Weekly COVID-19 Housing & Homelessness Call

Wednesday, May 13, 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 | * This is our 9th weekly call! You can access previous calls on our website – we have 7 calls. The first two not posted. But can go and look back at the other ones * Purpose is for information sharing in multiple directions – folks in communities' access to resources and best practices, and also want to hear about unmet needs to guide response and advocacy * Also we go over a lot of advocacy that is needed – today we have guests from the federal level * \*reviewed agenda * Denny Heck – 10th congressional district. Along with Maxine waters, lead sponsor of the rental assistants and stabilization act (HEROES) * Before we get start, address a couple of questions that have come up * One question – a lot of concern and question about folks currently exp homelessness and how they can access services. Ppl needed housing before this housing and more now. Access depends on where you are. Coordinated entry set up access points across the state <https://deptofcommerce.app.box.com/v/CEAccessPoints> * Another question – cuts to social services/homelessness/housing at local, state, or federal level as a result of the economic impact – federal gov is the only government that can go into debt. Already passed large spending packages. That’s why it’s so important to enact new revenue at the federal level, otherwise yes states will have to make cuts. We need significant funding in these services. Pushing on the state and local level on the revenue side and preventing cuts. We will need you helps in advocacy with that |
| 10:10  5 min  Caroline | Poll Questions |  | * Who is on the call? * 42% Seattle/King County * 13% NW WA * 27% South Puget Sound * 6% from Eastern WA * Some from Olympic Pen, SW WA, Central WA and Eastern WA * Roles: |
| 10:15  10 min  Kiki | State Updates & Q&A | Tedd Kelleher, Dept. of Commerce | * Couple years ago rep heck lead a committee on housing needs and analysis of what was going on. When proposal came out to 100 billion dollars – realized that was at the time it was an accurate measure of the need. * We are working to re-prioritize the resources that we have both federal and state and re-direct money toward rent assistance and other things to address this crisis. Pushing on the federal side for state resources * Aggragate will be frustrated if not a large infusion of federal money * Re-iterate what rachael was saying about state and local money – some options on the revenue side of the equation but with the size of the deficit, if we don’t want to see large cuts across the board its going to take a backfill to offset revenue loss * We are working to launch all of the program s passed with help of the alliance. Will be a comment period soon on the use of the shelter funds – stay tuned will be advertising it widely. Will be brief turnaround period but don’t hesitate to comment on proposal of what is no 40 million of shelter funds * Q: Is there likely to be an increase in Consolidated Homeless Funds, not just ESG? There is an emerging and ongoing need around resources for getting folks from shelters directly housed into more permanent/long-term housing (e.g. rapid rehousing funds, flexible funds for rental assistance, etc). * A: Consolidate homeless funds not just ESG? - just from a grant admin perspective, the thing we’re struggling with is the massive revenue loss for the document recording fee which funds those programs. If something doesn't change, looking at amending the contracts for reduction. Not sugar coat the reality. The revenue drop is likely severe enough we will be able to hold it through the biennium, but if anything, we are looking at a decrease if we get no federal money * Revisit regress tax system and use an equity lens? We hope so. The housing alliance will be engaging more than ever in increasing revenue in a progressive way, will be more involved at those tables from here on out * Western state patients can't leave because nowhere to go/housing - can't exit? - it’s a huge problem. It feels like when you're squeezing the balloon – issues bubbling up. Issues – end of the day it was a system that left 15,000 people outside. Had endless audits describing efficiency and resources - that’s fundamentally the problem. A resource problem. No great response. Having to de-prioritize other populations. End of the day its a zero-sum game * Collecting info on how CBDG funds being used by counties? - we track it for the non-entitlement areas for which we have congress. Direct relationship with the federal government. Not sure if federal report issued on these issues. Rachael: will follow up afterwards * What do you mean reprioritize state funds? - mostly about looking at existing restrictions on the funds and re-examining if that’s law or agency discretion – what are the underlying goals. Right now, setting aside other priorities and focusing on the health of ppl living outside and preventing ppl from getting pushed outside. Homing