

# **Voices From the Field**

Responding to COVID-19 (Part 4)  
February/March 2021

# PRESENTERS

Joy Moses, Director, Homelessness Research Institute

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# Housekeeping

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- Please use the Q&A feature to ask questions
- Please use the chat feature to engage in conversations during the presentation (be sure you are sending it to all panelists and attendees)
- This webinar is being recorded and it will be sent out to all registrants and posted on our website

# Agenda

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- Overview of the Project
- Survey Methodologies
- Findings
- Discussion/Q&A

# Overview

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- Beginning in April 2020, the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) started conducting national surveys of Continuums of Care (CoCs) to understand the impacts of COVID-19 and how communities have responded
- This has been a continuous project throughout the pandemic with three previous survey efforts (previous survey results are available for review on NAEH's website: <http://endhomelessness.org/covidsurvey>)
- Like earlier surveys, this fourth round of surveys asked questions related to health, housing, resources, and other topics related to the pandemic
- New for this round: An additional survey outreach effort to service providers and advocates

# Methodology-CoC Survey

- CoC Contacts listed on the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's [Grantee Contact](#) page received an email invitation from NAEH on February 23, 2021, to complete the 4<sup>th</sup> round of surveys
- Deadline for completion was March 5, 2021
- The data collection platform used was Survey Monkey
- Follow up personal emails were sent to two groups on March 17<sup>th</sup>: 1-Contacts at CoCs who responded to earlier surveys and 2-Contacts who never responded to any of the previous surveys
- Responses collected through March 31, 2021
- After removing duplicates and empty records, 147 unique CoCs (37.5%) responded to the survey at a 50% completion rate

# Methodology-Service Providers & Advocates Survey

- NAEH invited service providers and homeless advocates to complete a survey similar to the CoC survey on March 2, 2021
- The survey invitation was included in the Alliance's weekly newsletter
- Surveys were originally due on March 16<sup>th</sup>, but the deadline was extended to March 19, 2021
- There were 630 total responses, but some were neither service providers nor advocates and were therefore disqualified
- Of the 566 qualified responses, 113 were from advocates and 453 were from service providers
- Received responses from across the US and its territories, including every state except Mississippi

# Focus Areas

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- Consumer Health
- Crisis Response Housing
- Permanent Housing
- Unsheltered Homelessness
- Resources
- Staffing
- Advocate Insights



# Consumer Health: Vaccinations

## Priorities

- 25 States prioritized people experiencing homelessness
- 56% of CoCs

## Plans

- 49% of CoCs had mass vaccination plans

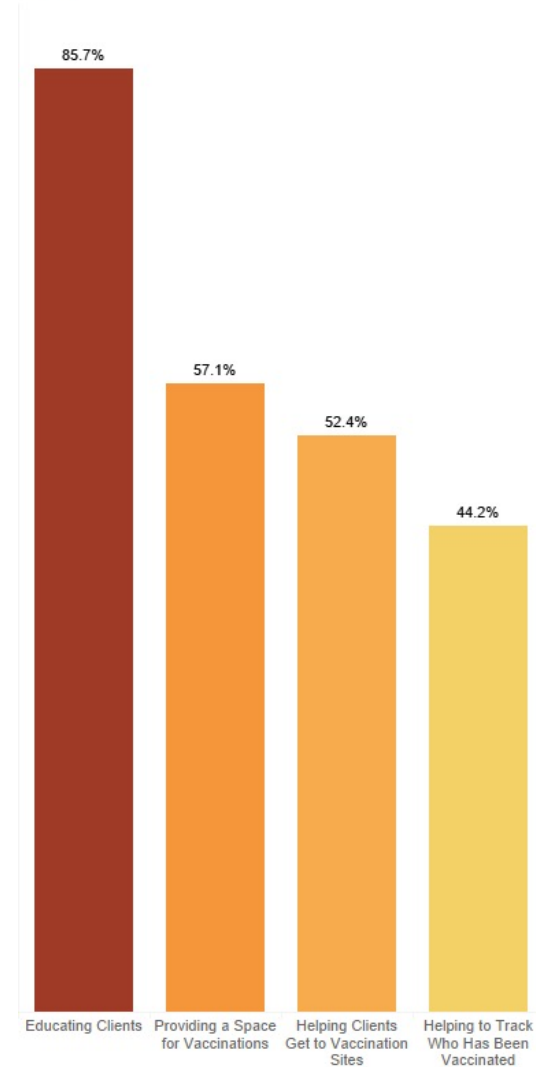
## Tracking

- 44% of CoCs had plans to track vaccinations in HMIS or elsewhere

## Implementation

- 61% of service providers said at least some of their clients had started receiving vaccinations
- Service providers play vital roles

