

MEMORANDUM

Date: May 11, 2020

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

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Subject: Updates on COVID-19 response and people experiencing homelessness nationwide, May 4 - May 10

National News

1. [Hennepin County, MN](#) (Minneapolis) is housing 540 houseless adults with underlying health conditions in hotel rooms. The County has spent \$4.3 million so far, and expects to spend \$1.6 million monthly.
2. [Portland, OR](#) has contracted with two hotels to shelter houseless individuals who have tested positive for the virus or are awaiting test results, but so far only 16 out of 120 available rooms are occupied.
3. [Newark, NJ](#) has begun testing all residents experiencing homelessness, by setting up testing stations at an airport hotel that is currently serving as a non-congregate shelter. Individuals who test positive will be moved to a hotel that is reserved for quarantine *only*, not individuals with health risks.
4. [Orange County, FL](#) (Orlando) is now sheltering houseless individuals who have tested positive in a hotel.
5. Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) has set up [a coronavirus treatment center](#) in a London hotel for people experiencing homelessness who have contracted the virus and require medical care. The facility is known as Covid Care, and is the first MSF deployment in the UK. The hotel cost is being covered by the Greater London authority, and the National Health Service and MSF are paying for staffing. **There are almost [50 hotels](#) in London providing non-congregate shelter to 90% of people experiencing homelessness, and 5,400 individuals across England and Wales are staying in hotels.**
6. The situation in [San Francisco](#) continues to intensify, as a letter penned by the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights on behalf of the Coalition on Homelessness demanded that Mayor Breed follow the Board of Supervisors order to procure 8,250 hotel rooms. **The letter is speculated to be a precursor to a potential lawsuit if the Mayor doesn't take action.** Meanwhile Hastings College of Law has [filed a federal lawsuit](#) against the city, alleging that failure in city policy had created unsafe conditions in the Tenderloin neighborhood, and that access to basic shelter is "medically necessary."

7. In [New York City](#), a new plan to close the subway system for nightly disinfection has alarmed homeless advocates, who say it could have devastating consequences for the thousands of people who sleep on the trains. There have been 829 positive cases in the population, 705 of which were in shelters, and 65 deaths.
8. In [Los Angeles](#), the number of hotel rooms available for people experiencing homelessness will be at about 3,000 by the end of the week. City Council voted on Wednesday to [identify hotels](#) who refuse to take people experiencing homelessness, **saying they could potentially be commandeered.**
9. [Michigan](#) is the latest state to receive FEMA approval for non-congregate shelter funding, bringing the total number of states with these agreements to nine.
10. [New Orleans](#) has placed 158 more unsheltered houseless individuals in hotel rooms.

National Low Income Housing Coalition Weekly Call (May 4) and weekly updates

- The NLIHC joined a coalition of 115 organizations in [writing a letter](#) to federal leaders asking that \$100 billion in rental assistance via the Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act be included in the next relief package. They are still collecting signatures, and other orgs are encouraged to [sign on](#). This [fact sheet](#) provides more info. The campaign hashtag is #rentreliefnow.
- Both look-up tools for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac [are now live](#). They still lack data on the 1-4 dwelling properties. Eviction protection look-up is [here](#).
- The National Alliance to End Homelessness has [a framework](#) for COVID response. ESG funding recipients are encouraged to follow this framework. Guidance covers unsheltered, shelters, housing, prevention and diversion, and systems change. All components have been developed using a racial justice and equity lens, and it guides communities to address the most urgent needs first. Actions in the framework must be funded and coordinated across many partners, not just homeless systems
- New Jersey has a FEMA agreement for five categories of individuals. This includes people who have tested positive, people awaiting results, individuals with high health risks, as well as first responders and other individuals who may require assistance. They have the typical 75%/25% cost share, but are seeking 100% reimbursement. The state is seeking to implement a full individual assistance program, in addition to the crisis counseling already in place. **They are collecting data from 211 and social services, and will use that data to apply for the next round of FEMA funding.** Potential areas of assistance are legal services, funeral expenses, etc.
- Eight states that have FEMA agreements: CN, NY, OH, NC, CA, MN, NJ, and VA. NJ has a much more restrictive agreement than CN, for example, and states are encouraged to push for a better agreement. FEMA has only spent a fraction of the funding they have available for this (6 out of \$70b). [This guide](#) gives recommendations based on what states have been

successful. The number one thing to know is work closely with the State's public health officials, to make sure they are defining this emergency broadly, because that will determine the breadth of resources.

