

# ADVOCATES' GUIDE '22

A PRIMER ON FEDERAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS & POLICIES



Made Possible by the Generosity of:



The PNC Financial Services Group



NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION



## NATIONAL LOW INCOME HOUSING COALITION

Established in 1974 by Cushing N. Dolbeare, the National Low Income Housing Coalition is dedicated to achieving racially and socially equitable public policy that ensures people with the lowest incomes have quality homes that are accessible and affordable in communities of their choice.

### NLIHC STAFF

Andrew Aurand | Vice President for Research  
Sidney Betancourt | Housing Advocacy Organizer  
Victoria Bourret | ERASE Project Coordinator  
Jordan Brown | Research Intern  
Jen Butler | Senior Director, Media Relations and Communications  
Alayna Calabro | Policy Analyst–COVID-19 Response  
Josephine Clarke | Senior Executive Assistant  
Matthew Clarke | Writer/Editor  
Courtney Cooperman | Housing Advocacy Organizer  
Bairy Diakite | Director of Operations  
Lindsay Duvall | Senior Housing Advocacy Organizer  
Dan Emmanuel | Senior Research Analyst  
Emma Foley | Research Analyst  
Sarah Gallagher | Senior Project Director, ERASE  
Ed Gramlich | Senior Advisor  
Sydnee Graves | Field Intern  
Kim Johnson | Senior Policy Analyst  
Paul Kealey | Chief Operating Officer  
Mike Koprowski | Director, Multisector Housing Campaign  
Kayla Laywell | Housing Policy Analyst

Joseph Lindstrom | Director, Field Organizing  
Mayerline Louis-Juste | Senior Communications Specialist  
Steve Moore Sanchez | Development Coordinator  
Neetu Nair | Research Analyst  
Khara Norris | Senior Director of Administration  
Brenna Olson | Policy Intern  
Noah Patton | Housing Policy Analyst  
Ikra Rafi | Creative Services Manager  
Betty Ramirez | Research Analyst  
Gabrielle Ross | Housing Advocacy Organizer  
Sarah Saadian | Senior Vice President, Public Policy  
Brooke Schipporeit | Housing Advocacy Organizer  
Sophie Siebach-Glover | Research Specialist  
Kennedy Sims | Communications and Graphic Design Intern  
Lauren Steimle | Web/Graphic Design Specialist  
Jade Vasquez | ERASE Project Coordinator  
Maya Ward-Caldwell | Fund Development Intern  
Chantelle Wilkinson | Housing Campaign Manager  
Renee Willis | Senior Vice President for Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion  
Rebecca Yae | Senior Research Analyst–COVID-19 Response  
Diane Yentel | President and CEO

### NLIHC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dora Leong Gallo, Chair | Los Angeles, CA  
Cathy Alderman | Denver, CO  
Dara Baldwin | Washington, DC  
Russell "Rusty" Bennett | Birmingham, AL  
Staci Berger | Trenton, NJ  
Andrew Bradley | Indianapolis, IN  
Loraine Brown | New York, NY  
Geraldine Collins | New York, NY  
Lisa J. D'Souza | St. Louis, MO  
Colleen Echohawk | Seattle, WA  
Aaron Gornstein | Boston, MA  
Bambie Hayes-Brown | Atlanta, GA

Zella Knight | Los Angeles, CA  
Moises Loza | Alexandria, VA  
Anne Mavity | St. Paul, MN  
Kathryn Monet | Washington, DC  
Chrishelle Palay | Houston, TX  
Eric Price | Washington, DC  
Hasson J. Rashid | Cambridge, MA  
Shalonda Rivers | Opa-Locka, FL  
Nan Roman | Washington, DC  
Megan Sandel | Boston, MA  
Marie Claire Tran-Leung | Redondo Beach, CA  
Sharon Vogel | Eagle Butte, SD  
Mindy Woods | Seattle, WA

# Table of Contents

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

About the <i>Advocates' Guide</i> .....	1-1
2022 Public Policy Priorities .....	1-2
A Brief Historical Overview of Affordable Rental Housing .....	1-6
The National Need for Affordable Housing .....	1-10
A Racial Equity Lens is Critical to Housing Justice Work .....	1-13
Income Targeting and Expenditures for Major Housing Programs .....	1-16
Housing as a Human Right .....	1-19

## CHAPTER 2: ADVOCACY RESOURCES

How Laws Are Made .....	2-1
The Federal Budget and Appropriations Process .....	2-3
FY22 Budget Chart .....	2-6
Lobbying: Important Legal Considerations for Individuals and 501(c)(3) Organizations .....	2-8
Congressional Advocacy and Key Housing Committees .....	2-11
Federal Administration Advocacy .....	2-17
Using Federal Data Sources for Housing Advocacy .....	2-21
Introduction to the Federal Regulatory Process .....	2-27
Using the “Freedom of Information Act” for Housing Advocacy .....	2-32
Resident Participation in Federally Subsidized Housing .....	2-36
Overcoming NIMBY Opposition to Affordable Housing .....	2-42
Lofty Rhetoric, Prejudiced Policy: The Story of How the Federal Government Promised—and Undermined—Fair Housing .....	2-46
Resident and Tenant Organizing .....	2-55
Our Homes, Our Votes: A Guide to Voter Engagement Activities for Nonprofit Housing Providers and Resident Organizations .....	2-60

Our Homes, Our Votes Engagement Plan .....	2-70
Housing Providers and Election Participation – Tips and Best Practices .....	2-77
Best Practices and Tips for Advocacy and Lobbying .....	2-79
Best Practices and Lessons Learned: Building Multi-Sector Coalitions .....	2-87
The HoUsed Campaign .....	2-91
Working with the Media .....	2-95

## CHAPTER 3: NATIONAL HOUSING TRUST FUND

The National Housing Trust Fund .....	3-1
National Housing Trust Fund: Funding .....	3-14
Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and Housing Finance Reform .....	3-16

## CHAPTER 4: RENTAL HOUSING PROGRAMS FOR THE LOWEST-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

Housing Choice Vouchers .....	4-1
Project-Based Vouchers .....	4-8
Tenant Protection Vouchers .....	4-12
Vouchers: Family Unification Program .....	4-17
Vouchers: Foster Youth to Independence Initiative .....	4-20
Mainstream and Non-Elderly Disabled (NED) Vouchers .....	4-23
Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Vouchers .....	4-26
Public Housing .....	4-31
Rental Assistance Demonstration .....	4-42
Repositioning of Public Housing .....	4-55
Moving to Work Demonstration & Expansion .....	4-63
Project-Based Rental Assistance .....	4-67
Section 202: Supportive Housing for the Elderly Program .....	4-73
Section 811: Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities Program .....	4-78
USDA Rural Rental Housing Programs .....	4-81
Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) .....	4-85

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Programs . . . . .	4–89
Homeless Assistance: Federal Surplus Property to Address Homelessness . . . . .	4–91
Rental Housing Programs for the Lowest-Income Households: Renters’ Tax Credit . . . . .	4–93

**CHAPTER 5: ADDITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAMS**

HOME Investment Partnerships Program . . . . .	5–1
Low-Income Housing Tax Credits . . . . .	5–5
Housing Bonds . . . . .	5–18
The Affordable Housing Program and Community Investment Program of the Federal Home Loan Banks . . . . .	5–22
Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Housing Programs . . . . .	5–25
Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program . . . . .	5–29
The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) . . . . .	5–31
Federal Housing Administration . . . . .	5–35
State and Local Housing Trust Funds . . . . .	5–40

**CHAPTER 6: SPECIAL HOUSING ISSUES**

Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes . . . . .	6–1
Housing Needs of Victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Dating Violence, and Stalking . . . . .	6–7
Inclusionary Housing Policies . . . . .	6–14
Manufactured Housing . . . . .	6–18
Olmstead Implementation . . . . .	6–22
Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure . . . . .	6–28
Housing Access for People with Conviction Histories . . . . .	6–30
Criminalization of Homelessness . . . . .	6–38
The Mortgage Interest Deduction . . . . .	6–43
Medicaid Expansion . . . . .	6–45
Disaster Housing Programs . . . . .	6–48
“Mixed Status” and “Public Charge” Rules: Attacks on Immigrants’ Access to Housing . . . . .	6–57
Land Use Restrictions and Affordable Housing . . . . .	6–65

Equal Access for Transgender People: The Trump Administration’s Attempt to Eliminate Shelter Protections for Transgender People . . . . .	6–67
Rent Control . . . . .	6–72
The Preservation of Affordable Housing . . . . .	6–75

**CHAPTER 7: HOUSING TOOLS**

Housing Counseling Assistance . . . . .	7–1
Fair Housing Programs . . . . .	7–5
Disparate Impact . . . . .	7–8
Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) . . . . .	7–14
Consolidated Planning Process . . . . .	7–29
Public Housing Agency Plan . . . . .	7–36
The “Community Reinvestment Act” . . . . .	7–43
Section 3: Job Training, Employment, and Business Opportunities Related to HUD Funding . . . . .	7–46
Continuum of Care Planning . . . . .	7–54
Additional Housing Programs: Housing First . . . . .	7–57
HUD-Funded Service Coordination Programs: ROSS, Family Self-Sufficiency, and Service Coordinators in Multifamily Housing for Elderly and Disabled . . . . .	7–61

**CHAPTER 8: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES**

Capital Magnet Fund . . . . .	8–1
Community Development Block Grant Program . . . . .	8–4
Opportunity Zones . . . . .	8–7
Community Development Financial Institutions Fund . . . . .	8–14

**CHAPTER 9: CORONAVIRUS, HOUSING, AND HOMELESSNESS**

Eviction Protections during the COVID-19 Pandemic . . . . .	9–1
The Role of FEMA in COVID-19 Response . . . . .	9–6
COVID-19 Relief Legislation . . . . .	9–11
Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA-CV) (CARES Act) . . . . .	9–14
Homeless Assistance, Coronavirus (Homeless Assistance-CV) . . . . .	9–17

Treasury Emergency Rental Assistance . . . . . 9-18  
Emergency Housing Voucher Program . . . . . 9-23  
NLIHC ERASE Project to Ensure  
Unprecedented Rental Assistance  
Reaches Renters Most in Need . . . . . 9-24

**CHAPTER 10: ABOUT NLIHC**

Make a Difference:  
Ways to Engage with and  
Support the Coalition . . . . . 10-1  
NLIHC Resources . . . . . 10-6  
NLIHC State Coalition Partners . . . . . 10-9

**APPENDIX**

List of Abbreviated Statutory References . . . . . AP-1  
Selected List of Major Housing  
and Housing-Related Laws . . . . . AP-3  
Glossary . . . . . AP-5  
*Advocates' Guide* Authors . . . . . AP-16

---

# Chapter 1:

# INTRODUCTION

---



# About the *Advocates' Guide*

---

**T**he *Advocates' Guide: An Educational Primer on Federal Programs and Resources Related to Affordable Housing and Community*

*Development* is a guide to affordable housing. But, on many levels, it is much more. The Guide comprises hundreds of pages of useful resources and practical know-how, written by leading experts in the affordable housing and community development field with a common purpose: to educate advocates and affordable housing providers of all kinds about the programs and policies that make housing affordable to low-income people across America.

NLIHC is pleased to present the 2022 edition of the *Advocates' Guide*. For many years, the *Advocates' Guide* has been the leading authoritative reference for advocates and affordable housing providers seeking a quick and convenient way to understand affordable housing programs and policies.

With the right information and a little know-how, everyone can effectively advocate for housing programs with our Members of Congress and other policymakers. Whether you are a student in an urban planning program, a new employee at a housing agency or community development corporation, or a seasoned affordable housing advocate looking for a refresher on key programs, this book will give you the overview of housing programs and advocacy tools you need to be a leader in the affordable housing movement and to advocate effectively for socially-just housing policy for low-income Americans.

## HOW TO USE THE *ADVOCATES' GUIDE*

The first section orients you to affordable housing and community development programs with articles that explain how affordable housing works, why it is needed, and what NLIHC believes are the highest housing priorities, including the national Housing Trust Fund. The advocacy resources section provides vital information to guide your advocacy with the legislative and

executive branches of government, as well as tips about how organizations and individuals can be effective advocates.

The next few sections cover housing programs for low-income households, additional housing and community development programs, special housing issues, housing tools, community development resources, and low-income programs and laws. These are the core affordable housing programs and issues to understand.

Take this *Guide* with you to meetings with lawmakers and share it with your friends and colleagues. The more advocates use this *Guide*, the greater our collective impact will be.

## A NOTE OF GRATITUDE

The *Advocates' Guide* was compiled with the help of many of our partner organizations. We are deeply grateful to each of the authors for their assistance as the *Advocates' Guide* would not be possible without them. Several articles build on the work of authors from previous versions of the *Advocates' Guide*, and we appreciate and acknowledge their contributions as well.

Thank you to PNC for their ongoing support for this publication.



**PNC**

The PNC Financial Services Group



# 2022 Public Policy Priorities

---

**N**LIHC works with Members of Congress, the Administration, affordable housing and community development organizations and advocates, low-income renters, and other stakeholders across the nation to ensure that the lowest-income people – including people of color, seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, people experiencing homelessness, and others – have a safe, affordable, and accessible place to call home.

In 2022, NLIHC will continue to focus on the health and housing challenges facing low-income renters and people experiencing homelessness during the coronavirus pandemic. NLIHC will also advocate for our long-term policy priorities, including:

- Ensuring federal responses to the pandemic and other disasters are fair and equitable;
- Protecting, monitoring, and expanding the national Housing Trust Fund;
- Preserving and increasing resources for federal affordable housing programs serving extremely low-income families;
- Ensuring protections for low-income renters;
- Promoting equitable access to affordable housing; and
- Championing anti-poverty solutions.

## ENSURE FEDERAL RESPONSES TO THE PANDEMIC AND DISASTERS ARE FAIR AND EQUITABLE

NLIHC leads the Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition of 850 national, state, and local organizations, including many working directly with disaster-impacted communities and with first-hand experience recovering after disasters. We work to ensure a complete and equitable housing recovery for the lowest-income and most marginalized households, including people of color, people with disabilities, people experiencing homelessness, seniors, families with children, immigrants, and other individuals

and their communities.

During the coronavirus pandemic, NLIHC and the NLIHC-led DHRC advocated for [essential resources and protections](#) to address the health and housing needs of people experiencing homelessness and low-income renters. Through our End Rental Arrears to Stop Evictions (ERASE) project, NLIHC is tracking, analyzing, and sharing best practices for emergency rental assistance programs. More information is available on [NLIHC's ERASE website](#).

The coalition will also work in 2022 to advance a comprehensive set of recommendations for [Congress](#), [FEMA](#), and [HUD](#) on disaster housing recovery issues. We will work to promote policy [recommendations](#) to overcome [barriers](#) to an equitable disaster housing recovery.

## PROTECT AND EXPAND THE NATIONAL HOUSING TRUST FUND

The national Housing Trust Fund (HTF) is the first new federal housing resource in a generation exclusively targeted to help build, preserve, and rehabilitate housing for people with the lowest incomes. NLIHC, its members, and other stakeholders played a critical role in the creation of the Housing Trust Fund in the “Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008.”

While \$1.9 billion have been provided to the HTF to date, far more resources are needed to address the severe shortage of housing affordable and available to people most impacted by America's housing crisis – those with the lowest incomes. NLIHC leads the [Housing Trust Fund Implementation and Policy Group](#), a coalition of national advocates committed to protecting and expanding this new resource.

In 2022, NLIHC will continue to build congressional support to increase funding to the Housing Trust Fund through various legislative opportunities.

## **PRESERVE AND INCREASE RESOURCES FOR FEDERAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMS**

Any new federal housing resources must be targeted to address the underlying cause of the affordable housing crisis – the severe shortage of affordable homes for people with extremely low incomes.

### **Increasing Federal Budgets for Affordable Housing**

Despite a proven track record, federal housing programs have been chronically underfunded. Today, just one in four families eligible for federal housing assistance get the help they need. NLIHC leads the [Campaign for Housing and Community Development Funding \(CHCDF\)](#), a coalition of 75 national and regional organizations dedicated to ensuring the highest allocation of resources possible to support affordable housing and community development.

In 2022, NLIHC will continue to advocate for increasing resources for key affordable housing programs, including Housing Choice Vouchers, public housing, project-based rental assistance, and homeless assistance grants, among many other programs, through the appropriations process.

### **Expanding and Reforming Resources in the Tax Code**

NLIHC supports the creation of a new, innovative renters' tax credit to help the lowest-income families afford a place to call home, as well as an expansion of the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (Housing Credit) program. Any expansion of the Housing Credit must also reform and improve the program to increase its ability to serve extremely low-income renters and encourage development in challenging markets, like rural communities and tribal lands. Any effort to divert scarce federal resources to address the limited housing challenges faced by higher income households is wasteful and misguided.

## **Increasing Resources to Build and Preserve Housing in Tribal and Rural Areas**

Native Americans living in tribal areas have some of the most pressing housing needs in the United States, with exceptionally high poverty rates, low incomes, overcrowding, lack of plumbing and heat, and unique development issues. Despite the pressing need for safe, decent homes, federal investments in affordable housing on tribal lands have been chronically underfunded for decades.

NLIHC works with tribal leaders and advocates to increase housing resources for tribal nations with the greatest needs, improve data collection on tribal housing needs, and reduce federal barriers to housing development. In 2022, there may be an opportunity to expand tribal housing resources through the reauthorization of “Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act,” the “Build Back Better Act”, and other legislative opportunities.

NLIHC also works to preserve and expand affordable housing available in rural areas by supporting funding for USDA Rural Development programs and through opportunities to preserve the agency's rental housing portfolio.

## **ENSURE PROTECTIONS FOR LOW-INCOME RENTERS**

### **Opposing Efforts to Cut Housing Benefits**

NLIHC opposes efforts to cut housing benefits through rent increases, work requirements, time limits, and other restrictions. These so-called reforms are neither cost effective nor a solution to the very real issue of poverty impacting millions of families living in subsidized housing or in need of housing. NLIHC leads the [Preventing Benefit Cuts](#) coalition to educate Members of Congress on proven solutions to ending housing poverty, including expanding—not slashing—investments in affordable homes, job training, education, childcare, and other policies to help families thrive.

## **Opposing Anti-Immigrant Proposals**

NLIHC opposes proposals that deter eligible immigrant families from seeking housing benefits or that force immigrant families currently receiving housing benefits to forego that assistance or face eviction. NLIHC co-leads the Keep Families Together campaign with the National Housing Law Project to oppose proposals to prohibit “mixed-status” families from living in public and other subsidized housing at HUD and USDA. NLIHC also participates in the Protecting Immigrant Families campaign to oppose proposals to make it easier for the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice to declare certain immigrants to be a “public charge,” denying them admission to the U.S., and possibly threatening deportation. In 2022, these coalitions will work to expand access to housing for immigrant households.

## **Preventing Evictions and Housing Instability**

NLIHC advocates for the creation of a national housing stabilization fund to provide emergency assistance to extremely low-income households to prevent housing instability and homelessness. Temporary assistance can stabilize households experiencing sudden economic shocks before it leads to situations requiring more prolonged and extensive housing assistance. NLIHC supports legislation advocating for “just cause” eviction standards, a national right to counsel, and other renter protections.

## **Promoting Healthy Housing**

All low-income renters deserve to live in healthy, accessible, high-quality homes. NLIHC supports efforts to improve housing conditions in federally assisted housing, including efforts to revise Real Estate Assessment Center inspection processes and address lead-based paint, carbon monoxide poisoning, and other unsafe and unhealthy housing conditions.

## **Protecting Federally Assisted Residents**

For decades, Congress has failed to provide adequate funding to maintain public housing in good condition, and as a result, public housing faces a more than \$70 billion backlog in capital

improvement needs. In response, HUD has sought to “reposition” public housing by reducing the number of homes in the public housing stock through the demolition or disposition of public housing, voluntary conversion of public housing to vouchers, and the retention of assets after a Declaration of Trust release. NLIHC monitors these efforts to help ensure that current and future public housing residents are not negatively impacted.

NLIHC also monitors the Rental Assistance Demonstration, which converts public housing to Section 8 funding streams in order to better access other forms of needed financing, to ensure resident protections and other requirements are enforced.

In 2022, NLIHC will work to secure major investments to repair and rehabilitate public housing, and to advance policies that protect renters living in public housing.

## **Protecting Survivors of Domestic Violence**

NLIHC supports federal protections to ensure survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking have access to safe, accessible homes and the ability to leave an unsafe housing situation without risking possible homelessness. NLIHC supports legislation to bar federally assisted housing providers from screening out applicants or evicting tenants because of the criminal activity of an abuser and to prohibit retaliation against a tenant for calling law enforcement or emergency assistance for help.

## **PROMOTE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND OPPORTUNITY**

NLIHC believes in just communities, where everyone has access to economic and educational opportunities, as well as affordable housing. Evidence shows that access to stable, affordable housing in communities of opportunity has broad, positive impacts. It can lead to better health and education outcomes and higher lifetime earnings, especially for children.

## **Advancing Fair Housing**

For more than 50 years, the “Fair Housing Act” has barred housing discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin, or disability and required communities take active steps to end racial segregation.

In 2022, NLIHC will continue to lead efforts to advance fair housing and other important regulations, such as the 2015 Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule, the 2013 Disparate Impact rule, and the 2016 Equal Access in Accordance with an Individual’s Gender Identity rule. These policies help promote more equitable communities, prevent hidden discrimination through biased policies or practices, and ensure appropriate access to services regardless of race, sexual orientation or gender identity.

NLIHC supports expanding the Fair Housing Act to bar discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, and source of income.

NLIHC supports increasing mobility opportunities through new allocations of mobility vouchers and expanded mobility counseling, and continued implementation of HUD Small Area Fair Market Rents in certain metropolitan areas that protect current and future tenants.

## **Achieving Criminal Legal Reform**

The United States incarcerates its citizens at a shockingly high rate and nearly one in three Americans has a criminal record. Black and Latino people, people with a disability, and members of the LGBTQ community are disproportionately impacted by the criminal legal system. As more formerly incarcerated individuals return to their communities, they face barriers to accessing affordable housing, putting them at risk of homelessness and recidivism. NLIHC advocates for safe, stable, affordable and accessible housing for those who have been involved in the criminal or juvenile legal system so that formerly incarcerated people can successfully reintegrate into their communities and make the most of their second chance. In 2022, there may be an opportunity to advance these priorities.

NLIHC advocates to end the criminalization of homelessness. Nationwide, people experiencing homelessness are targeted, arrested, and jailed under laws that criminalize homelessness by making illegal basic acts that are necessary for life. These laws are ineffective, expensive, and often violate homeless persons’ civil and human rights. NLIHC will work in 2022 to ensure federal policies discourage local governments from criminalizing homelessness.

