Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) and Homelessness Diversion

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Mindy Mitchell
Mia Bryant
Sr. Technical Assistance Specialists
National Alliance to End Homelessness

April McNeal
Your Way Home Homeless Prevention Program Manager
Office of Housing and Community Development
Montgomery County (PA) Department of Health and Human Services

Emily Mosites, Ph.D., MPH
Sr. Advisor on Health & Homelessness
Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)
WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS
Maximize the Impact of Historic Funding: Community Considerations

1. Reduce the number of people experiencing **literal homeless**.
2. Help people with the **highest needs**.
3. Reduce **racial disproportionality and disparities**.
4. Create and strengthen partnerships between CoCs and Rental Assistance Providers
5. Create **cross-sector referral systems** that will work to use ERA to reduce homelessness
6. Act with **urgency**.

Source: Kingsnorth Church Of England Primary School
EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE
MAKING THE CONNECTION TO REDUCE HOMELESSNESS

From the US Department of Treasury
• Help families experiencing homelessness gain access to assistance
  • For vulnerable families that do not have a current rental obligation—which is a requirement for emergency rental assistance eligibility—Treasury is creating a commitment letter process to help those families gain access to assistance.
  • ERA can help families who have lost, or are at imminent risk of losing, their housing, by paying for relocation assistance, prospective rent, security deposits, and temporary hotel accommodations.
Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA or ERAP)

Role of Grantees Cont…

• Drive towards equal access by removing language and cultural barriers in securing emergency rental assistance.
  • Grantees who cannot provide such services themselves should be engaging partners with the capacity to do so to ensure equal access to emergency rental assistance for all eligible households.
Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) FAQ’s

Who is eligible to receive assistance in the ERA and how should a grantee document the eligibility of a household?

A grantee may only use the funds provided in the ERA to provide financial assistance and housing stability services to eligible households.

a. To be eligible, a household must be obligated to pay rent on a residential dwelling and the grantee must determine that one or more individuals within the household has qualified for unemployment benefits or experienced a reduction in household income, incurred significant costs, or experienced other financial hardship due, directly or indirectly, to the COVID-19 outbreak;

b. One or more individuals within the household can demonstrate a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability; and

c. the household has a household income at or below 80% of area median income.

Treasury strongly encourages grantees to rely on the self-certification of applicants with regard to whether their financial hardship meets these statutory eligibility requirements.
3. How should a grantee determine that an individual within a household is at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability?

- Documentation which may include
  - (i) a past due utility or rent notice or eviction notice,
  - (ii) unsafe or unhealthy living conditions (which may include overcrowding), or
  - (iii) any other evidence of risk, as determined by the grantee.
26. May rental assistance be provided to temporarily displaced households living in hotels or motels?

- **Yes.** The cost of a hotel or motel room occupied by an eligible household may be covered using ERA assistance within the category of certain “other expenses related to housing” (as described in FAQ 7) provided that:

  i. the household has been temporarily or permanently displaced from its primary residence or does not have a permanent residence elsewhere;

  ii. the total months of assistance provided to the household do not exceed the applicable time limit described in FAQ 10; and

  iii. documentation of the hotel or motel stay is provided, and the other applicable requirements provided in the statute and these FAQs are met.
EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE
IN THE CONTEXT OF HOMELESSNESS DIVERSION

Connecting with Homelessness Diversion
What is Diversion?

Diversion is an intervention designed to immediately address the needs of someone who has just lost their housing and has become homeless that are seeking shelter by assisting the person or household find safe alternative housing immediately, rather than entering shelter or experiencing unsheltered homelessness.
Implementing Diversion Practice

Diversion Requires:

• Coordinated entry process and shelter front door
• **Resourceful staff trained** in:
  • Mediation, conflict resolution
  • Strength based assessment
  • Problem solving
  • Motivational Interviewing
  • Trauma Informed Care and Racialized Trauma Informed Care
• **Linkages** to mainstream services and natural supports
• **Flexible** funds
Enhancing the Diversion Housing Plan with ERA/ERAP

Emergency Rental Assistance: Another tool in your “diversion resource” toolbox

- Understand how to access ERA/ERAP
- Integrate ERA resource into housing plan when appropriate
- Create warm handoffs to ERA/ERAP
Successful Diversion Outcomes

- **Permanently Back with Friends or Family**
- **Temporarily Diverted While Seeking New Housing**
- **Return to Own Residence**
- **Permanent Relocation To Safe Place Out of Town**
CoC’s Role in the Larger Context of Ending Homelessness

Your “to-do” list to make it happen

• Know who has the funding and the current requirements
• Build partnerships with those providers
  • Understand the current requirements
  • Advocate for changes to help at risk and homeless persons get assistance when they do not meet the “current standards” for traditional rental assistance
• Create warm handoffs to providers for persons seeking shelter through coordinated entry
  • Make the connections to the ERA providers
  • Assist clients in accessing the resources
  • Assist with submission of paperwork to meet eligibility requirements
EXAMPLE OF A COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP USING ERA TO REDUCE LITERAL HOMELESSNESS

Your Way Home

Office of Housing and Community Development
Montgomery County PA Department of Health and Human Services
Emergency Rent & Utility Coalition (ERUC)

April McNeal, Masters of Applied Family Studies
Your Way Home Homeless Prevention Program Manager
Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
Norristown, PA 19404-0311
610-278-3506
amcneal@montcopa.org
About Your Way Home

Your Way Home is a public-private partnership whose mission is to ensure that everyone who lives, works, learns, and invests in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania has equal opportunity to live in an affordable home and a thriving community.
Your Way Home Homeless Crisis Response System

- Rapid Re-Housing
- Permanent Supportive Housing
- Emergency Shelter
- Coordinated Entry
- Homelessness Prevention
YWH Emergency Rent & Utility Coalition

The objectives of the Your Way Home Emergency Rent and Utility Coalition are to:

• Raise public and policymaker awareness of the needs of low-income and ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) families and individuals in Montgomery County who are on the brink of homelessness due to poverty caused by a health crisis, job loss, pay inequality, underemployment and/or systemic racism.

