Weekly COVID-19 Housing & Homelessness Call

Wednesday, July 29, 10-11:15am via Zoom

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| Time | Topic | Lead | Notes |
| 10:005 minEmily | Welcome & Settle in | Rachael Myers, Housing Alliance | * Looking forward to the day to see/to meet y’all face to face again
* Run down of agenda
* This week and next week are key times to be involved in federal advocacy
* Top left of zoom, otter.ai, if you click on the button you’ll see a live streaming of that transcription. AI, not real person so it makes some mistakes.
* Apologize for it going out last week
* Will have access to notes, recording, follow up actions
* Purpose is to share what’s working in communities, learn from each other, troubleshoot.
* Also so Dept of Commerce (and Housing Alliance) has opportunity to share updates and hear what’s happening in communities around covid, to ensure advocacy and response is meeting the needs of communities.
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| 10:055 minEmily | Poll Questions |  | * Same questions that we have been consistently doing
* Silver lining of COVID is that we all get to be in the same space from all over the state

1.) Where are you joining from today?2.) What hats are you wearing? |
| 10:1010 minCaroline | Updates on state housing and homelessness response during COVID-19 | Tedd Kelleher, Dept. of Commerce | * We sent out applications and are ready to write contracts for 100M CARES Act flexible Funding
* I will go over eligibility criteria
* Thank you for the comments from over 150 ppl to help hone the specifics of the form and process
* We’ve built a lot of spreadsheets and have used the census data
* Hard to truly judge the variables and what’s needed
* But the unemployment insurance will make a difference
* We intend and expect that we have to make adjustments
* We know that 100M is not enough
* We will revisit and hone those over time
* Ted Shared screen
* Resource of commerce’s website – Homeless Assistance page, New Eviction Assistance Program”:
* <https://deptofcommerce.app.box.com/s/kb5sds2gv4yc9n931j1e7f1dikvlyub1>
* List of people being awarded funding
* You can see who in your community is granted funds, single adults, families and youth
* If you want to engage in your community you can look up who they are
* You can also click on Program Forms and Guidelines to look at specifics
* Eligibility changed a little bit
* Households must meet two initial screening criteria, current income at or below 50% Area Median Income **over the last 60 days**
* At least one month of rent not paid or partially unpaid since March 1, 2020
* AND at least one of the additional criteria
* Ex: rent burden more than 50% of income, previously homeless within last 5 years
* At risk...
* Disability...
* Youth that is pregnant or parenting
* Youth has previous experience in a system
* NEW Equity provisions
* Provided a list to grantees, By & For organizations to outreach and fill in the paperwork
* Related performance measure that recipients are working for the same people in that community “By & For”
* Don’t hesitate to contact the grant manager with questions
* Q: Can you help me understand why the eligibility for ERAP does not include demonstrating that income has been affected by the pandemic?
* A: Part of the goal is to address the impact, and supporting those most at risk of bad outcomes – ex: if they have been evicted before that puts them more at risk
* R: Keeping the program as accessible as possible
* T: This is not the program we would have come out with if we had more lead time and planning, we will learn more lessons
* This is just eviction prevention
* Is unemployment factored into current income?
* Yes
* Q: Can you explain the representational portion more precisely. For example, if you just look at the whole population, that would result in far more white people getting help than BIPOC.
* A: trying to address inequities. Trying programs are being rolled out at scale
* Ted will answer some questions in the chat. See below:
* Q: Can you explain the representational portion more precisely. For example, if you just look at the whole population, that would result in far more white people getting help than BIPOC.
* A: It's in proportion to the people living in poverty, by county
* Q: will you be looking at this metric across all of our RA programs or just the ERAP?
* A; Yes, we will consider alternate ways of measuring proportionality, and what you are proposing seems reasonable from what I know now
* Q: Technical assistance?
* A: In terms of training, we will be providing videos on how to complete the forms, and are open to suggestions on other Commerce training
* 3 months of assistance only. We hope to be able to extend the months of assistance to at least six, if funding allows
* Question: What if the By and For list does not include any organizations in our county? Or, if we are not able to contract with any of these organizations?