## **Creating Greater Opportunities for Employment**

NLIHC supports efforts to improve HUD’s Section 3 program, which has the potential to serve as a robust resource for job creation in low-income communities. Section 3 aims to ensure jobs, training, and contracting opportunities associated with HUD-assisted projects go to low-income people, including residents of federally assisted housing, and to the businesses that hire them. NLIHC also supports an expansion of the Family Self Sufficiency program, linking HUD residents to services and educational opportunities that can lead to improved employment and earned income.

## **CHAMPION ANTI-POVERTY SOLUTIONS**

Beyond ensuring access to affordable housing, NLIHC is strongly committed to enacting legislation and protecting resources that alleviate poverty. NLIHC supports efforts to protect vital safety net programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, unemployment insurance, Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, the Children’s Health Insurance Program, the “Affordable Care Act,” Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability Income, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Moreover, NLIHC strongly supports efforts to increase the minimum wage and to target federal resources to communities with persistent poverty.

# A Brief Historical Overview of Affordable Rental Housing

---

**A**ffordable housing is a broad and complex subject intertwined with many disciplines including finance, economics, politics, and social services, among others. Despite this complexity, advocates can learn the essential workings of affordable housing and be prepared to advocate effectively for the programs and policies that ensure access to decent, affordable housing for people in need.

This article provides a broad, though not exhaustive, overview of the history of affordable rental housing programs in the United States and describes how those programs work together to meet the housing needs of low-income people.

## HISTORY

As with any federal program, federal housing programs have grown and changed based on the economic, social, cultural, and political circumstances of the times. The programs and agencies that led to the establishment of the federal department now known as HUD began in the early 1930s with construction and finance programs meant to alleviate some of the housing hardships caused by the Great Depression. An act of Congress in 1934 created the Federal Housing Administration, which made home ownership affordable for a broader segment of the public with the establishment of mortgage insurance programs. These programs made possible the low down payments and long-term mortgages that are commonplace today but were almost unheard of at that time.

In 1937, the “U.S. Housing Act” sought to address the housing needs of low-income people through public housing. The nation’s housing stock at the time was of very poor quality in many parts of the country. Inadequate housing conditions such as a lack of hot running water or dilapidation was commonplace for poor families. Public housing provided significant improvements for those who were able to access it. At the same time, the post-

World War II migration from urban areas to the suburbs meant declining cities. Federal programs were developed to improve urban infrastructure and to clear “blight.” This often meant wholesale destruction of neighborhoods and housing, albeit often low-quality housing, occupied by immigrants and people of color.

In 1965, Congress elevated housing to a cabinet-level agency of the federal government by establishing HUD, which succeeded its predecessors the National Housing Agency and the Housing and Home Finance Agency. HUD is not the only federal agency to have begun housing programs in response to the Great Depression, however. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) sought to address the poor housing conditions of farmers and other rural people with the 1935 creation of the Resettlement Administration, a predecessor to the USDA’s Rural Development programs. USDA’s rural rental and homeownership programs improved both housing access and housing quality for the rural poor.

The cost of operating public housing soon eclipsed the revenue brought in from resident rent payments, a reality endemic to any program that seeks to provide housing or other goods or services to people whose incomes are not high enough to afford marketplace prices. In the 1960s, HUD began providing subsidies to Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) that would help make up the difference between revenue from rent and the cost of adequately maintaining housing. In 1969, Congress passed the Brooke Amendment, codifying a limitation on the percentage of income a public housing resident could be expected to pay in rent. The original figure was 25% of a person’s total income and was later raised to the 30% standard that exists today. Advocates often refer to these as “Brooke rents,” for Senator Edward W. Brooke, III (R-MA), for whom the amendment is named.

Beginning in the late 1950s and continuing into the 1960s, Congress created several programs that leveraged private investment to create new affordable rental housing. In general, these programs provided low interest rates or other subsidies to private owners who would purchase or rehabilitate housing to be rented at affordable rates. The growth in these private ownership programs resulted in a boom in affordable housing construction through the 1970s, but once the contracts forged by HUD and private owners expired, or owners decided to pay their subsidized mortgages early, those affordable units were vulnerable to being lost from the stock.

The “Civil Rights Acts” of 1964 and 1968 included housing provisions intended to prevent discrimination against members of protected classes in private or public housing. Different administrations have prioritized these fair housing provisions to varying extents, but their existence has provided leverage to advocates seeking to expand access to affordable, decent housing, particularly for people of color.

In January 1973, President Richard Nixon created a moratorium on the construction of new rental and homeownership housing by the major HUD programs. The following year, the “Housing and Community Development Act of 1974” made significant changes to housing programs, marked by a focus on block grants and an increase in the authority granted to local jurisdictions (often referred to as “devolution of authority”). This act was the origin of the tenant-based and project-based Section 8 rental assistance programs and created the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from seven existing housing and infrastructure programs.

Structural changes in the American economy, deinstitutionalization of persons with mental illnesses, and a decline in housing and other support for low-income people resulted in a dramatic increase in homelessness in the 1980s. The shock of visible homelessness spurred congressional action and the “McKinney Act of 1987” (later renamed the “McKinney-Vento Act”) created new housing and social service programs

within HUD specially designed to address homelessness.

Waves of private affordable housing owners deciding to opt out of the project-based Section 8 program occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. Housing advocates, including PHAs, nonprofit affordable housing developers, local government officials, nonprofit advocacy organizations, and low-income renters, organized to preserve this disappearing stock of affordable housing using whatever funding and financing was available.

The Department of the Treasury’s Internal Revenue Service was given a role in affordable housing development in the “Tax Reform Act of 1986” with the creation of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, which provides tax credits to those investing in the development of affordable rental housing. That same act codified the use of private activity bonds for housing finance, authorizing the use of such bonds for the development of housing for homeownership as well as the development of multifamily rental housing.

The “Cranston-Gonzales National Affordable Housing Act of 1990” (NAHA) created the Comprehensive Affordable Housing Strategy (CHAS). It was now the obligation of jurisdictions to identify priority housing needs and to determine how to allocate the various block grants (such as CDBG) that they received. CHAS is the statutory underpinning of the current Consolidated Plan obligation. Cranston-Gonzales also created the HOME program, which provides block grants to state and local governments for housing. In addition, NAHA created the Section 811 program, which has provided production and operating subsidies to nonprofits for housing persons with disabilities.

Housing advocates have worked for more than a decade for the establishment and funding of the national Housing Trust Fund (NHTF), which is the first new housing resource in a generation. The HTF is highly targeted and is used to build, preserve, rehabilitate, and operate housing affordable to extremely low-income people. HTF was signed into law by President George W. Bush

in 2008 as a part of the “Housing and Economic Recovery Act.” In 2016, the first allocation of HTF dollars was provided to states.

Outside of the HTF, no significant investment in new housing affordable to the lowest income people has been made in more than 30 years and there still exists a great shortage of housing affordable to that population. As studies from NLIHC show, federal investment in housing has not increased at pace with the overall increase in the federal budget, and expenditures on housing go overwhelmingly to homeownership, not to rental housing for people with the greatest need. Federal spending caps enacted in 2011 further strained efforts to adequately fund programs.

## STATE AND LOCAL HOUSING PROGRAMS

State and local governments play a role in meeting the housing needs of their residents. The devolution of authority to local governments that began in the 1970s meant that local jurisdictions had greater responsibility for planning and carrying out housing programs. Some communities have responded to the decrease in federal housing resources by creating emergency and ongoing rental assistance programs, as well as housing production programs. These programs have been important to low-income residents in the communities where they are available, but state and local efforts have not been enough to make up for the federal disinvestment in affordable housing.

Cities, counties, and states across the country have begun creating their own rental assistance programs as well as housing development programs, often called housing trust funds, to meet local housing needs and help fill in the gaps left by the decline in federal housing production and rental assistance. Local funding sources may be targeted to specific income groups or may be created to meet the needs of a certain population, such as veterans, seniors, or families transitioning out of homelessness. Funding sources include local levy or bond measures and real estate transaction or document recording fees, among others.

Federal decision-making has had a direct impact on states’ responses to the shortage of housing affordable to extremely low-income people. In 1999, the U.S. Supreme Court found in *Olmstead v L.C.* that continued institutionalization of people with disabilities who were able to return to the community constituted discrimination under the “Americans with Disabilities Act.” This decision means that states are now developing and providing community-based permanent supportive housing for people with disabilities in response to *Olmstead* litigation or to avoid future litigation.

## DEVELOPING AFFORDABLE HOUSING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The expense of producing and operating housing affordable to low-income renters, and the multitude of funding sources available to finance it, make affordable housing development a complicated task.

Affordable housing developers, including PHAs redeveloping their housing stock, must combine multiple sources of funding to finance housing development or preservation. These funding sources can be of federal, state or local origin, and can include private lending and grants or donations. Some developers include market-rate housing options within a development to generate revenue to cross-subsidize units set aside for lower-income tenants. Each funding source will have its own requirements for income or population targeting, as well as oversight requirements. Some funding sources require developers to meet certain environmental standards or other goals, such as historic preservation or transit-oriented development.

Accessing these many funding sources requires entry into application processes which may or may not have complementary timelines and developers risk rejection of even the highest merit applications due to a shortage of resources. Developers incur costs before the first shovel hits the ground as they work to plan their developments around available funding sources and their associated requirements.

Developers encounter another set of requirements in the communities in which they work. They must operate according to local land use regulations, and sometimes encounter community opposition to a planned development, which can jeopardize funder support for a project.

Once developments open, depending on the needs of the residents, services and supports may be included in the development. These can range from after-school programs to job training to physical or mental health care. This can mean working with another set of federal, state, and local programs, and nonprofit service providers.

Despite these challenges, affordable housing developers succeed every day, building, rehabilitating, and preserving quality housing for low-income people at rents they can afford.

## **THE FUTURE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

The need for affordable housing continues to grow, particularly the need for housing affordable to the lowest-income people. Nationwide, there are only 37 units of housing affordable and available for every 100 extremely low-income Americans. Federal housing assistance only serves one quarter of those who qualify and special populations, such as disabled veterans returning from combat or lower income seniors, are increasing in number and need.

At the same time, the existing stock of affordable rental housing is disappearing due to deterioration and the exit of private owners from the affordable housing market. According to the National Housing Trust, our nation loses two affordable apartments each year for each one created. Local preservation efforts have seen success, and resources like the National Housing Preservation Database are helpful, but it is a race against time.

Finally, the very funding structure of most affordable housing programs puts them at risk at both the federal and local levels. The majority of federal housing programs are appropriated, meaning that the funding amounts can change

from year to year, or disappear altogether. State and local programs can be similarly volatile, because they are often dependent on revenue from fees or other market-driven sources and are vulnerable to being swept into non-housing uses. Ensuring funding at amounts necessary to maintain programs at their current level of service, much less grow them, is a constant battle.

## **THE ROLE OF ADVOCATES**

Affordable housing advocates have a unique opportunity to make the case for affordable rental housing with Members of Congress as well as with local policymakers. As the articles in this Guide demonstrate, subsidized rental housing is more cost-effective and sustainable than the alternative, be it institutionalization, homelessness, or grinding hardship for the lowest-income families. After decades of overinvestment in homeownership, the housing market collapse, and the growth of a gaping divide between the resources and prospects of the highest and lowest income people, it is necessary for Congress to significantly expand resources to help end homelessness and housing poverty once and for all.

Those who wish to see an end to homelessness must be unyielding in their advocacy for rental housing that is affordable to low-income people. Over the decades of direct federal involvement in housing, we have learned much about how the government, private, and public sectors can partner with communities to create affordable housing that will improve lives and heal whole neighborhoods. We must take this evidence, and our stories, to lawmakers to show them that this can, and must, be done.



# The National Need for Affordable Housing

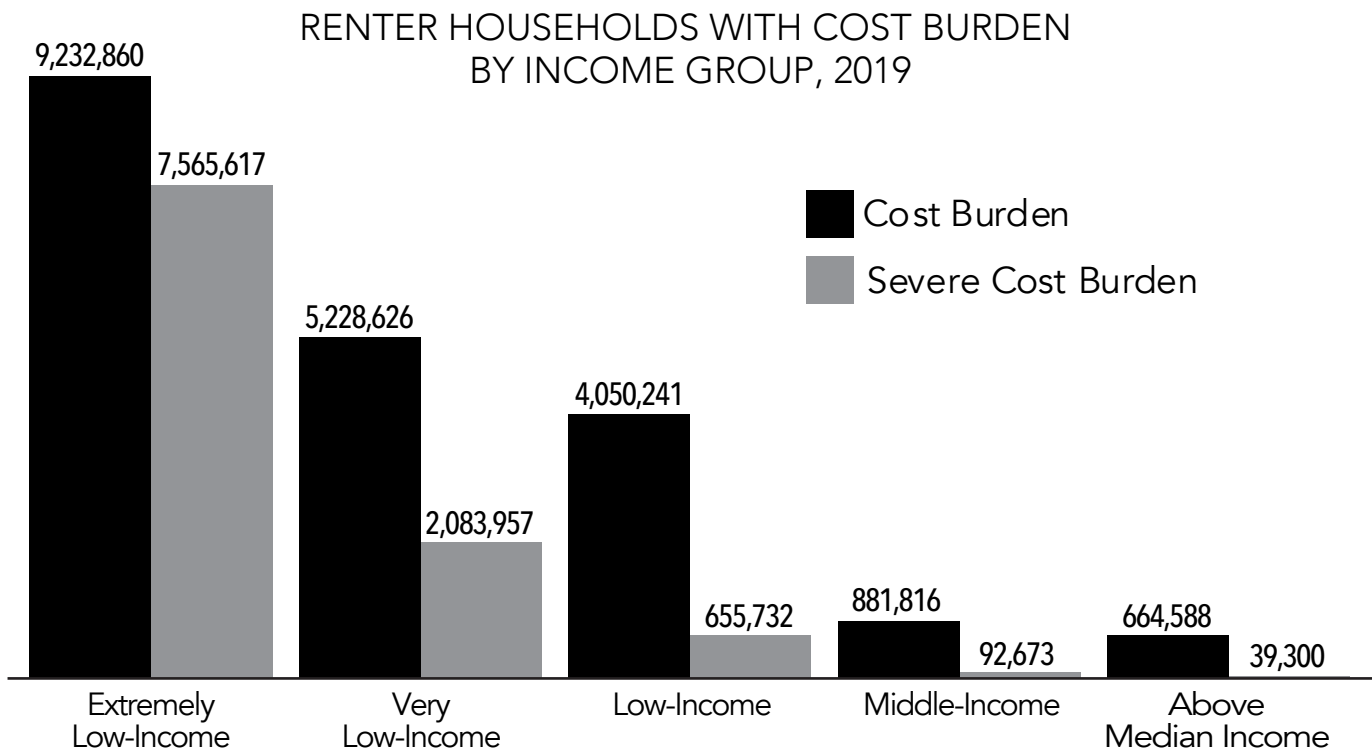
By Dan Emmanuel, Senior Research Analyst and Andrew Aurand, Vice President for Research, NLIHC

The United States is facing a shortage of affordable rental housing. The shortage is most severe for households with extremely low incomes, defined as income at or below the poverty guideline or 30% of their area's median income, whichever is higher. Even before COVID-19 sparked a public health and economic crisis, only 7.4 million affordable rental homes were available for the nation's 10.8 million extremely low-income (ELI) renter households under the assumption that households should spend no more than 30% of their income on housing costs (unless otherwise noted, figures are based on 2019 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample data). Not all 7.4 million homes, however, are available. Approximately 3.4 million are occupied by higher-income households. As a result, approximately 4 million rental homes are affordable and

available for ELI renters, leaving a shortage of nearly 7 million. In other words, there are only 37 affordable and available rental homes for every 100 ELI renter households.

The pandemic made this crisis even more acute, as millions of low-income renters were put out of work and put at risk of eviction. According to the Census Bureau's Housing Pulse Survey conducted in early October 2021, more than 16% of adult renters were behind on rent and more than one-quarter of adults with annual household incomes below \$25,000 were behind. More than three million renter households behind on rent in October 2021 thought they were very likely or somewhat likely to be evicted in the next two months.

The severe shortage of affordable homes for the lowest-income renters is systemic, affecting every state and metropolitan area. Without public subsidy, the private market is unable to produce new rental housing affordable to these households because the rents that the lowest-



Source: NLIHC tabulations of 2019 ACS PUMS data.

income households can afford to pay typically do not cover the development costs and operating expenses of such housing. New private rental housing, therefore, is largely targeted to the higher-price end of the market and the lowest-income renters must rely on older, private rental housing or subsidies.

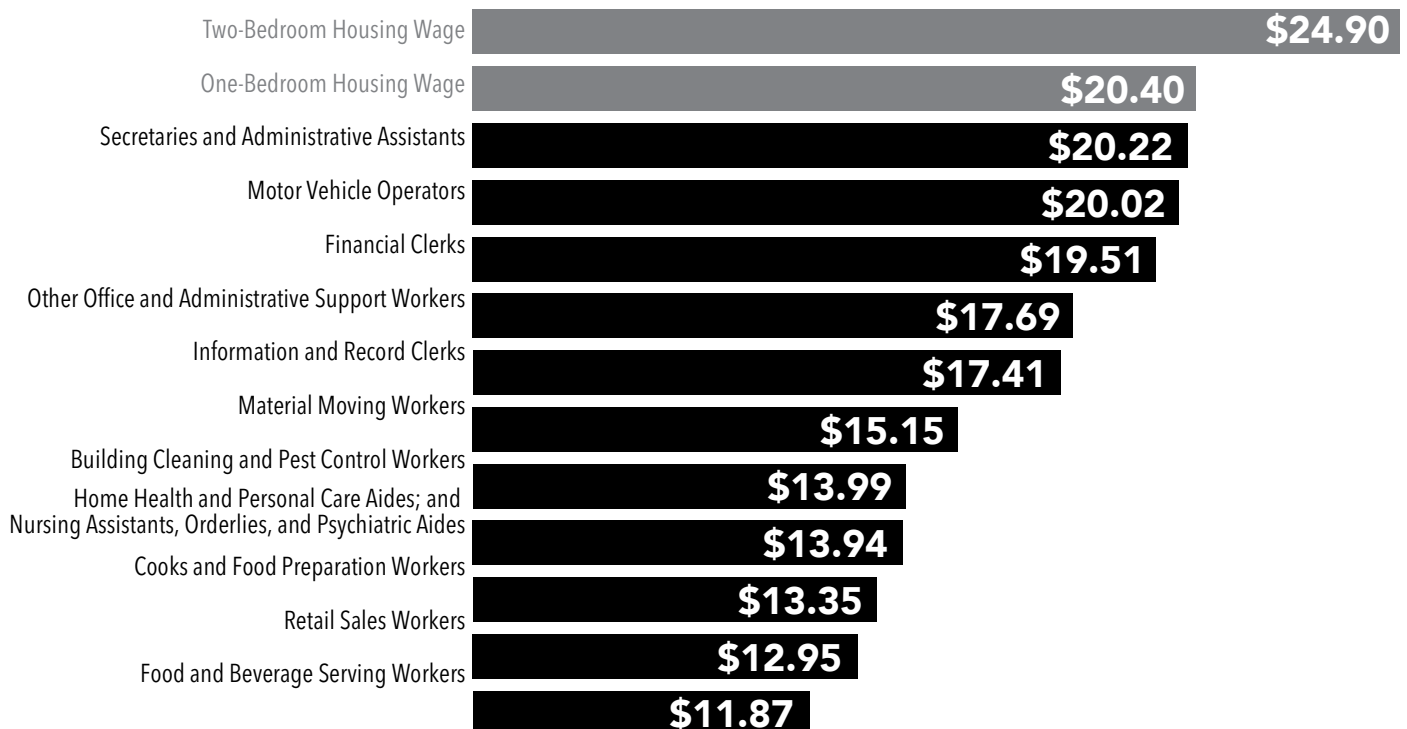
The private market, however, does not generate an adequate supply of older rental homes and subsidies are woefully inadequate. In strong markets, owners of older rental homes have an incentive to redevelop their properties to receive higher rents from higher-income households. In weak markets, owners of older rental homes have an incentive to abandon their rental properties or convert them to other uses when rental income is too low to cover basic operating costs and maintenance. Between 2000 and 2017, the number of rental homes renting for under \$600 fell by 2.4 million, and the share of low-cost homes in the national rental stock fell from 37%

to 25% (Joint Center for Housing Studies; JCHS, 2020: *America's Rental Housing 2020*). Meanwhile, just one in four households eligible for federal housing assistance get the help they need (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2017: *Chart Book: Federal Housing Spending Is Poorly Matched to Need*).

As a result of these challenges, 85% of ELI renter households spend more than 30% of their income on housing and 70% spend more than half of their income on housing, making them severely cost burdened. ELI households account for more cost burdened and severely cost burdened renter households than any other income group. The 7.6 million severely cost burdened ELI renter households account for 72% of the 10.4 million severely cost burdened renter households in the U.S.

The most vulnerable ELI renters, such as people with disabilities relying on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and minimum wage workers, typically face the greatest burdens. While the

### ELEVEN OF THE TWENTY LARGEST OCCUPATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES PAY LESS THAN THE HOUSING WAGE



Source: Occupational wages from May 2020 Occupational Employment Statistics, BLS, adjusted to 2021 dollars. Housing wages based on HUD fair market rents. ©2021 National Low Income Housing Coalition

Federal SSI benefit in 2021 was \$794 per month, the average monthly rent for a modest one-bedroom home was \$1,061. For the 4.6 million people with disabilities whose sole source of income is SSI, such costs are unsustainable (Technical Assistance Collaborative, 2021: *Priced Out*). In only 218 counties out of more than 3,000 counties nationwide can a full-time worker at minimum wage afford a modest one-bedroom apartment at the fair market rent (NLIHC, 2021: *Out of Reach 2021: The High Cost of Housing*).

Low-wage employment often does not pay enough for workers to afford housing and other necessities. A person working full-time every week of the year needs to earn an hourly wage of \$24.90 to afford a modest two-bedroom rental home without spending more than 30% of his or her income on housing, or \$20.40 for a modest one-bedroom apartment. These wages are far higher than the federal minimum wage and higher than wages paid in many of the most common occupations in the country.

Households with the lowest incomes face enormous barriers in obtaining affordable and accessible housing. Data show that they have the greatest housing needs relative to all other income groups and addressing their needs should be the highest national housing priority.