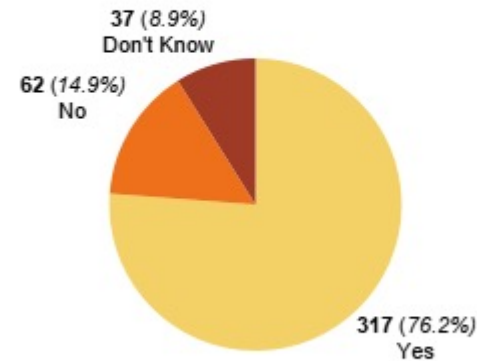
Your community has a vaccination plan. How is your agency contributing to that plan? Check all that apply.  
n=147



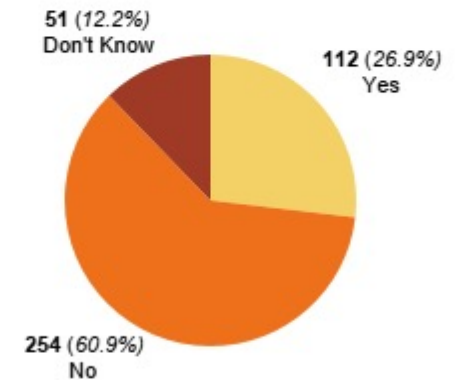
# Consumer Health: COVID-19 Cases

- Overwhelming numbers of service providers were impacted by the crisis.
- More than 1 in 4 had experienced a breakout among their clients.

To your knowledge, have some of your organization/agency's clients tested positive for COVID-19?



Have you had a breakout of COVID-19 among your agency/organization's clients?



# Crisis Response Housing: Common, Persistent, Limited

Non-congregate sheltering was a common response (the most significant growth was in this category)

79% of CoCs said programs still up and running

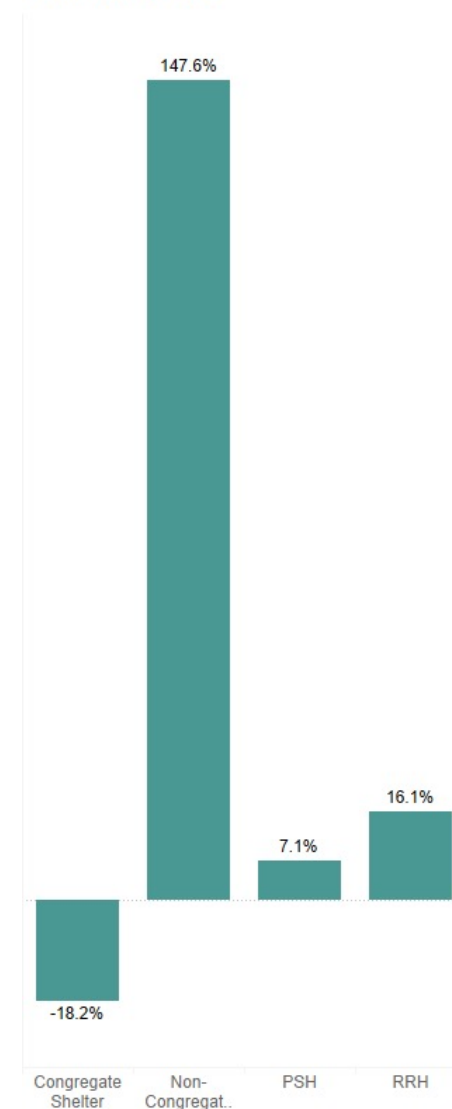
- Funding still available
- Prevention efforts

Some CoCs ended programs

- Limited COVID-19 cases among people experiencing homelessness
- Limited cases in the community generally
- Funding limitations

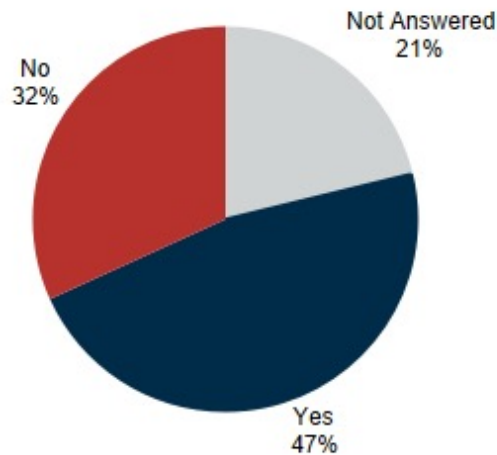
Evidence points to a limited number of people being able to access this resource—average of 66 beds added and previous results.

