

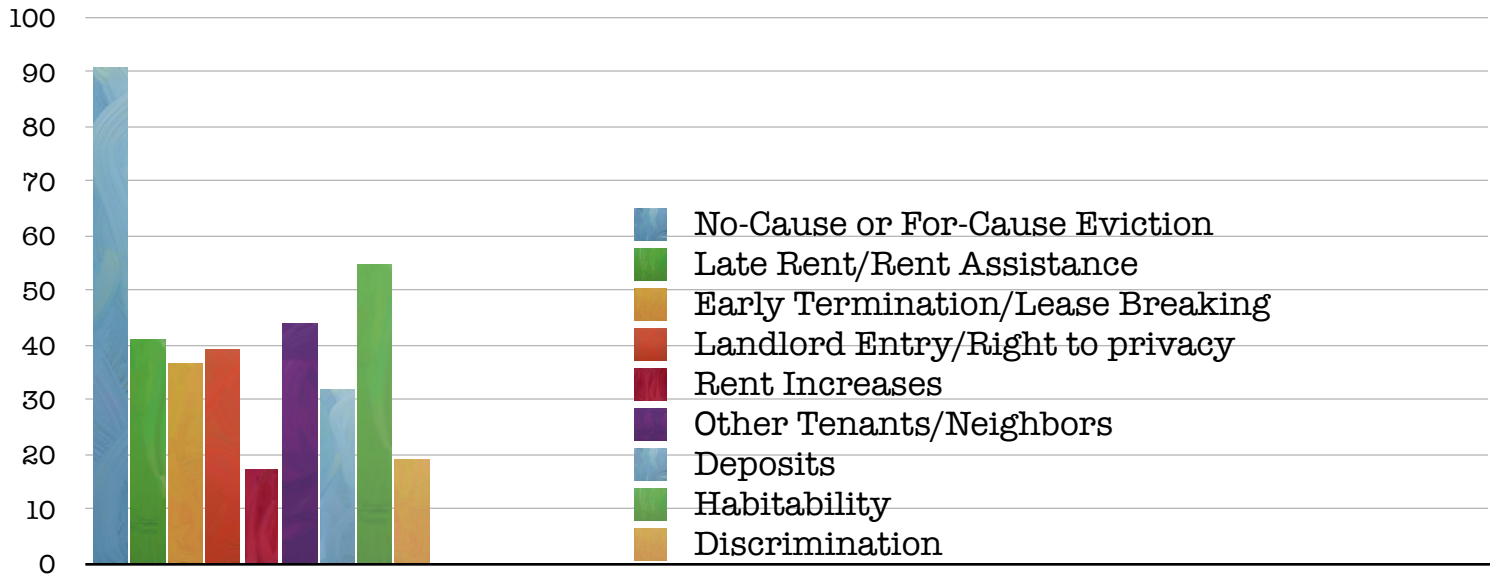


Mission Statement:

Springfield Eugene Tenant Association (SETA) is a 501c3 non-profit, public service organization that is dedicated to renters' rights and interests. We accomplish our goals by assisting, educating, and empowering tenants in the Springfield-Eugene area. We believe that housing rights are human rights and that affordable and accessible housing are the foundation of any strong community.

SETA COVID Update August 2020

Approximate Number of Calls in Top Categories*



Evictions ~91:

The majority of calls about evictions involve fear/threats
Some notices for non-payment
Other types of for-cause notices
Many complicated questions relating to no-cause termination, questions about when a home is sold
See note in landlord entry as well

Late Rent/Rent Assistance ~41:

Significant increase in callers unable to pay rent
Type of call was very rare before the pandemic

Landlord Entry/Right to privacy ~39:

Significant increase in calls from tenants wishing to deny entry
At least one caller received a 30/14 termination notice after doing so

Rent Increases ~17:

Unclear whether call volume has increased
Tenants report this as inappropriate at this time

Other Tenants ~44:

A significant increase in this type of call
Frequently a roommate desiring another to leave
Reports of attempts to contact law enforcement proving unhelpful

