

EVICTION DIVERSION INITIATIVE | NCSC

Eviction Diversion Case Study: Las Vegas Justice Court

Background

Las Vegas is currently the epicenter of the eviction crisis in the United States; in 2023 alone, it is on track to see 60,000 new eviction filings.¹ The Las Vegas Justice Court (LVJC)—in partnership with Clark County Social Services, Legal Aid of Southern Nevada, and Neighborhood Justice Center—came together to launch an ambitious eviction diversion program to create a coordinated process for connecting tenants with legal and social services. The project has the clear goal of reducing the number of preventable evictions and improving housing and financial stability for community members.

With financial support and technical assistance from the [NCSC Eviction Diversion Initiative](#), LVJC designed and implemented a new eviction diversion program and made strategic reforms to the court process to support its operations and improve the court experience for litigants.

Improving Forms to Increase Tenant Engagement

The statutory eviction process in Nevada is unique in placing the burden on the tenant to make the first contact with the court system. Nevada law requires tenants to file a [Tenant Answer](#) with the court within seven days of

receiving an [Eviction Notice](#). Only after the tenant files a timely answer, does the landlord file a complaint and request a court hearing. If the tenant does not file an answer, the landlord can request a summary eviction judgment without a hearing.

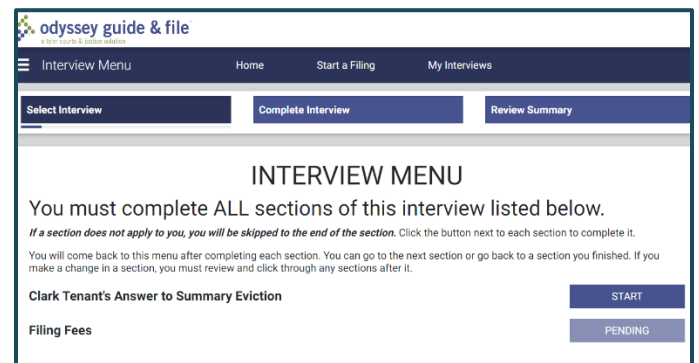
The screenshot shows a web interface for 'odyssey guide & file'. At the top, there are navigation links: 'Interview Menu', 'Home', 'Start a Filing', and 'My Interviews'. Below this is a progress bar with three buttons: 'Select Interview', 'Complete Interview', and 'Review Summary'. The main content area is titled 'INTERVIEW MENU' and contains the following text: 'You must complete ALL sections of this interview listed below. If a section does not apply to you, you will be skipped to the end of the section. Click the button next to each section to complete it. You will come back to this menu after completing each section. You can go to the next section or go back to a section you finished. If you make a change in a section, you must review and click through any sections after it.' Below this text are two sections: 'Clark Tenant's Answer to Summary Eviction' with a 'START' button, and 'Filing Fees' with a 'PENDING' button.

Figure 1 – A guided interview tool helps tenants prepare and file their answers with the Las Vegas Justice Court.

Prior to the launch of the diversion program, LVJC estimated that only one-quarter of tenants filed a timely answer with the court leading to an enormous number of eviction judgments by default. To increase tenant engagement, the Court made several changes to both court forms and filing procedures. Some of the key changes included:

- rewriting the Eviction Notice in plain language with clear, actionable instructions on how to respond;
- improving self-help and legal resource information on the Eviction Notice;

¹ Michael Scott Davidson, *Las Vegas Tops Nation as Eviction Crisis Spreads Across America*, Newsweek (April 7, 2023).

- rewriting the Tenant Answer in plain language and revising the form with more user-friendly design elements;
- creating a web-based, guided interview tool for preparing and filing the Tenant Answer (see Figure 1); and
- mandating use of the revised Eviction Notice and Tenant Answer forms.

Within the first six months of these changes going into effect, LVJC estimates that tenant answer rates increased from under 25% to over 50%, dramatically increasing the number of tenants eligible for the diversion program.

Creating an Automatic Enrollment Eviction Diversion Program

Given the high volume of eviction cases, LVJC implemented a formal system for court staff to screen and triage cases for the diversion program. Dedicated staff review every Tenant Answer after filing to determine eligibility for diversion program resources, which include rental assistance and other county-operated programs. By having court staff play a proactive role in screening cases, the burden of finding and connecting with the diversion program is lifted from the tenant. LVJC [Rule 6.8](#) outlines the mechanics of the eviction diversion program, including the court process for screening cases and automatic enrollment in the program.