in on preserving peoples housing. * Universal design building efforts? Most will need accessible housing – right now not a lot of building. Sort of a longer-term convo that’s important but haven't been focused in a capital focused place yet. * For those who are homeless – lose housing? - will need to focused advocacy efforts to prevent. Social distancing funded in a way not sustainable. A lot to work on there * Federal HEROES act rent assistance would provide the scale we need to tackle all these questions * Programs to help KC HA vouchers identify affordable housing – the way we are structured is that it really is at the state level providing financing and performance measurement and transparency, less about the specific navigation at the local level – zero sum gain issue. Not a bunch of vacancy folks are getting into. Housing resources filled. Haven’t seen data that says folks in there who don’t need it. We can improve – arms race of navigation assistance for various populations. Again, its squeezing the balloon – someone not getting in when someone does * 12-month payback program – backpay of owed rent debt. Will hear later on in the call on best practice for setting up rental re-payment programs. Will be addressed there * Side not – as mentioned in previous calls. If any community working through county emergency management to get FEMA money and other sorts of non-congregate housing who are at risk per CDC guidelines. If having issues or want to talk about the progress, don’t hesitant to reach out. Want to hear from other side on how its working getting this federal resource – advocating within the state system to make that better. Virus likely around 18 months. Stronger long-term plan for isolation and quarantine needed. Preventing/preparing for future surge |
| 10:25  5 min  Teresa | Report from NLIHC: Federal Advocacy | Joey Lindstrom, NLIHC  [jlindstrom@nlihc.org](mailto:jlindstrom@nlihc.org) | * Thank you for ongoing advocacy as we try to come up with good coronavirus policy interventions. * NLIHC is doing various working groups (policy, FEMA coordination, state and local implementation, long-term solutions). If you’d like to participate in any of the working groups, you can find info on the website. * The big news is the HEROES Act, introduced yesterday by Speaker Pelosi. <https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/democrats.appropriations.house.gov/files/documents/Heroes%20Act%20One%20Pager.pdf> * This is the D’s vision for how to respond to coronavirus. Covers many areas of relief, including NLIHC’s 3 highest priorities: $100B in emergency rental assistance, comprehensive nationwide eviction moratorium on all rental housing (for next 12 mo!), and ESG funding (?). * Over last couple weeks, they have focused their advocacy on the emergency rental assistance and rent stabilization act, which was included in package introduced by Speaker Pelosi. Spending package in the Senate will look different, and we’ll lose some things in negotiation. * https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Emergency-Rental-Assistance.pdf * Working to get MOC to support bill. 7 cosponsors in WA (all Ds). Advocacy will help in negotiations - please reach out and thank your MOC, tweet them using #rentreliefnow. * Senator Murray is a cosponsor but not Sen Cantwell. We assume she’s supportive but likely focusing on LIHTC. WLIHA will follow up with her office to see if she will cosponsor. * Rs may not sign on, but some expected to support prioritizing emergency rental assistance in final negotiations. |
| 10:30  10 min  Emily | Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act of 2020 | Congressman Denny Heck | * Rep. Heck’s bill is summarized here: <https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Emergency-Rental-Assistance.pdf> * Hopefully voting on CARES/HEROES on Friday * Thank you to WLIHA for all the work you do, effort makes a difference * Started writing this bill back in March when it first hit. * Last week brought on board the chair of the committee, delighted that Sen Brown picked it up on the senate side * Reaffirmed Joey’s strategies he highlighted, important that it’s a high priority * Reality is that some people can’t make June rent, this is foundational * If you don’t have a pillow, blanket, roof, every other issue in your life won’t be working * We’ve already given mortgage forbearance, this would be the equivalent for renters * For a lot of people, they’re renting from mom and pops, not just corporations, they’ve got bills to pay too. * Way to make everyone whole until we get to the other end * We are going to be in the soup here for a while * We're experiencing depression era unemployment * There is no V shaped recession, Slow climb out from this * Reaching out to those who haven’t signed on yet [in the legislature] * Our job is to do everything we can to make sure that 100 billion in rent assistance is in the final package * Wish we can step back and savor this incredible step forward, this is a big deal that we’ve got