NAEH COVID-19 Webinar Series: Understanding & Planning for Federal Funding

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National Alliance to End Homelessness

Agenda

- Welcome, Housekeeping, and Introductions

- Overview of federal coronavirus stimulus package (Steve Berg)

- Planning for effective use of federal funding to address COVID-19 and homelessness (Kristi Schulenberg)

- Upcoming webinars & resources

Follow Along Via #COVIDWebinar

- The Alliance is live-tweeting this webinar and will post webinar-related questions throughout our time together.

- Please engage in the conversation and share how your community is planning to strategically use CARES Act funds to address the COVID-19 pandemic among people experiencing homelessness.

- In addition to the live-tweeting on this and our upcoming webinars, the Alliance is working to develop a platform where communities can share information, ask questions of each other, and post resources.

CARES ACT OVERVIEW

CARES Act Overview

- What's in it for homelessness?
  - $12 billion for HUD programs, health care enhancements, individual payments, small business loans, unemployment insurance enhancements, state/local government support.
- How much? $2 trillion total.
- Different areas covered? Most of the money is to support private businesses, but substantial support for federal, state and local government
- For more: https://endhomelessness.org/whats-in-the-coronavirus-bill-for-homelessness/

Homeless Assistance Funding in the CARES Act

- $4 billion ESG – to state and local government for shelter, short-/medium-term rent, supportive services.

- Homeless and at-risk at 50% AMI.

- Increased flexibility – minimal decision-making process, no shelter cap, no match, costs already incurred may be reimbursed, for temporary shelter no environmental or habitability review .

- Housing First! No requirement for treatment or other activities to receive services with this funding.

- Timeline and formula – still uncertain.

CDBG

- What is it? Formula grant to state and local government for a range of uses
- $5 billion
- Allowable uses – almost anything with public benefit. Homelessness, housing capital or operating costs, or rent subsidies included.
- Who decides? City/county/state.
- Increased flexibility – no "public services" cap, so don't have to use most of it for building.
- Timeline for distribution – still uncertain but pressure to release quickly.

Other Funding

- Coronavirus Relief Fund
  - $150 billion – large amount but probably dwarfed by shrunken tax revenue in many places
  - Who decides – state/local government, tribes
  - Housing & homelessness options – up to government entities
- FEMA Assistance – Shelter, including non-congregate, is a fundable expense everywhere – webinar next week with NLIHC!
- Individual payments
  - Considerations for people who are homeless, without bank accounts – online applications under consideration
- Other HUD programs
  - Eviction Prevention provisions

Medicaid Waivers and COVID-19

- Since the president's declaration of a national emergency, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has granted *40* states 1135 waivers to address COVID-19
  - *1135 waivers allow states to set aside administrative requirements to increase access to medical services during an emergency*

Examples of waivers:

- Suspension of Medicaid fee-for-service prior authorization requirements (providers usually have to first obtain approval to provide a service to be eligible for payment).

- Making it easier for out-of-state providers to provide care.

- Allowing care in alternative settings from a hospital or doctor's office.

Medicaid Waivers (Continued)

- **Additional waiver to consider:**
  - *1115 Medicaid Demonstration* – could expand eligibility for coverage (ex., New York Disaster Relief Medicaid) – hasn't been utilized for COVID-19.

- **Advocacy efforts**
  - Assess waiver options, such as expanded access to telehealth (1135)
  - Contact your local state health agency to ensure those most at risk receive the care they need

PLANNING FOR EFFECTIVE USE OF CARES ACT FUNDS FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Alliance Framework for COVID-19 Homeless Response

- Prevention

- Unsheltered homelessness

- Shelter

- Stabilizing households in homeless system-funded programs (RRH and PSH)

- Exiting from homelessness to permanent housing

- Post-pandemic period

COVID-19 Homeless Response Planning Steps

Strategic planning efforts should include:

- **Assess** – communities should assess **existing resources** and **current challenges** to better mobilize these resources to achieve their goals.