The new mandatory Tenant Answer form was designed to serve as a screening tool for the diversion program (see Figure 2). The form collects information about each tenant's financial situation, age, and family composition. Based on the answers provided, eligible tenants are automatically enrolled in the diversion program and scheduled for an intake appointment with a representative from Clark County Social Services. Eligible tenants can opt-out of the program at any time.

2. What year were you born? _____

3. Do you live on a fixed monthly income from Social Security, veteran's benefits, disability benefits, or other similar program or benefit?
 No. If no, are you currently employed? No / Yes
 Yes. If yes, what is the source of your fixed income? _____

4. Has your landlord increased your rent in the past year? No / Yes

5. Is your landlord claiming you currently owe more than two months in back rent?
 No / Yes

6. Did something unexpected or unforeseen happen recently that caused you to fall behind on your rent payments (for example, a large, one-time expense that surprised you, like a car repair; a sudden illness, injury, or medical event; or an unanticipated, temporary loss of income due to a job change or loss of hours)?
 No.
 Yes. If yes, what happened? _____

Figure 2 - Screening questions in the tenant answer form are used to determine eligibility for the diversion program.

Integrating Social Services into Court Processes


LVJC and Clark County Social Services established a formal partnership to build access to financial and social services directly into the eviction court process. Tenants who are enrolled in the diversion program receive a [Court Order](#) directing them to attend an eviction diversion intake appointment. The Order explains what the eviction diversion program is, what to expect at the intake appointment, and what documents to bring to expedite the application process for services (see Figure 4). Intake appointments are scheduled Monday-Thursday from 7:30am - 6:30pm, allowing tenants to come to court outside of regular work hours if necessary.



Figure 3 - An intake specialist meets with a tenant during an eviction diversion intake appointment.

What is Eviction Diversion?

Eviction diversion is a joint effort between the court, county, and community partners to provide resources to you during the eviction process to prevent evictions that can be avoided. Prior to your [appointment](#) please fill out the Tenant Intake Interview at <https://forms.office.com/g/qMd7FTqQAV> or by scanning the QR code.



What will happen at the Eviction Diversion appointment?

At the Eviction Diversion appointment, you will provide information to an intake specialist that will be used to determine eligibility for services and resources, including certain rental assistance programs and rehousing. Immediately after your Eviction Diversion Program appointment, you will visit the Civil Law Self-Help Center, located on the first floor of the Regional Justice Center to meet with a Housing Advocate privately to discuss the eviction process and review your case for possible representation by an attorney free of charge. You may be referred to mediation to resolve outstanding issue with your Landlord. |

What if I am Unable to Make the Date Scheduled or I no longer need any services?

Figure 4 - A court order referring a tenant to eviction diversion answers questions about the process and what to expect.

At the intake appointment, tenants may receive customized referrals and services based on their individual circumstances and goals. During these appointments, intake workers assist tenants in applying for rental assistance (if they meet eligibility criteria) and may also refer cases to mediation, when appropriate. Tenants who may be eligible for other county-level financial or housing stability programs are referred to county social workers for ongoing case management services. Every tenant is also connected to onsite representatives from Legal Aid of Southern Nevada, who provide legal information and advice from the LVJC Self-Help Center.

All cases are also set for a future hearing date in front of a magistrate at which time the case will be dismissed and sealed if the diversion program resources have resolved the legal dispute. Otherwise, the case will move forward at that time.

Looking Ahead

LVJC is exploring how to use additional technology to further improve the tenant experience and bolster attendance at the eviction diversion intake appointments. Potential strategies include implementing a text message reminder system and using an online scheduling platform to allow tenants to easily reschedule appointments.

The scale and scope of the LVJC eviction diversion program would not have been possible without strong leadership from within the court and collaborative support at every level of government. This integrated, holistic eviction diversion model requires a substantial investment of time, money, and staff. Seed money from the NCSC Eviction Diversion Initiative supported additional court and county staff positions in the early stages. Continued operations and funding reflect an investment by the court and county in working collaboratively to provide wraparound support to community members.

NCSC Eviction Diversion Initiative

Visit ncsc.org/eviction or email EDI@ncsc.org for more information and resources on court-based eviction diversion programs or to [schedule a free consultation](#).

To learn more about NCSC’s Access to Justice work, visit ncsc.org/a2j.