

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 15, 2020

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

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Subject: Updates on COVID-19 response and people experiencing homelessness nationwide, June 8 - 14.

News and Updates

1. Several [Bay Area](#) jurisdictions plan to expand their testing program for the houseless population. Alameda and Contra Costa counties post data online about COVID infections among people experiencing homelessness, but there hasn't been a comprehensive statewide effort to track the virus' spread among this group. Santa Clara County plans to test every shelter resident, as well as every encampment of ten people or more, by the end of June. The University of California, San Francisco is leading a testing program for people experiencing homelessness in the southeastern part of the city. Last weekend they held a [testing event](#) in the historically Black neighborhood of Bayview-Hunters Point.
2. In [San Francisco](#)'s Tenderloin neighborhood, where tents have proliferated on sidewalks in recent months in an escalating public health crisis, city officials have promised to move 300 individuals into hotel rooms over the next three weeks. These will be individuals who are over the age of 60 or at risk due to health conditions, and have been in the city since before April 1. This measure is expected to settle [a lawsuit](#) filed against the city by a local college. In nearby [Oakland](#), the county just purchased the 92 room historic Lake Merritt Lodge to convert it into non-congregate shelter for older and high-risk individuals.
3. [Vermont](#) is strategizing a plan to transition clients from hotels and motels into housing. Currently the state has been extending the program every two weeks, but the cost (\$13.5 million over three months) is prohibitive to sustainability. [The plan](#) is to fund the hotel program through September, but phase people out of the temporary units over the coming months. A proposal for \$23 million in funding would address support services like a 12 month rental subsidy program and additional funding for case managers.
4. [California's Project Roomkey](#) has placed people in 9,400 rooms, with about 5,000 more rooms secured but not yet filled. This represents a 33% expansion of the state's emergency shelter system, but still represents just a fraction of the state's homeless population of about 150,000 individuals. Meanwhile, the state is looking toward its [next phase](#), which entails

spending \$600 million in federal emergency funding to acquire hotels and motels as permanent housing.

5. The Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority released the result of the [2020 Point In Time Count](#). While the city's increase is slightly smaller than the previous year at 14.2% versus 16%, about 60% of newly homeless respondents said their situation was due to economic hardship.
6. In [Springfield, MO](#), a Community Partnership of the Ozarks task force is providing hotel shelter for about 175 at-risk houseless individuals. They have spent over \$100,000 so far, which includes private donations through their Merciful Nights campaign, and they will also be receiving federal and United Way funding. In [St. Louis, MO](#) the city has spent about \$800,000 on two hotels, with a total of 200 rooms.
7. In [Australia](#), the hotel program is providing shelter for more than 60% of unsheltered individuals, but advocates worry about what will happen after the funding and program end. New South Wales is allocating \$36 million to secure homes in the private rental market, and for access to services, but this is still not enough to house all 1,200 people who are sheltering in hotels in the state.
8. On June 9, HUD announced that it will provide [\\$2.96 billion](#) of the remaining ESG funding to aid houseless and housing insecure Americans. These funds can be used for emergency shelter operation and supplies, hotel/motel vouchers, homeless services, prevention, and rapid rehousing.
9. [Curfews](#) imposed in cities around the country to contain the uprisings in response to the killing of George Floyd have created additional challenges for people experiencing homelessness.
10. [Ithaca, NY](#) became the first municipality in the United States to pass a rent forgiveness resolution. The resolution urges the NY State Department of Health to authorize the city's mayor to cancel rent for the three months of the state's eviction moratorium, and provide financial assistance to small-scale landlords.
11. The [Oregon](#) State Legislature appropriated \$75 million of the federal Coronavirus Relief Fund for rental assistance. The funds are to be disbursed directly to landlords on behalf of tenants who have been impacted by income loss, with \$55 million going to private market rentals for households making below 80 percent AMI, and \$20 million going to rental housing with affordability covenants. \$25 million will be available for foreclosure prevention.
12. Advocates in [North Carolina](#) credit their Homeless Initiative program with the low rate of infection among the state's houseless population.