- **Leverage** –communities should make the best available use of **other existing – non-homeless system – funds** to protect people experiencing homelessness from contracting and spreading COVID-19, help them exit homelessness, and meet the need of at-risk households

- **Strategize** – communities should **be strategic** and ensure that new funding is dedicated to **making the most impact** for those **currently experiencing** homelessness and **at immediate risk** of homelessness.

Alliance Framework – Prevention

- Prevent sheltered and unsheltered homelessness
- Challenges we face:
  - Mass unemployment and inadequate safety net
  - Anticipated increase in survivors fleeing domestic violence
  - Increase in people leaving doubled-up situations
  - All of these challenges fall disproportionately on people of color

Alliance Framework – Prevention

- Assess:
  1. Are we targeting prevention dollars **at the front door** of the homeless system to keep people where they are when it is safe and appropriate to do so?
  2. Just because funds can be used for more upstream prevention activities (i.e., 50% AMI), is this the most effective use of these funds? How can they have the greatest impact (e.g., lowering the AMI criteria)?
  3. What is the racial makeup of people at-risk of homelessness in our community and how can we ensure that people of color who are most at-risk are able to access prevention assistance?

- Leverage:
  1. Advocate to ensure safeguards are in place so people who lose employment do not spiral straight into shelter; consider eviction moratoriums, rent forgiveness, and legal assistance to prevent evictions.
  2. Promote community-based – non-homeless system – prevention assistance and work to improve targeting to households closer to the front door of shelter or to unsheltered homelessness.
  3. Advocate for use of TANF reserves to stabilize housing of at-risk families by increasing cash assistance and offering generous eviction prevention assistance.

Alliance Framework – Prevention

- Strategize:

  1. Ensure robust financial assistance pool and case management for those in PSH and those who recently transitioned out of homelessness.

  2. Flexible financial assistance for survivors of DV who need help to remain safe in own home or secure new housing after escaping abuse/sexual assault.

  3. Training public sector workers (e.g., criminal justice, public social services) to provide diversion assistance/problem-solving.

  4. Problem-solving and flexible financial assistance available at Coordinated Entry Access Points to identify opportunities for people to avoid shelter/unsheltered homelessness.

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Alliance Framework – Unsheltered Homelessness

- Promote the health and safety of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness while quickly transitioning them to temporary or permanent housing

- Challenges we face:

  - Insufficient 24/7, low-barrier shelter space open for every person currently without shelter.

  - People experiencing unsheltered homeless have no access to tools/resources to meet basic needs and remain safe from COVID-19.

  - Staff reductions, increased telework, and closed day centers.

Alliance Framework – Unsheltered Homelessness

- Assess:

    1. How can existing operational funds and organizational assets not currently being utilized be re-directed to create engagement and services for outreach staff?

    2. What is the racial makeup of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in our community and how can we ensure that people of color who are unsheltered are able to access needed assistance?

- Leverage:

    1. Seek political commitment to deploy public health workers to provide/expand mobile health care services to unsheltered adults and provide safe spaces and care for those who need to be quarantined.

    2. Open up recreational facilities for overnight use and provide places for handwashing, showers, and allow for safe parking.

    3. Moratoriums on sweeps of encampments.

    4. Emergency food stamps for unsheltered people.

Alliance Framework – Unsheltered Homelessness

- Strategize:
    1. Investment in outreach workers or supplies that unsheltered people require.
    2. Contract for motel/hotel rooms for individual isolation units for targeted populations.
    3. Utilize dormitories, convention centers, other unused spaces on college campuses, and unused space in social service agencies.
    4. Stand up congregate settings for COVID-19 positive individuals.
    5. Fund security and operations for motel/hotels and shelters.
    6. Increase staff, staff salaries, and investments in tools that people experiencing homelessness can use (internet and cell phone minutes) to remain connected to support system.
    7. Tap community partners: non-profits in partnership with food bank, local restaurants, hotels to provide food, meals on wheels, etc.