* Answer: The contract terms explicitly allow an exemption from the requirement if after trying to identify orgs that can do the work, and none are found
* Question: Will the grantees be sending out information to the “By & For” organizations that were listed? And in different languages?
* Answer: Commerce has contacted By and For organizations regarding the funds, and grantees are required to also outreach
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| 10:2010 minTeresa | Responding to HUD proposed rule permitting anti-trans discrimination | Meghan Maury, National LGBTQ Taskforce<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XEbOL7QDfJliEEy9WgbOCO1a052lMZMo2Cl8SMw0nq8/edit> <https://housingsaveslives.org/>mmaury@thetaskforce.org | * Appreciate you having me here. Need all the help we can get in this fight. Here to talk about the HUD rule that rolled out last week, why it matters, and what you can do to engage in the fight against this rule.
* In 2012 the previous administration released a regulation that no one who receives HUD funding can discriminate based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The rule recognizes that homelessness and housing instability is common among LGBTQ folks.
* Later realized the guidance was too broad and didn’t give shelter providers enough specifics on how to comply with the rule.
* A second rule was released in 2016 about how not to discriminate against trans and nonbinary people.
* Knew a roll back of the current rule was coming with the current administration. It took them all 4 years to do it, and the roll back is worse than anticipated. It also directly violates the recent Supreme Court decision that that clarifies that sex discrimination includes discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.
* It also implements a huge religious exemption that could extend beyond trans and nonbinary people to undermine all nondiscrimination protections.
* This also does harm on a personal level. It allows shelter providers to make a determination about someone’s gender (using physical characteristics like height, hair) on intake to exclude them from services at a sex segregated shelter.
* 1/3 of trans and nonbinary people experience homelessness in their lifetime, and this is significantly higher for people of color who are trans or nonbinary, about 50%. And it goes even higher for trans and nonbinary POC with disabilities. So this is likely to most impact people with multiple marginalized identities.
* Asking everyone who has capacity to help by weighing in on this. There’s a toolkit with strategies for people who want to directly advocate. Easiest way is to a file public comment on the Federal Register site.
* Have also created a website in partnership with True Colors, the National Center for Transgender Equity, and others where you can direct members of the public to submit a public comment as well.
* People can write a comment that's as short as a few sentences saying this rule will cause harm, please don't move it forward. Or they can add experiences from their own livesor more detailed arguments against the rule.
* If you have capacity to engage more deeply, critical voices we need to drive comments from include: people experiencing homelessness, service providers (especially shelter and IPV shelters), elected officials, and faith leaders.
* Proponents of the new rule are arguing that states are confused about nondiscrimination protections – need elected officials to counter this argument.
* Even with current rule in place, only 30% of shelters are currently housing trans and nonbinary people according to their gender.
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| 10:3010 minCaroline | Updates from the Center for Housing Justice | Kevin Solarte, National Innovation Service | * Michele – Kevin used to be with the Alliance a while back, we’re extremely excited that he is here to give an update on Housing Justice
* K: Fun to come full circle, as this was my first job out of grad school
* Left WA state 5 years ago, but have been doing work in WA state around Youth homeless work
* Context on the Center and why it was created; still new
* Main Goal - what we’re doing in systems and systems change work has been in the “reform” area -
* Ex. Youth work - reform work and it’s good work, but still working within a broken system and causes harm; how do we actually change to “transformative” work
* Long term vision, we know it’s a long road
* 2 main ways: Centering of racial of racial and LGBTQ equity
* We’ve looked at our data – acknowledge fact that there ae disparities and play in the margins, but we are working to change that
* 2nd - Center people with lived experience to shift power with how decisions are made to people with experience
* Create a platform and system that shares that power
* Two tenets
* One way is the National work – NIS sees it’s place at the national and local level, both have the same problem
* Having come from the Alliance, they really do try to do this but it
* it‘s not the normal on both the national level, meaningful power sharing and tapping into people from marginalized
* Policy decisions usually cis and white
* Start to shift that at these levels
* 2nd bucket – do this at the Jurisdictional level – city of Detroit
* What that looks like and what our method is at longer structure – usually it was shorter and only informed by executives
* Looking at 2-year engagements – organizing, focus groups, front line workers, people with lived exp. Black, LGBTQ identities and create a body of folx who can make these recommendations
* Now how do we craft a blueprint for how to do that work
* Participatory research – that takes time, not a 3-month engagement but a 2-year engagement
* We’re also trying to do this in the lens of the social justice uprising
* We do better work engaging with these systems at the same time
* We looked at the demands of Black Lives Matter movement and protesters and we’re fighting for those demands that movements are making in these areas of housing and homelessness
* NIS has a history in WA State and has done work in Seattle King County
* kevin.solarte@nis.us
* Lots of excitement form the Housing Alliance staff and others
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| 10:405 minTeresa | Housing and homelessness updates from San Juan County | Lisa Byers, OPAL Community Land Trust | * Lisa is director of OPAL Community Land Trust and also on the Housing Alliance board of directors. She’s providing an update today on how San Juan County is faring with regard to homelessness during COVID.
