Weekly COVID-19 Housing & Homelessness Call

Wednesday, April 22, 10-11:15am via Zoom

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| **Time** | **Topic** | **Lead** | **Notes:** |
| 10:00  5 min  Kiki | Welcome & Settle in | Rachael Myers, Housing Alliance | * If you have other topics after this call you’d like us to cover in upcoming calls, feel free to reach out * If you’ve got q’s that come up during the call, use the chat function – type the q’s and we will answer them in the chat or on the call, if we can’t then we will follow up after the call * Decided to extend the calls for an extra 15 minutes * Reviewed agenda |
| 10:05  5 min  Caroline | Updates from Commerce | Tedd Kelleher, Dept. of Commerce | * Disappointing to see the federal assistance act didn’t include rental assistance * Eviction Moratorium in WA state * Also seeing employment security are starting to pay the $600 * CHG guidelines have been changed with relaxation around rent assistance in light of the above * Most people who have lost their jobs can get unemployment assistance, but we want to make sure we are not getting in the way * State is due for changes there * CHG is primarily for unsheltered, not meant to be a general low income rent assistance program, but there is a link * LIHEAP program – Diane Klontz: * Approval and help to pay up to $1000 in rent assistance, to pay directly to landlords * Effective today * Timeline for CSG – probably about a week. * Process to apply for LIHEAP? If you are currently eligible for LIHEAP, contact whoever manages that. You don’t need a pay or vacate. Give them landlord name and they will pay directly to the landlord * The size of the problem though is in the hundreds of millions of dollars - no scenario where even a small percentage of people will be helped. It will take federal funding of hundreds of billions dollars. * LIHEAP – mild winter so they are using those funds. Not a new infusion of money. * [https://www.commerce.wa.gov/growing-the-economy/energy/low-income-home-energy-assistance/](https://www.commerce.wa.gov/growing-the-economy/energy/low-income-home-energy-assistance/ ) |
| 10:10  5 min  Emily | Eviction Moratorium Update  Here is a press release with these bullets, and it also includes a link to the proclamation language: <https://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-expands-eviction-moratorium-and-adds-additional-protections-residential-and-some> | Patricio Marquez, Washington Office of the Attorney General | * Wanting to walk through each of the bullet points of the amended moratorium and what they seek to do (see link in topic section for details about moratorium) * Moratorium kicked in on Thursday, extends to June 4th * First, eviction notices have been broadened from original moratorium to any eviction notice for any reason, unless that termination is to respond to an immediate risk to health or safety. This can’t be due to the tenant’s health status itself, but rather if the tenant poses a risk to other’s health and safety (for example, if there was a shooting in their unit after they move in) * Also, if a landlord had already served a notice prior, the landlord is prohibited from enforcing that notice. * Also prohibited from displacing someone who’s lease comes due during moratorium * Covers not just traditional housing, but also non-traditional. Ex. Roommates that share a home, Airbnb, RVs, public campgrounds, etc. * Court eviction proceedings prohibits seeking an eviction notice (except in health and safety situations, see above bullet point for an example). Enforcing court evictions not allowed * Law enforcement is now prohibited from serving or acting upon eviction orders (unless health and safety, see above), they are also prohibited from threatening to serve an eviction * Also puts a moratorium on late fees after Feb 29 * A landlord cannot charge rent or fees to someone unable is unable to live in a unit they previously were going to due to the COVID-19 outbreak (ie a student who is taking classes online.) * Prohibits a landlord or property manager to treat unpaid rent as an enforceable debt when it’s because of the COVID outbreak. -- no billing or sending to collections. This doesn’t apply when the landlord can prove that the tenant refused a reasonable payment plan. This calls for a case by case analysis, challenging to apply to a one size fits all situation * When moratorium is lifted, they can’t turn unpaid rent to enforceable debt, unless it can be proven that a tenant refused reasonable payment plans * New moratorium also prohibits rent increases for residential and commercial properties during moratorium |