Alliance Framework – Shelter

- Expand and improve temporary housing options to come into compliance with CDC guidance for separation, isolation, and quarantine.

- Challenges we face:

  - Much of the existing shelter inventory is not compliant with CDC guidelines.

  - Limited to no space for COVID-19 positive individuals and those symptomatic but not yet tested, who do not require hospitalization but do require quarantine/isolation, health care, and ways to meet basic needs.

  - Reductions in staff and volunteers that impede shelters from meeting current needs and make it nearly impossible to expand shelter inventory.

Alliance Framework – Shelter

- Assess:
    1. Are all shelter and transitional housing units fully utilized, low-barrier, and 24/7?
    2. Do we have a system-wide approach in place for COVID-19 response for individuals experiencing homelessness for both congregate and non-congregate settings with an appropriate staff plan in place?
    3. What is the racial makeup of people experiencing homelessness in our community and how can we ensure that people of color have equitable access to the safe, COVID-responsive shelter they need?

- Leverage:
    1. Seek political leadership to make public facilities (e.g., community rec centers, event spaces) available to provide temporary housing.
    2. Ask political and philanthropic leaders to fund individual rooms, semi-private rooms, and shared spaces to ensure space for those who are COVID+, symptomatic, or in high-risk categories
    3. Seek political commitment to deploy public health workers to provide mobile health care services to people in shelter and care for those who need to be quarantined.
    4. Get commitment of TANF resources to re-house all families to help families achieve greater safety and free up homelessness resources that can be used to assist currently unsheltered people.

Alliance Framework – Shelter

- Strategize:

  1. Increase housing navigation from shelter to create flow out of the system.

  2. Better utilize current space and contract for hotel/motel rooms, dorms, event spaces, etc.

  3. Increase staffing and operational support so overnight shelter programs can revert to 24/7 operations and meet people's needs.

  4. Hire qualified people of all sorts - not necessarily trained in social services - to increase staffing in new spaces; consider hiring hotel staff for security and food preparation.

  5. Investment in PPE, cleaning supplies, food, room separators, security.

  6. Funds to support COVID-19 CDC-compliant separation, isolation, and quarantine spaces.

  7. Increase staff salaries and invest in tools that people experiencing homelessness can use (internet and cell phone minutes) to remain connected to support .

Alliance Framework – Stabilizing households in homeless system-funded programs (RRH and PSH)

- Support formerly homeless individuals and families receiving RRH and PSH so they can successfully **sustain** permanent housing.

- Challenges we face:

  - Economic fallout due to job loss, inability to pay the rent, thus requiring program extensions and depleting program budgets.

  - Staff reductions and remote work means limited access for those who need more engagement, intensive supports.

  - People experiencing reduced access to public services leading to increased isolation, less responsive for those who may have chronic conditions.

  - Due to structural racism or program-level biases, people of color may be more likely to return to homelessness from RRH and PSH.

Alliance Framework – Stabilizing households in homeless system-funded programs (RRH and PSH)

- Assess:
  1. Can we utilize progressive engagement in RRH and PSH case management: flex case management **down** for more stable RRH/PSH residents and flex **up** interaction/engagement for those in greater distress?
  2. Can funds and volunteers providing congregate meals convert to food delivery services? What assets do we have that can support this?
  3. Revisit how staff time is allocated, identify program participants who may more easily transition through telecommunication/virtual meetings versus those who need more hands-on support.
  4. Can funds be redirected to increase virtual access to residents in RRH/PSH (e.g., paying for internet, computers, phones)?
  5. Are people of color more likely to return to homelessness from existing RRH/PSH? How can we provide additional, culturally responsive stabilization supports to people of color?

- Leverage:
  1. Equip people in RRH/PSH with technology so they can consult with medical professionals, mental health workers, and caseworkers over telephone or internet.
  2. Seek infusion of TANF or other state dollars to increase RRH resources, seek housing subsidies for people who will require long-term rental assistance.
  3. Expedite receipt of unemployment compensation or TANF benefits for households who have lost employment.

