

A FRAMEWORK FOR COVID-19 HOMELESSNESS RESPONSE

National Alliance to End Homelessness
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

OVERVIEW

- States and localities will receive significant ESG, CDBG and other funds. FEMA funds are available for certain activities.
- Funds should be used strategically to maximize impact.
- Homelessness could grow or shrink depending on your approach.
- Homelessness and pandemic disproportionately affect persons of color and marginalized communities – public health and economic impact.
- Resources should address and remediate disparities.

TIMEFRAME

The order in which to do things is important:

- Phase 1: Immediate Actions (already be underway)
- Phase 2: Short-Term Actions (begin now)
- Phase 3: Medium-Term Actions (begin in the next 30 days)
- Phase 4: Longer-Term Actions (begin in 30-60 days)

ACTION AREAS

Strategies and activities in these five areas:

- Unsheltered people
- Shelter
- Housing
- Prevention and diversion
- Strengthening systems for the future

CROSS-CUTTING VALUES

- Prioritize helping those most in need first (unsheltered, lowest income, disabled, etc.)
 - Higher income & prevention only when high-need are served
- Racial justice and equity approach
 - Involve those affected in planning and implementation
 - Collect data on disparities in services and outcomes
 - Plan to remediate disparities and review impact regularly to implement mid-course corrections as needed
 - Continue in all phases

PUBLIC HEALTH AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY

This is not only about ending homelessness (although if done well it will help)

- Public Health
 - Protect homeless people from the virus
 - Stop community spread
- Economic Recovery
 - Get homeless people stabilized in housing with health care and connected to jobs
 - Prevent a new wave of homelessness

Overview: Homeless System Planning for the Most Effective Use of COVID-19 Funding



IMMEDIATE ACTIONS Public Health Response: Emergency Protective Measures to Flatten the Curve

Create system-wide testing and/or screening protocol and route people to appropriate options based on need (asymptomatic, symptomatic, high-risk, COVID positive)

- **Unsheltered People:** Increase outreach and create additional hygiene resources (handwashing stations, showers, laundry) for people in unsheltered locations.
- **Shelters:**
 - Ensure social distancing in current congregate facilities.
 - Stand up new non-congregate shelter for high-risk, symptomatic, overflow and people in unsheltered locations.
- **Housing**
 - Continue housing people through normal channels.
- **Prevention/Diversion**
 - Implement jurisdiction-wide moratoria on evictions.
 - Support people in PSH and RRH.
 - Link to employment.
- **Other Key Activities:**
 - Collect data for planning.
 - Engage People with Lived Expertise in planning.



SHORT-TERM ACTIONS Public Health and Economic Recovery Response: Effective and Equitable Re-Housing

Develop policies and practices that support people in non-congregate or overflow shelters exiting to housing, not back to unsheltered locations.

- **Unsheltered People:**
 - Sustain and expand efforts to support, screen, test, and safely shelter people who are unsheltered.
 - Engage people with lived expertise and other partners to increase outreach, especially in rural areas.
- **Shelters:**
 - Begin re-housing people placed into non-congregate or overflow shelter.
 - Re-house people in congregate or unsheltered locations.
- **Housing:**
 - Begin landlord engagement activities.
 - Begin re-engagement of coordinated entry.
 - Begin cross-system planning.
- **Prevention/Diversion:**
 - Scale up efforts to prevent loss of housing among people in PSH and RRH programs.
- **Other Key Activities:**
 - Implement equity-based decision making protocols.
 - Use data to project need for different interventions and inform equity-based decisions.



MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS Economic Recovery Response: Reduce New Entries into Homelessness

Continue to implement CDC/HHS guidance in homeless programs and systems.