| 10:15  5 min Q: Emily A: Kiki | Q&A |  | Questions:   * Would a landlord need to re-issue those notices after the moratorium or can they enforce the notice they already issued * What is being done to ensure people can pay rent and other fees after the moratorium has ended? * So if someone experiences any of these challenges they are encouraged to file a complaint? Correct?   + A: Yes * Can landlords issue a 60-day notice of a rent increase now that takes effect AFTER the June 4th moratorium end? * Patricio, do you know if your office enforce the moratorium against a municipality/Washington State Patrol that issued a notice threatening to impound a RV/vehicle that someone lived in? * What is a “reasonable” payment plan? Is there guidance on this? * Does the moratorium include homeless encampments? * Is it reasonable for landlords to request proof of unemployment or denial in order to determine what is “reasonable” for repayment? * Are there any next steps in advocacy? For example, continuing to ask for 60-day mortgage relief, waived mortgage payments, etc. * Earliest date that evictions can take place? * Can a landlord issue a notice now that would take place after the moratorium ends?   Answer:   * Reasonable payment plan? It has to be reasonable based on the circumstances of that resident. Because its characterized person by person, difficult to give a definition that applies in all instances. Must take account of individual experiences. For some individuals who are out of work and don’t have word on when that will change. It may well be that a resident is not able. To now in the present indicate what they need and afford - some time and latitude may need to be provided by the property management. * Homeless encampments? Moratorium does apply to public lands. In terms of def od dwelling, it does require a structure of some kind. but the gov has intent to provide broad coverage. We have applied it to RV’s, which aren't typically covered. Work with us if threat of sweep. * More definition around reasonable would be helpful at some point. Proof of unemployment or denial of that to determine? The case by case analysis will be necessary. Its all so fresh and new – we need data. Governor needs info to see if a tweak is necessary. The moratorium seeks to take into account circumstances with broad affects. In some instances, dealing hundreds of individuals affective. I would caution landlords against being unreasonable with the documentation they seek. Some level of verification – that is reasonable – might be expected. The moratorium is definitive – this is not a blanket forgiveness of rent for all. Want folks to pay rent to mitigate the damages to landlords/property. Resident has every interest in being able to supply proof / verification if they can * Earliest date evictions can take place – not until June 4th. Can be evicted after as of now. One exception is the landlord can attest they need to respond to a risk that is of the health and safety of others. Have seen some complaints – shooting at my home. Resident’s exposure to covid 19 cannot meet that test. * Can landlords issue 60 day now that takes affect after – no bc that is a threat to increase rent and the moratorium prevents a threat. Any rent increase would happen 60 days AFTER june4 eviction notice |
| 10:20  10 min  Caroline | Strategies for a Racially Equitable Response | Katara Jordan & Klarissa Monteros, Building Changes | * Katara & Klarissa – Strategies and considerations for Racial Equity Response to COVID-19 * Diversion is a solution focused approach with flexible funds. Concerns using this during this time. Temporary solutions will not work for * Student homelessness – concerned, want to expand funds for youth under 25 and expand category to families who are doubled up or temp staying with others * 6/10 students are from communities of color * Racism, COVID and homelessness is a 3-part problem * Strategies – Diversion is an equitable approach * Immediate, direct cash transfers, flexibility, targeted outreach to communities of color, immigrants, refugees, tribal and rural regions * Specifically meeting needs of these communities – lean on families and friends temporarily until they can find a permanent place but this causes overcrowding * Inequitable solutions then expands people in category 3; short term 30-day motel stays instead; we can do tenant landlord mediations and negotiations with attorneys and use these funds to pay off arrears * This has worked well in the past; * Prioritize targeted resources if added funds aren’t already available * Talking to state about getting more funds * Offering training to organizations who are interested * Direct cash transfers to youth because families don’t usually have funds for them * Evidence shows money is used for basic needs * Reach Cash App is able to offer funds directly and they are talking to them about using this in BC * Educational awareness workshops; tenant rights, budget and resource plans, services will be offered; can offer this with Washington landlord associations * If you are interested in trainings on this please reach out to us * BC will follow up with questions in the chat |