Early Termination/Lease Breaking ~37:

Calls almost non-existent before pandemic
Primarily from students/parents of students
Problem NOT limited to students
Some report an offer to pay an early termination fee being refused
Threats of actual damages upfront
Tenants informed they must find someone to sublet

Deposits ~32:

Unclear whether call volume has increased
Usually refers to a caller feeling a landlord kept all or part of a deposit unjustly/unlawfully

Habitability ~55:

Calls frequently relate to landlords refusing to make repairs
Sometimes security issues such as broken locks
Calls seemed to decrease at first then begin again
Some callers report landlords using pandemic as excuse for not making repairs

Discrimination ~19:

Based on self reports we have heard from people with disabilities, the elderly, voucher holders, families with children, racial minorities, and survivors of domestic violence who believe they are or could be experiencing discrimination

* Approximately 300 total calls, however, number is higher because calls frequently cover multiple issues

Report and Partial Analysis from Director of Hotline

Since March 15th, Springfield Eugene Tenant Association (SETA) has received slightly over 300 calls. In close to 8 months prior to the COVID19 pandemic we had only received around 200 calls. As a new, relatively unknown organization our volume was increasing before the pandemic but jumped seemingly overnight. Calls are only counted if they are from tenants needing assistance. We also receive press inquiries, calls from landlords, and requests from tenants and partner agencies revolving around advocacy. Undoubtedly, our hotline has received an increase in calls due to increased attention but it is impossible to believe the main cause for the huge increase in volume is something other than increased need. One third of these callers have explicitly mentioned the pandemic as a primary reason for their call.

Before the COVID19 global pandemic 1/2 of all renters in Lane County were spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs while 1/3 were spending 50% or more on housing. Renters are disproportionately low-income. They also disproportionately fall into other vulnerable categories such as minorities, and people with disabilities. According to the Eugene/Springfield Consolidated Plan in Eugene renters experienced "housing problems at a rate about 30 percentage points above owner households. In Springfield renter households experience housing problems at a rate of 20 percentage points higher than owner households." Housing cost burden was the most common problem.

Since the beginning of the pandemic public unemployment data alone suggests that the vast majority of the unemployed in Lane County are in low-earning sectors of the economy such as Accommodation and Food Services, Healthcare and Social Assistance, and Retail Trade. The largest numbers of unemployed also have a high-school education or less and are under 54 years old. Ample news reports and data show that minorities and people of color are disproportionately affected by the pandemic. All of these people are also more likely to rent their homes.

Before the pandemic SETA rarely received calls requesting rent assistance and they are now regular. Another type of call that was almost nonexistent before the pandemic but is now regular is about early termination. Callers report wanting to get out of agreements they can no longer afford and feeling trapped. Many, but not all, are students (or their parents) unsure what is or will happen at institutions of higher education. Calls about landlord entry and tenants wishing to deny it did come in before the pandemic but were much less regular. Calls about problems with neighbors or housemates have increased significantly as well. Calls about eviction have always been regular but were not the single largest category prior to the pandemic as they are now.

While we are all affected by the economic crisis, we are not all affected equally. Financial burden is perhaps the most visible issue in our community and data from our hotline is consistent with this but also hints at other struggles. While the majority of our calls come from tenants experiencing issues with their landlords, we have received an increased number of calls about issues with neighbors and housemates. In Eugene, the largest percentage of rental housing is single family homes and we have a higher percentage of non-conventional households than similar communities elsewhere. This provides some, though incomplete, insight into this issue. Organizations that work with survivors suggest that, though reporting may go down, cases of domestic violence increase when people are stuck in their homes. This provides additional insight.

In such unprecedented times we would be hard pressed not to acknowledge the emotional and physical toll this pandemic is having on everyone. As an organization supporting and advocating for tenants, we reiterate that those who rent their homes are simply more likely to experience the worst economic, physical and mental health consequences of this crisis.

With questions contact:
Joshua Caraco
Director of Hotline Services
setapublic@gmail.com