

# 211 at United Way of Central Maryland

## **Summary of the Innovation:**

Access to Counsel in Evictions Coordinated Intake System (ACE-CIS) is a statewide intake system within 211 at United Way of Central Maryland that connects tenants facing eviction to legal support while also addressing their broader housing needs. Created in alignment with Maryland's Access to Counsel legislation, the program has evolved into a structured and scalable model supported by a multi-phase training program, continuous legal education, and multiple intake pathways. This integrated approach has strengthened statewide consistency, improved service quality, and increased tenants' ability to access legal assistance and essential resources during housing instability.

## **The Challenge that the Innovation Addressed:**

Maryland's right to counsel in eviction cases created a clear need for one coordinated entry point where tenants could be screened accurately, routed to the correct legal provider, and connected to stabilizing support. Before ACECIS, intake systems differed across counties; legal service organizations used inconsistent procedures, and tenants often could not determine eligibility or reach assistance in time. Calls coming through 211 and the Maryland Courts Help Center were not routed into a shared workflow, resulting in uneven experiences and missed opportunities for representation. The rapid increase in call volume also highlighted major training gaps. Without standardized guidance, staff applied different criteria, used different scripts, and produced inconsistent referrals. Many tenants were also ineligible for legal representation, but required critical resources such as rental assistance, utility support, or emergency shelter. A unified system needed to address both legal and nonlegal needs through one coordinated structure. ACECIS was created to be a solution to these challenges by establishing a statewide intake model that aligns legal providers under one workflow, ensures consistent triage through a highly structured training model, and provides tenants with clear access to support. The system also incorporates every major

access point: online intakes, live calls, voicemails, 211 transfers, and Maryland Courts Help Center inquiries; into one dependable process used statewide. CIS was created to resolve these challenges by establishing a statewide intake model that aligns legal providers under one workflow, ensures consistent triage through a highly structured training model, and provides tenants with clear access to support. The system also incorporates every major access point

### **The Decision-Making and Implementation Process:**

The decision to place ACECIS within 211 at United Way of Central Maryland recognized that tenants facing eviction require both accurate legal triage and robust resource navigation. A Baltimore City pilot allowed partners to evaluate workflows, resolve inconsistencies, and build a scalable model before statewide expansion. Civil Justice Inc., which operates the Coordinated Intake Platform and provides attorney led training, partnered with 211 at United Way of Central Maryland to create a unified statewide entry point grounded in shared data standards, workflow expectations, and legal accuracy. A major innovation was the development of a formal four phase training and assessment structure. Staff begin with foundational learning in Maryland housing systems and resource navigation, then progress into advanced legal triage aligned with Maryland case types. Training includes sessions with attorneys, structured live call listening, mock calls, one-on-one coaching in CIP and iCarol, and observation of live court dockets. Competency is demonstrated through written assessments, graded legal discussions, and monitored call evaluations. Operational improvements have strengthened consistency statewide. These include a dedicated ACE transfer line, scheduled live intake hours, twenty-four-hour access through voicemail and online submissions, two business day review of online applications, one business day voicemail returns, and same day routing of internal referrals. The Maryland Courts Help Center was formally integrated to ensure court initiated inquiries are screened and routed through the coordinated intake process. To support equitable access without shifting focus from the core innovation, ACE CIS also includes practical multilingual supports: bilingual Spanish ACE specialists, interpretation available in over two hundred languages through Language Line, and an online application offered in English, Spanish, and Chinese. Together,



these elements created a statewide, collaborative, high quality intake model rooted in consistent standards, strong partnerships, and a structured training framework.

**The Outcome/Impact of the Innovation:**

ACE CIS has delivered strong, measurable outcomes across Maryland. The Coordinated Intake Platform has completed 16,675 intakes, providing legal service organizations with a clear picture of statewide tenant needs. Approximately 30 percent of cases were routed to legal providers, and 85 percent of those were accepted for full representation, demonstrating accurate and consistent triage. Since summer 2023, staff have answered 27,553 calls and provided thousands of stabilizing Maryland housing resources. ACE-CIS has also been selected more than 15,000 times as a recommended resource through iCarol, highlighting the program's visibility and demand. Follow up surveys show meaningful stabilization: between September 1, 2025, and January 31, 2026, 70 percent of tenants reached remained in their homes, and additional households secured alternative stable housing. Client satisfaction is equally strong, with approximately 95 percent of tenants reporting satisfaction with the ACE intake process and 90 percent indicating they would recommend 211 Maryland. Workforce results confirm the strength of the structured training model. In the February 2026 staff survey, all specialists reported confidence or expertise in major case types, and 87.5 percent agreed the training prepared them well for the role. These results demonstrate that ACE CIS is a collaborative, well-trained, high volume system capable of processing tens of thousands of housing related inquiries and connecting tenants across Maryland to critical legal and stabilization supports.

**Potential Applicability to Other Members:**

ACE CIS is highly adaptable because it is built on a collaborative, multi-organization structure that can be replicated by other states. The model integrates 211 Maryland's statewide resource navigation capacity with Civil Justice Inc.'s legal expertise and platform management, and with the full network of legal service organizations funded by the Maryland Legal Services Corporation. This structure establishes shared triage standards, aligned expectations, and consistent workflows across diverse partners. The system's operational



design further supports replication: scheduled live intake hours, twenty four hour access through voicemail and online submissions, standardized scripting, same day routing expectations, and compatibility with platforms such as CIP and iCarol. Its inclusion of multiple access pathways: online intakes, live calls, voicemails, Community Resource Specialist referrals, and Maryland Courts Help Center inquiries; ensures consistent statewide intake across all jurisdictions. Multilingual supports are also in place, including bilingual Spanish specialists, Language Line interpretation, and a multilingual online application, offering equitable access while keeping the model simple and transferable. Supported by a structured four phase training program and the ACE Task Force partnership, ACE CIS provides a strong, scalable framework that can be adopted by other communities seeking to improve access to counsel and strengthen housing stability.