| 10:30  5 min  Kiki | Impact of COVID-19 on Immigrant Communities | Rich Stolz, OneAmerica | * Statewide civic engagement group grounded in immigrant and refugee communities across wa * A lot of pain and confusion, many issues folks are grappling with. This is one of those intersectional issues, but it does hit BIPOC communities particularly hard as we think about the overall context. * Context – already know there is a disparate impact of the disease striking POC and those with underlying conditions dying at higher rates than other populations * We know COVID-19 is having an outsized impact on the underlying economic issues facing our communities * All happening at a time when there was already sig concern in immigrant and refugee comm bc of political context and the person occupying the white house, with a range of policies and practices implemented in the last few years. Everything from “public charge” - limit ability to access benefits if deemd to be a burden on those benefits. * For any program that an immigrant may apply for, now a question if it will harm them sometime down the road. For the most parts those programs available should not harm their availability to receive immigration benefit in the future. * Presidents intent to ban all green cards to the country for the next 60 days – those announcements are feeding uncertainty. * Already ended refugee resettlement in the US – adds to the nativist and restricitonist movement already underway by our federal government * Three issues relevant in the context now:   + Sig demand on emergency relief services – food, housing, cash assistance, those are the issues that get raised most often in immigrant and refugee communities. Hitting Latino communities very hard in central wa, Somali pop in king, and east Asian com   + Need for emergency assistance is compounded by need for technology and access to that technology – computers, etc. Limiting their ability to apply for programs or get info about programs   + Matter of language access – most of what is available from the state will be / are being translate din Spanish but no other languages. Seattle and king county have done a better job translating what they should be concerned about, but most applications are not available in other languages. Demand for service – for example unemployment insurance and the scale of requests to ESD – exacerbating lack access and ability to field requests for information/other languages. * Effort underway in broader immigrant and economic justice community – more than 400 orgs signed on to letter that was delivered to stat decision makers to establish fund in Washington for folks who are undocumented who are excluded from benefits passed by congress in CARES – can circulate that to folks. We anticipate a pretty active effort to try and get that idea implemented. * Testing and care, any challenges specific to im & ref testing & care – they should have access to testing. They have not been excluded from those services by laws. There are concerns about underlying access to health services. More likely to go to clinics/hospitals - concerns about the capacity of those health places to meet the need |
| 10:35  5 min  Caroline | Update on Unemployment Benefits | John Tirpak, Unemployment Law Project | * Before UI was only for some people * March requirements are relaxed * Adding $600/claim * Added 13 weeks – to 39 weeks * Now workers not covered previously like Uber Drivers, and workers with less than the required hours * Good but hundreds of thousands of claims and it is taking longer; people are getting messaging and tech issues that need to be worked through. Claim is retroactive * Claims have taken longer, esp appeals bc of technical problems * They are needing to hire more people to access claims * Problems with language and disabilities * Apply online or on the phone * Access to computers, and 800# is always busy * Dept of law project and going to website; past webinars are also helpful * Website has info in 10 languages and free interpreters * Q: What about people with less work hours. Past rule is 680 hours, now under new rules, if you have some work hours then you can still qualify * New rules are good but the processing is the problem right now. |
| 10:40  5 min  Emily | How to get a rental assistance program up and running quickly using CARES Act funding | Kurt Wiest, Bremerton Housing Authority | * CARES act CDBG emergency rental assistance fund * We are a med size Housing Authority we work with our city when they get $ from CARES act, we were able to seamlessly set up distribution of those funds * About a year and a half ago we worked to set up a rental assistance fund. We realized that when someone experienced a personal financial crisis, about $1500 would be the difference between remaining housed and experiencing homelessness. * We wanted to address short term economic crises, figured giving people $1500 now would be better than letting people go homeless. * The program was going well, then COVID hit, and then we needed to be focused on where those funds were most needed. * Changed program priorities to help households impacted by COVID * Over the last 30-days we’ve processed over 40 applications for rental assistance * To streamline the process: no more that 3 months of rental assistance, at 70% of their rental contract, simple application available online, (bremertonhousing.org), limited to Bremerton residents, only people at 80% of AMI. Trying to make it as simple as possible. * Layering CARES act funds on top of previous funds * When CARES act funds are gone, we’ll go back to our previous funding sources * $ is already there, cities and counties have been notified. Inquire about how the city or county intends to distribute funds locally * Q: So what if they decide to use it differently than rental assistance ? A: Encourage your govts to use it for rental assistance. 5-day comment periods, there should be an opportunity to weigh in on public officials about how those funds should be use. There are strings attached on this part, that it can only be used for rental assistance. * Q: Question for Kurt: thoughts on policy of 80% AMI as maximum income. King county United Way recently allocated $5M in rental assistance that was used up in 2 days. am wondering if localities should cap at 60% AMI .  A: our exp in our previous program was 40-60% AMI, we expanded that we went down from 30-80, vast majority of people are people applying are already in 40-60% category anyway. |