Average Percent Changes between 2020  
HIC and 2021 HIC



# Crisis Response Housing: FEMA Aid

Through advisories issued in 2021, FEMA announced 100% reimbursements for crisis housing. Is your CoC planning to participate in this offer? n=151



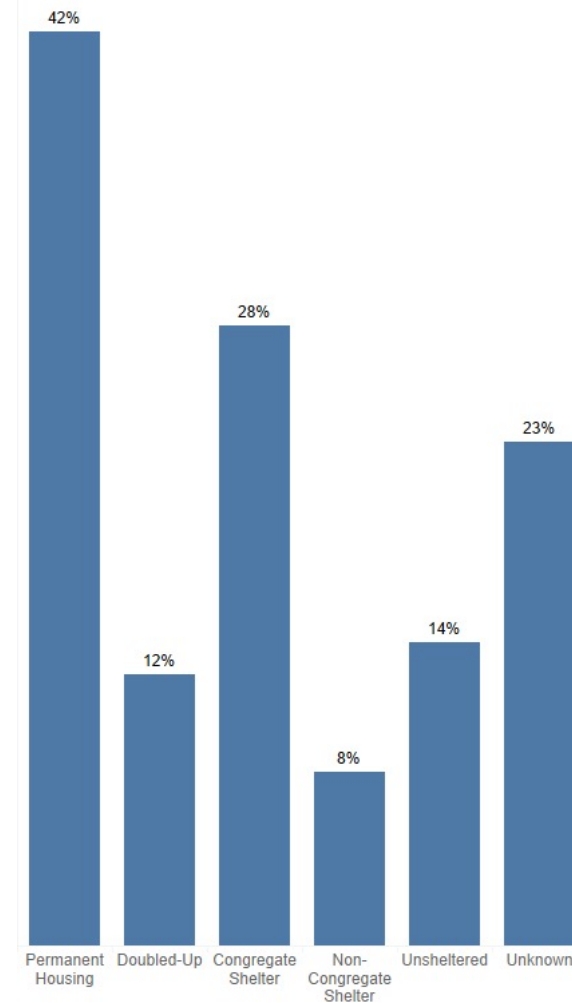
## Reasons for not taking advantage of FEMA aid:

- Being left out of the decision-making process by other city and county government officials.
- Perceptions that such programs are not needed.
- Bureaucratic concerns like the speed of reimbursements and reporting requirements.
- Insufficient staffing to manage efforts.
- Motels/hotels not wanting to serve people experiencing homelessness.
- Availability of other funding sources for these efforts.
- Insufficient information about the FEMA offer or how to apply.

# Permanent Housing

- CoCs, service providers, and advocates all agree: More permanent housing is needed.
- 76% report spending at least some CARES Act funds on these beds.
- Small sample says PSH grew by 7% and RRH by 16%
- However, only 42% (estimated) are going to permanent housing when they leave motels/hotels.

When COVID-19 crisis response housing placements end, where do people go? Please estimate the percentage who have exited to the below: (Average of the numbers displayed) n=94



# Unsheltered Homelessness

Pre-COVID-19 there was a 7% increase in unsheltered homelessness that impacted most subpopulations.

47% of CoCs say they have reason to believe their communities have experienced growths in unsheltered homelessness since the beginning of the pandemic.

But count efforts were disrupted. . . . Roughly 1 in 3 didn't conduct and unsheltered PiT and 85% of the others altered their methodology in some way.

Other ways tracking the population:

- HMIS
- By-Name lists
- Drop-In Center Data
- Encampment Mapping
- Quarterly "mini PiT Counts"
- Vehicle Counts

Besides the 2021 PIT Count, what other method is your CoC using to monitor the size and personal characteristics of its **UNSHeltered** population? (Check all that apply) n=113



