

## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** June 22, 2020

**To:** Marisa A. Zapata, PhD  
Director, PSU-HRAC

**From:** Lauren E. M. Everett  
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**Subject:** Updates on COVID-19 response and people experiencing homelessness nationwide, June 15 - 21.

### News and Updates

1. A large testing effort of [Denver](#)'s houseless population, led by the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, revealed a lower infection rate than had been assumed. The Salvation Army's metro social services director attributes these low numbers to shelters adopting social distancing measures and making other adjustments, like eliminating cafeteria-style dining.
2. Advocates in [New York City](#) are calling on the city government to extend a program that offers hotel rooms for isolation to individuals being released from prison and jail, which expires in June. Screening criteria that ask about criminal records often make it difficult for the formerly incarcerated to secure housing, risking homelessness or crowding in with friends or family. Meanwhile, [houseless youth](#) have been impacted by shelter and drop-in center closure, and they usually aren't eligible for hotel rooms due to their age and health, unless they contract the virus. Additionally, [housing courts](#) have reopened, and [homeless shelters](#) have a much higher COVID death rate than the city as a whole. To date, 85 people in the shelter system have passed away from COVID-related causes.
3. A new brief from [The Urban Institute](#) estimates that \$15.5 billion per month is needed when unemployment insurance expires, to alleviate cost burden for renters who were already cost-burdened, and for renters who lost income due to the pandemic.
4. Faced with eviction moratoriums to protect tenants who can't pay rent during the pandemic, some landlords have resorted to [harassing their tenants](#) until they "self-evict," or terminating their month-to-month leases "without cause" when they can't pay rent.
5. New data from the US Census Bureau reveals that nearly half of the [lowest-income renters](#) lack confidence about their ability to pay next month's rent.
6. [New Jersey](#) created a \$100 million short-term rental assistance program to benefit low- and middle-income tenants whose incomes have been impacted by the pandemic.
7. In [San Diego](#), the Housing Authority voted to allocate \$19 million toward purchasing hotels and \$10 million for homeless services in the non-congregate shelter space.

8. A group of medical students from Florida International University in the [Miami](#) area have been volunteering to assist quarantined houseless community members with symptom monitoring, telehealth, and general support. Over 40 students and six faculty members are participating.
9. The National Low Income Housing Coalition, in partnership with a number of other organizations, released The [Framework for an Equitable COVID-19 Homelessness Response](#). This framework provides guidance for how homelessness systems can leverage CARES Act and other funding to plan for both the short and long term.
10. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) has [extended the foreclosure and eviction moratorium](#) for single family homeowners through August 31, for property owners with FHA-insured mortgages.
11. The [California](#) Legislature is expected to vote on a bill this week that would allocate \$2 billion a year for homelessness. The bill is based around a 'right to housing' framework. Streetsblog looks at the challenges of [rehousing participants](#) in Project Roomkey, given the shortage of affordable housing.
12. New York City-based homeless advocate [Nikita Price](#), who is celebrated for his contribution to [participatory action-research](#) with Picture the Homeless, has passed away at age 63.

## NLIHC Weekly Call (Monday, June 15)

- **Representative Deb Haaland, 1st District of New Mexico:** More people of color than white people are unable to pay rent. Homelessness in NM has been going up even prior to the pandemic, and people have struggled to secure hotel vouchers. Homeless shelters have seen a decrease in donations, and are struggling to obtain needed materials. **Covid has hit the Native community hard, where people are dying at rates 19 times that of all other populations combined.** Poor housing conditions have played a role in spreading the virus. Many dwellings lack complete kitchens, don't have running water, and are overcrowded at over three times the state average. The tribal community (Pueblo, Apache, Navajo) needs more tests, with a quicker turnaround. There isn't broadband service in a lot of places, so you can't check the results online like other people in the state.
- **Lisa Rice, President & CEO, National Fair Housing Alliance:** We are [more segregated today](#) than 100 years ago, which is the result of a century of policies that perpetuate segregation. The NFHA is working on policies that will address this. People of color are more likely to live in toxic and poorly resourced neighborhoods, irrespective of income, and more likely to live in food, water, credit, education and employment deserts. In Atlanta, majority-white census tracts have four times more healthcare providers than in majority-black census tracts. So if we're placing COVID-19 testing sites in existing health care infrastructure, there's inequity there. If HEROES doesn't pass, it will worsen the impacts of the virus with increased homelessness and crowding. We

already had an evictions crisis, and it's going to get much worse without this. The protest movement is a great moment for communities to reevaluate their Fair Housing enforcement investment, healthcare investment, etc. [2019 Fair Housing Trends Report](#).