National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) Weekly Call (Monday, June 8) and Weekly Updates

(Register for the next call [here](#))

- **Chuck Schumer:** Democratic lawmakers in Congress introduced [legislation](#) June 8 that includes sweeping policing reforms. He is calling on Mitch McConnell to bring the HEROES Act before the Senate before July 4 as the funding is needed urgently. There are \$11.5 billion in ESG funds for homelessness outreach, and for developing and preserving affordable housing stock. 2.2 million Americans will be assisted by the rent relief in the act. Republicans opposed the other three bills but they passed anyway, so the administration will have to see the light about the necessity of the HEROES Act. It is essential to keep the pressure on GOP Senators. Also, HUD has recently been making many “terrible and cruel” policies, including dismantling the 2012 equal access rule that protects different gender expressions in accessing safe housing/shelter options, and the mixed-status family rule, which means that families with even just one undocumented person can’t live in public housing.
- **Lauren Frederick, Policy Development Officer, West Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness:** They are the state advocacy body, the CoC/HMIS for 44 counties, and a direct service provider. They’ve developed small planning groups to quickly move people from the street to hotels. Shelter providers, mental health professionals, and the United Way were key. Domestic violence and homeless shelters have been able to develop a plan to de-desensify (reduce capacity), and there have been no outbreaks in shelters yet. Hotels have been doing temperature checks. They’ve started moving people out of the hotels into housing or in some cases shelters. They have 10 to 30 people in each of the hotels, and have moved 25 to 30 people into housing in three weeks in one region. The state has allocated federal funding but they haven’t seen it yet, so they’re relying on private funding for PPE, hotels, etc. They’re anticipating a 40% increase in homelessness statewide, and are trying to increase system capacity.
- **Mike Basford, Director, Wisconsin Interagency Council on Homelessness:** Over 600,000 people in the state have filed for unemployment. Communities and nonprofits have been spending a lot on non-congregate sheltering. They have a 60-day moratorium on evictions and foreclosures for nonpayment, but that has expired. There has been an increase in eviction filings. Their \$25 million [rental-assistance program](#) is currently taking applications, with a maximum of \$3,000 per household. The state is also allocating \$15 million in CARES funds for food banks.
- **The NLIHC:** They have put together [a form letter](#) for individuals and organizations to contact their senators about supporting the HEROES Act. Chuck Schumer says 25,000 people need to reach out to each of those GOP Senators. This is a substantial goal, but not

impossible. It is important to encourage people to share their personal stories. GOP reps care about the business and economic arguments, so partnering with landlords and real estate industries is important to make that case.

NEAH Webinar (June 9): *Communities using data to analyze racial disparities during COVID*

- **Chandra Crawford, Director, Individual Homeless Adults, NAEH:** Black people are disproportionately impacted by the virus: they comprise 13% of the country's population, but counties with higher Black populations account for more than half of the cases and 60% of deaths. Black people are 3.5 times more likely to die from COVID than white people. Black people are at higher risk due to health, social, and economic disparities - e.g. living in a food desert, substandard housing, less insurance coverage. Black people are 40% of the homeless population, and in every state are more likely to experience homelessness than white people. Homeless systems have a responsibility to make sure they're not perpetuating these outcomes. NAEH's Race Equity Tool has a COVID tab. This enables providers to see where disparities exist.
- **Tashmia Bryant, Capacity Building and Equity Program Manager, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness:** They're seeing disparities in both testing positive, and in deaths. There's a new HMIS field for COVID, and that includes tracking who is in a hotel, symptoms, testing results, testing location/date. The status is color coded. Some healthcare providers are testing all shelter clients, and some are just testing people who are symptomatic. Of 210 tests in the shelter system, 15 have been positive. Data sharing reduces working in silos, and enables providers to know who else is involved in a client's case.
- **Marika Baliko, Director of Properties, Mississippi United to End Homelessness:** The state is 59% white, almost 40% Black, whereas the homeless population is 54% Black and 43% white. COVID cases are 53% Black, and deaths are also disproportionate. There are only two confirmed positive cases in the homeless population, but this could be attributed to a lack of testing/low number of tests available. The intake process includes data on how COVID has affected health, employment/income, and the household composition. They are also making sure that outreach teams ask about symptoms and testing status if applicable.
- **Alexis Lozano and Jessica Shimmin, ED and Data Analyst, EveryOne Home, Oakland:** 81% of the homeless population in Alameda County is Unsheltered. Black people are 11% of the population, and 47% of the homeless population. As part of Project Roomkey they have Operation Comfort, which is an emergency isolation and quarantine program with two hotels. Operation Safer Ground is for at-risk and elderly individuals. The protest movement is an opportunity to use the awareness of structural racism to connect it to the homeless and housing crisis response system. EveryOne Homes just completed a Racial Impact