# A Racial Equity Lens is Critical to Housing Justice Work

By Renee M. Willis, Senior Vice President of Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, NLIHC

**D**uring the 20th century, federal, state, and local governments systematically implemented racially discriminatory housing policies that contributed to segregated neighborhoods and inhibited equal opportunity and the chance to build wealth for Black, Latino, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Native American families, and other underserved communities. Ongoing legacies of residential segregation and discrimination remain ever-present in our society. These include a racial gap in homeownership; a persistent undervaluation of properties owned by families of color; a disproportionate burden of pollution and exposure to the impacts of climate change in communities of color; and systemic barriers to safe, accessible, and affordable housing for people of color, immigrants, individuals with disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender non-conforming, and queer (LGBTQ+) individuals.

–January 26, 2021, Memorandum on Redressing Our Nation’s and the Federal Government’s History of Discriminatory Housing Practices and Policies, President Joe Biden

Racial, residential segregation, displacement, and exclusion are mechanisms to exacerbate racial inequality in housing. Federal, state, and local governments—as President Biden acknowledges in his memorandum to Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Marcia Fudge—systematically and purposefully implemented racially discriminatory housing policies that excluded African Americans and others from equal access to housing and opportunities for economic mobility.

When all people have accessible and affordable homes in diverse and inclusive communities, we all benefit. Our economy benefits. Research shows that housing influences outcomes across many sectors. Students do better in school when

they live in stable, affordable homes. People are healthier and can more readily escape poverty and homelessness. Yet, people of color are significantly more likely than white people to face systemic barriers to quality, accessible, and affordable homes. In fact, 1 in 4 African American families and 1 in 6 Hispanic families live in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, compared to only 1 in 13 white families.

Housing is the pathway to economic mobility and opportunity. Yet for far too many people in this country, the pathway is full of roadblocks.

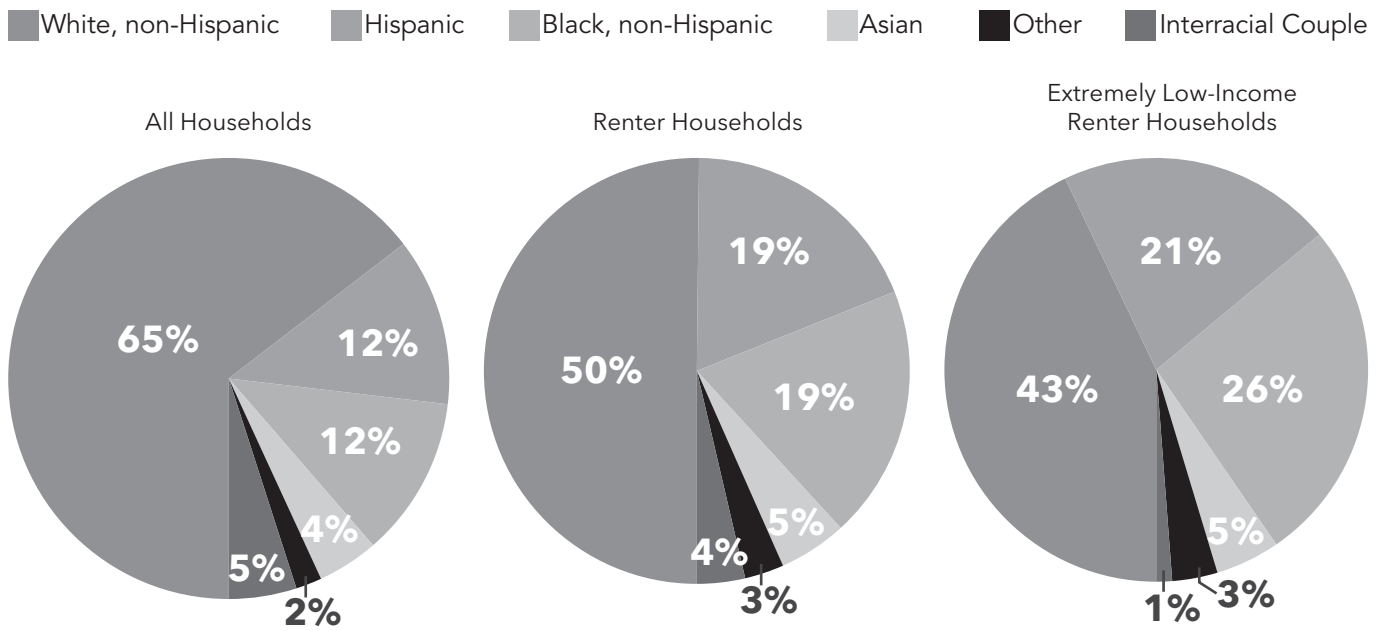
To learn more about the role of the government’s role in designing and perpetuating racial inequality in housing, read the article *Lofty Rhetoric, Prejudiced Policy: The Story of How the Federal Government Promised—and Undermined—Fair Housing* in Chapter 2 of this *Advocates’ Guide*.

## RACIAL DISPARITIES IN HOUSING

The orchestrated displacement, exclusion, and segregation of people of color by the United States government have exacerbated racial inequality in the United States. The effects are seen and felt today. According to NLIHC’s 2021 *The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Rental Homes*, “Black, Native American, and Hispanic households are more likely than white households to be extremely low-income renters.” The report finds that 6% of white non-Hispanic households are extremely low-income renters, yet 22% of Black households, 17% of American Indian or Alaska Native households, 15% of Hispanic households, and 10% of Asian households are extremely low-income renters.

As Figure 11 illustrates, non-Hispanic white households account for 65% of all U.S. households (including homeowners and renters), 50% of all renters, and 43% of all extremely low-income renters. Black households account for 12% of all households, yet they account for 19% of all renters and 26% of all extremely low-

FIGURE 11: RACIAL AND ETHNIC COMPOSITION BY HOUSING TYPE



Source: 2018 ACS PUMS.

income renters. Hispanic households account for 12% of all U.S. households, 19% of all renters, and 21% of extremely low-income renters.

This racial disparity is the result of historical inequities and racist policies and practices that have engendered higher homeownership rates, greater wealth, and higher incomes among white households.

## STRUCTURAL RACIALIZATION

When talking about racism, most people tend to focus on individual beliefs, biases, and actions. However, it is so much more. Understanding that racism exists not simply in individuals, but “[in] our societal organization and understandings,” [John O. Calmore, *Race/ism Lost and Found: The Fair Housing Act at Thirty*, 52 U. Miami L. Rev. 1067, 1073 (1998)] is key to developing strategies and solutions to combat it. Our practices, cultural norms and institutional arrangements help create and maintain racialized outcomes.

Structural racialization (also referred to as structural racism) “is a set of processes that may generate disparities or depress life outcomes without any racist actors” [John A. Powell, *Deepening Our Understanding of Structural Marginalization*, *Poverty & Race*, Vol. 22, No. 5,

(September-October 2013)]. A structural framing allows us to “take the focus off intent, and even off conscious attitudes and beliefs, and instead turn our focus to interventions that acknowledge that systems and structures are either supporting positive outcomes or hindering them” [John A. Powell, *Understanding Structural Racialization*, *Journal of Poverty Law and Policy*, Vol. 47, Numbers 5-6 (September-October 2013)]. The structural model helps us to understand how housing, education, transportation, employment and other “systems interact to produce racialized outcomes” [John A. Powell, *Structural Racism: Building Upon the Insights of John Calmore*, HeinOnline, 86.N.C.L. Rev. 791 (2007-2008)]. It also helps us to “show how all groups are interconnected and how structures shape life chances” (*Ibid*).

## RACIAL EQUITY

Race Forward defines racial equity as “the process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone” (Race Forward, <https://www.raceforward.org/about/what-is-racial-equity-key-concepts>). They further define racial equity as “the intentional and continual practice of changing policies,

practices, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people of color.” Advocates who want to be more intentional about how they bring a racial equity lens to their work should strive to do the following:

1. Understand the function of racism,
2. Focus on systemic racism instead of individual instances of racism,
3. Use data to show evidence of housing disparities,
4. Include people of color and others with marginalized identities in the process, and
5. Dismantle racist systems and structures and rebuild them more equitably.

Advocates should inform legislators of the ways through which they can create or lend support for policies that reduce inequities in housing. Policymakers at every level of government must advance anti-racist policies and redress the impacts of decades of intentionally racist housing and transportation policies, including redlining, blockbusting, restrictive covenants, restrictive zoning, and highway systems. Policymakers must work to advance additional anti-racist policies and achieve the large-scale investments and reforms necessary to ensure that the lowest-income and most marginalized renters have an accessible, affordable place to call home.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Visit NLIHC’s website, [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org).
- Othering & Belonging Institute, <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/>.
- Race Forward, [www.raceforward.org](http://www.raceforward.org).
- Equal Justice Institute, [www.eji.org](http://www.eji.org).
- The Opportunity Agenda, [www.opportunityagenda.org](http://www.opportunityagenda.org).
- *Opportunity Starts at Home, Racial Equity Advocates Are Housing Advocates*, <https://tinyurl.com/3837nsfv>.
- NLIHC, *The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Rental Homes*, <https://reports.nlihc.org/gap>.
- White House, *Memorandum on Redressing Our*

*Nation’s and the Federal Government’s History of Discriminatory Housing Practices and Policies*, <https://tinyurl.com/ycku5vv7>.

# Income Targeting and Expenditures for Major Housing Programs

Ensuring federal housing programs prioritize extremely low-income (ELI) renter households is a primary policy goal of NLIHC. Federal rental housing assistance isn't an entitlement and only one in four eligible households receive it. Income targeting helps ensure scarce federal housing resources reach ELI households who, because of their great needs, can be more difficult to serve than higher income groups. Targeting ELI renter households also helps ensure federal housing resources benefit populations impacted by systemic racism, ageism, and ableism.

ELI households have incomes less than or equal to 30% of area median income (AMI) or below the federal poverty guideline, whichever is greater. The nation's 10.8 million ELI renter households account for 25% of all renter households. Due to systemic racism, people of color are much more likely to head ELI renter households than white, non-Latino people. Twenty percent of Black-headed households, 18% of households headed by American Indians or Alaska Natives, 14% of Latino-headed households, and 10% of Asian-headed households are ELI renter households. Just 6% percent of households headed by white, non-Latinos are extremely low-income renter households. ELI renter households are also disproportionately headed by seniors and people with disabilities.

ELI renters have the greatest housing needs. There is a shortage of almost 7 million rental homes affordable and available to them. As a result, 85% of ELI renter households are cost-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Cost-burdened households have difficulty affording other necessities such as food, health care, and transportation. Seventy percent of ELI renter households are severely cost burdened, paying more than half of their income for housing. These severely cost-burdened ELI households account for 72% of all severely cost-burdened renter households in the U.S.

The following table displays income targeting requirements and expenditures for key federal affordable housing programs:

Housing Program	Income Targeting Requirements	National Annual Funding
Public Housing	At least 40% of new admissions during a Public Housing Agency's fiscal year must be households with income less than 30% of area median income (AMI), with the remainder for households earning up to 80% of AMI.	\$7.8 billion
Housing Choice Vouchers	At least 75% of new and turnover vouchers are for households with income less than 30% of AMI, with the remainder for households earning up to 80% of AMI.	\$23.1 billion
Project-Based Rental Assistance	At least 40% of new admissions during an annual period must be households with income less than 30% of AMI, with the remainder for households earning up to 80% of AMI.	\$13.5 billion

Housing Program	Income Targeting Requirements	National Annual Funding
Sections 202 and 811	For Section 202 and the 811 Capital Advance/Project Rental Assistance Contract programs, all units are for households with income less than 50% of AMI. For the 811 Project Rental Assistance program, all units are for households with income less than 30% of AMI.	Section 202: \$855 million
HOME Investment Partnerships	If used for rental, at least 90% of units assisted by the jurisdiction must be for households with income less than 60% AMI, with the remainder for households with income up to 80% AMI. If more than five HOME-assisted units are in a building, 20% of the HOME-assisted units must be for households with income less than 50% AMI. Assisted homeowners must have income less than 80% AMI.	\$1.35 billion
Community Development Block Grant	At least 70% of households served must have income less than 80% AMI. Remaining funds can serve households of any income group.	\$3.5 billion
McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants	All assistance is for participants who meet HUD's definition of homeless: those who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.	\$3.0 billion
Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS	All housing is for households with income less than 80% of AMI.	\$430 million
Low-Income Housing Tax Credit	All units are for households with income less than 50% or 60% of AMI, dependent upon whether the developer chooses 20% of units at 50% AMI or 40% of units at 60% AMI. Income averaging was authorized in 2018, allowing households with income up to 80% AMI to receive tax credit as long as the average income is less than 60% AMI.	\$10.9 billion
Federal Home Loan Banks' Affordable Housing Program	All units are for households with income less than 80% of AMI. For rental projects, 20% of units are for households earning less than 50% of AMI.	\$393 million
Section 515 Rural Rental Housing	All units are for households with income less than the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) definition of moderate income, which is 80% of AMI plus \$5,500. Households in substandard housing are given priority.	\$40 million



Housing Program	Income Targeting Requirements	National Annual Funding
Section 521 Rural Rental Assistance	In new projects, 95% of units are for households with income less than 50% of AMI. In existing projects, 75% of units are for households with income less than 50% of AMI.	\$1.4 billion
National Housing Trust Fund	At least 90% of funds must be for rental housing, and at least 75% of rental housing funds must benefit households with income less than 30% AMI or poverty level, whichever is greater. Remaining funds can assist households with income less than 50% AMI. Up to 10% may be for homeowner activities benefitting households with income less than 50% AMI.	\$689.7 million in 2021

**National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2022**

# Housing as a Human Right

---

By Eric Tars, Legal Director, National Homelessness Law Center

In 2021, we inaugurated a [president](#) and [vice-president](#) and [HUD Secretary](#) who have repeatedly affirmed “housing should be a right, not a privilege.” [Rep. Cori Bush](#) held the nation’s conscience to account to extend the eviction moratorium with a sleep-out on the steps of the Capitol on the principle that housing is a human right. And the [U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness](#) (USICH) stated the right to housing would be a “core value” of its new federal strategic plan to end homelessness.

None of these steps should be taken for granted. They are a sign that we as advocates have shifted the baseline of the conversation. And that shift has laid a strong basis for things like the eviction moratorium and the unprecedented investments in housing the Build Back Better Act.

The human right to housing is a holistic and powerful frame, carrying the weight of international law and tapping into our deep cultural understanding of the importance of upholding human and civil rights. The human right to housing frame is necessary because it addresses not only the affordability and basic supply of housing, but interdependent issues such as racial equity, public health, and educational opportunity. Pairing legal standards with the [popular resonance](#) of the call for the human right to housing is how this holistic approach is uniquely able to prevent homelessness and housing instability from happening in the future.

But there is danger, as the language of the right to housing becomes more widespread, without reference to the [strong international standards](#) which underpin it, it can become co-opted. Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg introduced a city ordinance creating a so-called “[right to housing and obligation to use it](#)” that re-defines housing to include tents and shelters, and threatens those who refuse to relocate

with criminal penalties. This is *not* a rights-based approach to addressing homelessness and housing insecurity. Indeed, thanks to well-organized advocacy, the [USICH](#), the [Department of Justice](#), and [Housing and Urban Development](#) have taken enforcement actions and adopted human rights language against the criminalization of homelessness.

While saying housing is a human right and making it happen in policy are two different things, changing the rhetorical frame is important to changing the policy. Faced with unprecedented threats from the pandemic, but also unprecedented opportunities to try to ensure we do not return to unacceptable pre-pandemic norms, housing advocates can use the human right to housing framework to reframe public debate, craft and support legislative proposals, supplement legal claims in court, advocate in international fora, and support community organizing efforts. Numerous United Nations (U.N.) human rights experts have recently visited the United States or made comments directly bearing on domestic housing issues including [housing obligations during the COVID crisis](#), providing detailed recommendations for federal- and local-level policy reforms. In 2022, advocates must work to consolidate these gains and push for action to accompany the rhetoric.

## HISTORY

In his 1944 State of the Union address, Franklin Roosevelt declared that the United States had a [Second Bill of Rights](#), including the right to a decent home. In 1948, the United States signed the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (UDHR), recognizing adequate housing as a component of the human right to an adequate standard of living.

The UDHR is a non-binding declaration, so the right to adequate housing was codified into a binding treaty law by the [International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights](#) (ICESCR) in 1966. The United States signed the ICESCR,

and thus must uphold the “object and purpose” of the treaty, even though the U.S. has not yet ratified it. The U.S. ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1992 and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1994. Both recognize the right to be free from discrimination, including in housing, on the basis of race, gender, disability, and other status and emphasize the need for equitable policies to make up for past discrimination. The U.S. also ratified the Convention Against Torture in 1994, protecting individuals from torture and other cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment, including the criminalization of homelessness.

More recently, the U.S. government supported, in part, a recommendation from the Human Rights Council in 2015 to “guarantee the right by all residents in the country to adequate housing, food, health and education, with the aim of decreasing poverty, which affects 48 million people in the country.” In October 2016, the U.S. signed onto the New Urban Agenda, “commit[ing] to promote national, sub-national, and local housing policies that support the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing for all as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, that address all forms of discrimination and violence, prevent arbitrary forced evictions, and that focus on the needs of the homeless, persons in vulnerable situations, low-income groups, and persons with disabilities, while enabling participation and engagement of communities and relevant stakeholders in the planning and implementation of these policies including supporting the social production of habitat, according to national legislations and standards.”

The U.S. has hosted several official and unofficial visits from top U.N. human rights officers in recent years that garnered significant press, as well as meetings with high profile elected officials. In 2019, the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty and others worked with Senator Cory Booker’s (D-NJ) office to host a packed-room congressional briefing on the U.N.’s special rapporteur on extreme poverty

and human rights report on his mission to the U.S. This resulted in numerous with seven of the leading Democratic candidates for President (Senators Booker, Harris (D-CA), Sanders (D-VT), and Warren (D-MA), former HUD Secretary Castro, former Representative O’Rourke, and Tom Steyer). And when Vice-President-Elect Harris joined President-Elect Biden’s ticket, she brought the housing as a right framing into his platform.

The rhetoric has now moved into the political mainstream, with countless local, state, and federal officials stating their belief that housing is a human right in 2021. What is needed now is to pair that rhetoric with accountability to the full scope of the standards of the human right to adequate housing described below.

## ISSUE SUMMARY

The human right to housing, as defined by international law, is a powerful framework that takes into account the current, imperfect reality, while also setting forth the numerous, interdependent and holistic pieces that are required for the full realization of the right. It promotes racial justice and housing justice, and supports other human rights. The right to housing includes negative and positive rights: for example, the government must refrain from imposing cruel and unusual punishments, such as punishing individuals for sleeping or sheltering themselves outdoors in the absence of adequate alternatives (negative right) but must also ensure adequate supply of affordable housing (positive right).

According to the U.N. Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which oversees the ICESCR, the human right to adequate housing consists of seven elements: (1) security of tenure; (2) availability of services, materials, and infrastructure; (3) affordability; (4) accessibility; (5) habitability; (6) location; and (7) cultural adequacy.

In the human rights framework, every right creates a corresponding duty on the part of the government to respect, protect, and fulfill the right. Having the right to housing does not mean that the government must build a house

for every person in America and give it to them free of charge. It does, however, allocate ultimate responsibility to the government to progressively realize the right to adequate housing, whether by devoting resources to public housing, universal vouchers, or renters tax credits, by creating incentives for the private development of affordable housing such as inclusionary zoning or the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, through market regulation such as rent control, through legal due process protections from eviction or foreclosure, and upholding the right to counsel to enforce those protections and ensuring habitable conditions through housing codes and inspections, or by ensuring homeless persons are not threatened with civil or criminal penalties for sheltering themselves in the absence of adequate alternatives. Contrary to the current framework that views housing as a commodity to be determined primarily by the market, the right to housing framework gives advocates a tool for holding each level of government accountable if any of those elements are not satisfied. Crucially, the human rights framework states clearly that the right to housing includes the right to participate in decisions on housing policy for those directly impacted by those policies. Human rights also actively embraces “special measures” for historically-marginalized populations, including affirmative action or reparations.

[France](#), [Scotland](#), [South Africa](#), and several other countries have adopted a right to housing in their constitutions or legislation, leading to improved housing conditions. In Scotland, the “Homelessness Act of 2003” includes the right for all homeless persons to be immediately housed and the right to long-term, supportive housing for as long as needed. The law also includes an individual right to sue if one believes these rights are not being met and requires jurisdictions to plan for the development of adequate affordable housing stock. Complementary policies include the right to purchase public housing units and automatic referrals by banks to foreclosure prevention programs to help people remain in their homes. All these elements work together to ensure that the right to housing is upheld. Although challenges remain

in its implementation, in general, Scotland’s homelessness is brief, rare, and non-recurring.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

Building on the success of 2021 in mainstreaming the human right to housing into the policy conversation, 2022 could be a breakout year for moving the right into practice.

On the positive side, increasing adoption of the language around the human right to housing by presidential candidates and Members of Congress indicates a comfort with this framing and a potential for a mutually reinforcing cultural shift. Ambitious legislative proposals including the [Build Back Better Act](#), [Ending Homelessness Act](#), [Housing is a Human Right Act](#), and others show a move toward a rights-based approach, as opposed to one that accepts artificial budget limitations as an excuse to not meet the need.

That said, the threat posed by COVID-19 and the accompanying economic crisis, and (as of this writing) Congress’ failure to pass meaningful longer-term measures to address housing inequality, could make things far worse before they get better. Millions could lose their homes, with life-long consequences, and state and local budgets will be cut due to lost tax revenue. Without a major [COVID-relief package that adopts a human rights approach](#), it will be difficult to “build back better”. It is precisely in this time of ongoing economic hardship that a rights-based approach to budgeting and policy decisions will help generate the resolve to protect basic human dignity first, rather than relegating it to the status of an optional policy. The National Homelessness Law Center, together with many other housing and homelessness organizations (including NLIHC), launched the [Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign](#) in 2016 and the [National Coalition for Housing Justice](#) in 2020, both of which call for human right to housing policies in the U.S.

U.S. advocates also will have multiple opportunities for interaction with international human right officials in 2022. The [InterAmerican Commission on Human Rights](#) held a hearing in 2021 on the situation of the right to housing in the U.S. and indicated it may schedule an official

visit. The U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination will hold a hearing in August to review the U.S.'s report, which discusses issues ranging from racial disparities in housing to criminalization of homelessness.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

Local groups wishing to build the movement around the human right to housing in the United States can use international standards to promote policy change, from rallying slogans to concrete legislative proposals. Groups like the #Moms4Housing use human rights to take direct action like taking over vacant buildings and to support broader local and statewide legislative advocacy. The UN has created model guidance for implementing the human right to housing, including policies to ensure it during the COVID-19 crisis. Advocates can also hold local governments accountable to human rights standards by creating an annual Human Right to Housing Report Card. Using international mechanisms (like those described above) can also cast an international spotlight on local issues.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

It is important for legislators and their staff (as well as other advocates) to hear constituents say that housing is a human right and ask for them to say it too, and call for policies to support it as such. This helps change the normative framework for all of the housing issues that we work on: *because* housing is a human right, we need to extend the eviction moratorium; *because* housing is a human right, we need to fund universal vouchers; all this creates the momentum for *because* housing is a human right, we need to [insert your housing priority]. Tying the concept to the United States' origins and acceptance of these rights in Roosevelt's "Second Bill of Rights," polling data, and the growing widespread acceptance by political leaders all emphasize that it is a homegrown idea rather than one imposed from abroad. On a somewhat converse point, using the recommendations made by human rights monitors can also reinforce advocates' messages by lending them

international legitimacy.