* Experience in San Juan County is not unique. There has been growing homelessness over last 10 years, but the islands don’t have an existing shelter program.
* Before pandemic, people who were homeless camped on private land, sometimes by agreement, sometimes not. They use showers at the State Park, phones & computer at community resource center, use bathrooms and get warm at public libraries. There was no regular case management, just occasional kindnesses and people who checked in on them.
* Nothing was formalized because we lacked scale. Just a history of individuals providing direct outreach neighbor to neighbor. People who were homeless said this is what they wanted, quiet and privacy. But for people with trauma, there was a lack of support.
* When stay at home order came down and the places people had used before we shut down, people experiencing homelessness were stranded.
* Formed a nonprofit collaborative to create a series of host sites on private land. People donated tents & trailers, created propane operated portable showers, rented portapotties, got cell phones, stood up wifi hotspots, negotiated with private property owners. Ended up with 5 host sites.
* County representatives expressed a desire to help, but weren’t able to provide funding in a timely way or address liability concerns of property owners.
* Local community foundation started an emergency response fund campaign and was able to raise money to fund case management. For the first time, trained social workers are supporting homeless neighbors, and they’re able to see the benefit of that.
* Thought shelter program application through Commerce would be an avenue to get funds, but application wasn’t funded. Their understanding is it was because their program didn’t have existing shelter capacity in place.
* Putting out a call to other rural communities in a similar situation to use this moment in time to creatively serve needs in rural communities.
* Ted: intent of the application was actually more about establishing shelter in places where there aren’t any than about expanding existing shelter capacity. It’s allowable to expand existing shelter, but not the primary goal of the program.
* Lisa: that was her interpretation as well, so was disappointed that their application wasn’t funded.
* Michele: has the deadline passed?
* Ted: we can grant extensions.
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| 10:4510 minEmily | Federal Advocacy Update | John Stovall, Housing Alliance and Joey Lindstrom, National Low Income Housing Coalition | John Stovall:* Big news is that the senate released their version of a relief pkg on Monday – sparse compared to HEROEs act that the House passed
* HEROs included a lot more
* “Senate package sucks, and we need something better”

Joey Lindstrom* Had a really successful virtual lobby day
* Thank you for the feedback from those, helpful
* We are really making behind the scenes progress
* Republicans are trying to establish a hard line on spending
* Trying to incentivize people to return to work
* Trying to get Democrats to be more “reasonable”
* Republicans will slip up and indicate that there’s intertest to extend the eviction moratorium
* Donald Trump said that he’s interested in extending the moratorium (even though he said it a few days after it expired)
* Other Republicans are showing interest, stumbling over themselves
* Sometimes info will leak out that they aren’t supposed to say - a lot of posturing from high level senators
* Intense negotiations between two bills
* Can’t predict what this means for housing spending yet
* House and Senate leadership are trying to demonstrate that they have the full support of their caucuses
* There is advocacy to do in the house to make sure our reps don’t back off housing support while drawing hard lines
* We need more democrats in the house to say that housing assistance is non-negotiable
* Some aspects of HEROs Act will fall to wayside, need to make sure none of that is housing
* Senate bill doesn’t include anything about shortfalls for local municipal gov’ts. So, if we were hoping to expand housing efforts with the efforts of this spending package, this is impossible to do if state and local governments are just shuffling their money in order to maintain – we want them to be able to expand
* Flagging that there isn’t significant $ that will allow for acquisition of properties in either bills. Going to do more advocacy on that after this
* A lot of hotels and motels are currently being used to house ppl experiencing homelessness
* A lot of hotels are seeing a devaluing of their properties, will see a lot of hotels coming up for sale. These could be used for permanent supportive housing. Need money in order to purchase those
* We have engaged with both parties for these
* Draft language of Dem party platform includes strong language about the housing trust fund, engagement with parties is paying off
* We're fighting for things really hard right now for the final spending package, but we’re going to be doing a lot after as well
* No matter how supportive your member of congress is, they need to keep hearing from you.
