

The Real Life Housing Search

The Tenant Resource Center

A dark blue diagonal graphic that starts from the bottom left corner and extends towards the top right corner, covering the lower half of the page.

Contents

1. Dos and Don'ts of finding housing
2. Where to start with clients experiencing homelessness
3. Common housing barriers
4. Tools for assessing housing barriers
5. Writing letters to landlords
6. Creative solutions to housing barriers

Dos and Don'ts of Looking for Housing

Do:

- Be creative when trying to find different housing options
- Make a human connection with a landlord
- Know your client's housing barriers and strengths
- Respect the applicant's decisions about their housing

Don't:

- Lie to a landlord
- Break a client's confidentiality

Where to Start with Clients who are Experiencing Homelessness?

The **VISPDAT** is an assessment tool used by Dane County's Coordinated Entry System

When should you refer a client to take the VISPDAT:

- If they are consistently sleeping (for more than 7 days)

- Outside
- In a shelter
- In a car
- In another place not meant for human habitation

Where can clients take the VISPDAT?

- The Beacon
- Shelters: Porchlight or Salvation Army
- Outreach workers

Taking the VISPDAT is NOT a quick solution for homelessness.

Common Housing Barriers

Landlords frequently screen applicants based on:

- Criminal history
- Eviction history
- Housing history
- Landlord references
- Income
- Credit score

Tools for assessing housing barriers:

- [CCAP](#)
 - Wisconsin's online court records system
 - WI is an open records state, so hearings are shown on our online court records system.
 - Just because there was a hearing does not mean that the defendant was at fault.
 - [TRC CCAP Blog](#)
- [Wisconsin Offender Locator](#)
- [Credit Reports](#)

CCAP Example



Wisconsin Circuit Court Access

[Search](#) [Calendar](#) [Pay fees](#) [Reports](#) [Help](#)

[View payments \(0 items\)](#)

[Return to search results](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#)



Summary

Trempealeau County Case Number [REDACTED] State of Wisconsin vs. [REDACTED]

Charges

Case summary

Filing date

12-12-2001

Case type

Criminal

Case status

Closed

Defendant

Defendant date of birth

12-22-1982

Address

[REDACTED]

DA case number

Court record

Receivables

Charges

Responsible official

Damon, John A.

Prosecuting agency

District Attorney

Prosecuting agency attorney

Nemer, William Patric

[Printable version](#)

Defendant owes the court: \$0.00

Count no.	Statute	Description	Severity	Disposition
1	946.41(1)	Obstructing an Officer	Misd. A	Guilty / No Contest

[View history and details of charges/sentences](#)

[Return to top](#)[Summary](#)[Charges](#)[Defendant](#)[Court record](#)[Receivables](#)

Defendant

Defendant name	Date of birth	Sex	Race 
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	Male	
Address (last updated 12-12-2001)	JUSTIS ID	Fingerprint ID	
[REDACTED]			

Court record


Date	Event	Court official	Court reporter	Amount
11-15-2017	Records of prosec. are converted data. See file.			
02-24-2003	Order of discharge	Walske, Penny A		
	Additional text: from probation.			
12-12-2001	Dispositional order/judgment	Damon, John A.		
12-12-2001	Probation questionnaire	Walske, Penny A		
12-12-2001	Appeal rights/info on postconviction relief	Walske, Penny A		
12-12-2001	Initial appearance	Damon, John A.	Nestingen, B J	
	Additional text: Def appeared in person without counsel. State by Bill Nemer. Defendant pleads Guilty.			
12-12-2001	Complaint filed			

Total receivables

Court assessments	Adjustments 	Paid to the court	Probation/other agency amount 	Balance due to court	Due date 
\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
\$331.00	\$0.00	\$331.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	



[Return to search results](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#)

CCAP Eviction Example



Wisconsin Circuit Court Access

[Search](#) [Calendar](#) [Pay fees](#) [Reports](#) [Help](#) [View payments \(0 items\)](#)

