



Everyone has the right to
an affordable and healthy
home during and after the
COVID-19 crisis

Pandemic Response Guidance

Preventing Eviction and Preserving Affordable Housing

APRIL 2020

Preventing Eviction and Preserving Affordable Housing

Prevent eviction, create housing for people experiencing homelessness, ensure that vulnerable populations are safe, and preserve the operation of affordable housing during and after the COVID-19 crisis.

(Thanks to [Georgia Housing & Legal Scholars](#), [KC Tenants](#) and [National Housing Trust](#) for developing many of these recommendations.)

Address the Needs of Renters & Housing Providers

Provide sufficient levels of rent payment assistance to ensure that all renters can afford their housing costs without taking on additional debt and that building owners have the resources necessary to continue to maintain their properties. Eviction moratoria without rent relief or cash assistance will put renters in a deeper crisis in the future while harming rental housing providers. States and localities should create emergency relief funds to provide immediate rental assistance to people who risk losing their homes because of sickness, inability to work, or any other factors related to COVID-19. This fund should launch immediately, without barriers to entry, like lengthy paperwork or application fees.

Immediately suspend all eviction filings, hearings, and enforcements currently in process and impose an eviction moratorium going forward that covers every type of eviction case and applies to every stage of eviction proceedings. Include penalties and enforcement for any moratorium violators.

The state or locality should create a fund to provide grants to housing providers so building owners can cover operating expenses.

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Address the Needs of Renters & Housing Providers (Continued)

If insufficient housing payment assistance is available, institute a statewide freeze on rent and mortgage increases during the state of emergency, including a ban on fees for missed or late rent or mortgage payments.

If neither rent and mortgage assistance nor freezes on increases can be established, residential tenants may be unable to pay rent during an eviction moratorium, which may in turn cause landlords difficulty in paying mortgages, property taxes, and other operating expenses. Jurisdictions should also consider protections against foreclosures for the duration of the state of emergency and the entire recovery period so as to not put renters at risk. State housing finance agencies should offer forbearance for multifamily borrowers with state-financed mortgages who have experienced a decline in earnings due to COVID-19.

Ensure there is clear communications, available in multiple languages, about new policies.

Address the Needs of People Already Experiencing Homelessness

Take action to convert vacant hotel and motel rooms, dorms, schools, hospitals, parking garages, and large stadiums into homes for people who need them, including those experiencing homelessness and people living in unsafe or unsanitary conditions now.

- Identify specific temporary spaces to specifically house those that exhibit fever, other related COVID-19 symptoms, or test positive where testing is available so that people can safely recover.
- Support people recovering from the pandemic and its economic fallout by providing services to transition to permanent housing.

For people who will not or cannot move indoors, build emergency sanitation sites near homeless encampments and major public transit hubs to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Sites should include 24-hour restrooms and showers, laundry, free hygiene supplies, COVID-19 testing, caseworkers, and disease prevention information in multiple languages.

People experiencing homelessness in shelters and encampments live in high density with little access to handwashing and have higher rates of chronic illnesses that puts them at heightened risk of COVID-19. Protecting those who are homeless or become homeless during the crisis will mitigate the spread of disease.

- Place a moratorium on encampment sweeps. Instead, locate additional facilities for sheltering the homeless without exceeding social distance recommendations from the CDC. State and local governments should assist in identifying facilities for decongestion and physical distancing.
- Supply additional sanitization services and supplies to homeless shelters.
- Supply funds and expand testing requirements to ensure routine testing is made widely available for homeless shelters and people experiencing homelessness, regardless of immigration status.
- Supply funding to support frontline staff in homeless shelters, including hiring additional personnel; purchasing personal protective equipment such as masks, gloves, and other sanitation supplies; purchasing thermostats; providing paid sick leave to encourage staff to stay home if ill; and funding to cover childcare costs to permit frontline staff to work while schools are closed.
- Ensure there is clear communications, available in multiple languages, about new policies.

Address the Needs of Vulnerable Populations in Prisons and Detention Centers

These recommendations are based on expertise from [United We Demand Action](#), [Medical Professionals](#), and [Immigrants Rising](#).

Guarantee safe conditions, and provide healthcare and support to protect those in Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention centers and prisons.

Alleviate the mass overcrowding in detention facilities through community-based alternatives to detention. Individuals and families, particularly the most vulnerable, should be released while their legal cases are being processed to avoid preventable deaths and mitigate the harm from a COVID-19 outbreak.

Provide free COVID-19 testing, treatment, and services for all, regardless of immigration status.

To ensure the safety of undocumented tenants, housing providers should refrain from calling Immigration and Customs Enforcement to impose evictions if rent payments are not made on time.

Address the Needs of Housing Providers for Seniors Who Are Especially Vulnerable

Provide immediate additional operating support for senior affordable housing providers, multifamily properties receiving project-based Section 8 assistance, and private sector mid- and high-rise affordable housing throughout the country, including:

- Establish a fund to discourage informal evictions by defraying the costs of reduced rental income due to lost rents and deferred evictions during this crisis. This could be in the form of a low-interest or no-interest loan to cover operating costs, which would be forgiven if landlords achieve high rates of housing stability during the state of emergency.
 - For Section 8 voucher holders who have lost income during the emergency, establish a speedy process to recalculate rents retroactive to the date income was lost before the moratoria on evictions expire.
 - Provide additional operating funds to subsidized senior housing and housing for high-risk groups. This includes:
 - Funding for building sanitization efforts and deep cleaning.
 - Funds to support enhanced visitation policies.
 - Funds to support and ensure routine screening and testing.
 - Funding to support frontline staff, including hiring additional personnel, and purchase personal protective equipment such as masks, gloves, and sanitation supplies to prevent the spread of illness among frontline staff; paid sick leave to encourage staff to stay home if ill; and childcare to permit frontline staff to work while schools are closed.
 - Ensure there is clear communications, available in multiple languages, about new policies.
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