**Weekly COVID-19 Housing & Homelessness Call Notes**

Wednesday, September 16, 10:00-11:15am via Zoom

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|  | Topic | Speaker | Notes |
| 10:00  5 min | Welcome & Settle in | Rachael Myers, Housing Alliance | * Change from original plan: Dept. Of Commerce not presenting but Rachael will provide updates, holding off on staff report with county data for later call * **Call to action for clean air shelters**: Please call on Gov. Inslee - <http://bit.ly/cleanairshelter> * Commerce resources update: federally focused resources here <https://bit.ly/2RDMhjv> * Another Commerce update: day shelters are and always have been an allowable use of consolidated homelessness grant funds - we encourage you to contact them with any questions * Alliance is collecting clean air/smoke shelters being set up across the state, please email us |
| 10:05  5 min | Poll Questions | | * **What hats are you wearing today?**      * **Has your local government created or expanded any emergency shelter options in response to wildfires or wildfire smoke?**   + King County – 77 beds   + City of Tacoma – day shelter in the Eastside Community Center - Metro Parks facility. 8-4. Medical Reserve Corp and two providers. No 24/7 available   + Spokane County – opened arena   + Stevens, Ferry & Lincoln - yes but only for those who are in evacuation from fire danger   + Yakima, Clark, Skamania, Benton, Lewis, Cowlitz, Snohomish Counties – none known   + Pierce County – opened facility with Pierce County Parks and Recreation, 8-4 only in Puyallup   + Walla Walla County – no day shelters, but supporting 24/7 shelter operations   + Illani – accepting evacuees with RV’s      * **From Aideet Pineda**: Please reach out to Molina representative for support within your county. Molina is trying to connect with those organizations that are working with individuals affected by the wildfires. If you do not know who the representative is I can connect you with them. Please email me at [Aideet.pineda@molinahealthcare.com](mailto:Aideet.pineda@molinahealthcare.com) * COEH (Conference on Ending Homelessness) coming soon! More information and registration at:[**https://www.wliha.org/conference/program-0**](https://www.wliha.org/conference/program-0) * DSHS (Department of Social and Health Services) has expanded their Disaster Cash Assistance Program (DCAP):   + Eligible counties designated as disaster areas: Douglas, Okanogan, Whitman, Lincoln, Spokane, Chelan, Pierce, Thurston   + To quality, households must have:     - Have suffered losses and live in one of the eligible counties     - be living in their home/primary residence (not a vacation home) at the time of disaster     - Be unable to live in/return to their home because of the disaster     - Be [resident of Washington State](https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=388-468-0005)     - Meet household net income limits     - Not have anyone in assistance unit be eligible for [any other program](https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=388-436-0030) that could meet their needs |
| 10:10  5 min | Implementing ERAP in Kitsap County | Matt Garrett, Kitsap Community Resources | * ERAP: Eviction Rent Assistance Program * In position right now – haven't started the program yet and will be talking about our plans. We don’t know how it will work, but this is how we are using some of our other programs. We just got the contract yesterday and today is the first day of ERAP * Coordinated entry and housing all under KCR (Kitsap Community Resources) umbrella org. Our coordinated entry (CE) is the hub for a lot of eviction prevention funds already, harps, CDBG (Community Development Block Grant), etc. helping already. Plan is for ERAP to fit in there as well * Plan for folks to go to CE and get plugged in where they want to go. They pay the initial upfront and we try to get them up to current if possible * Because we have multiple funding sources, if they need additional support, they will get connected to a case manager. We want to ensure qualified folks are connected if they qualify for multiple funding streams and that our CE team is not overloaded * Outreach to communities of colors and immigrant communities: KIAC (Kitsap Immigrant Assistance Collaboration) is hiring liaisons from different immigrant communities, and we are training them on ERAP. Liaisons will reach out and provide another way to get folks to coordinated entry. We’re hoping apps will be ready to go, which is why we’re training them. First training is this Friday, some in Spanish and some in English. * Pop up event ideas: different hub locations that we will send case managers, liaisons, and staff to churches, apartment complexes, etc. letting community members lead and supporting them as best as we can * Kitsap Legal Services: available if anyone is falling through the moratorium or the loophole. Some landlords have been making declarations to sell, so folks still ending up in eviction court as a result. * We are also conducting outreach directly to landlords, sending them info and having folks calling them directly / building relationships so they refer folks to us. * (Michele from the chat: If anyone is seeing abuse of the loopholes in the moratorium as Matt just mentioned, please let the Housing Alliance know as well: [**MicheleT@wliha.org**](mailto:MicheleT@wliha.org)) * It's a little challenge to make sure all these parts all play nicely together and flow. ERAP is lighter on documentation and we’re especially excited for how this could support the immigrant community |
| 10:15  5 min | Implementing ERAP in Yakima County | Annette Rodriguez, Yakima Neighborhood Health Services | * ERAP: Eviction Rent Assistance Program * Yakima Neighborhood Health is first and foremost a neighborhood health care clinic. They received their ERAP contract the first week of September, so they’ve already started helping families. * They are also an emergency resource center that helps folks experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. * They’ve been working hard to make it easy for families and individuals to get access to services. * With COVID, they are doing lots of social distancing: more phone appointments and socially distant appointments for those with more barriers. * Going through ERAP eligibility guidelines was important. Because they have already started doing this, they are seeing the families they should be serving. They are identifying a lot of first-time users of services: folks who have heard about them from the community. * They are going out to different places in the community where they are also providing COVID education and testing, so they can provide fliers about ERAP as well. * 50% of the folks served in Yakima are Latinx. These are people who are affected with reduced work hours, furloughs, etc. * Because they have the CHG (Consolidated Homelessness Grant) grant as well, they have a group of landlord groups that they have worked with before who are familiar with them, and they are being cooperative. * The folks that they are serving must be earning 50% or less of area median income and must have not paid their rent since March. * Households have to meet some different risk factors and criteria: rent burden 50% or more, or previously homeless within the last 5 years, those who have been discriminated against because of race, ethnicity, or gender identity, who are at greater risk of COVID, households where someone has a disability. Citizenship is not required. * As they’ve been rolling this out, they are working to ensure there are less burdens on families. They are getting requests with things like last month’s rent, rent is arrears, current rent, and one month in the future. * Things are really confusing for families right now. * Right now they are screening for ERAP first and prioritize that. Everyone in their building has been trained to do this, including doing street outreach. * They’re hearing stories of families that are being affected by COVID who are using rent money to be closer to family members who have been hospitalized, who are paying for food, etc. * Even with additional dollars coming here and there, many families they serve are large families with children, so they work to make sure their families get some kind of service, whether it is rent assistance or other services they can provide like help with medical costs. * Again, many of these people have not received assistance before, and they are really grateful to receive this assistance. * They really are working on outreaching to priority populations. They want to make sure that the folks experiencing any kind of discrimination or issue around this is connected to the right resource and service. Some families don’t know they can receive free COVID testing, etc, so they are working to help these families, including a trauma-informed approach. * They’re pushed full-force working with many different migrant and seasonal farm worker programs to make sure they are especially helping agricultural workers who are essential workers right now and who probably need them the most right now. * (From Nina Wycoff in chat: groups reaching out to Islanders and African tribes, especially from South King area – Somali Family Org, REWA, APICHAYA, all BLM orgs are aware and reaching out as resources permit - orgs servicing QTBIPOC are facing major service cuts and are hit harder by state budget cuts) |
| 10:20  5 min | Implementing ERAP in Thurston County | Kirsten York, Community Action Council of Lewis, Mason & Thurston Counties | * ERAP: Eviction Rent Assistance Program * Slide deck * Kirsten York, Director of Family Services * Community Action Agency for Lewis, Mason and Thurston Counties * See slide for wide array of services, they do a lot of housing assistance, ERAP help, energy assistance, etc. * Braiding resources to make sure people get the most sustainable network of resources * Intent and scope of ERAP is same as commerce – see slide * Outreach:   + Through all websites and social media (Thurston County Public Health and Social Services)   + Public facing flier and landlord facing flier, both in multiple languages   + Provider information sessions   + Presentations, email blasts to providers and referral resources * By and For Organization Memorandum of Use agreements – taking a mindful approach * Online scheduling system via website– still accepting appointments for 30 minute online portal appointments or phone appointments. Opened August 31st, 469 appointments scheduled since then * By and For Organizations: Community Youth Services (CYS) for head of household aged 18-24 * About a dozen By and For orgs in the county, they can make direct referrals or make appointments. * Also created a memo (MoU) for them to engage with two different components for this program – monthly reimbursement for direct outreach and marketing to their communities, and $75 reimbursement for every application they process with clients * Right now, 4 organizations engaged: COFA Alliance National Network, CIELO, Innovations for Human Trafficking, Stonewall Youth * Successes: Weekly meetings with Thurston County Public Health and Social Services   + Automated application to pre-populate on logs including demographic data for reporting – one less step   + Billing frequently for efficiency and getting hundreds of thousands of dollars out * Challenges:   + Quick implementation time frame, working out collaboration with providers and impact on clients   + Large number of vouchers and funding per week   + Rapid updates and changes in guidelines   + Increasing staffing   + Expenditure date coming quickly * **See slide deck for resources and links** * **Phone: 360-438-1100** * Response to question: “what is your online appointment source” - 469 appointments scheduled – average rental amount per household and divided that by the number of direct service dollars we had to spend. Currently still booking out appointments. if we have any more available funding at the end then we will keep scheduling |
| 10:25  10 min | How does the recent federal eviction moratorium interact with Washington’s moratorium? | Scott Crain, Northwest Justice Project | * State's largest provider of free legal services to low income people * If you’re looking for legal assistance/info beyond what’s discussed here you can go to:   <https://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/>   * + To get legal help via Northwest Justice Project, you can get start by going here:   <https://nwjustice.org/get-legal-help>   * CDC moratorium effective on September 4th. A surprise to a lot of us in the housing advocacy community. Still trying to catch up and figure out what it means. * New federal rule as provided a floor of protections for people who rent homes from being evicted through December 31, 2020. Floor because it doesn’t apply if a state already has a moratorium that’s more effective. * If you read the CDC moratorium, its great they are talking about why we are keeping people from being evicted. 1) don’t want folks to be homeless or 2) live doubled up, both which would be bad for COVID. Evictions will make risk of Covid-19 worse. CDC put the “why” in writing for us * In WA state, we already have a moratorium and CARES Act requirements. How does that interact? Even for the lawyers, it's been tough to sort out. Can fairly say that the CDC moratorium will provide a little more protection for WA renters. * For the CDC moratorium to work folks must be a “covered person”: 1) income under 99,000, 2) unable to pay full rent due to medical or job loss (not specific to pandemic), 3) had to have tried to get rental assistance, 4) must be at risk of homeless or living in closed quarters. Really for folks with nowhere else to go * Declaration requirement – if this applies to you you must sign to it to make it truthful. CDC threated criminal conviction if folks are lying. We don't like that – we’re trying to make it a little friendlier to tenants. But if you submit this, you will be a “covered person” * Big question – do we in WA need to go through this declaration with our already strong eviction moratorium in place? Our moratorium has been less protective in that landlords can give 60-day notices that they plan to move in or sell the property. This CDC moratorium could protect renters from that; its purpose is to keep people in homes when nowhere else to go. * Declarations could serve as defense against eviction, but very wary of implications of just signing these declarations. If you’re getting these 60-day notices for either reason, contact legal help right away. * Our job as lawyers and tenant advocates is to make the best argument we can and help the judge understand the purpose. Main purpose – get people legal assistance. * Glossing over a few things regarding challenges in courts in other states, we will see how that plays out. For the moment this is effective and available and folks can use it if needed. * Q: Information on WA law help or any resource that we can help spread the word? What would be the best resource for that? A: Some FAQ going up this week on the website and this issue will be listed there. * For concerns for violations of the state moratorium, you can contact the AG’s office: Enforcement of the moratorium    1 (833) 660-4877 and leaving a general message by selecting option 1.   <https://fortress.wa.gov/atg/formhandler/ago/COVID19EvictionComplaintForm.aspx>   * Q: If our moratorium expires on October 15, would this apply? A: Yes. If that’s the case we’re really going to have to talk to tenants about the declaration process. * Rachael: We’ll absolutely be working and calling on the governor to extend our moratorium, will invite you all to help with that * Q: What are we going to do about the massive amount of rental debt? A: These moratoriums are putting off the evictions. Only that will solve the debt is rental assistance. Folks won’t just automatically have that money to pay it. That’s why we’re glad that funding is available in our state from CARES Act for this ($100 bill) |