- **Eric Samuels, President & CEO, Texas Homeless Network:** They used FEMA funding in about 20 communities for non-congregate shelters. Houston is using \$56 million to house people over the next few years. Amarillo has closed all of its shelters other than Salvation Army, and has de-densified those. The ESG and other disaster funds represent a major increase in homelessness and housing funding for many communities, which is a great opportunity. They've seen and heard about a lot more evictions across the state, so they're trying to address that.
- **Shelly Nortz, Deputy ED for Policy, Coalition for the Homeless (NYC):** They're working on de-densifying congregate shelters. The city has been helping people move into double occupancy hotel rooms, starting with seniors and high-risk individuals. They're also moving whole shelters into hotels. They have about 11,000 people in hotels now up from 3,500 pre-COVID due to low shelter capacity. This will eventually get up to 13,500. They think they should move everyone, but there's a debate about moving people with mental illness and substance abuse disorders behind closed doors. New York City has lost 93 people experiencing homelessness to the virus. The unsheltered population was already facing substantial obstacles, and there's been a surge of homelessness due to service industry workers being laid off. They're testing about 1,000 people a week in NYC shelters. The city has closed the subway from 1 to 5 a.m. for the last several weeks. It has created major problems for people with mental disabilities who don't understand, and for people with mobility impairments who can't easily exit the system. They're very concerned about the remaining congregate shelters, which present a high risk due to physical proximity. We now live in a pandemic era, and we can't rely on them. We need to get people into housing. Those who are left in congregate shelters are even more at risk during heat waves. Shelters aren't air conditioned, and fans can blow the virus around.
- **Melina Lodge, Director of Programs, Housing Network of Rhode Island:** There is an urgent need for rental assistance, utility assistance, and some mortgage assistance. Rhode Island hasn't been as successful as other states in allocating CARES funding. There's only \$1.5 million in rental assistance through ESG funding, and there have been challenges making applications eligible with the criteria of the funding source. She would like to see leadership investing more flexible dollars. They're administering a few assistance programs themselves and maybe haven't been thoughtful about how clients utilize the application and what kinds of documentation is taken because they're denying people at a significant rate. She estimates the state needs about 50 to 60 times the amount of funds. They're advocating for an eviction diversion program. A larger challenge is balancing crisis advocacy work versus longer term work. Unemployment is

about to go away, so they're concerned about having infrastructure and resources in place to meet that demand.

- **John Jopling, Housing Law Director, Mississippi Center for Justice:** The Governor put an April 3 eviction moratorium in place, and the same day they got a call that a trailer park landlord was disconnecting utilities for people who had not paid. This was in a furniture manufacturing area where production had to shut down due to parts from overseas being unavailable. The Mississippi Center for Justice filed a temporary restraining order, and the PR around that victory led to an outpouring of phone calls from other households who were facing these issues. There was an amendment to their landlord/tenant law last year that allows for same-day eviction in the event of non-payment, whereas it used to be at least 10 days. The moratorium was lifted June 1. But even during that time, landlords were disconnecting utilities and using other constructive eviction tactics, or sometimes just locking the tenant out illegally. It's been difficult serving 88 counties, so a lot of the work was making sure that people had copies of the moratorium. They also provided people with basic coaching on how to negotiate with the landlord. The ray of hope is with the emergency rental assistance. This wouldn't have happened without this current crisis. They looked to CDBG and ESG funds for this. They don't see the situation improving anytime soon. Many people still don't have unemployment.
- **Lisa Marlow, Manager of Communications and Media Relations, NLIHC:** Share resources, information and stories constantly, with all possible audiences and platforms. Local media is really important to target, because people probably don't know that the HEROES Act has rental assistance in it. Submit op eds and letters to the editor on the need for rental assistance. They've added a [social media kit](#) to the CV response kit. The campaign is "Can't Wait" and the hashtag is #rentreliefnow.

### **NAEH webinar, with the National Coalition to End Urban Indigenous Homelessness (June 16): *Lifting up the Sky- Addressing the Pandemic & Indigenous Homelessness***

- **Colleen Echohawk-Hayashi, Patricia Allen-Dick, Zachary DeWolf; National Coalition to End Urban Indigenous Homelessness & Chief Seattle Club:** Indigenous removal was the first homelessness in the US, so the Indigenous experience with homelessness can inform solutions for ending all homelessness. There's generational trauma around pandemics, so having specific cultural materials and connections is really important for outreach. King County has a rapid-rehousing program for Native people, which has been very successful. Having Native case managers is really key to success.
- **Andrea Gracia, MD, LA City/County Native American Indian Commission:** She also works at the LA County Department of Mental Health. LA County has the largest Native

population in the country, at about 175,000 people. They would like to have culturally sensitive housing for their community, and stronger relationships with the CoC. The Native community is probably not counted as much as it should be, and identified in the way they would like. When the pandemic started the Commission decided they needed to have a community webinar with the numerous community-based organizations in the area. That initial group decided to meet weekly, and then bi-weekly. Overall, they've been seeing the tangible benefits from bringing community partners together.