Alliance Framework – Stabilizing households in homeless system-funded programs (RRH and PSH)

- Strategize:
  1. Increase rental assistance funds for RRH and ensure a progressive engagement model.
  2. Invest in landlord relationships during reduced case management responsiveness.
  3. Invest resources in PSH so people can continue receiving medications (e.g., consultations with mental health providers over phone), have prescription renewals/co-pays covered and delivered.
  4. Food and food delivery services.
  5. Think through behaviors most likely to put PSH program participants at risk of evictions or acquiring COVID-19 and invest resources to mitigate; provide 24/7 staffing where beneficial.
  6. Fund risk mitigation pools.

Alliance Framework – Exiting to permanent housing

- Move as many people out of shelter/unsheltered homelessness as quickly as possible to **stop the spread of COVID-19**

- Challenges we face:
  - Job loss/lost income means that households may require deeper, longer-lasting rent subsidies
  - Physical distancing guidelines make it harder for people to return to safely doubled-up situations or move into shared housing arrangements
  - Staff reductions and teleworking staff may impede housing search assistance and access to needed paperwork to facilitate process.
  - Landlords, property managers, and public housing agencies may be slower or less responsive to applications for housing and housing assistance.

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Alliance Framework – Exiting to permanent housing

- Assess:
  1. Are current funding sources accessible and flexible for people to quickly exit shelter? Rapid exit funds.
  2. Are all staff, in **all** crisis and housing programs trained in problem-solving, rapid exit strategies?
  3. Where can we strengthen landlord engagement strategies within individual programs and the system?
  4. What is the racial makeup of people experiencing homelessness in our community and how can we ensure that problem-solving housing resources are equitably distributed and culturally responsive?

- Leverage:
  1. Advocate to political leadership to make accessible **all** available public housing units/subsidies and expedite paperwork to bring them online.
  2. Pass a moratorium on landlords being able to refuse to accept Section 8 subsidies.
  3. Utilize TANF to provide funding for rent assistance to families with children.

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Alliance Framework – Exiting to permanent housing

- Strategize:
  1. Increase investments in problem-solving diversion and rapid exit services, including flexible financial assistance (e.g., rental assistance, childcare assistance, transportation assistance, increased staff, staff training).
  2. Increase investment in RRH (i.e., housing identification assistance, rent and move-in assistance, case management).
  3. Support RRH models that are light-touch, short-to-medium term, and longer-term with intensive services.
  4. Expand housing navigation for street outreach, rapid exit from shelter, and RRH/PSH.
  5. Create landlord incentive pools, risk mitigation pools.
  6. Create and/or bolster shared housing programs – ensure COVID-19 safety protocols.

Alliance Framework – Post-Pandemic Period

- How do we envision homeless services in the future, post-pandemic?
- What lessons will strengthen how we:
  - Prevent and divert people from homelessness?
  - Outreach to unsheltered people?
  - Shelter people?
  - Re-house people?
  - Re-connect people to community and natural supports?

Additional Resources

- NAEH COVID-19 Webinar Series: Links to register - https://endhomelessness.org/events/upcoming-events/
  - Protocols for Addressing Sheltered and Unsheltered Homelessness
    - **TOMORROW!** Thursday, April 2nd, 3:30-4:30pm EST
  - Serving & Supporting Unsheltered People During COVID-19
    - Tuesday, April 7th, 3:00-4:00pm EST
  - Working with FEMA to Address Homelessness During the Pandemic
    - Thursday, April 9th, 3:00-4:00pm EST
  - Supporting People Remotely in Housing
    - Thursday, April 16th, 3:00-3:30 EST
- NAEH COVID-19 Resource Page:
  - https://endhomelessness.org/coronavirus-and-homelessness/

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**THINK STRATEGICALLY.
ACT ACCORDINGLY.**