Numerous national associations, including the American Bar Association, American Medical Association, American Public Health Association, and International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies have passed resolutions endorsing a domestic implementation of the human right to housing, which local groups are using as tools in their advocacy. In reaching out to religiously motivated communities, it may be helpful to reference the numerous endorsements of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in favor of the human right to housing and to point out that Pope Francis called for the human right to housing to be implemented during his 2015 visit to the U.S. All of these can lead us to a future where housing is enjoyed as a right by all Americans.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Homelessness Law Center (formerly the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty), 202-638-2535, <https://homelesslaw.org/>.



---

# **Chapter 2:** ADVOCACY RESOURCES

---





# How Laws Are Made

---

By Sarah Saadian, Senior Vice President of Public Policy, NLIHC

**T**he lawmaking process can be initiated in either chamber of Congress: the House of Representatives or the Senate. Revenue-related bills must originate in the House of Representatives. Legislators initiate the lawmaking process by crafting a bill or a joint resolution.

Although Members of Congress introduce bills and help maneuver legislation through the lawmaking process, congressional staff also play an essential role in the process. Members of Congress have staff working in their personal offices and those who serve as Chair or Ranking Members of committees or subcommittees have separate committee staff as well. Both personal and committee staff have significant input in the legislative process.

The following steps, adapted from the Government Printing Office (GPO), describe the process of enacting a bill that is introduced in the House of Representatives into law. Enacting a joint resolution into law requires the same steps as a bill.

## ENACTING A BILL INTO LAW

1. When a representative has an idea for a new law, he or she becomes the sponsor of that bill and introduces it by submitting it to the clerk of the House of Representatives or by placing it in a box called the “hopper.” The clerk assigns a legislative number to the bill, with H.R. for bills introduced in the House of Representatives (and S. for bills introduced in the Senate). GPO then prints the bill and distributes copies to each representative.
2. The bill is assigned to a committee by the Speaker of the House so that it can be studied. The House has standing committees, each with jurisdiction over bills in certain areas. The standing committee, or often a subcommittee, studies the bill and hears testimony from experts and people interested in the bill. The committee then may release the bill with a recommendation to pass it, or revise the bill and release it, or lay it aside so that the House cannot vote on it. Releasing the bill is called “reporting it out,” while laying it aside is called “tabling.”
3. If the bill is released, it then goes on a calendar, which is a list of bills awaiting action. Here the House Rules Committee may call for the bill to be voted on quickly, may limit the debate, or may limit or prohibit amendments. Undisputed bills may be passed by unanimous consent or by a two-thirds majority vote if members agree to suspend the rules.
4. The bill then goes to the floor of the House for consideration and begins with a complete reading of the bill. Sometimes this is the only complete reading. A third reading of the title only occurs after any amendments have been added. If the bill is passed by simple majority (218 of 435), the bill moves to the Senate.
5. In order to be introduced in the Senate, a senator must be recognized by the presiding officer and announce the introduction of the bill. Sometimes, when a bill has passed in one chamber, it becomes known as an act; however, this term usually means a bill that has been passed by both chambers and becomes law.
6. Just as in the House, the bill is then assigned to a committee in the Senate. It is assigned to one of the Senate’s standing committees by the presiding officer. The Senate committee studies and either releases or tables the bill just like the House standing committee.
7. Once released, the bill goes to the Senate floor for consideration. Bills are voted on in the Senate based on the order in which they come from the committee; however, an urgent bill may be pushed ahead by leaders of the majority party. When the Senate considers the bill, it can be debated indefinitely. When there

is no more debate, there is a vote on the bill. In many cases, a simple majority (51 of 100) passes the bill. In recent years, however, the Senate has needed 60 votes to overcome the threat of a filibuster.

8. The bill now moves into a conference committee, which is made up of Members from each chamber of Congress. The conference committee works out any differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill. The revised bill is sent back to both chambers for their final approval. Once approved, the bill is printed by the GPO in a process called enrolling. The clerk from the introducing chamber certifies the final version.
9. The enrolled bill is now signed by the Speaker of the House and then the vice president. Finally, it is sent for presidential consideration. The president has 10 days to sign or veto the enrolled bill. If the president vetoes the bill, it can still become a law if two-thirds of the Senate and two-thirds of the House then vote in favor of the bill and override the veto.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

*The Legislative Process*, from the U.S. House of Representatives: <https://www.house.gov/the-house-explained/the-legislative-process>.

*Ben's Guide to the U.S. Government*: <https://bensguide.gpo.gov/how-laws-are-made>.

# The Federal Budget and Appropriations Process

By Sarah Saadian, Senior Vice President of Public Policy, NLIHC

**F**unding the federal government is a two-part process that occurs annually. First, a federal budget resolution is passed, and then funds are appropriated among federal agencies and programs.

Both the Administration and Congress participate in the process of developing a federal budget resolution that establishes the overall framework and maximum dollar amount for government spending in a fiscal year (FY). The appropriations process is also handled entirely by Congress and establishes the amount of funding for individual activities of the federal government. Although the budget resolution should be completed, and funds appropriated during the prior FY, in recent years Congress has not completed the appropriations processes in advance of the start of the FY due to disagreements between the House and Senate over top line budget amounts.

## TYPES OF FEDERAL SPENDING AND REVENUE

There are three categories of spending for which the budget and appropriations process establishes limits and defines uses: discretionary spending, mandatory spending, and tax revenue.

### Discretionary Spending

As the name suggests, government expenditures in the discretionary portion of the budget are subject to annual evaluation by the president and Congress. Although the discretionary portion of the budget represents less than half of total annual expenditures, it is the area of spending that the president and Congress focus on most. Each year, the Administration and Congress re-evaluate the need to allocate funds for federal departments, programs, and activities. Discretionary spending amounts vary annually, depending upon the Administration and congressional policy priorities.

### Mandatory Spending

Mandatory spending is almost entirely made up of spending on entitlements, such as Social Security and Medicaid. Expenditures for entitlements are based on a formula applied to the number of households eligible for a benefit. The amount of funding in a given year is determined by that formula. Typically, the Administration and Congress do not focus much on this spending in the budget and appropriations processes. However, Congress can use the budget resolution to direct authorizing committees to participate in a budget cutting processes called budget reconciliation, whereby authorizing committees are required to suggest savings from mandatory programs.

### Tax Revenue

Taxes provide revenue to the government to fund spending priorities. Tax policy includes not just revenues, but also expenditures in the form of deductions, credits, and other tax breaks. These expenditures reduce the total tax amount that could potentially be collected to provide revenue for the federal government. Each year, the Administration and Congress decide what tax revenues to collect and what tax expenditures to make by forgoing revenue collection in pursuit of certain policy priorities.

## BUDGET PROCESS

The federal FY runs from October 1 through September 30. Planning for the upcoming FY begins as early as a year-and-a-half before the beginning of the FY.

### President's Budget Request

The budget process officially commences on the first Monday of February, when the president is required by law to provide a budget request to Congress for all Administration activities in the coming FY.

The president's budget request to Congress includes funding requests for discretionary programs, mandatory programs, and taxes. The majority of housing programs are funded through the discretionary portion of the budget. The president's funding request for discretionary programs varies from year to year to reflect the Administration's evolving policy priorities.

### **Congressional Budget Resolution**

Once the president submits a budget to Congress, the House and Senate Committees on the Budget prepare a budget resolution. The budget resolution sets the overall framework for spending for a one-year fiscal term. The resolution includes a top-line spending figure for discretionary activities. The House and Senate Committees on Appropriations use this figure as the maximum amount of funding that can be appropriated in the next FY. This new discretionary cap either increases or decreases the overall amount of funding that the Committees on Appropriations have available to allocate to HUD and the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) affordable housing activities. Even though the budget resolution establishes the overall spending level for the FY, it does not go into detail as to how this funding will be allocated. The details are the job of the Committees on Appropriations, which begin their work after Congress agrees to a budget resolution.

To craft the budget resolution, the House and Senate Committees on the Budget first hold hearings at which Administration officials testify regarding the president's budget request. The Committees on the Budget each craft their own budget resolutions. The House and Senate then attempt to agree on a final budget resolution. Since this is a resolution and not a bill, it does not have to be signed into law by the president.

Once Congress passes a budget resolution, the appropriations work begins. If Congress does not pass a budget resolution by the statutory deadline of April 15, the Committees on Appropriations are free to begin their appropriations work.

If Congress does not pass its appropriations bills by the October 1 start of the FY, it must provide funding for the period after the FY ends and before an appropriations bill is passed. This funding is provided by a continuing resolution (CR). A CR continues funding for programs funded in the prior FY, usually at the funding level from the year prior, although exceptions or "anomalies" may sometimes be included for certain programs. If Congress does not pass a CR and appropriations bills have not been enacted, the government shuts down, as it did for 17 days in October 2013.

### **THE APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS**

Unlike the budget process, which is initiated by the Administration, the appropriations process rests entirely in the hands of Congress. After Congress passes a budget resolution, the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations divide the top-line figure for discretionary spending among their 12 respective appropriations subcommittees. The two appropriations subcommittees that provide the majority of funding for affordable housing and community development programs are the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD) Subcommittee and the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food, and Drug Administration Subcommittee in each chamber of Congress.

Each subcommittee must divide the amount of funding allocated by the Committee on Appropriations between the various priorities funded in its bill. Each subcommittee must also determine the priority programs within each of their bills and provide sufficient funding for those priorities. In order to determine its priorities, the THUD subcommittees hold hearings, during which HUD or USDA officials testify regarding specific programs and initiatives included in the president's request. Witnesses in these hearings provide a far greater level of detail on programmatic activity than witnesses testifying at budget committee hearings, which focus on overall proposed spending rather than particular activities.

After appropriations hearings are completed, the subcommittees craft their bills. The subcommittees then hold a markup of their draft bills and report out the bill they pass to their respective appropriations committees. The appropriations committees hold a markup of each bill and report out on those bills to Congress. The House and Senate must then negotiate final THUD and Agriculture bills. Once these bills are passed by Congress, they are signed into law by the president.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

For the past decade, Congress was limited by low spending caps that were put in place under the “Budget Control Act of 2011” (BCA). These low spending caps made it difficult for Congress to fund domestic programs, including affordable housing and community development, at the necessary levels.

FY 2022 was the first year in a decade where Congress was not limited by BCA budget caps. This provided an opportunity for advocates and congressional champions to secure robust resources for housing investments.

President Joe Biden signed into law a FY 2022 spending bill on March 11, 2022, with increased funding for affordable housing and community development programs. After nearly five months of negotiations, House and Senate leaders released the final bill text on March 9 for an FY 2022 spending bill that would provide roughly \$1.5 trillion in federal spending for the new fiscal year. The spending bill provides HUD programs with \$53.7 billion, a \$4 billion increase over FY 2021-enacted levels.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates should weigh in with the Administration and Congress on the importance of strong funding for affordable housing.

- Advocates should urge their Members of Congress to provide robust funding for HUD and USDA affordable housing programs. If Members of Congress do not hear from advocates, they will not know how important

these programs are in their districts and states.

- Advocates should let their Members of Congress know that the low spending caps required by law resulted in the loss of affordable housing opportunities in their states and districts. Budget caps should not be continued into future years, and robust funding is needed to address the severe shortage of housing for people with the lowest incomes.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

NLIHC, 202-662-1530, <https://nlihc.org/federal-budget-and-spending>.

# FY22 Budget Chart

## FOR SELECTED HUD AND USDA PROGRAMS

HUD PROGRAMS (SET ASIDES ITALICIZED; DOLLAR AMOUNTS IN MILLIONS)	FY21 FINAL	FY22 PRESIDENT	FY22 HOUSE	FY22 SENATE	FY22 ENACTED
<b>Tenant Based Rental Assistance</b>	<b>25,777</b>	<b>30,442</b>	<b>29,215</b>	<b>27,719</b>	<b>27,370</b>
<i>Contract Renewals</i>	23,080	24,986	24,950	24,527	24,095
<i>Tenant Protection Vouchers</i>	116	100	100	100	100
<i>Administrative Fees</i>	2,159	2,765	2,469	2,474	2,410
<i>Section 811 Mainstream Vouchers</i>	314	508	500	463	459
<i>Veterans Affairs Supportive Hsg Vouchers</i>	40	0	20	50	50
<i>Tribal Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Vouchers</i>	5	0	5	5	5
<i>Family Unification</i>	25	0	25	30	30
<i>Housing Mobility Services</i>	0	491	150	75	25
<i>Incremental Vouchers</i>	--	1,552	1000	0	200
<b>Public Housing</b>					
<i>Capital Fund*</i>	2,942	3,678	3,718	3,794	3,388
<i>Emergency/Disaster Grants</i>	75	40	65	75	75
<i>Operating Fund*</i>	4,864	4,917	4,922	5,044	5,064
<b>Moving to Work</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Choice Neighborhoods Initiative</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>350</b>
<b>Self-Sufficiency Programs</b>					
<i>Family Self-Sufficiency</i>	105	120	150	120	109
<i>Jobs-Plus Pilot</i>	15	20	15	15	15
<b>NAHASDA</b>					
<i>Native American Housing Block Grant</i>	647	723	722	772	772
<i>Competitive Grants</i>	100	100	150	150	150
<b>Native Haw. Hsg Block Grants</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Hsg. Opp. for Persons with AIDS</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>450</b>
<b>Community Development Fund</b>	<b>3,475</b>	<b>3,770</b>	<b>4,688</b>	<b>4,190</b>	<b>4,841</b>
<b>HOME Investment Partnerships</b>	<b>1,350</b>	<b>1,850</b>	<b>1,850</b>	<b>1,450</b>	<b>1,500</b>
<b>Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>12.5</b>
<b>Homeless Assistance Grants</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>3,500</b>	<b>3,420</b>	<b>3,260</b>	<b>3,213</b>
<b>Rental Assistance Demonstration</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100**</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Project-Based Rental Assistance</b>	<b>13,465</b>	<b>14,060</b>	<b>14,010</b>	<b>13,970</b>	<b>13,940</b>
<b>Hsg. for the Elderly (202)</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>928</b>	<b>1,033</b>	<b>956</b>	<b>1,033</b>
<b>Hsg. for Persons w/Disabilities (811)</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>352</b>
<b>Housing Counseling Assistance</b>	<b>57.5</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>57.5</b>	<b>57.5</b>
<b>Policy Development &amp; Research</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>Fair Hsg. &amp; Equal Opportunity</b>	<b>72.5</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Healthy Homes &amp; Lead Hazard</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>415</b>
<b>Climate Initiative</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>800^</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Section 502 Direct Homeowner Loans</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>1,250</b>	<b>1,250</b>
<b>Section 502 Guaranteed Homeowner Loans</b>	<b>24,000</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>30,000</b>	<b>30,000</b>
<b>Section 504 Repair</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Section 514 Farm Labor Housing Loans</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Section 516 Farm Labor Housing Grants</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Section 515 Rental Housing Direct</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>50</b>

<b>HUD PROGRAMS (SET ASIDES ITALICIZED; DOLLAR AMOUNTS IN MILLIONS)</b>	<b>FY21 FINAL</b>	<b>FY22 PRESIDENT</b>	<b>FY22 HOUSE</b>	<b>FY22 SENATE</b>	<b>FY22 ENACTED</b>
<b>Section 521 Rental Assistance</b>	<b>1,410</b>	<b>1,450</b>	<b>1,450</b>	<b>1,450</b>	<b>1,450</b>
<b>Section 523 Mutual and Self-Help Housing</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Multifamily Preservation &amp; Revitalization</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>79</b>
<i>Preservation Demonstration</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Section 542 Vouchers</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>45</i>

*\* The spending proposals disaggregate spending for the public housing capital and operating accounts. Funding to support operating costs includes formula funding and additional resources to be made available based on need. Funding to address capital costs includes formula funding, emergency capital needs, resources to address lead-based hazards, and other funding priorities.*

*\*\* The president's budget allocates \$100 million for RAD conversions, splitting funding evenly between PBRA (\$50 million) and TBRA (\$50 million) conversions. The administration does not propose lifting the cap on number of units that can be converted under RAD.*

*^ The budget request provides \$800 million for a new climate initiative to help communities reduce carbon pollution and increase resilience to the impact of climate change. This funding includes a \$100 million set-aside for targeted investments in Native American housing.*

# Lobbying: Important Legal Considerations for Individuals and 501(c)(3) Organizations

---

By Joey Lindstrom, Director for Field Organizing, NLIHC

## LOBBYING AS A 501(C)(3) ORGANIZATION

Contrary to what many nonprofits believe, 501(c)(3) organizations are legally allowed to lobby in support of their organization's charitable mission. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) defines lobbying as activities to influence legislation. Electoral activities that support specific candidates or political parties are forbidden, and nonprofits can never endorse or assist any candidate for public office. If 501(c)(3) groups do lobby in support of their charitable mission, the amount of lobbying an organization can do depends on how the organization chooses to measure its lobbying activity. Two options determine lobbying limits for 501(c)(3) groups: the insubstantial part test and the 501(h) expenditure test.

### Insubstantial Part Test

The insubstantial part test automatically applies unless the organization elects to come under the 501(h) expenditure test. The default insubstantial part test requires that a 501(c)(3)'s lobbying activity be an "insubstantial" part of its overall activities. The insubstantial part test has two elements. Unfortunately, the IRS and courts have been reluctant to define the line that divides substantial from insubstantial. A federal court case from 1952 establishes that if up to 5% of an organization's total activities are lobbying, then this does not constitute a "substantial part" of the organization's activities. The insubstantial part test is an activity-based test that tracks both the organization's spending, as well as activity that does not cost the organization anything. For example, when unpaid volunteers lobby on behalf of the organization, these activities would be counted under the insubstantial part test. No clear definitions exist to describe lobbying under

the insubstantial part test.

### 501(h) Expenditure Test

An alternative, the 501(h) expenditure test, provides much clearer guidance on how much lobbying a 501(c)(3) can do and what activities constitute lobbying. The 501(h) expenditure test was enacted in 1976 and implementing regulations were adopted in 1990. This choice offers a more precise way to measure an organization's lobbying limit because measurements are based on the organization's annual expenditures. The organization is only required to count lobbying activity that actually costs the organization money (i.e., expenditures); therefore, activities that do not incur an expense do not count as lobbying. A 501(c)(3) can elect to use these clearer rules by filing a simple, one-time form: IRS Form 5768 (available at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)).

To determine its lobbying limit under the 501(h) expenditure test, an organization must first calculate its overall lobbying limit. This figure is based on an organization's "exempt purpose expenditures;" generally, this is the amount of money an organization spends per year. Once an organization has determined its exempt purpose expenditures, the following formula is applied to determine the organization's overall lobbying limit. Organizations are allowed to spend 20% on lobbying with overall annual expenditures of \$500,000. The allowable amount lowers to 15% for overall expenditures between \$500,000 and \$1 million, and further reduces to 10% for organizations with expenditures between \$1 million and \$1.5 million. A lowest 5% threshold applies to organizations with expenditures between \$1.5 and \$17 million.

An organization's overall yearly lobbying limit is capped at \$1 million. This means that if an organization chooses to measure its lobbying under the 501(h) expenditure test, it also agrees



not to spend more than \$1 million on lobbying activity each year.

Two types of lobbying under the 501(h) expenditure test are possible: direct lobbying and grassroots lobbying. Limitations dictate how much money can be used for each. An organization can use its entire lobbying limit on direct lobbying, but it can only use one-fourth of the overall limit to engage in grassroots lobbying.

Direct lobbying is communicating with a legislator or legislative staff member (federal, state, or local) about a position on specific legislation. Remember that legislators also include the President or governor when you are asking them to sign a bill into law or veto a bill, as well as Administration officials who have the ability to influence legislation.

Grassroots lobbying is communicating with the general public in a way that refers to specific legislation, takes a position on the legislation, and calls people to take action. A call to action contains one to four different ways the organization asks the public to respond to its message: (1) asking the public to contact their legislators; (2) providing the contact information, for example the phone number, for a legislator; (3) providing a mechanism for contacting legislators such as a tear-off postcard or an email link that can be used to send a message directly to legislators; or (4) listing those voting undecided or opposed to specific legislation. Identifying legislators as sponsors of legislation is not considered a call to action.

The regulations clarify how the following communications should be classified:

- **Ballot Measures:** communications with the general public that refer to and state a position on ballot measures (for example, referenda, ballot initiatives, bond measures, and constitutional amendments), count as direct, not grassroots lobbying, because the public are presumed to be acting as legislators when voting on ballot measures.
- **Organizational Members:** the 501(c)(3)'s members are treated as a part of the organization, so urging them to contact public

officials about legislation is considered direct, not grassroots, lobbying.

- **Mass Media:** any print, radio, or television ad about legislation widely known to the public must be counted as grassroots lobbying if the communication is paid for by the nonprofit and meets other, rather nuanced provisions. These provisions include: referring to and including the organization's position on the legislation; asking the public to contact legislators about the legislation; and appearing on the media source within two weeks of a vote by either legislative chamber, not including subcommittee votes.

### **Lobbying Exceptions**

Specific exceptions for activities that otherwise might appear to be lobbying under the 501(h) expenditure test are listed below. It is not lobbying to:

- Examine and discuss broad social, economic, and similar problems. For example, materials and statements that do not refer to specific legislation are not lobbying even if they are used to communicate with a legislator. Additionally, materials and statements communicating with the general public and expressing a view on specific legislation but that do not have a call to action are also not considered lobbying.
- Prepare and distribute a substantive report that fully discusses the positives and negatives of a legislative proposal, even if the analysis comes to a conclusion about the merits of that proposal. The report cannot ask readers to contact their legislators or provide a mechanism to do so, and it must be widely distributed to those who would both agree and disagree with the position. This non-partisan distribution can be achieved through a posting on an organization's website or a mailing to all members of the legislative body considering the proposal.
- Respond to a request for testimony or assistance at the request of the head of a government body such as a legislative committee chair.

- Litigate and attempt to influence administrative (regulatory) decisions or the enforcement of existing laws and executive orders.
- Support or oppose legislation if that legislation impacts its tax-exempt status or existence. This lobbying exception is narrow and should be used with caution after consultation with an attorney.

