

# State Wide Advice for Tenants

Gina Miserendino and Tina Riley

DHC established the State Wide Advice for Tenants Hotline in 1999 in response to an apparent need for the tenant community to have ready access to information regarding Landlord Tenant rights and responsibilities as well as for information on affordable housing options. This report will first focus on the numbers and categories of callers and will then follow up with a discussion of some of the issues. The State Wide Advice for Tenants can be accessed by calling **1-888 -DEL-SWAT (1-888-335-7928)**.

*Housing—if it is adequate—provides privacy and security against intrusions, both physical and emotional,* writes Michael Stone in Shelter Poverty. For the nearly 1,200 callers from every corner of Delaware in 2003, aspects of the basic right against intrusion were either threatened or violated. The numbers also indicate that need is growing, in 2003 twice as many calls than in 2002 were received on the hotline.

### Calls by County

New Castle County calls comprised 28 percent, Kent callers represented 42 percent, and 30 percent were calls from Sussex. (Chart II)

### Type of Housing

DHC addresses questions from individuals from all points of the

housing spectrum. The majority, 62 percent, called from private, unassisted rental housing. The next highest group of callers was from individuals living in manufactured housing --16 percent. Callers living in publicly subsidized housing were four (4) percent public housing, nine (9) percent Section 8 residents, and three (3) percent Low Income Housing Tax Credit Property tenants. Four (4) percent of calls came from individuals who were homeless. Residents of prisons, long-term hospitals, and the Dover Air Force Base made up the final two (2) percent. (Chart III)

### Calls by Need

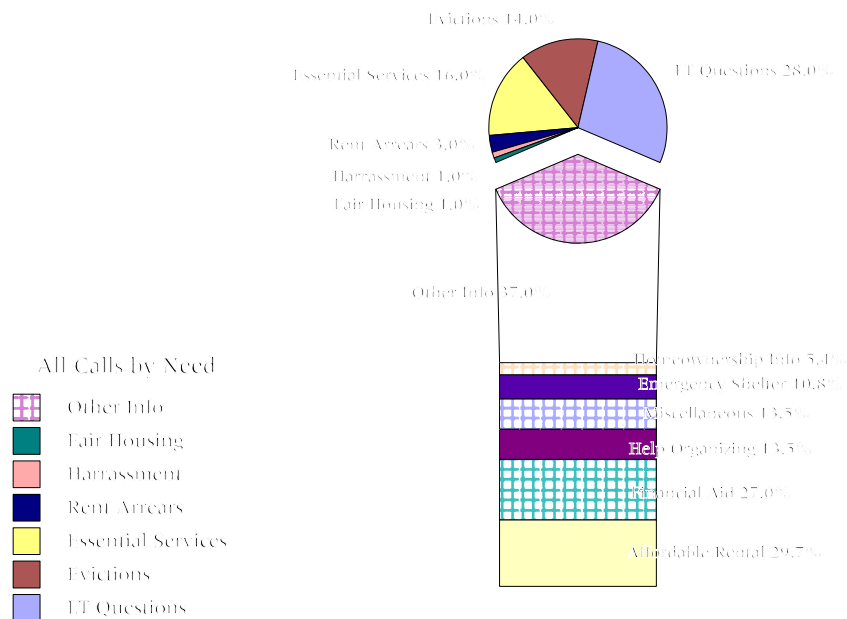
In the *Calls by Need / Seeking Landlord Tenant information* category, 14 percent of calls were relating to evictions, three (3) percent had

questions about arrears/delinquencies, 16 percent concerned essential services (water, hot water, electricity or heat) one (1) percent concerned landlord harassment and Fair Housing issues, 28 percent fell into the general Landlord Tenant Questions category (Chart I)

Of callers seeking other information, eleven (11) percent sought affordable rental housing, four (4) percent needed emergency shelter. Ten (10) percent of callers needed financial help related to housing, two (2) percent sought home ownership information. Five (5) percent were looking for information regarding community organizing and five (5) percent sought other information. (Chart I)

In addition to distributing over 9,000 copies of the publication to agencies and community groups, two hundred copies of DHC's *Housing in a Hurry, Guide to Finding Room in Delaware* based on DSHA's listing of affordable housing were either sent or emailed out to callers.

Chart I: Calls by Need  
DHC State Wide Advice for Tenants



### Some Observations

The nature of the calls received on the State Wide Advice to Tenants line are diverse to say the least. Most of the calls are from current tenants throughout Delaware or people looking for housing, but we also receive calls from social service agencies, landlords, and tenants in other states. The underlying commonality among all the calls is the caller's need to be educated about his or her rights and responsibilities.

So often we speak to tenants who share their situations which result in questions such as: