

## The Urgent Need for Rapid Rehousing (RRH) during COVID-19

An unprecedented level of federal investment is now available at the state and local level to fund the disease mitigation efforts underway in our homeless programs, stem a rising tide of housing insecurity, and avoid swamping an already strained homeless system. Efforts to utilize these funds should be part of a coordinated strategy that is data-driven and includes a quick ramp-up of RRH resources. As rehousing planning decisions are considered, a Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) should be implemented to examine how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by proposed funding decisions, processes, programs, and policies. REIAs should be used to reduce racial and ethnic disparities and inequities and identify more equitable alternatives.

## How Will the COVID-19 Crisis Affect RRH?

It is possible that communities will experience a rapid churn in people losing housing and seeking new housing, resulting in communities experiencing a sharp increase in both homelessness and vacancies. This could mean that homeless assistance providers will be working with people who may have never sought public benefits before.

Providers may also find opportunities to work with landlords who are aggressively seeking tenants to make up for income lost during the stay on evictions. Many will need to loosen their usual criteria for selecting tenants due to the high number of people who could not work due to restrictions on nonessential businesses. Others may be more likely to accept tenants with strong work history but no current job if they are receiving RRH assistance. Landlords may also understand that rent nonpayment and evictions are the result of circumstances beyond the tenant's control. Developing a [coordinated effort to activate rehousing strategies](#) is critical.

Homeless assistance providers should be aware that the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act places limits on landlords' and lenders' abilities to report late rent or mortgage payments to credit agencies. However, these limits apply only if the tenant or borrower made arrangements with the landlord or lender before they fell behind. A [statement](#) by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau explains these provisions.

## What Are the Special Concerns for RRH in Rural Areas?

### *Budget Considerations*

- **Transportation:** Case managers will likely be driving long distances to seek out rental properties, engage clients, etc., so there needs to be enough funding for mileage/car rentals. There is likely no public transportation, so addressing client transportation needs is critical.
- **Technology:** As the case managers will likely be mobile (rather than office-based), their technology needs to be well-suited for the working conditions: tablet/laptop and appropriate cell phone coverage/service with hot spot capability.

### *Unit Considerations*

There will likely be fewer options for rent in rural communities, so think outside of the box—shared housing, renting a room in a house (rather than an apartment), and duplexes.

## COVID-19 Considerations

Rural communities are, in general, not abiding by social distancing/face masks as stringently as urban areas, so case managers (if they are not used to working in rural communities) need to be prepared for these conditions.

## How Are Urban Communities Preparing to Rapidly Rehouse People?

The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority has identified the following steps in its [COVID-19 Recovery Plan](#) for responding to the increased need for RRH:

- Identify and acquire housing units and properties and deploy holding fees.
- Increase ability to quickly match and assign available housing units to clients.
- Dedicated staff need to help people find and move into available units.
- Implement an inventory management system to enable active tracking of available resources.
- Buy and pre-assemble move-in kits at scale so residents have basic supplies.

Additionally, some communities are planning a “[housing surge](#)” to identify and rehouse people who are newly experiencing homelessness and those who were homeless prior to COVID-19.

<b>RRH Approaches Based on Subpopulations</b>	<b>Considerations Based on Subpopulation</b> <i>Please note that all interactions across subpopulations should be centered in equity, be trauma-informed, and based on client choice with a harm-reduction approach.</i>
<b>Young Adults (18–24)</b>	Point Source Youth, in its RRH Handbook, offers some helpful suggestions for assisting young people. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anticipate and address landlord concerns such as noise and guests. Proactively review lease expectations and provide trainings on how to be a model tenant.</li><li>• Base the tenant’s share of the rent on a percentage of the unit’s cost that increases over time, rather than basing the share on the tenant’s income. This creates an incentive to increase income.</li><li>• Recognize that some young adults—especially those who are transgender and/or Black, Indigenous, and people of color—may face greater obstacles to finding a job and may need more time to pay a higher percentage of rent.</li><li>• Normalize shared housing as it is especially common among young adults aged 18–24. Create a roommate-matching survey that includes factors such as cleanliness, smoking, visitors, pets, daily routine, etc. Provide trainings to young adults on roommate conflict resolution and setting aside money for situations in which one roommate must move out.</li></ul>
<b>Older Adults</b>	Many older adults, especially those experiencing long-term homelessness, have chronic medical conditions that require ongoing treatment and monitoring. Physical limitations or disabilities may impact mobility within the unit and in the community. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure access to medical care, home health and personal care, medications and assistive devices, and routine medical monitoring.</li><li>• Identify and develop relationships with landlords offering Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-accessible units.</li><li>• Where available, identify wheelchair-accessible public transportation resources.</li><li>• Develop referral agreements with senior service agencies to access resources such as Meals on Wheels, volunteer companions, etc.</li></ul>

<b>Survivors of Domestic Abuse, Partner Violence, or Trafficking</b>	<p>Survivors face significant logistical and personal barriers to rehousing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety and privacy are paramount and must drive planning.</li> <li>• Help survivors regain control and self-determination by offering them choices.</li> <li>• Address landlord concerns about potential risks while protecting tenant privacy.</li> <li>• It may take a long time to overcome damage to economic self-sufficiency and personal well-being. Plan services accordingly.</li> </ul>
<b>Highly Vulnerable Populations</b>	<p>People who are chronically homeless with serious mental illness (SMI) and/or co-Occurring substance use disorder (SUD) may need long-term support in permanent supportive housing (PSH), but would benefit from RRH while transitioning from non-congregate shelters or unsheltered status while awaiting PSH.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where available, identify and plan to assist with connecting individuals to local community resources and necessary supports.</li> <li>• Proactively review lease expectations and provide trainings on how to be a model tenant.</li> <li>• RRH may be a rental subsidy to get the individual out of homelessness, but highly vulnerable individuals may need PSH afterward.</li> <li>• Increasing incomes may be challenging, but all possible options and interests for which the individual qualifies should be explored.</li> </ul>