## RECORD KEEPING

Whether measuring lobbying under either the insubstantial part test or the 501(h) expenditure test, a 501(c)(3) organization is required to reasonably track its lobbying in a way sufficient to show that it has not exceeded its lobbying limits. Three costs that 501(h)-electing organizations must count toward their lobbying limits are:

- Staff Time: for example, paid staff time spent meeting legislators, preparing testimony, or encouraging others to testify.
- Direct Costs: for example, printing, copying, or mailing expenses to get the organization's message to legislators.
- Overhead: for example, the pro-rated share of rented space used in support of lobbying (a good way to handle this is to pro-rate the cost based on the percentage of staff time spent lobbying).

Although the 501(h) election is less ambiguous than the insubstantial part test, it is important to carefully consider which option is best for your organization.

## LOBBYING AS AN INDIVIDUAL

The undeniable benefit of lobbying in an official capacity on behalf of an organization or coalition is that the broad reach of the group's membership, clients, and staff deepens the impact of your message. By contrast, a benefit of lobbying as an individual is that it can free you to discuss issues you care about in a more personal manner without concern for any potential limitations placed by a board of directors or organizational policy. Remember that even when you do not speak on behalf of your organization

or employer, it is always appropriate to mention what affiliations or work have informed your individual perspective.

Much like organizational lobbying, the key to lobbying as an individual is to ensure that your voice is heard and that congressional and Administration officials are responding to your particular concerns. In-person meetings, phone calls, and emails can all be effective and influential strategies.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Bolder Advocacy, an Alliance for Justice (AFJ) campaign: Bolder Advocacy publishes a detailed, plain-language book on the 501(c)(3) lobbying rules called *Being a Player: A Guide to the IRS Lobbying Regulations for Advocacy Charities*. Another Bolder Advocacy publication, *The Rules of The Game: A Guide to Election-Related Activities for 501(c)(3) Organizations (Second Edition)*, reviews federal tax and election laws which govern nonprofit organizations with regard to election work and explains the right and wrong ways to organize specific voter education activities. Bolder Advocacy also publishes guides on related topics, such as influencing public policy through social media, praising or criticizing incumbent elected officials who are also candidates, and rules on coordinating with 501(c)(4) organizations. Bolder Advocacy maintains a free technical assistance hotline and offers workshops or webinars for nonprofit organizations.

Bolder Advocacy, 866-NP-LOBBY (866-675-6229), [www.bolderadvocacy.org](http://www.bolderadvocacy.org).

# Congressional Advocacy and Key Housing Committees

---

By Sarah Saadian, Senior Vice President of Public Policy, NLIHC

**M**embers of Congress are accountable to their constituents, and as a constituent, you have the right to advocate for the issues important to you with the members who represent you. As a housing advocate, you should exercise that right.

## CONTACT YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

To find the contact information for your Members of Congress, visit [www.govtrack.us](http://www.govtrack.us), or call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121.

## MEETING WITH YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

Scheduling a meeting, determining your main “ask” or “asks,” developing an agenda, creating appropriate materials to take with you, ensuring your meeting does not veer off topic, and following-up afterward are all crucial to holding effective meetings with Members of Congress.

For more tips on how to advocate and lobby effectively, see *Best Practices and Tips for Advocacy and Lobbying* in this chapter.

## KEY CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES

The following are key housing authorizing and appropriating committees in Congress:

- The House of Representatives Committee on Financial Services.
- The House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations.
- The House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means.
- The Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.
- The Senate Committee on Appropriations.
- The Senate Committee on Finance.

See below for details on these key committees as of November 10, 2021. For all committees, members are listed in order of seniority and members who sit on key housing subcommittees are marked with an asterisk (\*).

## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES

Visit the Committee’s website at <http://financialservices.house.gov>.

The House Committee on Financial Services oversees all components of the nation’s housing and financial services sectors, including banking, insurance, real estate, public and assisted housing, and securities. The Committee reviews laws and programs related to HUD, the Federal Reserve Bank, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, government sponsored enterprises including Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, and international development and finance agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The Committee also ensures the enforcement of housing and consumer protection laws such the “U.S. Housing Act,” the “Truth in Lending Act,” the “Housing and Community Development Act,” the “Fair Credit Reporting Act,” the “Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act,” the “Community Reinvestment Act,” and financial privacy laws.

The Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance oversees HUD and the Government National Mortgage Association (Ginnie Mae). The Subcommittee also handles matters related to housing affordability, rural housing, community development including Opportunity Zones, and government sponsored insurance programs such as the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the National Flood Insurance Program.

\*Members marked with an asterisk sit on the Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance.

### **Majority Members (Democrats)**

- Maxine Waters (CA), *Chair*
- Carolyn B. Maloney\* (NY)
- Nydia M. Velázquez\* (NY)
- Brad Sherman\* (CA)
- Gregory Meeks (NY)
- David Scott (GA)
- Al Green\* (TX)
- Emanuel Cleaver\* (MO), *Subcommittee Chair*
- Jim A. Himes (CT)
- Bill Foster (IL)
- Joyce Beatty\* (OH)
- Juan Vargas\* (CA)
- Josh Gottheimer (NJ)
- Vicente Gonzalez\* (TX)
- Al Lawson\* (FL)
- Michael San Nicolas (GU)
- Cindy Axne\* (IA)
- Sean Casten (IL)
- Ayanna Pressley (MA)
- Ritchie Torres\* (NY)
- Stephen F. Lynch (MA)
- Alma Adams (NC)
- Rashida Tlaib (MI)
- Madeline Dean (PA)
- Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY)
- Jesús “Chuy” García (IL)
- Sylvia Garcia (TX)
- Nikema Williams (GA)
- Jake Auchincloss (MA)

### **Minority Members (Republicans)**

- Patrick McHenry (NC), *Ranking Member*
- Frank D. Lucas (OK)

- Pete Sessions (TX)
- Bill Posey\* (FL)
- Bill Huizenga\* (MI)
- Blaine Luetkemeyer (MO)
- Ann Wagner (MO)
- Andy Barr (KY)
- Roger Williams (TX)
- French Hill (AR), *Subcommittee Ranking Member*
- Tom Emmer (MN)
- Lee M. Zeldin\* (NY)
- Barry Loudermilk (GA)
- Alexander X. Mooney (WV)
- Warren Davidson (OH)
- Ted Budd (NC)
- David Kustoff (TN)
- Trey Hollingsworth\* (IN)
- Anthony Gonzalez (OH)
- John Rose\* (TN)
- Bryan Steil\* (WI), *Subcommittee Vice Ranking Member*
- Lance Gooden\* (TX)
- William Timmons (SC)
- Van Taylor\* (TX)

## **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS**

*Visit the committee's website at  
<http://appropriations.house.gov>.*

The House Committee on Appropriations is responsible for determining the amount of funding made available to all authorized programs each year.

The Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development and Related Agencies (THUD) determines the amount of government revenues dedicated to HUD and other relevant agencies, including the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness.

\*Members marked with an asterisk sit on the THUD Subcommittee.

### **Majority Members (Democrats)**

- Rosa DeLauro (CT), *Chair*
- Marcy Kaptur (OH)
- David Price\* (NC), *Subcommittee Chair*
- Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA)
- Sanford Bishop (GA)
- Barbara Lee (CA)
- Betty McCollum (MN)
- Tim Ryan (OH)
- C. A. Dutch Ruppersberger (MD)
- Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL)
- Henry Cuellar (TX)
- Chellie Pingree (ME)
- Mike Quigley\* (IL)
- Derek Kilmer (WA)
- Matt Cartwright (PA)
- Grace Meng (NY)
- Mark Pocan (WI)
- Katherine Clark\* (MA)
- Pete Aguilar\* (CA)
- Lois Frankel (FL)
- Cheri Bustos (IL)
- Bonnie Watson Coleman\* (NJ)
- Brenda Lawrence (MI)
- Norma Torres\* (CA)
- Charlie Crist (FL)
- Ann Kirkpatrick (AZ)
- Ed Case (HI)
- Adriano Espaillat\* (NY)
- Josh Harder (CA)
- Jennifer Wexton\* (VA)
- David Trone\* (MD)
- Lauren Underwood (IL)

- Susie Lee (NV)

### **Minority Members (Republicans)**

- Kay Granger (TX), *Ranking Member*
- Harold Rogers (KY)
- Robert Aderholt (AL)
- Michael Simpson (ID)
- John Carter (TX)
- Ken Calvert (CA)
- Tom Cole (OK)
- Mario Diaz-Balart\* (FL), *Subcommittee Ranking Member*
- Steve Womack\* (AR)
- Charles Fleischmann (TN)
- Jamie Herrera Beutler (WA)
- David Joyce (OH)
- Andy Harris (MD)
- Mark Amodei (NV)
- Chris Stewart (UT)
- Stephen Palazzo (MS)
- David Valadao (CA)
- Dan Newhouse (WA)
- John Moolenaar (MI)
- John Rutherford\* (FL)
- Ben Cline (VA)
- Guy Reschenthaler (PA)
- Mike Garcia\* (CA)
- Ashley Hinson\* (IA)
- Tony Gonzales\* (TX)

### **House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means**

*Visit the committee's website at <http://waysandmeans.house.gov>.*

The Committee on Ways and Means is the chief tax writing committee in the House of Representatives and has jurisdiction over taxation, tariffs, many programs including Social

Security, Medicare, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and unemployment insurance. The Low Income Housing Tax Credit falls within its jurisdiction.

### **Majority Members (Democrats)**

- Richard Neal (MA), *Chair*
- Lloyd Doggett (TX)
- Mike Thompson (CA)
- John Larson (CT)
- Earl Blumenauer (OR)
- Ron Kind (WI)
- Bill Pascrell (NJ)
- Danny Davis (IL)
- Linda Sanchez (CA)
- Brian Higgins (NY)
- Terri Sewell (AL)
- Suzan DelBene (WA)
- Judy Chu (CA)
- Gwen Moore (WI)
- Dan Kildee (MI)
- Brendan Boyle (PA)
- Don Beyer (VA)
- Dwight Evans (PA)
- Brad Schneider (IL)
- Tom Suozzi (NY)
- Jimmy Panetta (CA)
- Stephanie Murphy (FL)
- Jimmy Gomez (CA)
- Steven Horsford (NV)
- Stacey E. Plaskett (VI)

### **Minority Members (Republicans)**

- Kevin Brady (TX), *Ranking Member*
- Devin Nunes (CA)
- Vern Buchanan (FL)
- Adrian Smith (NE)

- Tom Reed (NY)
- Mike Kelly (PA)
- Jason Smith (MO)
- Tom Rice (SC)
- David Schweikert (AZ)
- Jackie Walorski (IN)
- Darin LaHood (IL)
- Brad Wenstrup (OH)
- Jodey Arrington (TX)
- Drew Ferguson (GA)
- Ron Estes (KS)
- Lloyd Smucker (PA)
- Kevin Hern (OK)
- Carol Miller (WV)

## **SENATE COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS**

*Visit the committee's website at [www.banking.senate.gov](http://www.banking.senate.gov).*

The Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs oversees legislation, petitions, and other matters related to financial institutions, economic policy, housing, transportation, urban development, international trade and finance, and securities and investments.

The Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation, and Community Development oversees mass transit systems, general urban affairs, and development issues and is the primary oversight committee for HUD. The subcommittee oversees HUD community development programs, the FHA, the Rural Housing Service, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, and all issues related to public and private housing, senior housing, nursing home construction, and Indigenous housing issues.

\*Members marked with an asterisk sit on the Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation, and Community Development.

## Majority Members (Democrats)

- Sherrod Brown (OH), *Chair*
- Jack Reed\* (RI)
- Robert Menendez\* (NJ)
- Jon Tester\* (MT)
- Mark Warner (VA)
- Elizabeth Warren (MA)
- Chris Van Hollen\* (MD)
- Catherine Cortez Masto\* (NV)
- Tina Smith\* (MN), *Subcommittee Chair*
- Kyrsten Sinema (AZ)
- Jon Ossoff \*(GA)
- Raphael Warnock\* (GA)

## Minority Members (Republicans)

- Patrick Toomey (PA), *Ranking Member*
- Richard Shelby\* (AL)
- Mike Crapo\* (ID)
- Tim Scott (SC)
- Mike Rounds\* (SD), *Subcommittee Ranking Member*
- Thom Tillis (NC)
- John Kennedy (LA)
- Bill Hagerty\* (TN)
- Cynthia Lummis\* (WY)
- Jerry Moran\* (KS)
- Kevin Cramer\* (ND)
- Steve Daines\* (MT)

## SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Visit the committee's website at <http://www.appropriations.senate.gov>.

The Senate Committee on Appropriations is responsible for determining the amount of funding made available to all authorized programs each year.

The THUD Subcommittee has jurisdiction over funding for the Department of Transportation and HUD, including community planning and development, fair housing and equal opportunity, the FHA, Ginnie Mae, public housing, and indigenous housing issues.

\*Members marked with an asterisk sit on the THUD Subcommittee.

## Majority Members (Democrats)

- Patrick Leahy (VT), *Chair*
- Patty Murray\* (WA)
- Dianne Feinstein\* (CA)
- Richard Durbin\* (IL)
- Jack Reed\* (RI)
- Jon Tester (MT)
- Jeanne Shaheen (NH)
- Jeff Merkley (OR)
- Chris Coons\* (DE)
- Brian Schatz\* (HI), *Subcommittee Chair*
- Tammy Baldwin (WI)
- Christopher Murphy\* (CT)
- Joe Manchin\* (WV)
- Chris Van Hollen\* (MD)
- Martin Heinrich (NM)

## Minority Members (Republicans)

- Richard Shelby\* (AL), *Ranking Member*
- Mitch McConnell (KY)
- Susan Collins\* (ME), *Subcommittee Ranking Member*
- Lisa Murkowski (AK)
- Lindsey Graham\* (SC)
- Roy Blunt\* (MO)
- Jerry Moran (KS)
- John Hoeven\* (ND)
- John Boozman\* (AR)
- Shelley Moore Capito\* (WV)

- John Kennedy\* (LA)
- Cindy Hyde-Smith (MS)
- Mike Braun\* (IN)
- Bill Hagerty (TN)
- Marco Rubio (FL)

- Richard Burr (NC)
- Rob Portman (OH)
- Patrick Toomey (PA)
- Tim Scott (SC)
- Bill Cassidy (LA)
- James Lankford (OK)
- Steve Daines (MT)
- Todd Young (IN)
- Ben Sasse (NE)
- John Barrasso (WY)

## SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Visit the committee's website at [www.finance.senate.gov](http://www.finance.senate.gov).

The Senate Committee on Finance oversees matters related to taxation and other general revenue measures, including health programs under the “Social Security Act” such as Medicare, Medicaid, and the Children’s Health Insurance Program, as well as TANF and health and human services programs financed by a specific tax or trust fund. The Low Income Housing Tax Credit falls within its jurisdiction.

### Majority Members (Democrats)

- Ron Wyden (OR), *Chair*
- Debbie Stabenow (MI)
- Maria Cantwell (WA)
- Robert Menendez (NJ)
- Thomas Carper (DE)
- Benjamin Cardin (MD)
- Sherrod Brown (OH)
- Michael Bennet (CO)
- Bob Casey (PA)
- Mark Warner (VA)
- Sheldon Whitehouse (RI)
- Maggie Hassan (NH)
- Catherine Cortez Masto (NV)
- Elizabeth Warren (MA)

### Minority Members (Republicans)

- Mike Crapo (ID), *Ranking Member*
- Chuck Grassley (IA)
- John Cornyn (TX)
- John Thune (SD)



# Federal Administration Advocacy

---

**N**ot all efforts to shape federal housing policy involve congressional advocacy. Once legislation is enacted by Congress, it must be implemented and enforced by the executive branch.

Opportunities for administrative advocacy generally fall into five categories:

- Providing commentary during the regulatory process.
- Calling for enforcement of existing laws.
- Influencing policy and program implementation.
- Advocating for or against executive orders.
- Litigating against federal agencies and officials.

These types of advocacy are not considered lobbying by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS); therefore, 501(c)(3) organizations are free to engage in such activities without limit so long as there is no intent to influence legislation. For nonprofits interested in housing advocacy, engaging federal agencies through the regulatory process falls entirely outside the definitions of lobbying.

Numerous federal agencies contribute to the development and implementation of our nation's housing policy. Seven key divisions of the federal government administer affordable housing programs and carry out a variety of functions, such as providing funding to incentivize affordable housing development, managing government sponsored enterprises (GSEs) that have an affordable housing directive, coordinating housing resources of multiple departments, or influencing the direction of affordable housing policy. It is important for advocates to weigh in with these agencies as they shape federal affordable housing priorities, determine the level of resources available to reach affordability objectives, and implement housing laws passed by Congress.

Many other parts of the executive branch are also involved in housing and related issues. Important targets for federal administrative advocacy include, but are not limited to:

- The White House.
- HUD.
- The Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH).
- The Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA).
- The Department of Agriculture's Rural Housing Service (USDA RHS).
- The Department of the Treasury.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

## THE WHITE HOUSE

The White House develops and implements housing policy through a variety of means and has multiple councils and offices that are involved with affordable housing.

The Domestic Policy Council (DPC) coordinates the domestic policymaking process of the White House, offers advice to the president, supervises the execution of domestic policy, and represents the president's priorities to Congress. The Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships is part of the DPC and works to build bridges between the federal government and nonprofit organizations, both secular and faith-based, in order to better serve Americans in need. The Office of National AIDS Policy is also part of the DPC; it coordinates the continuing efforts to reduce the number of HIV infections across the U.S. through a wide range of education initiatives and by coordinating the care and treatment of people with HIV/AIDS. The Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation, another part of the DPC, is focused on promoting service as a solution and a way to develop community leadership, increase investment in innovative community solutions that demonstrate results, and develop new models of partnership.

The National Economic Council coordinates policy making for domestic and international economic issues, provides economic policy advice for the president, ensures that policy decisions and programs are consistent with the president's economic goals, and monitors the implementation of the president's economic policy agenda.

The Office of Public Engagement (OPE) and Intergovernmental Affairs creates and coordinates opportunities for direct dialogue between the Administration and the public. This includes acting as a point of coordination for public speaking engagements for the Administration and the departments of the Executive Office of the President. Federal agencies, including HUD and USDA, have liaisons that work with the White House OPE. The Office of Urban Affairs is part of the OPE; it provides leadership for and coordinates the development of the policy agenda for urban areas across executive departments and agencies.

## **DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

HUD is the federal government's primary affordable housing agency. The agency administers programs that provide rental and homeownership units that are affordable to low-income, very low-income, and extremely low-income (ELI) households. HUD also manages grants for community development activities and plays a vital role in the Administration's efforts to strengthen the housing market. HUD administers a variety of housing programs through the Offices of Public and Indian Housing (PIH), Community Planning and Development (CPD), Housing, Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), and the Government National Mortgage Association.

PIH, CPD, and the Office of Housing administer HUD's main rental assistance programs for ELI households. PIH administers funds to local public housing agencies to operate public housing units, administer Housing Choice Vouchers, and offer programs that support residents.

CPD administers funding for the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF), the McKinney-Vento Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Grants, the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS program, the HOME Investment Partnerships program, and the Community Development Block Grant program. The Office of Housing oversees a range of programs including Project-Based Section 8, special needs housing programs such as Section 202 Housing for the Elderly and Section 811 Housing for People with Disabilities, and the FHA. FHA provides insurance for mortgage loans to increase private lending interest by reducing institutions' risk. FHA's Mutual Mortgage Insurance Fund provides profits, or receipts, that have been used to offset a portion of HUD's annual costs to operate its other programs.

## **INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS**

The Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) coordinates the homeless policies of 19 federal departments that administer programs or provide resources critical to solving the nation's homelessness crisis; USICH comprises the secretaries and directors of these 19 federal agencies. The agencies with the largest roles in providing these resources include HUD, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. These agencies rotate responsibility for chairing the USICH. The USICH's main task is implementing the federal government's strategic plan to end homelessness. USICH also coordinates with state and local governments on developing and implementing their strategies to end homelessness.

## **FEDERAL HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY**

The Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) was created in 2008 by the "Housing and Economic Recovery Act" as the successor to the Federal Housing Finance Board. FHFA regulates Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which are both GSEs. It also regulates the Federal Home Loan Banks to

ensure there is sufficient funding for housing finance and community investments.

The GSEs were taken into conservatorship by FHFA due to financial problems stemming from the housing crisis. Prior to being taken into conservatorship, the GSEs were to provide a percentage of their book of business to the HTF; these contributions were suspended in 2008. The GSEs were also meant to provide funding for the Capital Magnet Fund (CMF). On December 11, 2014, FHFA Director Mel Watt lifted the suspension so that the GSEs must set aside funds for the HTF and CMF. In 2016, the first HTF dollars were allocated to the states.

## **DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE RURAL HOUSING SERVICE**

The USDA RHS administers programs that provide affordable rental and homeownership opportunities in rural areas of the country. Although HUD funding is used in rural areas, USDA's Office of Rural Development (RD) programs uniquely target the needs of rural communities and supplement HUD funding.

RHS affordable housing programs provide grants, loans, and direct funding for rental housing operations and development. Programs target low-income families, seniors, and farm workers, providing a range of housing options. RD also provides programs to support energy efficiency, economic development, and infrastructure for rural areas.

## **DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY**

The Department of the Treasury administers several housing and community development programs including the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, the Making Home Affordable program, the Hardest Hit Fund, and Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI). The CDFI administers the CMF and the New Market Tax Credit. The Treasury has overseen funding for several recent disaster recovery efforts, including special allocations of LIHTCs and other incentives to spur redevelopment. The Treasury also oversees Housing Bonds, which finance the development

of rental and homeownership units. The Treasury offers backing to HUD's FHA Mutual Mortgage Insurance Fund and also played a key role in the nation's housing crisis recovery efforts by purchasing mortgage-backed and debt securities issued by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

## **DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) sets policy and administers a range of programs for veterans including homeownership loans and a supportive housing initiative. The VA partners with HUD to provide the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Voucher Program. HUD provides an allocation of Housing Choice Vouchers to certain public housing agencies to make units affordable; local VA offices select voucher recipients and provide supportive services to the individual or family prior to and during their housing tenure. The VA also works cooperatively with the Interagency Council on Homelessness, which helped coordinate resources for veterans through Opening Doors, its plan to end homelessness.

## **CONTACT FEDERAL AGENCIES**

Contact information for the agencies mentioned above, as well as additional key federal agencies and offices, can be found below and online.

White House, 202-456-1414, [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

Office of Management and Budget, 202-395-3080, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/>.

HUD, 202-708-1112, [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov).

HUD USER, 202-708-1112, [www.huduser.org](http://www.huduser.org). (HUD USER contains valuable statistics for those interested in financing, developing, or managing affordable housing, including HUD-mandated rent and income levels for assisted housing programs and Fair Market Rents).

Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Housing and Community Facilities Programs, 202-699-1533, [www.rd.usda.gov](http://www.rd.usda.gov).

Federal Housing Finance Agency, 202-414-3800,

[www.fhfa.gov](http://www.fhfa.gov).

Department of Health and Human Services,  
Office of Community Services, 202-690-7000,  
[www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs).

Department of Justice, 202-514-2000, [www.usdoj.gov](http://www.usdoj.gov).

Department of Transportation, 202-366-4000,  
[www.dot.gov](http://www.dot.gov).

Department of the Treasury, Community  
Development Financial Institutions Fund, 202-  
622-6355, <https://www.cdfifund.gov>.

Department of Veterans Affairs, <http://www.va.gov/>.

FEMA, 202-646-2500, [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov).

Environmental Protection Agency, 202-272-  
0167, [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov).

Small Business Administration, 202-205-8885,  
[www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov).

# Using Federal Data Sources for Housing Advocacy

---

By Andrew Aurand, Vice President for Research, NLIHC

**H**ousing advocates have long used federal data to measure, visualize, and communicate their communities' unmet housing needs to inform policy at the national, state, and local levels. Data from the American Community Survey (ACS), for example, allow us to quantify the critical housing shortage for extremely low-income renters and the racial disparities in housing affordability. HUD's *Picture of Subsidized Households*, meanwhile, shows the quantity and geographic distribution of HUD-subsidized housing. Nonprofit organizations also rely on federal data to create accessible third-party public data platforms, like the *National Housing Preservation Database*.

The following section provides a brief overview of federal data sources for housing advocacy. Members of Congress often threaten to cut financial resources for data collection and dissemination, making it imperative that advocates and organizations promote and protect these programs.

## HOUSING NEED, SUPPLY, AND QUALITY

### American Community Survey (ACS)

See <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/> and <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>.

A series of tutorials on obtaining and using ACS data is available at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/training-presentations.html>.

The ACS is a nationwide mandatory survey of approximately 3.5 million addresses conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. The survey is distributed on a rolling basis, with approximately 295,000 housing units surveyed each month. Annual data provide timely information on the demographic, economic, and housing

characteristics of the nation, each state, the District of Columbia, and other jurisdictions with at least 65,000 residents.

The sample size from one year of ACS data is not large enough to draw annual estimates for smaller populations. To produce estimates for smaller areas, the Census Bureau combines multiple years of ACS data. Five-year ACS data provide a five-year moving average for all communities, down to census tracts. The five-year data are not as timely as the annual data, but they are more reliable (because of the larger sample) and available for many more communities. ACS data are often used by federal agencies to determine how money is distributed across the country.

The ACS provides housing advocates with important information. For example, the ACS captures data on housing costs and household income, allowing us to calculate the prevalence of housing cost burdens across communities by race and ethnicity. The data also allow us to measure the shortage (or surplus) of housing for various income groups. NLIHC uses ACS data to produce its annual report, *The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes*, which estimates the shortage of affordable rental housing in each state, DC, and the largest metropolitan areas. Other important variables in the ACS include race, household type, and employment.

Legislation has been introduced in recent years to make participation in the ACS voluntary rather than mandatory. Research from the Census Bureau shows that a voluntary ACS would lower response rates by as much as 20% (see *The American Community Survey: Development, Implementation, and Issues for Congress*), forcing the Bureau to send surveys to a larger number of households and spend more time following up with them in person and by telephone to encourage participation. These additional steps would add to the Bureau's expenses. If the ACS

became voluntary and the Bureau did not take these additional steps, the survey's sample size would decline, resulting in less accurate data especially for small communities and hard-to-reach populations.

### **Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy Data**

See <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/cp.html>.

The U.S. Census Bureau provides HUD with custom tabulations of ACS data that show housing problems among households of different income levels. The Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data are primarily used by Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)-entitled communities in their HUD-required Consolidated Plan, but they can also be useful for housing advocates in measuring the housing needs in their community. CHAS data use HUD-defined income limits to categorize households as extremely low-, very low-, and low-income. The data also count the number of housing units affordable to each of these income groups. Therefore, the data provide a count of households at different income levels and the number of housing units affordable to them at the national, state, and local levels. The data also provide important information on cost burdens, overcrowding, and inadequate kitchen and plumbing by income level. The data can also be broken down by race, elderly/non-elderly status, household size, and disability status.

The most recent CHAS data are from the five year 2014-2018 ACS. HUD provides a web-based query tool that makes commonly used CHAS data readily available, particularly housing cost burdens, for communities. The CHAS raw data can be downloaded for more detailed analyses.

NLIHC uses the CHAS data to estimate the shortage (or surplus) of rental housing by income category for every county and place in the U.S. Data can be obtained by contacting the NLIHC research team at [aaurand@nlihc.org](mailto:aaurand@nlihc.org).

### **HUD Point-in-Time Count and Housing Inventory Count**

See [www.hudexchange.info/resource/3031/pit-and-hic-data-since-2007](http://www.hudexchange.info/resource/3031/pit-and-hic-data-since-2007) and <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hdx/guides/ahar/#reports>.

HUD's Point-in-Time (PIT) count is the primary tool for measuring the extent of homelessness in the nation. Continuums of Care (CoC) that provide housing and services to people experiencing homelessness must conduct a count each January of sheltered homeless persons in emergency shelter, transitional housing, and Safe Havens. A separate count is conducted every other January (every two years) of unsheltered homeless persons whose primary nighttime residence is not ordinarily used as a regular place to sleep, such as a car, park, abandoned building, or bus or train station. Although not required, HUD encourages CoCs to conduct an annual count of unsheltered homeless persons.

PIT count is a labor-intensive task coordinated at the local level. The result is a point-in-time estimate of the number of people experiencing homelessness in the U.S. and among specific subpopulations, such as individuals, families with children, veterans, unaccompanied youth, and the chronically homeless. These estimates are published in HUD's *Annual Homeless Assessment Report* to Congress.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness produces a series of research briefs on the state of homelessness, including by race, gender, and geography, using PIT data. These are available at [https://endhomelessness.org/resources/?fwp\\_categories=point-in-time-counts&fwp\\_content\\_filter=data-and-graphics](https://endhomelessness.org/resources/?fwp_categories=point-in-time-counts&fwp_content_filter=data-and-graphics).

The Housing Inventory Count is an inventory of beds available for the homeless population by program, including emergency shelters, supportive housing, and rapid rehousing.

### **American Housing Survey**

See <http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/ahs.html>.

The national American Housing Survey (AHS) is a

longitudinal survey of housing units that provides information on the size, composition, and quality of the nation's housing stock. It is funded and directed by HUD and conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau every odd numbered year. The AHS is unique in that it follows the same housing units over time. The survey includes questions about the physical characteristics and quality of housing units and about their occupants, so users can identify how the price, quality, and occupants of dwellings change over time. The same sample of housing units was followed from 1985 to 2013 with changes to the sample to account for new construction, demolitions, and conversions.

A new national sample of housing units was drawn for the 2015 AHS. The core national sample represents the nation plus its 15 largest metropolitan areas. For the first time in 2015, HUD-assisted units were identified through administrative data and oversampled to produce more reliable comparisons between subsidized and unsubsidized housing.

Supplemental samples in the AHS provide data for additional metropolitan areas, contingent upon HUD's budget. The 2015 AHS also included supplemental questions on food security, healthy homes, housing counseling, and neighborhood arts and culture. Supplemental questions typically change from survey year to survey year. The 2017 AHS included supplemental questions on delinquent housing payments, disaster preparedness, and commuting. The 2019 AHS included supplemental questions on food security, accessibility of homes for persons with disabilities, and post-secondary education.

The AHS is the data source for HUD's *Worst Case Housing Needs Report*, which is provided to Congress every two years. This report identifies the number of very low-income households in the U.S. who either spend more than half of their income on housing or live in severely physically inadequate housing. The AHS sample is not large enough to calculate estimates for specific states or smaller areas other than the metropolitan areas for which HUD includes a supplemental sample.

## Fair Market Rents

See <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr.html>.

Fair Market Rents (FMRs) are published by HUD each year for every metropolitan area and nonmetropolitan county in the U.S. FMRs represent the estimated cost of a modest apartment for a household planning to move. They are used to determine payment standards for Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs), initial renewal rents for some expiring project-based Section 8 contracts, and initial rents in the Moderate Rehabilitation Single Room Occupancy program. FMRs also serve as rent ceilings for the HOME Investments Partnership program and the Emergency Solutions Grants program.

In most metropolitan areas and nonmetropolitan counties, FMRs are set at the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile of gross rents, which is the top end of the price range that movers could expect to pay for the cheapest 40% of apartments.

HUD published a final rule on November 16, 2016 that requires local public housing agencies in 24 metropolitan areas to use Small Area FMRs rather than traditional FMRs to set HCV payment standards. Small Area FMRs reflect rents for U.S. postal ZIP codes, while traditional FMRs reflect a single rent standard for an entire metropolitan region. The intent of Small Area FMRs is to provide voucher payment standards that are better aligned with neighborhood-scale rental markets, resulting in relatively higher subsidies in neighborhoods with more expensive rents and lower subsidies in neighborhoods with lower rents. Small Area FMRs are intended to help households use vouchers in higher opportunity neighborhoods. Small Area FMRs for all metropolitan areas are available on HUD's [FMR webpages](#).

## U.S. Decennial Census

See <http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about.html>.

The Decennial Census asks U.S. citizens a limited number of questions but serves an important Constitutional and governmental function. Article

1, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution mandates a full count of American residents every 10 years, which is used to apportion seats in the U.S. House of Representatives among the states. The Census Bureau distributes a questionnaire to every U.S. household and group quarters, requesting basic demographic information, such as age, sex, and race. The count is also used to help determine the distribution of billions of dollars in federal money for infrastructure and other services.

## PUBLICLY ASSISTED HOUSING

### Picture of Subsidized Households

See <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/picture/yearlydata.html>.

HUD's *Picture of Subsidized Households* provides data on the location and occupants of HUD's federally subsidized housing stock. The programs represented in the dataset are Public Housing, Housing Choice Vouchers, Moderate Rehabilitation, Project Based Section 8, the Rent Supplement and Rental Assistance Project, Section 236, Section 202, and Section 811. This dataset allows users to examine the income, age, disability status, household type, and racial distribution of occupants in subsidized housing at the national, state, metropolitan area, city, Public Housing Agency, and project level. The data also include the poverty rate and percentage of minorities in census tracts of subsidized developments to examine the extent to which subsidized housing is concentrated in high-poverty or high-minority neighborhoods.

### HUD Community Assessment Reporting Tool

See <https://egis.hud.gov/cart/>.

The Community Assessment Reporting Tool allows users to map and explore HUD investments in cities, counties, metropolitan areas, and states. The tool provides information about Community Planning and Development competitive and formula grants (e.g., HOME, CDBG, and CoC grants), rental programs (e.g., Housing Choice Vouchers, Public Housing, and Project Based Rental Assistance), mortgage insurance, housing counseling, and other HUD grants and programs. The tool also provides data

on selected demographics of assisted households and on the demographics and cost burdens of the general population.

### National Housing Preservation Database

See <http://www.preservationdatabase.org/>.

The National Housing Preservation Database (NHPD) was created in 2012 by NLIHC and the Public and Affordable Housing Research Corporation to provide communities and housing advocates with the information they need to effectively identify and preserve subsidized housing at risk of being lost from the affordable housing stock. NHPD is an online database of properties subsidized by federal housing programs, including HUD Project-Based Rental Assistance, Section 202, HOME, USDA Rural Development (RD) housing programs, and the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit. This unique dataset includes the earliest date at which a property's subsidies might expire and property characteristics significant in influencing whether the subsidized property might be at risk of leaving the subsidized housing stock, such as neighborhood location and ownership information.

## OTHER DATA SOURCES

### HUD eGIS Open Data Storefront

See <http://hudgis-hud.opendata.arcgis.com/>.

HUD eGIS Open Data Storefront is a data portal that provides users with access to multiple HUD datasets, including Community Development activities, HUD-insured multifamily properties, and other rental housing assistance programs. The portal also provides access to HUD's mapping tools.

### Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) Data

See <https://ffiec.cfpb.gov/data-publication/>.

The "Home Mortgage Disclosure Act" requires many lending institutions to publicly report information about mortgage applications and their outcomes. The information that institutions report includes whether the mortgage application was for a home purchase, home improvement, or refinancing; the type of loan (e.g., conventional,



FHA); mortgage amount; the applicant's race, ethnicity, gender, and age; whether the application was approved; census tract of the property's location; and other features of the mortgage. The data can be used to help identify discriminatory lending practices, as well as examine the extent to which lenders meet the mortgage investment needs of communities. Small lenders and those with offices only in nonmetropolitan areas are not required to report data.

## **POLICYMAP**

PolicyMap (<https://www.policymap.com/>) is an online mapping and data tool that provides information on demographics, housing, employment, and other characteristics of communities across the U.S. Some of PolicyMap's data are available at no charge to the public, while other data require a subscription. The site's housing data include home values, rent prices, vacancy rates, affordability, and federally subsidized housing information.

### **Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Data**

See <https://datacatalog.urban.org/dataset/data-and-tools-fair-housing-planning> and <https://egis.hud.gov/affht/>.

HUD's Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule required CDBG-entitled jurisdictions to conduct an Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) as part of their five-year Consolidated Plan. The purpose of the AFFH rule was to provide jurisdictions with a planning approach to help them address patterns of segregation, promote fair housing, and foster inclusive communities free from discrimination. HUD effectively suspended implementation of the rule in August 2018 (see the AFFH sections in Chapter 7 of this guide).

In July 2020, after HUD took AFFH data and tools offline, the Urban Institute made an archived copy of the data available in its Data Catalog. HUD's AFFH Data and Mapping Tool provided data on demographics, job proximity, school proficiency, environmental health, poverty, transit, and housing burdens. The Urban Institute

resource includes raw data from February 2018 and July 2020 used in the data and mapping tool, along with data documentation and a user guide. These resources can be used to identify fair housing issues across the country.

### **Other Surveys**

The Current Population Survey (CPS) ([www.census.gov/cps](http://www.census.gov/cps)) is a joint venture between the Department of Labor and the Census Bureau and is the primary source of labor force statistics for the U.S. population. The CPS Annual Social and Economic Supplement provides official estimates of income, the poverty rate, and health insurance coverage of the non-institutionalized population.

The Housing Vacancy Survey ([www.census.gov/housing/hvs](http://www.census.gov/housing/hvs)) is a supplement of the CPS that quantifies rental and homeowner vacancy rates, characteristics of vacant units, and the overall homeownership rate for states and the 75 largest metropolitan areas.

The Survey of Market Absorption ([www.census.gov/programs-surveys/soma.html](http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/soma.html) and <https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/soma/soma.html>) is a HUD-sponsored survey conducted by the Census Bureau of newly constructed multifamily units. Each month, a sample of new residential buildings containing five or more units is selected for the survey. An initial three-month survey collects data on amenities, rent or sales price levels, number of units, type of building, and the number of units taken off the market (absorbed). Follow-up surveys can be conducted at six, nine, and 12 months. The data provide the absorption rate of new multifamily housing.

The Rental Housing Finance Survey (<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/rhfs.html>) is a HUD-sponsored survey, first conducted by the Census Bureau in 2012, that collects data on the financial, managerial, and physical characteristics of rental properties nationwide. Data are released triennially. Owners or property managers are surveyed about operating costs and revenue characteristics for the rental housing stock.

Starting in 2020 and continuing into 2022, the Census Bureau’s Household Pulse Survey (<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey.html>) collects real-time data on the social and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on American households. Among the questions posed respondents are asked about their housing tenure, employment status, confidence in paying upcoming rent, and whether they are caught up on rent payments. The current survey also includes whether renters have applied for or received emergency rental assistance.

## WHAT ADVOCATES SHOULD KNOW

High-quality data that accurately reflect the population requires participation. Housing advocates should encourage everyone to fully participate in the Decennial Census, ACS, and other federal surveys for which they are selected. The accuracy and reliability of the Census’s data products depend on it.

Advocacy organizations, such as NLIHC and its state partners, use federal data to quantify the scarcity of housing affordable to the lowest-income families, which makes it easier to set specific and defensible goals for expanding the affordable housing stock. NLIHC uses these data to provide housing profiles for each U.S. state and Congressional district, which can be found at <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state> by selecting the state and then clicking on the Resources tab.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Housing advocates should remind Members of Congress of the importance of reliable and unbiased data to understanding and addressing housing needs. Specific issues that advocates should highlight to Members of Congress include:

- Adequate funding for the ACS, AHS, and other federal surveys is imperative for up-to-date and reliable data regarding the nation’s housing supply and needs. ACS data are the foundation for HUD’s fair market rents and income-eligibility thresholds.

- Participation in the ACS needs to remain mandatory. Changing the ACS to a voluntary survey would lower response rates. The reliability of the survey’s findings would decline without the Census Bureau spending millions of additional dollars each year to send the survey to a larger number of households and to conduct in-person or phone follow-ups to encourage participation.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

The [Census Project](https://thecensusproject.org/) is a network of national, state, and local organizations that advocates for sufficient funding for the U.S. Decennial Census and the ACS: <https://thecensusproject.org/>.

The Association of Public Data Users advocates to strengthen and protect federal statistical agencies and programs: <http://apdu.org/>.

HUD’s Office of Policy Development and Research hosts research, publications, and data sets on housing and community development: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/home.html>.

# Introduction to the Federal Regulatory Process

---

By Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, NLIHC

**W**hen Congress changes an existing law or creates a new one, federal agencies like HUD must implement the changes or the new law by modifying an existing regulation or by creating a new one. Federal agencies also sometimes review existing regulations and amend them even when there are no changes to the underlying law. Both the creation of a new regulation and the modification of an existing regulation provide advocates with an opportunity to shape policy.

Congress passes legislation and the president, by signing that legislation, turns it into a law. Usually, these laws spell out the general intent of Congress but do not include all technical details essential to putting Congress' wishes into practice. Regulations add those details and usually present the law's requirements in language that is easier to understand.

Two publications are key to the federal regulatory process. The *Federal Register* is a daily publication that contains proposed regulations, final rules, and other official notices, presidential documents, and other items. All final regulations published in the *Federal Register* are eventually gathered together ("codified") in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The HUD-related rules in the CFR are usually updated each April. The federal government uses the words "regulation" and "rule" interchangeably; however, technically HUD defines a "rule" as a document published in the *Federal Register* and a "regulation" as a rule that is codified in the CFR.

## SUMMARY OF THE REGULATORY PROCESS

### Proposed Regulations

In order to carry out laws, Congress gives federal agencies, like HUD, the power to interpret laws, write rules based on that interpretation, and

enforce the rules. When housing law is created or modified, HUD will draft suggested regulations that specify how the law is to be carried out. These are "proposed" regulations.

Before publishing proposed regulations, HUD must send them to the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB's) Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), which theoretically has up to 90 days to review the regulations' consistency with Executive Order 12866, "Regulatory Planning and Review" (although OIRA has been known to hold on to proposed regulations for more than 90 days). Rules under review by OIRA and their status are listed on the EO 12866 Regulatory Review site. If OIRA judges the proposed regulations to be inconsistent, they are sent back to HUD "for further consideration." However, technically, HUD has authority from Congress to issue the rules.

Once cleared by OIRA, HUD must publish a "notice of proposed rulemaking" (NPRM) in the *Federal Register* that contains the proposed language of the regulations. The public must have an opportunity to submit written comments and is generally given a 60-day period to comment.

### Final Regulations

Once the comment period on a proposed rule is closed, HUD must consider all comments and may make changes based upon them. Once those changes are complete, and after another review by OIRA, HUD publishes a final rule in the *Federal Register*.

In the introduction, or preamble, to the final rule, HUD must discuss all meaningful comments received and explain why each was accepted or rejected. In addition to the actual text of the changed or new regulations, the final rule must state a date when it will go into effect, generally 30 or 60 days in the future. However, before the final regulations go into effect, they are sent to the Congressional subcommittee responsible for the

subject matter for at least 15 days to ensure that all rules meet, but do not overstep, Congressional intent. In practice, this 15-day Congressional review seems simply to be a courtesy; Congress seldom weighs in.

It is not unusual for more than a year to pass between publication of a proposed rule and final implementation. It is even possible for proposed rules to be withdrawn. For example, during the Obama Administration, proposed changes to the public housing demolition regulations and to the Section 3 employment opportunities regulations were not acted on by the Obama Administration for several years and were subsequently removed by the Trump Administration before they could be made final.

### Other Regulatory Options

In addition to proposed and final rules, the regulatory process can occasionally include:

- **Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR).** HUD can ask for information from the public to help it think about issues before developing proposed regulations. For instance, in the second year of the Trump Administration, HUD issued an ANPR regarding streamlining the affirmatively furthering fair housing rule and an ANPR regarding streamlining the fair housing disparate impact rule.
- **Interim Final Rules.** HUD can issue regulations that are to be followed as if they are final, but ask for continued public comment on some parts of the rules. Subsequent final rules can include changes based on any additional public comment. For example, the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF) program was implemented by an interim rule in 2015. HUD's intention was to allow states and developers to have experience using the new program and then seek input regarding suggested changes before implementing a final rule. On April 26, 2021, HUD requested comments about the HTF Interim Final Rule; as of the date on which this *Advocates' Guide* article was written, a final rule was published but will likely be

published sometime in 2022.

- **Supplemental Notice of Rulemaking.** HUD may seek additional comment on a proposed rule in order to further focus consideration before issuing a final rule.
- **Direct Final Rules.** HUD can issue regulations thought to be minor and uncontroversial but must withdraw them if negative comments are submitted.
- **Negotiated Rulemaking.** This is a seldom-used approach that engages knowledgeable people to discuss an issue and negotiate the language of a proposed regulation, which is then submitted to the *Federal Register*. When HUD sought to change the public housing operating fund rule, it engaged in negotiated rule making with public housing agencies and a handful of public housing leaders.
- **Petition for Rulemaking.** This is a process through which anyone can submit suggested regulations along with supporting data and arguments in support of the suggestions. If HUD agrees, it will publish proposed rules; if HUD denies the petition, the denial must be in writing and include the basis for denial. For example, advocates thought the Obama Administration was not moving on improvements regarding lead-based paint hazards so used the petition for rulemaking process. Although not officially in response to the petition, HUD did move on proposed changes.
- **Informal Meetings.** HUD has the authority to gather information from people using informal hearings or other forms of oral presentations such as "listening sessions." The transcript or minutes of such meetings are on file in the Rules Docket. For example, after the Trump Administration effectively suspended implementation of the affirmatively furthering fair housing rule, it conducted five invitation-only listening sessions. More positively, the Biden Administration held several listening sessions about restoring the affirmatively furthering fair housing rule.

