

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 1, 2020

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

From: Lauren E. M. Everett
Graduate Research Assistant, PSU-HRAC

Subject: Updates on COVID-19 response and people experiencing homelessness nationwide, May 25 - 31

News

1. [Washington, D.C.](#) posts a daily update of data on the houseless population and COVID infections, quarantine, and other information.
2. Abode Services in the [Bay Area \(CA\)](#) is managing non-congregate hotel shelters for nearly 400 people. Kara Carnahan, the director of programs for the nonprofit, was interviewed about her experiences by Marketplace.
3. [Seattle's](#) hotel shelter program is reporting very positive results as a result of “an approach that houses people before asking them to get an income or agree to change their behavior.” However, the community response in Renton (a suburb) has been oppositional.
4. A hotel in [Appleton, WI](#) is housing 90 clients from a local homeless shelter.
5. [San Francisco](#) opened its first sanctioned encampment this week, by City Hall in the Civic Center neighborhood. The “safe sleeping village” has space for about 90 people, and designates individual spaces with painted perimeters on the pavement. Porta potties and hand washing stations are set up on both sides of the space. Supervisor Haney, who has been advocating for hotel shelter, suggested this may even be more expensive than securing hotel rooms.
6. [Texas](#) is the latest state to face a large increase in positive COVID tests among the houseless population. Cities are exploring various options to address this, including securing more hotel space (Austin).
7. A recent survey by the U.S. Census Bureau found that [one fifth of adults](#) across the US have slight or no confidence of their ability to pay their rent or mortgage in June.
8. Service providers and advocates in [Madison, WI](#) are anticipating a large increase in people experiencing homelessness in June, as the state’s eviction moratorium expired earlier this week. The Wisconsin Coalition Against Homelessness wants the state to take action, and has offered [a three-pronged strategy](#).
9. In [New York City](#), the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (which oversees the development of affordable housing), is asking developers to increase the portion of their projects that are income-based. So far this has resulted in 200 additional

affordable apartments, and some of them have already been allocated to households currently experiencing homelessness.

10. In [Victoria, B.C.](#), city leaders approved the use of \$300,000 in emergency funding to continue booking hotel rooms for people experiencing homelessness and sheltering in city parks.
11. The expiration of Illinois' stay-at-home-order at the end of May has resulted in [Evanston's](#) decision to suspend municipal funding for hotels, citing the end of FEMA eligibility. Support agency Connections for the Homeless will pay for the cost of the program for the foreseeable future, and requests that the city continue to seek FEMA funding, arguing that the reimbursements period extends until August.
12. [Fort Lauderdale, FL](#) was already sheltering about 100 people in hotels, and would like to secure 100 more rooms. They plan to use federal grants to pay for the first set of rooms for 60 days, and have appealed to the county to split the cost of the program's second phase.
13. Los Angeles is working on their plan to transition people experiencing homelessness into housing after the crisis. The [L.A. Rehousing Recovery Strategy](#) entails a large-scale effort to acquire and lease property, utilizing investments from local, state and federal governments. A new report from UCLA's Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy predicts [a large surge in homelessness and evictions](#) following the lifting of emergency orders.
14. A bipartisan proposal introduced this week in the Senate would allocate [\\$1 billion to students](#) experiencing homelessness for shelters, motel bills, food, school supplies and other services.

National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) Weekly Call (Tuesday, May 26) and Weekly Updates