- The group raised funds to make a COVID PSA for the Native community, which finished filming last Sunday.
  - They've been sharing County data with the group, and comparing it with service providers' experiences, which don't always align.
  - They've also been able to connect their community to partners, and distribute over 7,000 pounds of dried goods, both food and sundries.
  - They've been vetting fact sheets that go out, and trying to center community voices.
  - They don't have day centers for houseless Native folks right now. The removal of that opportunity to socialize has been an issue, and providers have seen less people picking up food and generally engaging. They're worried because they don't know where those people are. With Project Roomkey, the concern is that the Native population isn't connected to the HMIS. They had about 60 Native people enrolled in the project as of a few weeks ago, but their intuition is that there should be way more Native people in the hotel rooms.
  - [Native Connections](#) in the Phoenix area is a good program to look at for best practices.
- **Patina Park, State of MN, Tribal State Relations & Systems Implementation:** The Twin Cities has a very concentrated Native population. Native people are 27 times more likely to be homeless in MN than white people. It's difficult to find low-income housing that is supportive and can accommodate a multi-generational household. The uprising in Minneapolis had a big impact on their camps. Some of the outside instigators were hiding in the encampments, and there was a large effort to relocate people in the camps to hotels etc. It is important to look at things responsively and think about what the community needs rather than what outsiders think it needs (e.g. living in tents can be safer than in a shelter right now).
  - **Summer Keli'ipio, Lili'uokalani Trust, Hawaii:** This crisis presents an opportunity to educate and connect with non-Native people about some of the challenges that Native people have been facing with modernity, that now others are experiencing with the pandemic. They're seeing a lot of trauma surfacing with clients. There's a need to balance doing with being. Bringing indigenous knowledge and concepts to working with the community is really important.

## NAEH webinar (June 17): COVID-19 Future Planning for the Homelessness Response System

- **Heidi Marston & Phil Ansell, LAHSA and the Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative:** 6,082 people have been moved into shelter over the past three months. There are 35 hotel sites with 3,357 rooms as part of Project Roomkey, and 4,056 people have been moved into these rooms. Going forward, their guiding principles are 1. No one sheltered through this effort should return to the street, 2. Quickly house the most vulnerable, 3. Curb the inflow, 4. prepare the system for future crises, 5. Ensure racial equity lens. Public health and economic recovery framework has four categories for each of the five pillars of response (unsheltered, shelter, housing, prevention & diversion, strengthening system): immediate, short term, medium term, longer term. There are at least 15,000 people among the homeless population who meet the CDC vulnerability criteria. The two responses are 1. Transfer to PSH/exit RRH to permanent housing, 2. problem solving. For inflow (newly homeless), the response is either problem solving or prevention/rental assistance. Housing placement has a workflow. Their funding sources are ESG-CV, CDBG-CV, Coronavirus Relief Funds, state, and local (Measure H).
- **Deb Schweikert and Hedda McLendon, COVID-19 Homeless Response, Public Health - Seattle & King County and King County Department of Community and Human Services:** They've tested over 120,000 people, with 7% positive (8,797), 17.3% (1,521) of positives hospitalized, and 6.5% (574) deaths. They've included PSH in the homelessness response, as well as people who have experienced homelessness within the last 12 months. The curve has flattened in King County in recent months. There are 23 new (by construction or use) emergency response facilities, seven deintensification sites with capacity for about 750 people, five non-congregate shelter facilities serving 500 people, four isolation and quarantine sites with capacity for 300 people, three assessment and recovery centers with capacity for 1,200 individuals, and an additional hotel vouchers for 250 people.

Their prevention and outbreak response includes a FAST team (field assessment, support and technical assistance), strike (targeted on-site response when there's a positive case), and mobile testing. Future homeless response for the virus is to 1. protect those at high risk, 2. decrease the number of high risk settings, and 3. reduce transmission in outbreaks. There's been a shift in approach toward sustainable prevention (see slide below). They're preparing for a second wave, and that entails an increase in proactive outreach and testing. Looking forward, they are trying to balance isolation/quarantine surge capacity with deintensification. They have seen encouraging situations with some clients engaging with services in a way they hadn't previously, and they are trying to figure out how to sustain that. Local data shows disproportionate levels of infections for Asian-Pacific Islanders and Latinos. Interestingly, the deaths are disproportionately white, compared to levels of infections.