## The Role of Congress

Before HUD can publish a rule for comment or publish an interim rule, the rule must be submitted to HUD's congressional authorizing committees for a review period of 15 calendar days (which does not depend on Congress being in session). As noted above, Congressional review seems mostly to be a matter of courtesy, and Congress seldom weighs in.

The "Congressional Review Act" (CRA) requires all federal agencies to submit final rules to Congress and the Government Accountability Office (GAO). The CRA provides an expedited legislative process that allows Congress to overturn a rule if both houses pass a "resolution of disapproval" and the president signs the joint resolution of disapproval. Senate rules have a timetable for this expedited process of 60 days during which the Senate is in session. The Trump Administration made extensive use of the CRA. More information about the "Congressional Review Act" can be found in *The Congressional Review Act: Frequently Asked Questions*.

## HOW TO FIND PROPOSED AND FINAL REGULATIONS IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER

The Government Printing Office (GPO) publishes the *Federal Register* and the CFR.

- The current day's *Federal Register* and links to browse back issues are at <https://bit.ly/32BpASX>.
- A preview of the next day's *Federal Register* is at <http://bit.ly/2iVERG4>.
- *Federal Register* notices for both proposed and final rules can be tracked by subscribing to a daily email of the table of contents of the *Federal Register* at <http://bit.ly/2iNz1sY>.

The public can read and copy comments made by others at HUD headquarters or at <https://www.regulations.gov>, which also provides all rules open for comment and enables electronic submission of comments.

## HOW TO READ THE FEDERAL REGISTER

Both proposed and final rules are standard features in the *Federal Register*. The opening heading will look like this (with different numbers and topics):

**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT**  
**24 CFR PART 990**  
**[DOCKET NO. FR-4874-F-08]**  
**RIN 2577-AC51**  
**REVISIONS TO THE PUBLIC HOUSING OPERATING FUND PROGRAM**

**AGENCY:** Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing, HUD

**ACTION:** Final rule

Below the heading will be the following categories:

**SUMMARY:** This is a short presentation of what is proposed or implemented and what the related issues and rulemaking objectives are.

**DATES:** Here is either: "*Comment due date*," the date by which comments to proposed rules are due; or "*Effective Date*," the date the final rule will go into effect.

**ADDRESSES:** For proposed regulations only, this section provides the room number and street address for sending written comments, although it is now preferable to submit comments electronically at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov)

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** The name of a HUD staff person responsible for the issue is presented, along with a phone number and office address.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This section is often called the "preamble" and can go on for many pages. It contains a detailed discussion of the issues and the rule-making objectives. The law or sections of a law that give legal authority for the regulations are generally mentioned. With final rules, there must also be a discussion of all of the significant public comments submitted, along with HUD's reasons for accepting or rejecting them.

**LIST OF SUBJECTS IN NN CFR PART NNN:** The actual changes begin at this heading. Key words are presented here.

Next, there is a sentence that says “Accordingly, for the reasons described in the preamble, HUD revises [or proposes to revise] *nn* CFR Part *nnn* to read as follows:”

The sections of the regulations subject to change then follow in numerical order.

At the very end, the document is dated and “signed” by the appropriate HUD official.

## SENDING COMMENTS ABOUT PROPOSED REGULATIONS

### Your Comment Letter

Be sure to follow the guidance provided in the “ADDRESSES” section of the proposed rule. For example, regarding proposed changes to the Consolidated Plan rules, one would have addressed comments to:

Regulations Division, Office of General Counsel  
Room 10276  
Department of Housing and Urban Development  
451 Seventh Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20410-0500

RE: Docket No. FR-4923-P-01; HUD 2004-0028  
Revisions and Updates to Consolidated Plan

It is very important to indicate the docket number and it is helpful to include the subject title as it appears in the heading of the proposed rule. There is no set format for writing comments, although HUD’s “How do I prepare effective comments?” (<http://bit.ly/2jjqVcg>) is a useful guide. It is best to indicate which of the proposed rules are of concern by citing them and commenting on them individually. For example:

*ABC Tenant Organization thinks that there are problems with proposed section 91.315(k)(3) because...*

*We strongly endorse proposed section 91.205(b)(1) because...*

Advocates should rely on their experiences to explicitly state why they agree or disagree. When there is disagreement, suggest words that address the concern. Don’t just write about the problems; be sure to tell HUD what is beneficial. Declaring support for key provisions is often essential to counterbalance negative comments from those in opposition.

### How to Submit Comments via Regulations.gov

It is best to submit comments electronically at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). There you will see a big blue box that says, “Make a difference. Submit your comments and let your voice be heard,” and within the blue box a white search box that reads “SEARCH for: Rules, Proposed Rules, Notices or Supporting Documents.”

In the search line, type in either the docket number, the registrant identification number (RIN), or the title of the rule, such as “Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing.” Hitting “Search” provides the rule open for comment. If you are submitting a comment on the day comments are due, you can also try, under “Comments Due Soon” – “Today” located at the right column.

Next, below the link for the proposed rule, there is a small box to the left with “Comment” in blue letters. Select “Comment.” Under “Write a Comment,” assuming you have written at least a page of text, it is suggested that you **do not** type in your comment where it says “Start typing here...” Instead, it is recommended that you scroll down a little to where it says “Attach Files.” In the box created by dashed lines where it says “Drop files here or Browse,” click on Browse. There you will have to click on “Choose files.” That will open your own computer files. Go to your appropriate folder and select your comment letter. Then choose “open” on your system. That should attach your comment letter in the regulations.gov system.

Enter your email address and opt to receive an email confirmation. Next where it says “Tell us about yourself! I am ...\*” click (so add space before “click”) on one of the three icons that describes you (probably “An Organization”).

Under “Your Organization Information,” select the type from the dropdown menu; probably simply “Organization” and type in your organization’s name.

Finally, check the reCAPTCHA box to confirm that you are not a robot. Hit “Submit Comment” in the little blue box. Sent!

## THE CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS

All final rules published in the *Federal Register* are eventually collected and placed in the CFR and “codified.” To look up a rule that has not changed in the past year, turn to the CFR, which is generally updated each April for HUD-related rules. All titles updated through 2020 are available at <https://bit.ly/2EqaJ3w>. (Not all of the HUD-related rules were available for 2021 as of November 2021.)

The CFR has 50 “titles”, each representing a broad topic. HUD-related regulations are in Title 24. Each title is divided into “parts” that cover specific program areas. For example, within Title 24, Part 93 covers the national Housing Trust Fund rules and Part 982 lays out the Housing Choice Voucher program rules.

In addition, the GPO provides the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (e-CFR). Although it is not an official legal edition of the CFR, it is an editorial compilation of CFR material and *Federal Register* amendments that is updated daily. Access the e-CFR at <http://bit.ly/YlVWrv>. On the e-CFR home page, select Title 24 from the dropdown box, and a list of HUD-related “parts” will appear.

## TALKING ABOUT REGULATIONS

Two levels of regulatory citation have already been mentioned, the “title” and the “part.” Below that comes the “section” that covers one provision of a program rule and then a “paragraph” that provides specific requirements.

For example, the Public Housing Authority Plan regulations are in Title 24 at Part 903, written as 24 CFR 903. Resident Advisory Boards (RABs) and their role in developing the annual PHA Plan

are presented in Section 13, cited as 24 CFR 903.13. “Paragraph” (c) specifies that PHAs must consider the recommendations made by the RAB and subparagraph (c)(1) goes into more detail by requiring PHAs to include a copy of the RAB’s recommendations with the Plan. This is written as 24 CFR 903.13(c)(1).

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Low Income Housing Coalition, 202-662-1530, [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org).

National Archives and Records Administration has a good online tutorial at <http://bit.ly/2ijLMIo>.

Office of the *Federal Register*, <http://bit.ly/2jbBM3I>.

HUD’s Office of General Counsel has an Overview of HUD’s Rulemaking Process at <http://bit.ly/2hYyekB>

Rules that might be at OIRA, or that have recently cleared OIRA, are at <https://bit.ly/2SFpUZw>.

The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) is at <https://bit.ly/31MHCv1>.

The Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) is at <https://bit.ly/3H5NQ2p>.

The EO 12866 Regulatory Review site is at <https://bit.ly/3bWsUwq>.

# Using the “Freedom of Information Act” for Housing Advocacy

---

By Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, NLIHC

Everyone has the right to request federal agency records or information under the “Freedom of Information Act” (FOIA).

Federal agencies, subject to certain exceptions, must provide the information when it is requested in writing. In order to use FOIA, advocates do not need to have legal training or use special forms. All that is necessary is a letter.

## SUMMARY

FOIA allows individuals and groups to access the records and documents of federal agencies such as HUD and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Office of Rural Development (RD).

Requests must be made in writing. Each agency has its own practices and regulations. HUD’s FOIA regulations are at [24 CFR Part 15](#). USDA’s regulations are at [7 CFR Part 1 Subpart A](#).

HUD’s FOIA webpages are at [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/administration/foia](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/administration/foia) and RD’s FOIA webpages are at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/freedom-information-act-foia>. The Department of Justice FOIA webpages are at <https://www.justice.gov/oip>. Check out the “Learn about FOIA” option on the top, left-hand side of the menu bar to learn more.

FOIA does not provide access to the records and documents of parts of the White House, Congress, the courts, state and local governments or agencies, private entities, or individuals.

Records include not only print documents, such as letters, reports, and papers, but also photos, videos, sound recordings, maps, email, and electronic records. Agencies are not required to research or analyze data for a requester, nor are they required to create a record or document in response to a request. They are only obligated to look for and provide existing records. Agencies must, however, make reasonable efforts to search for records in electronic form. The term “search”

is defined as reviewing, including by automated means, agency records (e.g., performing relatively simple computer searches).

A formal FOIA request might not be necessary. By law and presidential order, federal agencies are required to make a substantial amount of information available to the public. Before considering a FOIA request, advocates should explore the HUD or RD websites and be confident that the information sought is not already available online.

If advocates cannot find the information they seek on an agency’s website, it might be readily available from agency staff in the field, regional, or headquarters’ offices. Rather than invoking the formal FOIA process, it is often quicker and easier to start with an informal approach. Simply phone or email the agency office and ask for information. Formal, written FOIA requests generally trigger a slower, formal, bureaucratic process. In recent years, HUD has been very slow in responding to FOIA requests.

- Some HUD contact information can be found under the “Contact Us” tab on the HUD website, [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov). Other HUD staff might be found on a specific program area’s website, such as Public and Indian Housing (PIH) under “About PIH” or even by going deeper, for example, in the Housing Choice Voucher Program’s staff directory, <https://bit.ly/2SexKJY>.
- RD state offices can be located at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices>, and state and local offices can be located at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/browse-state>. If you are not sure where to submit a FOIA request, send it to the RD FOIA/Privacy Act Officer in Washington, DC, at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/freedom-information-act-foia>.
- USDA Service Centers (which might have an RD area office) can be found at



<https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=us&agency=rd>.

## MAKING A FOIA REQUEST

If an informal request does not produce the desired information, a formal request may be necessary. A formal FOIA request can be simple and short, but it must be in writing. In your letter, state that you are making a request under FOIA. Describe what you are looking for in as much detail as possible, including dates, names, document numbers, titles, types of beneficiaries you are concerned about, etc. Specify the format (paper or electronic) in which you would like to receive the requested information.

Request a waiver of any fees for copying or searching, explaining your organization's mission and its nonprofit status in order to demonstrate that you do not have a commercial interest in the information. Explain how this information will:

- Be of interest to more than a small number of people, and how your organization can distribute the information to many people.
- Lead to a level of public understanding of a HUD or RD activity that is far greater than currently exists.

Provide contact information for the individual or organization requesting the information, including mailing address, phone number, and email address. Ask the agency to provide detailed justifications for any information that it refuses to release. Include a statement that the law requires the agency to respond within 20 working days indicating whether the request will be processed.

Formal requests must be in writing, but they can be made by email, fax, or postal mail.

### HUD FOIA REQUESTS:

- To make a FOIA request of HUD headquarters electronically, go to [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/administration/foia/requests](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/administration/foia/requests)
- To make a FOIA request through the mail write to:  
  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Freedom of Information Act Office  
451 Seventh Street, SW, Room 10139  
Washington, DC 20410-3000

- If the response is not adequate, contact the FOIA Public Liaison for HUD headquarters at [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/administration/foia/servicecenters](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/administration/foia/servicecenters).
- To make a FOIA request of documents from a HUD regional office, advocates should locate the appropriate person and address from the HUD FOIA Requester Service Centers webpage at [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/administration/foia/servicecenters](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/administration/foia/servicecenters).
- The Department of Justice also has a list of HUD regional FOIA contacts as well as FOIA liaisons at <https://www.foia.gov/#agency-search>.
- If the response from the FOIA Requester Service Center is not adequate, contact the FOIA Public Liaison for the appropriate geographic region.

### RD FOIA REQUESTS:

- To make a FOIA request for RD documents at either the local level or at RD headquarters, advocates can write to the RD FOIA Coordinator for their state. Contact information for RD FOIA State Coordinators can be found at [https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/USDA\\_RDFOIAStateContacts.pdf](https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/USDA_RDFOIAStateContacts.pdf).
- If you are not sure where the information is located, send the FOIA request to the RD FOIA Officer at RD headquarters in Washington, DC, <http://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/freedom-information-act-foia>.

The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press provides an interactive tool to generate a FOIA request to any agency, <https://www.ifoia.org>.

### Timeline

Once a request is made, HUD and RD will log the request and provide a tracking number. The agencies must grant or deny a FOIA request within 20 working days of receipt. This response simply shows whether the agency intends to provide the information. There is no time limit on providing the information; however, USDA's

regulations require RD to approximate the date that the information will be provided.

When an agency determines whether to comply with a FOIA request, the “FOIA Improvement Act of 2016” requires the agency to immediately notify the requester of the determination and the reasons for it. The 2016 act also requires the agency to notify the requester that there is a right to seek assistance from the agency’s FOIA public liaison.

If there are unusual circumstances, such as large numbers of records to review, staffing limitations, or the need to search for records in another physical location or from another agency, the agency must give written notice and can add an extra 10 days, as well as provide the requester with an opportunity to limit the scope of the request so that the request can be processed more quickly. The 2016 act adds that when unusual circumstances exist and an agency needs to extend the time limits by more than 10 additional working days, the written notice to the requester must notify the requester of the right to seek dispute resolution services from the Office of Governmental Information Services.

The 2016 act requires agencies to make records available for public inspection in an electronic format that, because of their subject matter, the agency determines have become or are likely to become the subject of subsequent requests for substantially the same records, or that have been requested three or more times.

### **Expedited Requests**

If there is imminent threat to life or physical safety, or if there is an urgent need to inform the public, advocates can ask for expedited processing. HUD and RD will issue a notification within 10 working days indicating whether a request will get priority and more rapid processing.

### **Denial of Requests**

Information can only be denied if it is exempt. The law lists nine exemptions, such as classified national defense information, trade secrets, personal information, and certain internal

government communications. The letter denying a FOIA request must give the reasons for denial and inform the requester of the right to appeal to the head of the agency.

The “internal government communications” exemption might be relevant to housing advocates. The intent of this exemption is to promote uninhibited discussion among federal employees engaged in policymaking. This exemption would apply to unfinished reports, preliminary drafts of materials, and other internal communications taking place as agency staff undertake a decision-making process.

### **Appeals**

Decisions to deny a fee waiver, deny a request for expedited disclosure, or failure to release the requested information can be appealed. Appeals to HUD should be made within 30 days. A letter should be sent to the HUD official indicated in the denial letter and generally include a copy of the original request, a copy of the denial, and a statement of the facts and reasons the information should be provided. Specific information for appeals pertaining to fees or expedited processing are listed at [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/administration/foia/foiaappeals](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/administration/foia/foiaappeals).

For adverse determinations, the 2016 act requires agencies to give the requester at least 90 days from the date of the adverse determination to file an appeal. In addition, the 2016 act requires agencies to notify the requester that there is a right to seek dispute resolution services from the FOIA Public Liaison or from the Office of Government Information Services.

To appeal an RD denial, advocates can send a letter to the RD official indicated in the denial letter within 45 days. If that appeal fails, advocates can appeal to the RD FOIA Officer. If still not satisfied, advocates should write to the Rural Housing Service Administrator. The agency has 20 working days to decide on an appeal.

# SAMPLE FOIA LETTER

Date

Agency/Program FOIA Liaison

Name of Agency or Program

Address

RE: Freedom of Information Act Request

Dear [*name*]:

Under the Freedom of Information Act, I am requesting copies of [*identify the records as specifically as possible*].

I request a waiver of fees because my organization is a nonprofit with a mission to [*state the organization's mission and activities, demonstrating that it does not have a commercial interest in the information*]. In addition, disclosure of the information will contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations and activities of HUD/RD.

[*Explain how the information is directly related to HUD/RD, how the information will contribute to public understanding of HUD/RD operations or activities, and how you or your organization, as well as a broader segment of the public, will gain a greater understanding of these agencies by having the requested information. Describe the role and expertise of your organization as it relates to the information and how the information will be disbursed to a broader audience*].

As provided by law, a response is expected within 20 working days. If any or part of this request is denied, please describe which specific exemption it is based on and to whom an appeal may be made.

If you have any questions about this request, please phone me at \_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

Your name

Address

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

HUD's FOIA regulations are at 24 CFR Part 15, <https://bit.ly/3F2wzFt>.

USDA's regulations are at 7 CFR Part 1 Subpart A,

<https://bit.ly/3n4C40a>.

HUD FOIA webpages, [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/administration/foia](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/administration/foia).

USDA RD FOIA webpage, <https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/freedom-information-act-foia>.

Department of Justice FOIA websites, <http://www.justice.gov/oip> and <http://www.foia.gov>.

Public Citizen's "Freedom of Information Act" webpages are at <https://www.citizen.org/article/freedom-of-information-act-foia-resources>.

Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press FOIA Wiki is at [https://foia.wiki/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://foia.wiki/wiki/Main_Page).

General Services Administration, Your Right to Federal Records, [https://www.gsa.gov/cdnstatic/Your\\_Right\\_to\\_Federal\\_Records.pdf](https://www.gsa.gov/cdnstatic/Your_Right_to_Federal_Records.pdf).

# Resident Participation in Federally Subsidized Housing

---

By Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, NLIHC

Subsidized housing residents have important personal perspectives about the impact of established and emerging subsidized housing policies on their homes and communities. Consequently, they also have good ideas about how their housing developments should be managed. Resident participation in all aspects of housing management is critical to the long-term success of federal housing programs.

HUD has three major programs that provide rent subsidies to approximately 4.4 million households nationwide. These programs are the public housing program, private multifamily properties assisted by the Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance program, and the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. Each program has its own set of challenges and opportunities related to resident participation.

## PUBLIC HOUSING

**Administering agency:** HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH)

**Year started:** 1986 for public housing tenant participation, 1998 for Resident Advisory Boards

**Population targeted:** Residents of public housing

**See also:** For related information, refer to the *Public Housing*, *Public Housing Agency Plan*, and *Rental Assistance Demonstration* sections of this guide.

Many HUD policies help support the participation of all public housing residents in public housing agency (PHA) decision making.

### PHA Plan Process

Opportunities for resident participation exist in the annual and five-year planning processes, collectively called the PHA Plan, required by the "Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998" (QHWRA). Many PHAs only have minimal

PHA Plan resident engagement requirements, but the process does open the door for residents and other community members to interact and influence PHA decisions.

For larger PHAs (referred to as Non-Qualified PHAs), the PHA must conduct reasonable outreach to encourage broad public participation in the PHA Plan process. It must invite public comment regarding a proposed PHA Plan and conduct a public hearing to discuss it, whether it is a 5-Year Plan or an Annual Plan. With smaller PHAs (called Qualified PHAs), the public hearing applies only to the 5-Year Plan and each year there must still be a public hearing to discuss any changes to the PHA's goals, objectives, or policies even though they do not submit an Annual Plan. Hearings conducted by PHAs, Non-Qualified as well as Qualified, must be held at a location convenient to PHA residents.

At least 45 days before a public hearing:

- Non-Qualified PHAs must make the proposed PHA Plan, required attachments, and other relevant information available for public inspection at the PHA's main office during normal business hours.
- Qualified PHAs must make information relevant to any changes in goals, objectives, or policies available for public inspection at the PHA's main office during normal business hours.

The regulations for the PHA Plan process are at Part 903 of Title 24 of the Code of Federal Regulations (24 CFR Part 903). For more information, see *Public Housing Agency Plan* in Chapter 7 of this *Advocates' Guide*.

### Resident Advisory Boards

QHWRA created Resident Advisory Boards (RABs) to ensure that public housing and voucher-assisted households can meaningfully participate in the PHA Plan process. Each PHA

must have a RAB consisting of residents elected to reflect and represent the population served by the PHA. Where residents with Housing Choice Vouchers make up at least 20% of all assisted households served by the PHA, voucher households must have “reasonable” representation on the RAB.

The basic role of the RAB is to make recommendations and assist in other ways with drafting the PHA Plan and any significant amendments to the PHA Plan. By law, PHAs must provide RABs with reasonable resources to enable them to function effectively and independently of the housing agency. Regulations regarding RABs are in the PHA Plan regulations, Part 903.

### **Part 964 Resident Participation Regulations**

A federal rule provides public housing residents with the right to organize and elect a resident council to represent their interests. This regulation, 24 CFR Part 964, spells out residents’ rights to participate in all aspects of public housing development operations. Residents must be allowed to be actively involved in a PHA’s decision-making process and to give advice on matters such as maintenance, modernization, resident screening and selection, and recreation. The rule defines the obligation of HUD and PHAs to support resident participation activities through training and other activities.

A resident council is a group of residents representing the interests of the residents and the properties they live in. Some resident councils are made up of members from just one property, so a PHA could have a number of resident councils. Other resident councils, known as jurisdiction-wide councils, are made up of members from many properties. A resident council is different from a RAB because the official role of a RAB is limited to helping shape the PHA Plan. Resident councils can select members to represent them on the RAB.

Most PHAs are required to provide \$25 per occupied unit per year from their annual operating budget to pay for resident participation activities. A minimum of \$15 per unit per year

must be distributed to resident councils to fund activities such as training and organizing. Up to \$10 per unit per year may be used by a PHA for resident participation activities. On August 23, 2013, HUD issued [Notice PIH 2013-21](#) providing guidance on the use of tenant participation funds.

### **Resident Commissioners**

The law also requires every PHA, with a few exceptions, to have at least one person on its governing board who is either a public housing or voucher resident. HUD’s rule regarding the appointment of resident commissioners, at Part 964, states that residents on boards should be treated no differently than non-residents.