| 10:35  15 min | Updates from the Housing Alliance: New Pulse survey data | Michele Thomas, Housing Alliance | * This is just a quick summary. The Housing Alliance will put all of this into a document and will share once that is available. * You can also explore the data directly here:   <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2020/demo/hhp/hhp12.html>   * The Pulse data – the Census Bureau started shortly after the pandemic began to do weekly surveys with people across the country, with a variety of questions to figure out how the COVID economy and the pandemic itself were impacting households. * They do this on a range of issues, including food insecurity and other important measures, which we’ve been sharing and summarizing. * They paused the data for about a month, but they updated again last week. * The information that they call week 13 data is over two weeks, from August 19-31st. * What it says about Washington State: there were 139,706 households in renter households in Washington who were not currently caught up on rent payments. This represents 9% of all renter households. * However, disparities by race were very significant. Black households in Washington were 5 times more likely than white households to be unable to pay their rent, and Asian households were 2.6 times more likely. Female headed households were also harder hit – 80,000 female-headed households versus 60,000 male-headed households. In terms of age groups, youth and young adults aged 18-24 and adults age 40-54 were faring worse than other age groups. * One in five renter households in Washington State reported either no confidence or only slight confidence in their ability to pay their rent. In September, this represents 18.56% of all renter households in Washington. * With the ERAP program, we’re hoping this will improve. * Households of color were much more likely to report that they had either no or only slight confidence in their ability to pay September’s rent. 15.5 % of white households share this low level of confidence, compared to 30% of Hispanic/Latino households and 19.32% of black respondents. * In terms of debt, we’ve been watching this closely because we’re concerned about the long-term impacts of debt. It’s not just the debt to landlords that tenants are accruing that worries us, it’s the debt that tenants are accruing because of the reliance on very high interest forms like credit cards or payday loans. * A lot of renters also report they are depleting their savings and relying on loans from friends and family. * The household Pulse survey data shows that 27% of all renter households in Washington have increased reliance on credit cards or loans to meet basic needs and 32% report that they’re depleting their savings. This doesn’t only include people who have reported they’re behind on rent but includes all renter households. So, it’s extremely probably that people who are currently able to pay their rent are doing so with credit cards and loans, and by depleting savings, so that speaks to an impending crisis for renter households even if or when the economy begins to recover. * Of renter households in Washington who were unable to pay rent in August, 10% of those households have reported that they were more heavily relying on credit cards or loans to meet basic needs. * Of those households who are unable to pay their rent, 27% are borrowing from friends and family to meet their basic needs. So, even people who are unable to pay their rent are not saving money, they are hurting. They’re heavily relying on friends and family, savings, and unsustainable high rates of credit and credit cards to meet basic needs. * We will update our PDF document and share widely, and make sure it’s available by the next call. * Question: Any info on those borrowing to pay mortgage? * A: There is data on that and we’re hoping that on the next call we’ll be able to have someone from the Washington Homeownership Resource Center talking about resources available to folks who are struggling to pay their mortgage. We will look at that data and bring it back to the next call. We have seen that there is a slight increase in folks who are homeowners reporting that they’re unable to pay their mortgages. It’s alarming that there’s an increase, but the disparity between renter and homeowners is pretty big right now and it’s renter households that are reporting a lot more hardship. |
| 10:50  10 min | Federal advocacy updates | Rachael Myers, Housing Alliance | * National Low Income Housing Coalition call updates: * Congress is back and only through September * They have to pass a budget or there will be a shutdown * There seems to be bi-partisan work to make sure that doesn’t happen * Recently seemed like there was less chance for agreement on Covid Relief funding for the 100B in rental assistance, the moratorium etc. * They were not going to come back but Speaker Pelosi said that they will remain in session until there is a Coronavirus package * House – Problem Solvers Caucus – 1.5 trillion-dollar package, much smaller that HEROES Act, but does include 25B for Rent Assistance to use through January, this is not insignificant and this is bi-partisan so this is hopeful * Please do take action to encourage members of congress to act. Even if you’ve acted, please do it again. They need to keep hearing that this must be taken care of before they go home * Sharonne Navas talked about digital divide – currently est. 285,000 students without access and 50k seniors without access to internet; they put up a petition   + **Close the digital divide:** <https://bit.ly/35JiYog> * **HousingSavesLives.org campaign** – changing equal access rule and allows them to access shelters based on their gender identity * Each unique comment that is received has to be responded to. Please go to this website and add your comment: <https://housingsaveslives.org/>   + **Deadline is September 20** |
| 11:00  15 min | Q&A | | * (From Kirsten Jewell: US Census is doing their unsheltered outreach on September 22 - 24. In most cases, they are doing a simple headcount in encampments - but this will be from 7pm - 7am. If you work with people in encampments, please let them know that this is happening and the importance of the census - to improve safety for everyone. Thank you!) |
| 11:15 | Wrap-up & Adjourn | | * All links and follow-up information will be provided in follow-up email |