- Arizona is the third worst in the nation for affordable housing. They have allocated \$5 million to rental assistance for renters who have been impacted by COVID. They're using data to inform their funding and policy decisions, and it has revealed that the Navajo Nation has been hit especially hard, with a per-capita infection rate similar to NYC.
- Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota is into its second lockdown to protect residents inside the reservation. Check-points to leave the reservation are running 24-7, the curfew is 9 p.m., and if people are outside they are required to wear masks.

Next City webinar: What Cities Are Doing About Homelessness (May 5)

- **Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui (Cambridge, MA):** The city has addressed two issues (small business closure and homelessness) by appropriating funding to contract with restaurants for 90 days to provide meals for shelters. She estimates the city has spent over \$62,000 so far with a total possible expenditure of \$100,000 to \$200,000. Eighteen restaurants participating, 13 shelters, 2,000 meals.
- **Eren Pehan (Director of Missoula, MT housing authority):** The city purchased a hotel for emergency homeless housing that will eventually become permanent affordable housing. They were already working on a plan to identify underutilized assets, and were going to negotiate a purchase of the hotel as part of a land banking strategy. This would have entailed public outreach, but with COVID urgent action was needed. It serves people awaiting test results, already confirmed positive, or high-risk. The pandemic resulted in an increase in unsheltered individuals and expanding encampments, and they estimate up to 40% of the population could contract the virus without this intervention.

NAEH webinar: Using Your Data to Analyze Racial Equity (May 7)

- **April Mitchell (Dept. of Housing and Special Needs, HUD):** CARES Act re-housing strategies: focus resources on addressing inequities in COVID response; make sure you have providers who are experts in underserved populations; track housing placement rates; CoCs should think about how to update Coordinated Entry strategies to account for vulnerabilities associated with the virus.
- **Chandra Crawford (NAEH):** Black people are especially disproportionately impacted by the virus. 13.4% of the general population, whereas counties with higher Black populations account for more than half of all cases and almost 60% of deaths. Black people are at higher risk due to health, social, and economic disparities which are a result of structural inequities and injustice. Black people are also overrepresented in the homeless population (40%)

- The NAEH's Racial Equity Network's [Racial Equity Tool](#) now has a COVID-19 tab. The [Action Steps](#) provide guidance based on what your data reveals. It is important to conduct outreach with people of color who have lived experience.

[NAEH webinar: Focusing on People Who Are Unsheltered \(May 5\)](#)

- **Kendall Cloeter (Virginia Housing and Community Development CoC):** VA's primary focuses were 1. Securing shelter for unsheltered, 2. Increasing access for guests of shelters that close during the day. \$2.5m was provided for unsheltered. They used 2020 PIT data to figure out how many individuals would need help. The next wave of funding will focus on continuing emergency shelter, and focus on exits to permanent housing. This can be seen as an opportunity to engage with some of the harder to reach clients.
- **Rachel Biggs (Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless):** Their street medicine project has over 100 people on the team. They can do screening and testing on the street, and then steer people into various pathways of care. Phase 1: setting up isolation and quarantine, de-intensifying shelters, shifting amount of time spent on outreach (10-40%); Phase 2: supporting individuals and preventing further morbidity; Phase 3: anticipating individuals being in a sicker state than when AHCH last saw them and may be out of medication for several months.
- **Marco Santana (Los Angeles Family Housing):** LAFH has been able to move 400 participants into Project Roomkey rooms. The focus was on two large and historic group encampments with all people of color, and they have had great success with this (San Fernando Valley). **They attribute the success to moving the whole community at once, into the same hotel.** The plan is to exit participants into PH. LAHSA stipulates that 80% of PSH stock be allocated for PRK participants. LAFH is assigning designated Housing Coordinators as well as PRK staff to conduct an assessment and goals with participants.

Other resources

1. NLIHC [FAQ](#) on COVID-19 and Racial Equity.
2. [Guidance](#) for helping people experiencing homelessness access their economic impact payments.
3. Housing Action Illinois has created [a guide for advocates](#) to message their work around funding and policy.
4. The National Alliance to End Homelessness has a series of free courses to assist staff who are staffing hotels/motels and congregate shelters. **They're free for up to 2,500 users, and registration will be live on [the website](#) May 11.**
5. [Five ways](#) state and local governments can strengthen their capacity to meet growing rental assistance needs.

6. COVID-19 threatens [a new eviction crisis](#).
7. The CDC released [an assessment of COVID-19 infection prevalence](#) in homeless shelters in four U.S cities between March 27th and April 15th.
8. You can find all of the NAEH webinars [here](#).