it in this bill at all, but we have a big journey ahead of us. * Rachael: A lot of gratitude in the comments, everyone is struggling including private and public landlords. Note the importance that undocumented folks have access to support * Q: When will fed moratorium on evictions end? * A: Joey: Possibly after 12 months? Will confirm. Rep Heck: I think that’s right * Q: Most important is keeping ppl housed, but politics and important macroeconomy, have landlords signed on? * A: this thing almost fell apart, including recently between property owners and advocates. Very fragile, okay for now. We have a wonderful opportunity for a unique marriage here, both interests are served by us being successful. Renters want to pay rent and not make trade-offs, landlords want to be whole too. There is a path where both interests are met, but takes some active listening skills. Mission is to help ppl who are vulnerable and at risk * Q: About paycheck protection program, mega churches? (Missing complete question) * A: HEROES Act does make some changes that were needed for small businesses, extended 8 wk. payback to the end of the year. Treasury adopted a ??%. We’re making midcourse corrections; we were engaged in the fog of war. We can see a little further ahead of us, but not that far. This is going deeper. Another thing we can do is make sure some of the $ goes to minority owned businesses and smaller banks and community. No more $$ in the bill we’re going to vote on this week. Always trying to figure out what’s working and not working. Key is to get $$ in hands of individuals * Thank you for the work you do everyday |
| 10:40  5 min  Kiki | Additional federal updates and advocacy needed | Rachael Myers, Housing Alliance | * Advocacy critical – house voting on bill lielly friday. Senate will be much harder passed. Senate controlled by republicans. Recognizing and remembering to thank the folks who have signed onto these bills to continue prioritizing rental assistance and other asks * Summary of the bill: <https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Emergency-Rental-Assistance.pdf> * In the HEROES act, in addition to the 100 billion in rental assistance, includes 11.5 mill for homelessness through ESG. Uniform eviction moratorium. 75 bill for homeowner assistance. Talking about 175 bill for housing issues. Actually greater than that – including the homeowner assistance, housing choice vouchers, rental assistance, CBDG and some other things in there. a lot in that bill for housing. Critical we move that forward. * Take action with our landing page: <https://housingalliance.salsalabs.org/covidresponse/index.html> |
| 10:45  5 min  Caroline | Report Out: Best practices for setting up rent repayment plans | Stephanie Velasco, City of Seattle Office of Housing | * Affordable housing providers best practices, which are rapidly changing what were standard repayment plans * Emerging practices: Payment plans of 6-9 months with possibilities for extensions * Providers are also working case by case with households with what is actually feasible * Amounts and duration may vary widely * Ability to pay back rent for people may be minimal and then come in stronger depending on when they are able to work, so payment plan will likely change over time * Emergency legislation passed by Seattle City Council: any landlords and tenants across Seattle, not just affordable housing * Any rent due will be due after 6 months as a default plan, a set consecutive equal plan, depending on how much back rent is owed: * Say 1-2 months = 5 months * Over 2 months = 6-month installments * Intending to set a floor and give landlords and tenants to figure out what is actually feasible * Will send a link to where to find the final signed ordinance, but it is not up yet. * Here is the link to the City of Seattle ordinance: http://seattle.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4432265&GUID=CADC7C14-9AD7-46CD-9369-ED939D6D727D |
| 10:50  5 min  Emily | Regional Update: Walla Walla County | Sam Jackle, Walla Walla Co. Dept of Community Health | * Focusing on rental assistance * Work group from council on homeless, making sure we’re collaboration w/ each other putting together rental assistance * Majority working with coordinated entry, as more funds come available the program will be ready to go * We have a unique relationship with our hospital, it has a team focused on health outcomes, with focus on self mgmt. * Working with that team w/ our shelters and homeless population * Relationships and trust are being built, strengthen that connection * Work with community services and health dept., 2 hats. * Want to mention we have noticed lower numbers in domestic violence shelters, one thing is that increased rules and restrictions can be difficult * Want to focus on pre-existing programs * How to plan beyond the sept 30 for WA emergency Housing grant. Stay home stay safe is the focus, but time is flying * Medical rounding does include encampments, don’t have safe parking in Walla Walla * They also assist w/ ppl who have been tested, helpful because it helps stretch the resources * Q: are you able to do testing for folks in shelters and for unsheltered folx? * A: Right now no, but we are pushing for that. Had conversations about if we reach a threshold of positive cases then we’ll do on site testing. We are pushing for it though, because it makes things easier. |
