

MEMORANDUM

Date: May 18, 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, May 11 - 17

News

1. In [Palm Beach, FL](#) nonprofit Palm Beach County Homeless Coalition is raising money to move homeless seniors and veterans out of an established tent city into hotels. The Safe Shelter of Hope program has raised \$90,000 of their \$118,000 goal.
2. A recent effort in [New York City](#) to relocate people experiencing homelessness from the subway to shelters has faced criticism from advocates. An estimated 2,000 people have been seeking shelter on trains and in stations, and were left to fend for themselves during inclement weather. Outreach workers hired by DHS have been offering transport to shelters, and 479 individuals have agreed, but [the shelters](#) they are being transported to were recently de-densified (relocating individuals to other shelter in response to social distancing recommendations), raising confusion as to the strategy. In response to Mayor de Blasio's resistance to a large-scale, non-congregate hotel program, City Council will hold [an emergency vote](#) on Tuesday on a bill that would offer free hotel rooms to all unhoused New Yorkers.
3. [Los Angeles](#) added 460 more rooms to its hotel stock for people experiencing homelessness. The Salvation Army is coordinating mental health and other services. City Council is also continuing to discuss [hotels that refuse to participate](#) in Project Roomkey, particularly those that have received taxpayer subsidies, leading to speculation that ordering compliance from those hotels might be a possibility.
4. In [Seattle](#), Mayor Durkan signed off on an expansion of the Public Defender Association's new Co-LEAD Program, which provides hotel rooms and auxiliary services to people experiencing homelessness. The program serves individuals living in outdoor environments like parks, and individuals exiting the criminal justice system.
5. Lawndale Christian Health Center in [Chicago](#) has been running an isolation and quarantine center in the Gold Coast Hotel. They have treated 231 people at the hotel, and the emphasis has shifted from treating people with coronavirus symptoms to prevention for high-risk individuals. The biggest challenge has been finding permanent housing for the guests.

6. In [Astoria, OR](#), a small number of houseless individuals are being housed in a local motel using Medicaid funding for those who are on the Oregon Health Plan, and Providence Community Grants for those who are not.
7. Doctors Without Borders has dispatched a medical team to the [Navajo Nation](#), which is facing high per-capita infection rates due to under-resourced health care services, lack of infrastructure, disproportionate vulnerabilities, and other systemic inequities. More information [here](#) and [here](#).
8. [Indianapolis](#) is already providing hotel shelter for houseless individuals who have been diagnosed or are awaiting test results, and are now moving toward a hotel contract for older and at-risk populations of people experiencing homelessness.
9. In [San Francisco](#) the battle to secure 7,000 rooms for people experiencing homelessness continues. At a Tuesday meeting the Board of Supervisors pressed Health Officer Dr. Tomas Aragón about his refusal to issue a public health directive which would compel the city to commandeer the needed rooms. He explained that the move was unnecessary since the city has the capacity to negotiate for the rooms.
10. [King County, WA](#) (Seattle) announced plans to extend the lease on non-congregate shelter hotel rooms, as well as opening the Elliott Avenue Modular Shelter Project, which will house 45 men currently staying at a traditional shelter. This will be [the fourth modular village](#) in the Seattle area, which is part of efforts that began four years ago and have been fast-tracked in response to the pandemic.
11. In Canada, the province of British Columbia purchased a [Victoria](#) hotel to serve as non-congregate shelter during the pandemic, and affordable housing in the long term. It will provide about 65 rooms with wrap-around services for people currently living in two local encampments.

National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) Weekly Call (Monday, May 11) and Weekly Updates

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

- The [HEROES Act](#) was passed by the House of Representatives on May 15, and awaits a vote by the GOP-lead Senate where it faces significant opposition. Notably, it includes \$100 billion in emergency rental assistance, a national moratorium on evictions, \$11.5 billion in homeless assistance grants, and \$13 billion in additional funding for HUD and USDA housing providers. The NLIHC has developed a [media tool kit](#) for advocates to raise awareness around the need for this funding.
- Three industries accounted for 50% of the job losses: accommodation/food, health care and social assistance, and retail. There are also sectors employing large numbers of low-income workers. According to a recent Pew survey, a little more than half of low-income households had experienced a job or income loss. May-Sept projections are that 12.7 million renters will need rental assistance, at a monthly cost of \$9.9 billion. Read [the full report](#)

- **Elissa Margolin, Director, Housing Action New Hampshire:** They advocated for a statewide strategy for people experiencing homelessness, which resulted in two emergency orders from the Governor: [restricting all hoteliers](#) to providing lodging for vulnerable populations and essential workers only, and [requiring medical cooperation](#) to serve the homeless. This formed the foundation for their interventions. The Governor established an office of emergency response and two advisory boards to allocate the \$1.2 billion they received in CARES Act funding.
- **Bob Palmer, Policy Director, Housing Action Illinois:** 33% of deaths are Black residents, versus their 15% share of the population. There are also (smaller) disparities with Latinos. The state does not have a FEMA agreement, and the cost service providers are incurring for hotels is huge. \$1.8m a month for 600 people, which is affordable in the short term with government funding but they need to be working on a long-term plan.
- **Marie Claire Tran-Leung, Director, Legal Impact Network, Shriver Center on Poverty Law:** Illinois is working on rapid release from prison. However, this population faces serious challenges finding housing. The Shriver Center is reaching out to Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) and advocating for modifications to extend guest policies, in order to enable residents to shelter their family members who aren't on the lease. This would mean that the individual doesn't have to search for housing at this time; that the family is relieved from a possible eviction; and that the PHA would know who's staying in their units. They are also advocating for relaxing restrictions on criminal screening so that people can move in long term, and for waiving standard occupancy limits.