| 10:45  5 min  Emily | Regional Update from Island County | Theresa Sanders, Island County Public Health | * I work for public health dept in island county, I’m public info officer * Island county is a small rural county, we have a high case count * One of my colleagues is also on if there are any questions specific to Island Co * This is Whidbey island and Camano, no way to get to them than to take a 1.5 drive * From a rural perspective, serious access issues. One hospital on Whidbey island * Once COVID hit there were no clinics that stayed open on Camano island, they had to leave to receive services, concerns about transporting with no known status * A lot of people don’t realize that Camano island is part of Island county, though it is close to Snohomish * We also have a long-term care facility on Whidbey island, which had a positive case. There was mass testing, doc tested all patients and staff. Part of reason of high # when you test more you get more. This was a tremendous community effort. He got enough PPE and tests to test whole community * There was a collaborative effort to institute practices around quarantining staff and visitors. * 61% of cases associated with long term care facility, beginning to be around staff and visitors. * Big spike when tested, slowly leveling off * This is when being a small rural community worked to our advantage, we were able to get folks in a room at the same time. * A lot of time in rural communities it’s usually a bad picture, this is a case where it worked well. * We do struggle with access to health care, these things harmed us through this response * We have smaller non-English speaking populations, we have struggled with outreach. * There is a small grant for outreach to hard to reach pop, trying to find a community partner for this * we have a high veterans pop, very at-risk pop with COVID, they also struggle with housing and behavioral health. This was an issue before, and now as we work through this * We were able to go in really early and talk to our jail about how to reduce their numbers, and instituting measures of population control. No confirmed cases in jail system. + case for us * Worked strategically with stakeholders * Done outreach with our schools: equity, food, digital needs * How does the county play a role in * Biggest need is the staff for the response. We have 4 public health nurses * Trying to find creative ways to source clinical nursing providers (ppl who can do tests, come up with creative solutions for that) * We knew an unsheltered pop on island, needed to create a plan if someone tested positive. HS dept worked with how this would happen, have a plan in place if this occurs * Broad planning has been collaborative between Public Health and the hospital and our grantee. * We did a broad search on various types of facilities, we have worked with a motel to get isolation beds. Been helpful in working with our community in this way. 50 beds to be accessed, so far just 3 people needing it. 2 in our unsheltered, 1 in human services dept |
| 10:50  5 min  Teresa | Federal Advocacy Update | Rachael Myers, Housing Alliance | * King Co CM Kathy Lambert (chair of Housing Committee) would appreciate suggestions for how to keep people housed after this – her door is open and she encourages people to reach out to her. * As Ted has said on every call, there’s no way the state will have the resources (unless something changes dramatically) to support the enormous need for rental assistance, etc. So federal response is critical. * A 4th relief package passed out of Senate yesterday and is going to the House. It’s an economic package (doesn’t include funding for housing or homelessness), but does include new infusion of funds to the Paycheck Protection Program for nonprofits and small businesses. * Still looking for housing and homelessness resources in an upcoming relief package. Earliest that vote would come is May 4. Advocacy critical right now. Our ask: $100B in rental assistance, 11.5B in Emergency Solutions Grant funding, nationwide moratorium on evictions, plus voucher funding. * Take action link: <https://bit.ly/CVfederalaction> * NLIHC has put together [extensive document](https://nlihc.org/responding-coronavirus) on what is needed in next federal package to address housing & homelessness. We’re looking closely and adding specific requests for WA, including specific request from public housing authorities. * Also today is national day of action for SNAP. (Forgot to check chat for link before I signed off, sorry.) |
| 10:55  15 min  Emily | Q&A |  | Ran out of time |
| 11:10  5 min  Teresa | Wrap-up & Announcements |  | Ran out of time |