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

- **Dr. Megan Sandel, Co-Lead Principal Investigator, Children's HealthWatch:** There are multiple connections between housing and healthcare. Housing quality is important because people tend to spend more time out of the home when quality is low. Doubling up/crowding can also increase conditions like mold and pests. Low quality is also tied to depression. Doubling up/crowding has been shown to increase the spread of the virus. Maps of redlining, unemployment, cost burden, empty grocery stores will mostly overlay each other. Even when there is food assistance, when someone has to go to 3-4 grocery stores to get everything they're exposing themselves more.
- **Rep Alissa Keny-Guyer, Oregon:** Tina Kotek formed the Housing and Human Services Committee in 2015 to address how far behind the state was in housing strategy. Kotek asked her to form a small COVID-specific housing group. One of the major functions of the group is to use federal funds and allocate state funds to a state rental assistance program, and to assess needs. They sent a letter to the Governor to make sure that the agency that manages CDBG funds knows they can be used for rental assistance. They sent a similar letter to local entitlement jurisdictions encouraging them to use their funds for rental

assistance. They also allocated \$8.5 million of state funds to emergency rental assistance and sent a letter to the Legislative Emergency Board requesting \$300 million in virus relief funds. They are hoping to have a special session in late June to discuss eviction and housing policies, and to allocate funds.

- **Gavin Thornton, ED, Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice:** Six out of nine households have lost income, and nearly one third have missed last month's rent or mortgage, or have slight or no confidence about paying the next installment. The state hasn't used much of their federal relief funds for rental assistance. The Hawaii Budget and Policy Center conducted [a survey of landlords and property managers](#) to assess how widespread nonpayment has been, in order to gauge the need for rental assistance and other policy.
- **Randy Shaw, Director, Tenderloin Housing Clinic:** The Tenderloin is one of the most ethnically diverse neighborhoods in the US, and has been effectively turned into a containment zone by Mayor Breed. The 30-block area is filled with SROs and apts; 99.9% of residences are rentals. There are about 430 tents on the sidewalk, and it is impossible to pass, so now all the residents are endangered (both sheltered and unsheltered). This neighborhood is a classic example of low-income and people of color bearing the brunt of the virus. They were successful in stopping gentrification, and as a result the city treats it like a dumping ground. Their lawsuit advocates for houseless people to be isolated in safe environments, including hotels or supervised tent encampments.
- **Renee Williams, Staff Attorney, National Housing Law Project:** The pandemic has complicated situations where people need to leave their homes due to domestic violence. Not all states have early termination laws that allow people to break their lease without financial penalty. Some jurisdictions have stopped public housing move-ins, which creates a challenge for re-housing people. Some of the eviction moratoriums have exceptions for criminal activity, and domestic violence is treated as such in some jurisdictions, and thus is grounds for eviction for the victim.

Reviewing the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on U.S. Housing Markets: The US House of Representatives Subcommittee on Housing, Community Development and Insurance Virtual Roundtable (May 22)

Chaired by Rep. William Lacy Clay, with a panel of Ms. Fercho, Ms. Scheutz, and Ms. Yentel

- We need to ensure that our response here incorporates what we have learned from the 2008 crisis, which heavily impacted Black households. Just as people were starting to get back on their feet this crisis hits, which is again disproportionately impacting minority households. This is the rationale for passing the HEROES Act.

- Over four million customers have received mortgage forbearance, per the CARES Act.
- Eviction moratoriums could lead to 1. Rent debt that can't be paid off, 2. Ripple effects on local economies (taxes, paying wages of employees, mortgages, etc.), 3. May discourage small-scale property owners from being property owners at all (e.g. in the case of ADUs) - disincentive to operating small-scale rental housing. Instead of moratoria, Congress can continue to provide rental and other financial assistance to renters, and grants and low-interest loans to landlords. Congress has already acted to provide some assistance, but further targeted assistance is needed.
- The country was already in an affordable housing crisis before the pandemic started. More than one half of low-income households reported a recent decline in income or a job loss. In the first week of May only 70% of renters in older, lower-cost residences were able to pay rent, and many paid with their one-time stimulus checks. Evictions are beginning, as many moratoria have expired. Some states are offering rental assistance, but the demand is overwhelming and the funds are usually claimed very quickly. The government needs to intervene. Congress should implement a uniform national moratorium, but that's not enough - they must provide at least \$100 billion in emergency rental assistance.
- The idea that under eviction moratoria renters who can pay, won't pay, isn't born out in the data, so we shouldn't make policy based on that. What we have now is a patchwork, which is creating relief and protection for some renters, but there is also a lot of confusion and lack of understanding of the current laws. That's why we just need a national moratorium. That of course isn't enough, which is why we also need rental assistance. That would ensure that low-income renters aren't becoming debt-burdened, and to ensure that small landlords aren't losing their properties.