Analysis and can use this momentum. The Racial Equity Analysis is tracking who is becoming homeless, and strategies to prevent it. This is especially important as eviction moratoriums are lifted and the unemployment rate increases. They're also tracking who is being housed and staying housed. Black and Asian Pacific Islanders have a higher rate of return to homelessness.

NEAH webinar, in partnership with The National Center for Complex Health and Social Needs (June 11): *Promising Practices and Resources for Quarantine Hotels*

- **NYC quarantine hotels:** There are 70,000 individuals in the shelter system. The homeless system coordinates among five agencies. The Department of Homeless Services prioritizes people 65 and older. There are four sites that just serve this population. They're now working to move people from the congregate shelters into hotels. They've moved about 11,000 people into these hotels. They're managed by 24-7 onsite nursing care. Now they're figuring out discharge planning. Many people will return to the shelter setting. The Department of Health is managing quarantine hotels for people who have tested positive or have been exposed.
- **On securing units:** stand up new non-congregate shelter for high risk, symptomatic, overflow, and individuals in unsheltered locations; identify the target population & prioritize; identify unconventional units; identify funding resources; coordinate with community partners. It is important to use coordinated entry to identify what kind of setting each individual needs.
- **Connecticut:** They identified the most vulnerable clients in the system, and used that data to target how they would decompress shelters. Hotel and motel is the most common, but also college dorms, trailers, churches, and even AirBnB. FEMA is a common funding source, along with ESG-CV, CDBG, CDBG-CV, Coronavirus Relief Fund, state/local, and private. The CDC is going to release guidance on testing next week. The National Council for Health Care for the Homeless is doing a webinar June 19 on new testing guidance. It is important to look at the latest science about testing, otherwise it's ineffective (e.g. must be able to isolate people while awaiting test results). There must be a system approach to these testing protocols.
- **Ensure sites are supportive with wrap around services.** It needs to be low-barrier, culturally appropriate, non-discriminatory, accessible and equitably accessed. Examples of what needs to be considered: substance use, pets, belonging storage. Also, one must employ harm reduction and trauma-informed care models. Ensure that the staff is trained in those approaches, as well as de-escalation and cultural competencies, motivational interviewing. Actively connect people to comprehensive health services. About 90% of people 65 and older in LA's last PIT were not registered with Medicare. So that's an

example of using this opportunity to get people connected to services they're already eligible for.

- **Rehousing:** Continue housing people through normal channels, make necessary changes to Coordinated Entry to support COVID-19 response and ensure they are equity driven, employ a 'housing surge' strategy with the funding that is coming into communities.
- **Training resources:** There are seven [online self-paced courses](#) from NAEH. These include CDC guidance within a homelessness context, response system 101 with COVID-19 focus, cultural humility, harm reduction, trauma-informed care, trauma-informed care supervision, case management 101 in COVID-19 era. This is for people newly on-boarding staffing a shelter. Here are some [other free training webinars](#), and Alameda County's quarantine program [resources](#).

Other resources

1. CARES funding [overview](#).
2. Wisconsin health department [guidance](#) for community service providers.
3. CHS's [guide](#) on hotel and motel acquisition for non-congregate shelter.
4. A new study by the Urban Institute reveals [widening housing disparities](#) by race and income, as a results of the pandemic.
5. Real Change makes the case for why [tiny house villages](#) are an ideal form of shelter during a pandemic.
6. The latest edition of the NLIHC's [Tenant Talk](#) publication focuses on COVID-related issues.
7. Coronavirus Relief Fund [overview](#).
8. [Guidance](#) for helping people experiencing homelessness access their economic impact payment.