• Advocate for more public and private funding for emergency rent and utility programs.

• Create a forum for emergency rent and utility service providers and funders to share resources, best practices, lessons learned and innovative solutions.
YWH Emergency Rent & Utility Coalition

- Montgomery County received direct & state pass-through ERA1 & ERA2 allocations.

- $64.4 million received so far, another $40.3 million expected.

- Framed equity as a core component from the beginning of program design.

- Partnered with 6 community-based organizations.

- Committed to the use of HMIS & Coordinated Entry existing structures.
Equity as a Core Strategy to Program Design

• Partnered with Your Way Home agencies primarily led by and serving people of color.

• Utilized the Urban Institute Equity tool for targeted zip code prioritization.

• Embraced the use of HMIS to track data and outcomes by gender, race, ethnicity, income, etc.

• Utilized the existing infrastructure of community-based organizations, coordinated entry, and a public-private partnership.

• Utilized a hybrid coordinated entry approach; applicants can access the program via phone, online, or in person.

• Stayed away from third-party software because it did not meet the needs of households most at risk of homelessness.

From the National Low-Income Housing Coalition Research Brief:
“There is a positive correlation between partnering with local nonprofits who have experience with rental assistance and application completeness and higher ratios of households served.”
ERUC, Coordinated Entry, & HMIS

• Expanded the use of Coordinated Entry 2-1-1 Call Center to pre-screen for ERUC eligibility.

• All households passing pre-screen are entered into HMIS as a household and referred to an ERUC agency.

• 2-1-1 also pre-screens for the homeless crisis response system and will often do dual referrals to ERUC as well as Street Outreach, Emergency Shelter, & other homeless providers.

All emergency shelter, street outreach, Rapid Re-Housing, Permanent Supportive Housing, and ERUC providers enter into HMIS!
ERUC Prioritization

• Household income does not exceed 50% AMI, preferably 30% AMI, or Unemployed 90 days prior to application.

• Reside in an identified zip code with higher shares of households living in poverty, cost-burdened low-income renters, severely overcrowded households, or unemployed people.

ERUC agencies dynamically prioritize eligible pre-screened household from a Community Queue in HMIS, using the above-mentioned criteria. Not first-come, first-served!
ERUC & Diversion

Locally Prioritize:
• 30% AMI or below
• Unemployed
• Vulnerable Zip Codes

Serves:
• People in hotel/motel
• Couch surfing
• Accessing CE for homeless services

Coordinates With:
• 2-1-1
• Street Outreach
• Rapid Re-Housing providers
• Prevention providers
ERUC & Prevention

Eviction Prevention and Intervention Coalition (EPIC)

Provides free, limited legal representation + financial assistance and social services to tenants facing eviction in seven of the highest eviction-case Municipal District Courts in Montgomery County.

One of the six ERUC agencies is also the lead social service agency for EPIC.

Thus, ERUC has established relationships with eviction court judges, their clerks, and local court administration.
Households Served: 8,497 (as of 8/12/2021)

- African American: 46%
- White: 32%
- Hispanic/Latino: 15%
- Female head of household with children: 67%
- Domestic Violence history: 7%
- At or below 30% AMI: 66%

100% of ERA1 Direct Entitlement funds spent, now spending ERA1 funds passed-through from Pennsylvania.
Let’s stay connected. . .

Please visit www.yourwayhome.org to:
• Subscribe to our Newsletter
• Attend our Events
• Stay up to date

@YWHMontco – Twitter

April McNeal
Homeless Prevention Program Manager
AMcNeal@montcopa.org
610-278-3506
IMPORTANT PSA FROM THE CDC

Dr. Emily Mosites
COVID-19 update

Homelessness Unit
Disproportionately Affected Populations Team
CDC COVID-19 Response
Forecasting COVID-19 Cases for the Next 4 Weeks

Observed and forecasted weekly COVID-19 cases in the United States
National COVID-19 Transmission by County

[Map showing the transmission levels by county with color coding: High (red), Substantial (orange), Moderate (yellow), Low (blue), No Data (gray)].

CDC COVID Data Tracker
For more information, contact CDC
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
Contact us!

Alliance Capacity Building Team
Tashmia (Mia) Bryant
tbryant@naeh.org

Mindy Mitchell
mmitchell@naeh.org

Kay Moshier McDivitt
kmoshierrmcdivitt@naeh.org

Kristi Schulenberg
kschulenberg@naeh.org

Your Way Home
April McNeal
AMcNeal@montcopia.org

CDC
Emily Mosites
lwx7@cdc.gov