## A SHIFT IN APPROACH TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE PREVENTION

- Shift in emphasis from building up outbreak response capacity to a focus on proactive prevention efforts
- Increased consideration of long term, sustainable capacity needed tied to initiatives beyond COVID

Approach	Future Focus	Δ from March - June
Single Room Units for High Risk Individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Intensive efforts to identify and place high risk individuals in single rooms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Contingency planning for 90+ days</li> <li>▪ Potential of permanent housing options</li> </ul>
Fortification and Deintensification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High risk criteria drive proactive efforts to improve existing sites and identify additional bed capacity needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use of "optimal" shelter standards to guide fortification</li> <li>▪ Push for solutions that add sustained bed capacity</li> </ul>
Guidance, Education, & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Practical advice to implement guidelines</li> <li>▪ Build capacity and comfort of providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sustain platform for other CD efforts</li> <li>▪ Engage other partners on training and outreach</li> </ul>
Supplies – Homeless Service Providers + Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ramp down proactive distribution and consider stockpile for future surge or non-COVID needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Phase out role as supplies more readily available</li> <li>▪ Consider non-COVID factors (weather, air quality, etc.)</li> </ul>
Mobile Outreach – Prevention and Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase FAST outreach; Strike as needed</li> <li>▪ Sustain PHC focus of unsheltered outreach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Combine FAST and Strike teams to HEART</li> <li>▪ Continue to align unsheltered approach</li> </ul>
Testing and Surveillance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proactive – reactive testing on set intervals based on risk assessment of sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Shift focus from reactive to proactive tests</li> <li>▪ Decreased emphasis on CLI surveillance</li> </ul>
Disease Investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sustain dedicated capacity for disease investigators with fluency in homeless</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create flex so can surge up or down depending on need across response areas</li> </ul>
Isolation and Quarantine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sustain baseline capacity for IQ plus surge</li> <li>▪ Consider non-COVID IQ needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Repurpose ACRC sites for High Risk</li> <li>▪ Ramp down to baseline IQ capacity</li> </ul>

- **Ana Rausch, Vice President of Program Operations and Jessica Preheim, Vice President of Strategic Planning & Public Affairs, Coalition for the Homeless in Houston and Harris County and Jessica Preheim:** Over the past several years since the Coalition began its leadership of the CoC, they've seen a 54% reduction in homelessness and 19,000 people housed with an 85% success rate. For the pandemic response, they've utilized the same funding as other areas (FEMA etc.) as well as private and HOME funding through the city and county. About \$50 million to \$75 million total. This is more funding than they have had in the past, so this is the time to think about long term.
  - They've proposed a two-year strategy consisting of 1. COVID emergency shelters (with social distance protocols), 2. a bridge to PSH using CARES etc. funding, and 3. starting with Rapid-Rehousing (RRH) and then moving people into PSH when it becomes available.
  - The RRH program is 12 months, and targets 1,700 people. It requires 17 navigators and 52 case managers. The diversion plan aims to prevent households from entering the HMIS, through rental assistance, conflict mediation, etc. This program needs 80 case management staff.
  - Other components of the two-year strategy are mental health case management for high-risk individuals, expanding homeless outreach, and PSH homeless prevention by providing ongoing rental assistance and wraparound services.

There are 5,000 PSH slots in the CoC, and they turn over at a rate of 40 to 50 a month. RRH can be used as a bridge to PSH instead of having people live on the streets or emergency shelters while they're on the waitlist. CARES RRH funds can be used to add capacity to the current systems. There's a potential to house 1,700 people in the next year. They are proposing two years of work in one year, to make a significant impact on their waitlist. This massive rehousing effort is expected to dramatically reduce the PIT. The Harvey response was highly impactful and will serve as a guide. The goal is to house about 5,000 people in PSH in 24 months, with a 95% retention rate. They collaborated with many partners to formulate their COVID/CARES plan (261 people from 143 organizations). 6 organizations have shared interest in being key service providers. Municipalities have stepped forward with allocating their federal funding. The program's launch date is Aug 1.

The [complete slides](#) from this webinar.

## Other Resources

1. Responding to Coronavirus: Ensuring Housing Stability During A Crisis - [recommendations](#) from the NLIHC-led Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition.
2. HOME ACRES Act eviction moratorium [sample letters](#) to owners and tenants.
3. HUD allocated the second round of [CARES Act ESG funding](#) on June 9.
4. The case for why [Housing Authorities need more funding](#) to continue their response to the pandemic.
5. Opinion: Use [ESG funds](#) to help people currently experiencing homelessness first.
6. The Urban Institute explores how federal coronavirus relief can help state and local governments [prevent evictions](#).
7. As the [federal ban on evictions](#) on rental properties backed by the government is set to expire at the end of June, Black and Latino households (who are more likely to be renters) will be the most impacted group.