| 10:55  10 min  Teresa | Regional Update: Yakima County, Homelessness Response and Medical Respite | Esther Magasis, Yakima County Dept. of Human Services; Rhonda Hauff, Yakima Neighborhood Health Services | Rhonda:   * Yakima Co now has highest rate of infection in WA and on the west coast. * County’s testing rate is around 20% and increasing and testing between 25-30% positive. * YNHS provides supportive housing, medical and respite care, CE, diversion. Their niche is serving chronically homeless. Strong CoC in Yakima Co. * Respite care is shelter with emergency medical care – during Covid it also serves as isolation. * YNHS also has 180 units of supportive housing – increasing recognition of importance of housing to health outcomes. * Homeless patients who access medical respite care access hospitals 50% less after than patients who don’t. Reduces cost.   Esther:   * Broader strategy in Yakima Co for Covid response: utilizing Covid emergency housing grant, consolidated homeless grant, and FEMA funds. * Working to connect people needing emergency rental asst to case management before moratorium is lifted – trying to save CHG funds for this as much as possible. * Process of developing homeless system response has included partnerships with board of county commissioners, dept of human services, health dist, office of emergency management, city of Yakima, providers, Yakama Nation (though that partnership isn’t official yet). * Focused on prevention (increase distancing and sanitation in congregate settings) and preparation (develop plan for isolation and recovery beds before they’re needed). * Expanded young adult shelter resources to keep youth out of adult shelter system. * Despite high rate of positive cases, only 1 confirmed positive so far in any of their shelters. Hopefully a sign that prevention measures are working. In the event they see more positive cases, prepared to expand medical respite program through YNHS. * Also working to create clear policy with providers to make it clear when people need to be referred to medical respite, when they need to get tested. Shelter guests being screened already. Making sure providers know what they are looking for and what needs to be assessed. * Homeless populations are a high-risk group for transmission because they’re so often spending time in congregate settings, more likely to be aging, experiencing acute illness or disability, have limited ability follow public health guidance, and more likely to experience stigma & discrimination. * Website platform has helped them coordinate donations across providers and communities – get specific supplies where they are needed. At this point have purchased over 25k items to distribute and met 1/3 of community need so far. YNHS has given suggestions for care kits (puzzles, books, art activities) for people in forced isolation, which can be traumatizing. * Takeaways: identifying early on their unifying philosophies of trauma-informed care; remaining flexible and going month-to-month on agreements and revisiting plans consistently; and staying in consistent communication across providers and partners. |
| 11:05  10 min  Emily | Q&A |  | * Q: Can you say something about contact tracing w/ unsheltered and homeless individuals * A: in order to be tested you must be symptomatic. Our staff goes to locations. People who need testing we register as our patient, with their consistent we share results with shelter. If they don’t give consent that info won’t be shared. In Yakima, contact tracing is being done by state dept of health, offered to help but they are not wanting that. |
| 11:15  Teresa | Wrap-up & Adjourn |  | * Reminder to please reach out to your Members of Congress. WLIHA will send out an action alert soon to make that easy to do. * Information for undocumented folks: [https://www.nhlp.org/campaign/protecting-renter-and-homeowner-rights-during-our-national-health-crisis-2/](https://www.nhlp.org/campaign/protecting-renter-and-homeowner-rights-during-our-national-health-crisis-2/ ) * Much concern expressed for people who are undocumented, ensuring people know their rights. We’ll share resources in a follow-up email and will address this again in an upcoming call. * Another concern expressed about people utilizing payday loans to make rent, and some landlords encouraging tenants to pay rent with their credit cards. When moratoriums end, people will still owe back rent, so we’ll keep working hard on rental assistance. * If you’re hearing about landlords in your community who are encouraging people to pay rent on credit cards or use payday loans, please reach out to us through our website to let us know. |