# Resources

## CARES Act of 2020

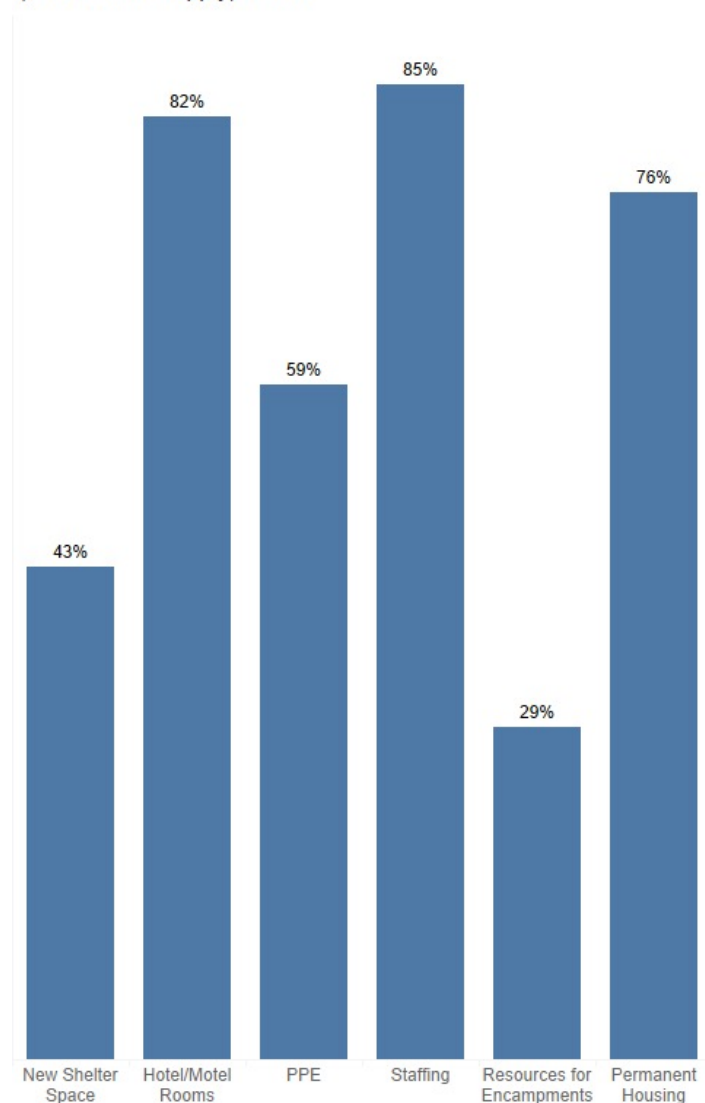
- Directed \$4 billion to the Emergency Solutions Grant program.
- 41% of CoCs say they have unspent and unobligated funds.
- Directs money to a variety of needs.

American Rescue Plan Act of 2021—funds not flowing directly to homeless services

## Service Providers

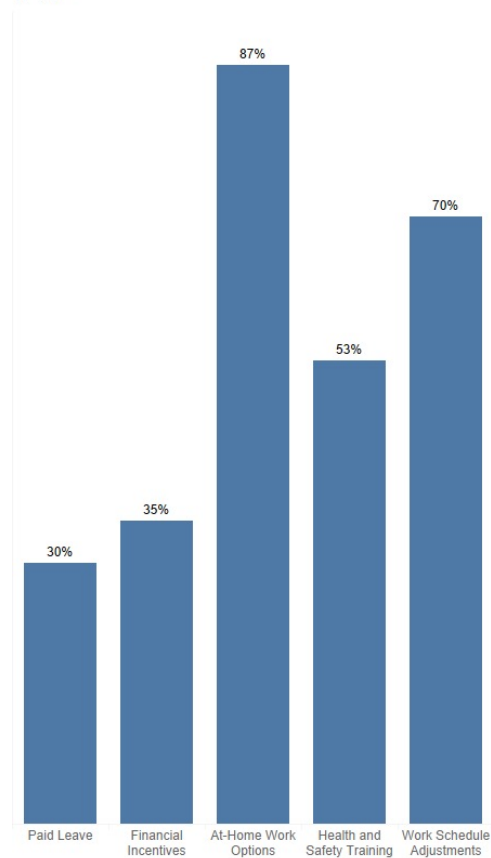
- 1 in 4 had lower than typical fundraising outcomes
- 35% say increased demand for services outstrips new funds they have received
- Challenges:
  - Canceled fundraising events
  - Decreases in state and local revenues leading to cutbacks in contracted services
  - Reduced income from billable services
  - New expenses (e.g., PPE and hazard pay)
  - Future funding uncertainties

Towards which needs have your CARES Act funds been directed?  
(Check all that apply) n=107



# Staffing

What measures has your CoC implemented to address pandemic related staffing concerns? (Check all that apply.)  
n=103



## Consistent reports of employee shortages:

- Frontline shelter staff (72%)
- Case managers (69%)
- Street outreach workers (62%)

Ongoing challenges include increased stress, exhaustion, and decreased morale.

