the Court.

### For Tenant?

- Must have been economically impacted by COVID-19.
- No prior eviction writ of possession within the last 12 months (pre COVID-19)
- Must have a combined household income at or below 200% of federal poverty.
- Must be a Pinellas County resident.

### For Landlord?

- If an agreement is reached during mediation, the landlord must agree to a dismissal of any pending eviction action once tenant does his/her part under the agreement.

### What is landlord/tenant mediation?

Mediation is a voluntary process wherein the tenant and landlord work with a certified mediator to try to resolve their outstanding disputes. The mediator is a neutral third party who assists the parties in communicating their concerns with one another with the goal of reaching an agreement that resolves the dispute. If an agreement is reached, it will be put in writing and all parties will sign it. In cases filed with the Court, the signed Agreement will be submitted to the Court and will become a Court Order.

### How does it work?

Staff at the program will work with the landlord and tenant to set a date and time for the mediation. A mediator will be assigned free of charge. Prior to the mediation, you will receive a link and directions on how to join a Zoom meeting. You can join from your phone or a computer. Over the course of 1-2 hours, the mediator will work with both sides to discuss the issues and work towards an agreement. If an agreement is reached, the mediator will write up the agreement and send it to you to sign through DocuSign. The mediator will take care of filing the paperwork with the Court (if the case is currently in litigation).

### How Can I Apply?

To apply for help, please call (727) 582-7475. You will be directed to an Intake Specialist who will ask you questions to see if you qualify for this program. If you qualify, we will contact the other party and ask them if they are willing to participate in a mediation. Once everyone agrees to participate, we will schedule a date and time for the mediation. At this point, you'll receive additional instructions in writing to help you prepare for your mediation.