[Return to search results](#) [Next](#)  

Dane County Case Number [REDACTED] vs. [REDACTED]

Case summary


Filing date 10-04-2018	Case type Small Claims	Case status Closed
Class code description Small Claims, Eviction	Responsible official Commissioner, Small Claims (Rm 2000)	

Party summary


Party type	Party name	Party status
Plaintiff	[REDACTED]	
Defendant	[REDACTED]	

Parties

Plaintiff: [REDACTED]

Date of birth	Sex	Race 
Address (last updated 10-09-2018) [REDACTED]		

Defendant: [REDACTED]

Date of birth	Sex	Race 
Address (last updated 10-09-2018) [REDACTED]		

Attorneys

Attorney name	Guardian ad litem	Entered	Withdrawn
[REDACTED]	No	10-23-2018	10-23-2018

Summary

Parties

Court record

Court record

Date	Event	Court official	Court reporter	Amount
10-23-2018	Notice Additional text: of Termination of Limited Appearance			
10-23-2018	Notice of Appearance Additional text: Limited appearance by [REDACTED]			
10-23-2018	Stipulated dismissal	McAndrew, W. Scott		
10-23-2018	Stipulation and Order Additional text: on eviction	McAndrew, W. Scott		
10-23-2018	Eviction hearing Additional text: stipulated	McAndrew, W. Scott		
10-23-2018	Appearance	McAndrew, W. Scott		
10-12-2018	Affidavit of service for [REDACTED]			
10-09-2018	Filing fee paid Additional text: [REDACTED]			\$94.50
10-04-2018	Summons and complaint Additional text: Note: Zip code for defn shows Windsor vs Stoughton, WI cannot correct per mgmt-cs			

Eviction Outcomes

A **judgment of eviction** or a **writ of restitution** means that the judge sided with the landlord

If an eviction case is **dismissed**, that means that the judge sided with the tenant's perspective

If there is a **stipulated dismissal**, it means that the tenant and landlord came to an agreement where the tenant had to do certain things, and then the tenant wouldn't be evicted.

If the CCAP record does not say anything beyond that stipulated dismissal, it means that the tenant successfully did what they agreed to do.

Credit Reports

There are three national credit bureaus:

- Equifax
- Experian
- TransUnion

All WI residents may request one free credit report per year from each credit bureau.

- [Free Annual Credit Reports Here](#)

The Federal Trade Commission enforces federal fair credit reporting laws.

- [File Consumer Complaints Here](#)
- 1-877-FTC-HELP

Letters To Prospective Landlords

Letters to prospective landlords can help alleviate concerns they may have about an applicant

If a tenant is searching for housing, and knows that they have barriers that make it difficult for a landlord to rent to them, the tenant can write a letter to attempt to explain their situation.

These letters generally have this format:

- **General explanation of the barrier** that the landlord will encounter
- **A little context for the problem** (ie, the bad credit was due to medical bills from cancer)
- **An explanation of why this barrier won't be a concern for the landlord, with verification and personal references** where possible (ie, sober for 10 years and here is the sponsor who can verify)
- **An explanation of why the prospective tenant will be a great tenant**

Sample letters:

- [Inaccurate landlord references](#)
- [Criminal history](#)
- [Money owed to a past landlord](#)
- [Credit problems](#)

Resources: [TRC Blog with Sample Letters](#)

Tenant Resource Center

Contact us:

- By Phone: 608-257-0006
- By Email: asktrc@tenantresourcecenter.org
- By Stopping by:
 - **Main Office**, located in the Social Justice Center. Mon - Fri 9am - 6pm (no appointment necessary). 1202 Williamson Street, Suite 102, Madison, WI 53703
 - **Campus Office**, located in the Student Activity Center. Hours vary by semester (no appointment necessary). 333 East Campus Mall, Room 3156 Madison, WI 53703

For more information:

So much information is on our website, about many housing search related issues:

<http://www.tenantresourcecenter.org>