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) webinar: *Operating Isolation and Quarantine Facilities and Providing Medical, Behavioral Health and Substance Use Treatment: Lessons Learned from King County (May 12)*

- **Josephine Wong, Deputy Director, King County Department of Community & Human Services:** Latino and Black residents have a higher rate of infection than other populations. King County is using an equity impact awareness tool to make sure they are reaching hardest hit populations. The isolation and quarantine strategy is to slow the spread of the virus. There is a county hotline that results in referrals, and they provide triage, coordination and transportation to the facility. They have 24/7 onsite staff, medical, behavioral health, security, IT/tech, facilities for room turn over, transportation, and meals, as well as harm reduction strategies, pet boarding, and discharge planning. Meals are dropped off once a day.

- **Kelli Nomura, Director, Behavioral Health and Recovery Division, I/Q Behavioral Health Lead:** Their integrated care team was created over the last few months. After medical assessment, they work with clients to develop a wellness plan. They're then able to either continue a psychiatric plan or begin a new one. Behavioral health screening identifies three levels of need. The skills needed for behavioral health staff were more extensive than what was available in the current network, so they reached out to individual practitioners who could be brought onto the team. Over 100 behavioral health staff per day are needed to fill the shifts. They're also considering discharge planning: where guests will go, transportation, and other considerations like supporting their wellness plan on an ongoing basis. It is important to keep guests comfortable and incentivize their stay.
- **Julie Dombrowski, MD, MPH - Associate Professor of Medicine, University of Washington Deputy Director, Public Health - Seattle & King County HIV/STD Program, I/Q Medical Lead:** The goal of medical care is to provide a restful, healing environment to monitor condition. Care is delivered by nurses on a step up/step down basis depending on condition. Substance use disorder treatment is available for opioids, alcohol, and stimulants. People have the option of managing withdrawal or continuing. There is a wide scope of knowledge and background among nursing staff, and they often need training on harm reduction and behavioral health conditions.

National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH webinar): *Making Housing Happen in Difficult Times (May 12)*

- **Mia Bryant, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness:** In CT Black people are disproportionately impacted by the virus, so racial equity work has entailed recognizing disparities, analyzing data, using a racial equity framework, working with Chandra Crawford from NAEH's Racial Equity Network, and training a diverse group. The hotel program will be expiring June 1, so they are focusing on next steps for when that ends. The challenge is that some guests were from shelters and some were unsheltered, so the emphasis is on finding PSH. They practice 'motivational interviewing', which consists of open-ended questions, change talk, and affirmations. Trauma-informed care focuses on choice and agency, highlighting personal strengths and evoking times when things were going better, allies, and who they have personally helped. They will convert to ESG funds when FEMA expires
- **Jennifer Steigerwald and Jamie Hummer, Strategies to End Homelessness (Cincinnati CoC):** They set up a quarantine facility but have had no positive cases in shelters as of yet. Coordinated entry prioritization policy includes pregnant or breastfeeding mothers, people over 55, those with at-risk health conditions (lung disease, heart conditions, immunocompromised, obesity, diabetes, kidney disease, liver disease). Multiple factors take

priority, but there isn't a hierarchy among factors. HUD waivers allow them to access housing that was previously unavailable, opening the door to new landlords.

- **Sara Busick, CATCH, Boise ID:** They increased rapid resolution funds (first month's rent and deposit), hired someone who has experience as a property manager, adjusted prioritized queue to focus on hotel-to-home, secured damage fund grant dollars, engaged in social media outreach to landlords, devised creative solutions that involved community members who want to help, and prioritized ESG for prevention and rapid rehousing.

Other resources

1. NLIHC working group [sign up](#).
2. NLIHC federal resource [guidelines](#).
3. NLIHC [webinar series](#).
4. A new report from [Kaiser Health News](#) looks at the role inadequate housing plays in public health during this pandemic.
5. New York City family shelter provider Win has released a housing stability and recovery plan, [The Aftermath Plan: Responding to Homelessness in the Wake of COVID-19](#). The plan consists of five policy priorities to prevent housing instability for the most vulnerable families.
6. The Urban Institute's Housing Matters initiative released [a report about transitional tiny home villages](#) in Tallahassee, FL. The authors interviewed residents, planning officials and core development staff in order to assess whether this model meets the housing needs of people experiencing homelessness.
7. New research from Columbia University's economics department projects a [40-45% increase in homelessness](#) by the beginning of summer if current conditions continue, without interventions like rental assistance.
8. The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty's COVID [Response Tracker](#) provides regularly updated information on each state.