

Stow: From Fear to Stable Housing

In November 2020, David, a disabled tenant, found himself facing eviction in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. David lived in a small two-family home in Stow. His landlord who lived downstairs had passed away unexpectedly and a new owner, a Limited Liability Corporation, sent him a Notice to Quit, terminating his tenancy for no reason. Within several months, they sent him a court complaint for a no-fault eviction (an eviction that was not his fault). David had heard of multiple landlords in the area that were evicting tenants so that they could renovate the building and increase the rents.

When David tried to pay the rent, the new owner refused to accept it. Confused and without anywhere to go, David reached out to MetroWest Legal Services.

David's legal aid attorney assisted him in obtaining 11 months in his apartment in order to look for a new place to live. He took full advantage of this time and submitted applications for public housing. With very limited income and unable to work, David knew that public housing was likely the only sustainable option as rent prices in the private market were skyrocketing.

Because David had a no-fault eviction he was able to apply for priority status for

public housing. However, when the public housing authorities began screening David's application, there was a misunderstanding over the agreement that David signed to resolve his eviction case. One housing authority alleged that David had made himself homeless by leaving his former apartment without a judge's order. Far from reality, David had not made himself homeless.

Fortunately, the legal aid attorney was able to explain the case to the housing authority in a way that cleared up the misunderstanding and David was placed back on the priority list. A few months later, he was offered a public housing apartment and shortly after moved into his new home.

David recognized without legal representation his life could have been very different. Consumed by uncertainty, hopelessness, and fear of becoming homeless, David - as with most unrepresented tenants - found the eviction process very difficult to navigate and understand. When he was denied priority for public housing, he experienced a similar sense of hopelessness.

But David is now in his new apartment and able to focus on his health while feeling hopeful about his future.