* Q: Regarding dem platform, did they include any tenant protections?
* A: No, nothing about national protections. People’s action has looked at national rent control, but that’s not in the current platform.
* Q: Biden’s proposal, section 8 expanding to all who eligible. Is there any asterisks, or does he actually mean all who qualify will get it?
* A: It is the entitlement we’ve dreamed of, no asterisk. He actually does mean all who qualify will get it. One of the positives of Matthew Desmond’s rise to super celebrity, since he proposes this in Evicted. But if you expand vouchers, you also need to expand the supply of housing. You also need to fund the Housing Trust Fund more.
* M: you also need more tenant protections to prevent housing discrimination to be paired with this
* Q: (missed the question 🙁)
* A: Conversation about changing those deadlines, but I don’t know. 2 conversations there, should these be extended, and 2 can Carson or Mnuchin extend them without permission from congress? It seems like they can, but it’s questionable if they will. Getting money out the door is important. Some Republicans really rely on “what difference does it make if communities don’t use it?” So, we need to be able to demonstrate that the money hits the road quickly, to take the sails out of that talking point.
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| 10:555 minTeresa | State Advocacy Update – Eviction Moratorium | Michele Thomas, Housing Alliance | * The Governor did extend the eviction moratorium in WA from Aug 1 to Oct 15. Much of the original moratorium stands. There are two changes:
* (1) a clarification to local law enforcement that if an eviction meets terms of current moratorium (there are loopholes), then local law enforcement can carry out the eviction.
* (2) the proclamation now includes the intention for the Governor’s office to create an informal taskforce that will convene by Sept 15. They intend to include stakeholders both from landlord community and tenant advocate community, and key lawmakers. Task force members haven’t been named yet. We are encouraging them to include renters of color and orgs representing people of color, including the WA Immigrant Solidarity Network.
* We’re still hearing that renters across the state are getting in payment plans that they can’t really afford, and want to stress there is part of the proclamation that requires the landlord, if they want to collect any of the arrears, to offer the tenant a payment plan that is individually tailored.
* Tenants do not have to agree to terms that don’t fit their financial situation. If tenants have no income, they can set a payment plan that begins when they have income again.
* We encourage everyone to read these payment plans very carefully. Don’t sign something you can’t afford or feel tentative about, because it could jeopardize your chances of preventing eviction.
* If you need assistance you can contact Tenants Union, Solid Ground, the CLEAR line from Northwest Justice Project, or your local pro bono law offices that provide tenant rental assistance. John will include contact information for these in the follow-up email.
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| 11:0015 minEmily | Q&A |  |  |
| 11:15 | Wrap-up & Adjourn |  | * Thank you all for your hard work locally. Thank you to Commerce, Ted, for your work to get the Rental Assistance Program out the door and for your emphasis on racial equity. I think it should be a model for what other state agencies should be doing now and into the future.
* Thank you to all our speakers today.
* We’ll put up the recording as always. Thank you to Caroline, Emily, Teresa for taking notes.
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