NAEH webinar: A Framework for COVID-19 Homelessness Response (May 26)

- Jurisdictions across the country will be receiving a significant amount of money to address homelessness via the CARES Act. In particular, there is \$4 billion for the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), which is nearly 15 times as much as the last appropriation (approximately \$270 million) for that program. Other funding sources are CDBG funds, Coronavirus Relief Funds, and FEMA.
- The [Framework for COVID-19 Homelessness Response](#) was developed to help communities think strategically about how to best allocate these resources; not just to address the current crisis, but continue work on ending homelessness in the long term.
 - Goal 1: address racial and economic disparities with funding allocation.
 - Goal 2: help those with the highest needs first, e.g. those who are unsheltered, older, medically vulnerable, and disabled.

- Goal 3. Get people into housing eventually, not just appropriate shelter.
 - Success is contingent on developing meaningful partnerships with non-homelessness-focused agencies and sectors, especially housing, health care, and employment. Prevention is key.
 - Time is of the essence: act quickly, this is not business as usual.
- This is an opportunity to create better solutions for ending homelessness, by improving our systems for the future.

NEAH webinar: *Data Collection & COVID-19: Learning from the Field (May 28)*

- **Shercole King, HMIS Administrator, VIA LINK (New Orleans, LA):** It's important to understand your community DNA. Who are your key players? Are you collaborating effectively with everyone? We need to understand who is involved and might have access to data. New Orleans has a limited sharing system, in which only basic client profile information is shared between agencies. There are different systems for collecting data in different jurisdictions, and the CoC is strict on sharing procedures. Data will add precision to making referrals that help to avoid overwhelming the healthcare system. Develop a COVID data request for certain agencies, then develop a system to share information (e.g. data request form for local hospitals working with the homeless to share case manager info).
- **Genell Denzin, HMIS Data Analyst, Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio:** They added a field to their Prioritization report that helps inform readers about which clients need to be moved immediately to non-congregate housing. They're planning to create CoC-wide and county-level reporting on positive cases, to help with planning and technical assistance. This will include racial equity reporting per NAEH spreadsheet. The COVID screening tool has fields for date, vulnerable clients, diagnosis, symptoms, and potential contact. They're using the CDC guidelines but are also trying to incorporate other risk factors like race.
- **Margot Ackerman, Research Director, Homeward (Richmond, VA CoC):** They moved 99 people into hotels with no HMIS data entry. The initial focus was on getting client entries done. They took on data entry for some temporary programs and worked with staff from other agencies to make sure that they knew when clients left. They added a COVID assessment and more ways for service providers to find out if someone has tested positive, to address concerns of outreach workers. They added a data field for when a client is undergoing a COVID assessment, and a "caution" graphic to make sure that's flagged. They're also collecting data on motel stays in a spreadsheet, and it's color coded with test results. For partners, they provide weekly metrics, weekly activity reporting to the state, and details for case conferencing (e.g. which clients have income). What success looks like:

exit to programs with case management, low number of cases in shelters, system engagement with people who have been in the system for years but have not been engaged.

Other resources

1. [LAHSA's guide](#) to Remote Case Management in Rapid Re-Housing in The Time of COVID-19
2. The CDC's [Checklist](#) for Homeless Service Providers During Community Re-opening
3. NAEH's [COVID-19: Federal Resource Guideline Series](#)
4. NAEH's COVID-19 [Online Learning Series](#), an online course curriculum to provide homeless system leaders and providers with training and materials to aid in their community response.
5. The NLIHC just released their 2020 [Picture of Preservation report](#), which forecasts a loss of nearly 300,000 affordable homes in the next five years without additional resources.