## Implemented Supports:

- At-home work options
- Work schedule adjustments
- Financial incentives (e.g., hazard pay, bonuses)
- Paid leave
- Appreciation events
- Employer-provided lunches
- Virtual exercise and wellness activities
- Virtual team building activities

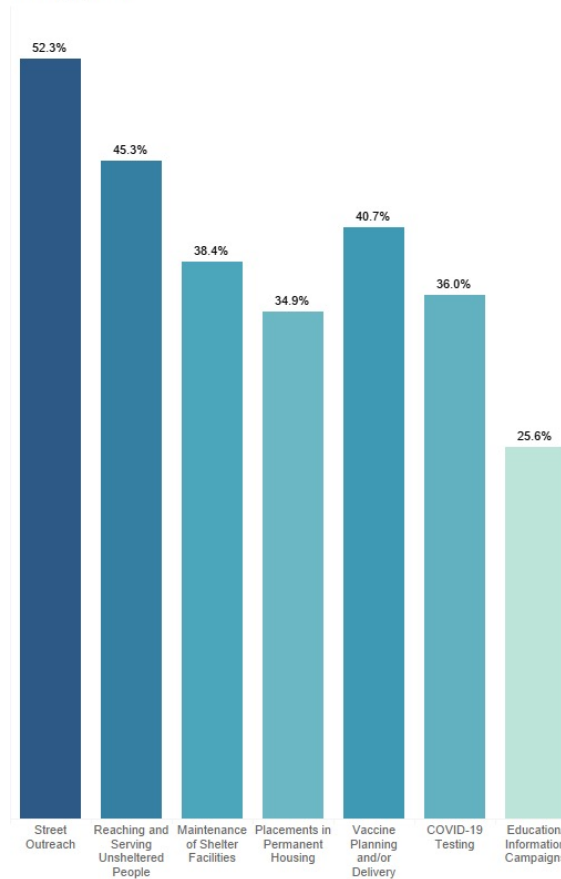


# Advocate Insights

## Identified Success Areas:

- 1) Street Outreach
- 2) Reach and Serving Unsheltered People
- 3) Vaccination Planning and Delivery

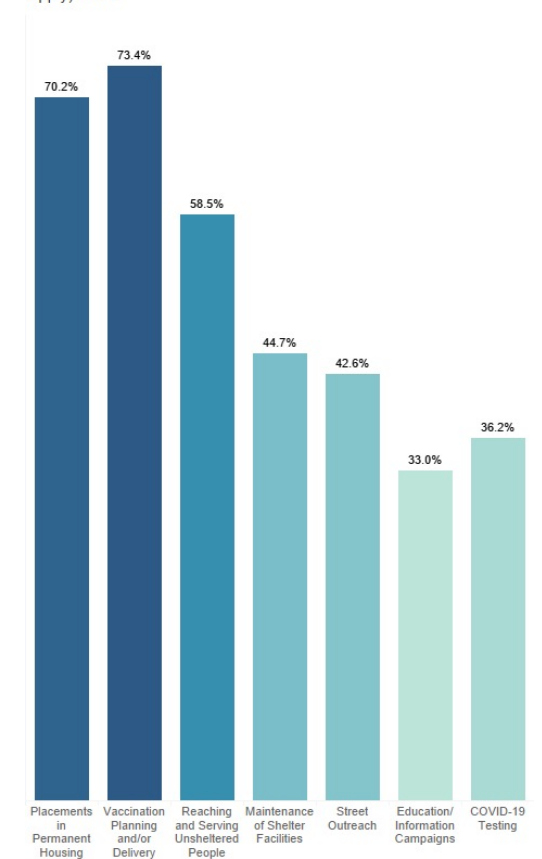
In my community, crisis response on behalf of people experiencing homelessness **is particularly effective** in the following areas? (Check all that apply) n=86



## Identified Challenge Areas:

- 1) Vaccination Planning and Delivery
- 2) Placements in Permanent Housing
- 3) Reaching and Serving Unsheltered People

In my community, crisis response on behalf of people experiencing homelessness **is challenged** in the following areas? (Check all that apply) n=94





ENDHOMELESSNESS.ORG

# Contact Info & Resources

Joy Moses	<a href="mailto:jmoses@naeh.org">jmoses@naeh.org</a>
Jackie Gardner	<a href="mailto:jgardner@naeh.org">jgardner@naeh.org</a>
Earlier Survey Results	<a href="http://endhomelessness.org/covidsurvey">http://endhomelessness.org/covidsurvey</a>
COVID-19 Resources	<a href="https://endhomelessness.org/category/covid-19/?post_type=resource">https://endhomelessness.org/category/covid-19/?post_type=resource</a>
Center for Learning	<a href="https://endhomelessness.org/centerforlearning/">https://endhomelessness.org/centerforlearning/</a>

# Discussion & Q&A