- **Unsheltered People:** Re-house people living in unsheltered locations and increase support for unsheltered persons.
- **Shelters:**
 - Scale up non-congregate shelter as needed.
 - Implement or increase housing-focused case management in shelter.
- **Housing:**
 - Move people from CARES-funded RRH into PSH if needed.
 - Work with PHAs and other housing agencies to access vouchers for households in CARES-funded RRH who need long-term assistance.
- **Housing cont'd:**
 - Prevent evictions due to economic crisis for extremely low income and marginalized persons first. Plan for higher income (30-80% AMI) at-risk households.
- **Prevention/Diversion:**
 - Divert households from homeless systems when possible.
 - Engage partner systems (TANF, Child Welfare, Justice) for prevention activities.
- **Other Key Activities:**
 - Use data to refresh projections of need for different interventions and assess equity impact.



LONGER-TERM ACTIONS Economic Recovery and Public Health Preparedness: Strengthen Systems to Advance Racial Equity and Prepare for Future Crises

Strengthen connection between homeless and public health/emergency management systems to prepare for future crises.

- **Unsheltered People:** Monitor re-housing efforts for people living in unsheltered locations.
- **Shelters:**
 - Close non-congregate and overflow shelters by moving residents into housing.
 - Assess the feasibility of congregate shelter as a common practice in light of pandemic.
 - Connect COVID related homeless assistance to employment systems.
- **Housing:**
 - Assess and plan additional activities/targeting for marginalized/highly impacted communities.
- **Prevention/Diversion:**
 - Prevent evictions due to economic crisis for higher income populations as appropriate (30-80% AMI).
- **Other Key Activities:**
 - Conduct review of COVID response to inform lessons learned for planning, including impact of equity-focused practices.

PHASE 1: Protect and Prevent Spread

- Unsheltered: testing/screening; get into appropriate shelter/housing; hygiene and health for those outside; peers
- Shelter: testing/screening; social distancing & Q&I; peers
- Housing: continue current efforts
- Prevention/Diversion: RRH and PSH checks
- Systems: establish partnerships (public health, CoC, etc.); enter and analyze data; document disparities; engage people with lived expertise

PHASE 2: Public Health & Economic Recovery

- Unsheltered: Testing/screening; move all to shelter/housing; create acceptable alternatives for those who reject shelter
- Shelter: Scale up congregate and non-congregate shelter; test/screen all; peers; examine data for inequities
- Housing: assess need for various models; intensive landlord engagement; speed lease-up; funding sources
- Prevention and diversion: scale up; examine for equity
- Systems: establish equity-based decision making; examine data; establish links to employment

PHASE 3: Economic Response

- Unsheltered: find options acceptable to those still unsheltered
- Shelter: to-scale on specialized non-congregate shelter; no exits from shelter to street; housing services; plan to replace all congregate with non-congregate shelter
- Housing: plan to-scale exits from shelter to homes; partners and resources for re-housing to scale; connection to services, employment
- Prevention/diversion: system-wide diversion; begin scaling prevention for <30%AMI; use non-homeless funding; target marginalized communities
- Systems: plan response to income/rent cuts; equity-based decisions

PHASE 4: Economic Recovery and Future Health

- Unsheltered: full services to remaining unsheltered
- Shelter: eliminate congregate shelter
- Housing: to scale housing strategy for those exiting homelessness; connection to services and employment
- Prevention/diversion: strengthen diversion; partners support previously homeless to prevent recidivism; if all <30%AMI are housed, move to higher incomes for prevention
- System: strengthen mainstream partnerships, esp. with public health; evaluate response to COVID; document equity best practices

FUNDING SOURCES

- FEMA
- ESG
- CDBG
- Coronavirus Relief Fund
- Federal funding to States/localities (TANF, Medicaid, etc.)
- Family Violence Prevention and Services Act
- RHVA/HYDP
- HOME – TBRA
- HOPWA
- Section 8, 202, 811
- Philanthropic funds
- State/local discretionary funds

FRAMEWORK NEXT STEPS

- Distributing to industry groups
- Revised @ 2 weeks
- Tools, protocols, guidance, documents, etc. will be added
- More assistance to implement