## **RENTAL ASSISTANCE DEMONSTRATION**

The Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) allows PHAs and owners of private, HUD-assisted housing to leverage Section 8 rental assistance contracts in order to raise private debt and equity for capital improvements. The public housing component allows up to 455,000 units of public housing to apply for permission to convert their existing public housing capital and operating fund assistance to project-based Housing Choice Vouchers (PBVs) or to Section 8 project-based rental assistance (PBRA) by September 30, 2024.

RAD does not have “regulations”; instead, it is governed by operating Notices:

- *Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) Implementation Notice* –REV4, is at <https://bit.ly/2shSyrT>.
- *RAD Fair Housing, Civil Rights, and Relocation Notice* 2016-17, is at [https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/16-17hsgn\\_16-17pihn.pdf](https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/16-17hsgn_16-17pihn.pdf).

Before submitting a RAD application to HUD, a PHA must notify residents and resident organizations of a project proposed for conversion. The notice (since January 2017) must be a written RAD Information Notice (RIN) that indicates, among other things:

- The PHA’s intention to convert units through RAD;

- A general description of the conversion (for example whether there will be rehabilitation or new construction);
- Resident relocation protections if relocation is involved; and
- All of the resident rights provided by the RAD statute (such as the right to remain, right to return if there is temporary relocation, and no rescreening upon return).

The PHA is not required to notify the RAB or residents of other developments.

After a RIN is issued, the PHA must conduct at least two meetings with residents of the selected project(s). Since January 2017, at these meetings the PHA must discuss conversion plans, give residents a chance to comment, and describe all RAD resident rights. The PHA must also explain whether there will be:

- Any change in the number of assisted units, change in bedroom sizes, or other change that might impact a household's ability to re-occupy the property.
- Any reduction of units that have been vacant for more than 24 months.
- Plans to partner with an entity other than an affiliate of the PHA, and if so, whether that partner will have an ownership interest.

After a RAD application has received preliminary HUD approval (called a CHAP) but before a PHA requests a "Concept Call" with HUD, the PHA must have at least one meeting with residents to discuss updated conversion plans and ask for feedback regarding the proposed improvements. The PHA must provide comprehensive written responses to comments made by residents at this meeting.

After the Concept Call and before submitting a Financing Plan, the PHA must have at least one more meeting with residents to discuss updated conversion plans and the anticipated Financing Plan. The PHA must provide comprehensive written responses to comments made by residents at this meeting.

After HUD has issued a RAD Conversion Commitment (RCC), the PHA must notify residents that the RAD conversion has been approved. The notice must include the anticipated timing of the conversion, the anticipated duration of rehabilitation or new construction, the revised term of the lease and house rules, and whether relocation is anticipated.

More meetings with residents are required to discuss any substantial changes in a conversion plan.

### **RAD is a Significant Amendment**

RAD conversion is a significant amendment to the PHA Plan. However, HUD does not require a significant amendment process to begin until late in the conversion process, which could be as late as five months after HUD has issued a preliminary approval for RAD conversion of a specific development, by which time the PHA has secured all necessary private financing. Consequently, RAB involvement and the PHA-wide notice, broad public outreach, and public hearing required by the significant amendment regulations will not take place until the conversion application process is too far along. Rather than engage all PHA residents before an application for RAD conversion is submitted, the public engagement process is only required to take place close to the time when a PHA has all its financing and construction plans approved and is ready to proceed – the likelihood of a PHA making any meaningful changes is virtually zero.

### **Resident Organizations Continue to Receive \$25 Per Unit**

Whether a property is converted to PBV or PBRA, each year the PHA must provide \$25 per occupied unit at the property for tenant participation; of this amount, at least \$15 per unit must be provided to the legitimate resident organization for resident education, organizing around tenancy issues, or training. The PHA may use the remaining \$10 per unit for resident participation activities; however, some PHAs distribute the entire \$25 per unit to the resident organization.

## Residents' Right to Organize

Residents have the right to establish and operate a resident organization. If a property is converted to PBRA, then the current multifamily program's resident participation provisions apply; these are the Section 245 provisions (see Privately Owned, HUD-Assisted Multifamily Housing [Project-Based Section 8 Rental Assistance below]). If a property is converted to PBV, instead of using Public Housing's Section 964 provisions (see Part 964 Resident Participation Regulations above), RAD requires resident participation provisions similar to those of Section 245. For example, PHAs must recognize legitimate resident organizations and allow resident organizers to help residents establish and operate resident organizations. Resident organizers must be allowed to distribute leaflets and post information on bulletin boards, contact residents, help residents participate in the organization's activities, hold regular meetings, and respond to a PHA's request to increase rent, reduce utility allowances, or make major capital additions.

Properties converted to PBRA are no longer required to meet PHA Plan requirements. In addition, PBRA residents can no longer be on the RAB, be a PHA commissioner, or be on a jurisdiction-wide resident council, unless the PHA voluntarily agrees.

More information about RAD is in Chapter 4 of this *Advocates' Guide*.

## HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHERS (SECTION 8)

**Administering agency:** HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH)

**Year started:** 1998 RABs

**Population targeted:** Residents with Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers

**See also:** *Housing Choice Vouchers* and *Public Housing Agency Plan*

Approximately 2 million households receive tenant-based assistance through the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCV). Housing Choice Voucher households, often referred to as Section

8 voucher households, are among the most difficult residents to organize because they can choose a private place to rent anywhere in a PHA's market and are thus less likely to live close to or have contact with each other. However, the PHA Plan process, and the requirement that voucher households be included on the Resident Advisory Board (RAB), offer platforms for organizing voucher households so that they can amplify their influence in the decision-making affecting their homes.

## Participating in PHA Plan Processes

At the local level, voucher households can play a key role in shaping PHA policies by participating in the annual and five-year PHA Plan processes. PHAs make many policy decisions affecting voucher households, including determining the value of a voucher to a household and landlord by setting "voucher payment standards" that are generally between 90% and 110% of the Fair Market Rent (FMR). Other key policies include minimum rents, developing admissions criteria, determining the amount of time a voucher household may search for a unit, giving preferences for people living in a PHA's jurisdiction, as well as creating priorities for allocating newly available vouchers to categories of applicants (for example, homeless individuals, families fleeing domestic violence, working families, or those with limited English-speaking capability).

## Participation on Resident Advisory Boards

Voucher households can play an integral role in setting the agenda for local PHAs because the RAB regulations require reasonable representation of voucher households on the RAB if voucher households comprise at least 20% all households assisted by a PHA.

## PRIVATELY OWNED, HUD-ASSISTED MULTIFAMILY HOUSING (PROJECT-BASED SECTION 8 RENTAL ASSISTANCE)

**Administering agency:** HUD's Office of Multifamily Housing Programs

**Year started:** 1978, with significant regulatory changes in 2000

**Population targeted:** Residents of private multifamily HUD-assisted rental developments

**See also:** *Project-Based Rental Assistance*

Tenants' rights to organize is based on law at 12 USC 1715z-1b and spelled out in regulations at 24 CFR Part 245, Subpart B, which require owners of privately owned, HUD-assisted multifamily housing to recognize tenant organizations. A legitimate tenant organization is one established by tenants that represents all tenants, operates democratically, meets regularly, and is completely independent of owners and management. The regulations recognize the rights of tenants to distribute leaflets, canvass, post notices, and convene meetings without management present and without prior notice or permission from management. Residents can invite outside organizers to assist them. HUD-funded organizers have the right to go into a building without a tenant invitation to help residents organize.

Unlike the Section 964 regulations for Public Housing, the Section 245 regulations do not require a specific structure, written bylaws, or even elections for a tenant association to be "legitimate," as long as the "organic" tests are met: the group meets regularly, operates democratically, represents all tenants, and is completely independent of owners. This allows "early stage" tenant organizing committees to demand recognition as legitimate tenant groups and to claim their right to organize in the face of common resistance or hostility from private owners and managers.

The civil money penalties regulation from 2001 (24 CFR Part 30) allows HUD to assess fines on owners or management agents for major violations of tenants' right to organize. On June 18, 2010, HUD sent a letter to all owners and management agents highlighting key features of Part 245, emphasizing the right of tenants to organize and repeating the list of protected tenant organizing activities. Policy [Notice H 2011-29](#) of October 13, 2011, and [Notice H 2012-21](#) of October 17, 2012, repeated and elaborated on the content of the June 2010

letter, adding civil money penalties that HUD could impose on an owner or manager failing to comply with Part 245. [Notice H 2014-12](#), issued on September 4, 2014, revised [Notice H 2011-29](#) and [Notice H 2012-21](#) by adding a tenant appeals process when a decision by the local HUD office concludes that an owner did not violate the tenant participation regulations or other program obligations.

[Notice H 2016-05](#), issued on March 31, 2016, updated the previous notice regarding filing complaints, added to the list of property types that may be assessed a civil money penalty, and clarified that that civil money penalties may be assessed on Project-based Section 8 developments, not just buildings with HUD mortgages. [Notice H 2016-05](#) also elaborated on the responsibility of owners to give priority to meeting spaces that provide physical access to people with disabilities. In addition, when residents have complaints, the Notice allowed tenants to reject "mediation" with owners as an option for resolving complaints because many tenants found mediation unproductive; instead, tenants may seek a ruling by HUD regarding owner infractions.

Other HUD guidance includes HUD's [Model Lease](#), which is applicable to all HUD tenants, and explicitly refers to the regulations' provisions about the right to organize. HUD's [Management Agent Handbook 4381.5 Revision 2](#) requires owners to recognize tenant unions and specifies management practices that would violate tenants' rights and therefore potentially result in HUD-imposed sanctions.

[Resident Rights and Responsibilities](#) is a resident-oriented HUD brochure explaining that tenants have the right to organize free from management harassment or retaliation. This brochure must be made available in appropriate languages and distributed annually to all HUD tenants at lease signing or recertification.

In addition, over the years, Congress and HUD have expanded the formal process for tenant participation in decisions affecting HUD-assisted housing. For example, HUD must notify tenants



about a pending auction or sale of their building if it is owned by HUD or is under HUD foreclosure so that tenants can either submit a purchase offer as a nonprofit or limited-equity cooperative or support purchase by others. In addition, when owners choose to go into HUD's Mark-to-Market program, HUD is required to notify tenants prior to a first and second tenant meeting so that tenants can comment on the owner's plans to rehabilitate the building and change the financing.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates should speak to their Members of Congress and ask them to:

- Monitor HUD's oversight of PHA and owner compliance with residents' rights when public housing is converted under RAD.
- Reverse HUD's administrative weakening of the PHA Plan and Congress' streamlining of the Plan's requirements for 75% of the nation's PHAs.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Alliance of HUD Tenants, 617-522-4523, [www.saveourhomes.org](http://www.saveourhomes.org).

National Housing Law Project, 415-546-7000, [www.nhlp.org](http://www.nhlp.org).

NLIHC, 202-662-1530, [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org).

NLIHC's Public Housing webpage, <https://nlihc.org/explore-issues/housing-programs/public-housing>

An outline of resident participation in the PHA Plan process, <https://bit.ly/3ogDnXN>.

24 CFR Part 903, *Public Housing Agency Plans Regulations*, is at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2018-title24-vol4/pdf/CFR-2018-title24-vol4-part903.pdf>.

HUD's PHA Plan webpage is at [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/pha](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha)

An outline of key Part 964 features, <https://bit.ly/39sQXmJ>

Outline of resident participation in the PHA Plan process, <https://bit.ly/3ogDnXN>

HUD's Resident Advisory Board (RAB) webpage is at [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/pha/about/rab](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/about/rab) (Note that this page is no longer directly linked on the Office of Public and Indian Housing's s PHA Plan webpages).

24 CFR Part 964, *Tenant Participation and Tenant Organizing in Public Housing Regulations*, is at <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2018-title24-vol4/pdf/CFR-2018-title24-vol4-part964.pdf>.

Notice PIH 2013-21, *Guidance on the use of Tenant Participation Funds*, <https://bit.ly/2qMmrAj>.

24 CFR Part 245, *Tenant Participation in Multifamily Housing Projects*, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2018-title24-vol2/pdf/CFR-2018-title24-vol2-part245.pdf>.

Notice H 2016-05, *Revision of Tenant Participation Requirements in accordance with 24 CFR Part 245*, is at <https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=16-05hsgn.pdf>.

*HUD Resident Rights and Responsibilities* brochure: English, [https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/DOC\\_12162.pdf](https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/DOC_12162.pdf).

Other languages, [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/fair\\_housing\\_equal\\_opp/17lep](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/17lep) (scroll down to Multifamily section)

Notice H 2014-12, *Implementation of Tenant Participation Requirements in Accordance with 24 CFR Part 245*, <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=14-12hsgn.pdf>.

An outline of the key features about RAD for public housing residents is available at <https://bit.ly/3oc5TcT>.

# Overcoming NIMBY Opposition to Affordable Housing

---

Jaimie Ross, President/CEO and Kody Glazer, Legal Director, Florida Housing Coalition

**T**he Not In My Backyard Syndrome (NIMBYism), in the context of affordable housing, connotes objections made for reasons such as fear and prejudice. This is in contrast, for example, to objections over the real threat of an incompatible neighboring use, such as a hazardous waste facility near a residential area.

NIMBYism presents a particularly pernicious obstacle to producing affordable housing. Local elected officials are too often barraged by the outcry of constituents over siting and permitting affordable housing. Consequences of NIMBYism include lengthy and hostile public proceedings, frustration of consolidated plan implementation, increased costs of development, property rights disputes, and inability to meet local housing needs.

Fortunately, there are tools advocates can use to avoid or overcome these objections, usually to the eventual satisfaction of all parties.

## ISSUE SUMMARY

Local zoning and land use decisions have historically resulted in racially and economically segregated communities. Richard Rothstein's *The Color of Law* details the intentional segregation wrought throughout the United States by means of government lending, insurance, and appraisal requirements for housing, including through practices like redlining and the security maps used by the Homeowners' Loan Corporation and Federal Housing Administration (FHA). A parallel argument can be made that government planning and zoning discrimination used to entrench NIMBY opposition is the perpetuation of modern-day segregation. NIMBYism is often a proxy for intentional segregation as it keeps people confined to pre-existing demographic patterns that often

reflect the overt, intentional segregation of the past.

Local zoning codes that segregate uses by housing type and require subjective standards of "compatibility" with existing surroundings set the stage for NIMBYism and for segregation. Exclusionary zoning laws that create single-family-only districts and use a subjective test of "compatibility" and consistency with the "character" or "neighborhood scale" perpetuate homogenous neighborhoods of low-density, single-family homes. These policies create an uphill battle when developers of affordable rental housing look for sites that will provide desperately needed homes for lower-income households.

Land use decisions are made in an ever-increasingly political environment fueled by NIMBYism and NIMTOOism (the Not In My Term Of Office syndrome). The NIMBYs are residents determined to maintain homogeneous neighborhoods, "preserve" their property values, and vehemently oppose the development of affordable housing. The NIMTOOs are the local elected officials who may or may not agree with the NIMBYs but are not about to vote in favor of the affordable housing development if it will jeopardize re-election.

### Best Practices for Housing Advocates to Overcome NIMBYism.

The best defense to NIMBYism is a good offense. And a good offense means:

#### 1. Know your legal rights.

When discrimination against an affordable housing development is really discrimination against a race, color, national origin, religion, disability, sex, or familial status, it violates the federal Fair Housing Act. State and local fair housing protections may include additional characteristics protected from discrimination. Litigation is usually not a meaningful remedy because housing funding cycles are on a tight time

clock and court actions can take years to resolve. But knowing your legal rights and making local government lawyers and elected officials aware of what you know about your rights is often all you need to benefit from fair housing protections. In cases where discrimination is clear and local elected officials act in disregard of that fact, consider reporting the incident to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) or your state or local fair housing centers. If HUD or the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) takes the case, it is a little like standing up to a schoolyard bully - it could make your future dealings with your local government much easier.

A non-profit developer may be hesitant to challenge a local government over land use issues if the local government provides funds to the non-profit. Establishing a good relationship with a local legal services office or other local advocates for the public interest is an effective way around the need for the affordable housing developer to cry foul when local government succumbs to neighborhood opposition. Local advocates can make these arguments on behalf of future tenants or residents directly impacted by the land use decision.

## **2. Expand legal protections for affordable housing.**

### **(a) Fair Housing & Due Process**

Advocate for state or local laws that make it harder for NIMBYism to prevail. For example, in 2000, the Florida Fair Housing Act<sup>1</sup> (the state's substantial equivalent to the federal Fair Housing Act) was amended to include affordable housing as a protected class. This expansion of the Florida Fair Housing Act has provided the Florida Housing Coalition and other housing professionals a useful tool for advocating for local government lawyers and commissions to approve affordable housing units or face legal challenges. In 2009, North Carolina adopted a similar state law to add affordable housing as a protected class in its fair housing law.<sup>2</sup>

---

1 Fla. Stat. § 760.26 (2021).

2 N.C.G.S. § 41A-4(g) (2021).

One of the reasons the Florida statute is so effective is that enforcement does not require going to court. If a local governing body violates this state fair housing statute, the affordable housing developer can immediately file a petition under the Florida Land Use and Environmental Dispute Resolution Act<sup>3</sup> to have a special magistrate appointed who will review the denial in the context of the private property rights and fair housing rights of the affordable housing developer. This set of state statutes has been used to reverse land use denials of affordable housing, causing elected officials to reverse denials that were made in response to NIMBY-fueled public outcry. Using a special magistrate process is particularly beneficial because even if a party prevails in a court case using a substantive due process claim under the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment or an anti-discrimination claim under an applicable Civil Rights law, the time it would take could thwart development as funding opportunities disappear due to delay.

### **(b) Zoning & Land Use**

Regulations that unduly restrict flexibility in housing types and densities enable NIMBYism to thrive and allow existing patterns of segregation to continue. For communities that do not look all that different from the days of redlining, NIMBYism in the form of local land development regulations requiring a subjective test of neighborhood compatibility is a way for the government to perpetuate the overt, intentional segregation of the past. Housing advocates can study their local land development processes and push for reforms that facilitate more integrated communities.

Restrictive zoning, particularly single-family zoning, creates a high hurdle for affordable housing. In December 2018, Minneapolis, Minnesota, became the first major city in the United States to adopt a plan to allow up to three dwelling units on a single-family lot in areas zoned for single-family only housing.<sup>4</sup> This change allows duplex and triplex rental housing in what

---

3 Fla. Stat. § 70.51 (2021).

4 The Minneapolis 2040 Plan is available at <https://minneapolis2040.com/>.

would otherwise be an exclusively single-family homeownership area. In 2019, Oregon passed a law requiring cities with populations of 25,000 or more to allow duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and other “missing middle” housing types in single-family districts. Cities of 10,000-25,000 in population are required to allow duplexes in single-family zones.<sup>5</sup> In 2021, California passed Senate Bill 9 which, among other policies, provides that a proposed duplex within a single-family zone be “considered ministerially, without a discretionary review or a hearing” if the proposal meets statutory requirements.<sup>6</sup> Up-zoning policies such as these remove the obligation for an affordable housing developer to seek land use changes on a case-by-case basis and thereby avoid forums that invite NIMBYism.

In 2020, the Florida Legislature passed a law permitting all local governments to approve affordable housing developments without zoning or land use changes on land zoned for residential, commercial, or industrial uses.<sup>7</sup> This state permission for local governments to override its own zoning requirements may prove to be a powerful tool in avoiding NIMBYism by reducing the need for developers to secure zoning approval in a public forum. It could be particularly useful for incorporating small-scale rental developments in single-family zoning districts and for adaptive reuse of commercial properties for affordable residential development. Of course, advocates will need to ensure that this zoning override is never used to site affordable housing near toxic uses.

Laws, whether federal, state, or local, that are helpful to your cause are only helpful if decision-makers and their staff are aware of those laws. The expansion of the state fair housing act to include affordable housing in Florida, for example, has been successful in keeping local elected officials from succumbing to NIMBY opposition. But the law has been successful only because housing advocates have

been conscientious about ensuring that local government lawyers know about the statute. It is now commonplace in Florida for a city or county attorney to inform the elected body during a heated public hearing that they run afoul of the state’s fair housing law if they deny the affordable housing developer’s application. Legal protections for affordable housing provide political cover to elected officials who are sometimes facing an electorate threatening to unseat those officials who vote in favor of affordable development.

### **3. Educate elected officials.**

Once a NIMBY battle ensues, it is often too late to educate. Local elected officials need to understand the importance of affordable housing in general. Advocates should have an education campaign about affordable housing and its importance to the health of the entire community without regard to a particular development. Getting good media coverage is also helpful. Whenever possible, education should include bringing elected officials to see completed developments and sharing the credit with them at ribbon cuttings and in news stories. Regarding a pending development, whether you can meet with your elected officials depends upon the *ex parte* rules in your jurisdiction. However, if you discover that the community opposition is meeting with elected officials about your development, you certainly should do the same.

### **4. Garner allies for affordable housing from a broad range of interests.**

Too often, the only proponents of an affordable housing development are the developers themselves. Whenever possible, have members of the business community, clergy, and like-minded social service agencies stand up for your development to demonstrate the community value of new affordable housing construction. The potential beneficiaries of the development (future residents) can also be effective advocates. And, if possible, recruit a former member of the opposition to speak on behalf of your development.

---

5 Or. Rev. Stat. § 197.758.

6 Cal. Gov. Code. § 65852.21 (2021).

7 Fla. Stat. § 125.01055(6) (2021); Fla. Stat. § 166.04151(6) (2021).

The media can be an important ally throughout the process of development approval. Whenever you foresee a potential NIMBY problem, it is best to contact the media first so that they understand your development plan and its beneficial public purpose. In this way, the neighborhood opposition will have to justify to the media why it makes sense to stop a development that the media already considers an asset for the community. Again, the best defense is a good offense.

### **5. Address all legitimate opposition.**

Key to overcoming NIMBYism is to address all legitimate concerns expressed by the opposition. Those concerns may be, for example, traffic, available infrastructure, or project design - issues that may lead you to adjust your proposed development. The developer should come prepared with professional traffic studies, infrastructure impact reports, and other important planning documents so that what may be a legitimate concern is addressed.

If you address all legitimate concerns and the opposition persists, you are now in the enviable position of being able to state with certainty that the opposition is *illegitimate* - it is, therefore, opposition that would be inappropriate, arbitrary, capricious, or unlawful for the local government to consider in making its land use decision. In other words, you win!

# Lofty Rhetoric, Prejudiced Policy:

---

## THE STORY OF HOW THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PROMISED—AND UNDERMINED—FAIR HOUSING

By Renee Willis, Senior Vice President for Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, NLIHC & Chantelle Wilkinson, Campaign Manager, OSAH, NLIHC

**T**he federal government has long recognized the importance of housing to the lives of all Americans. Unfortunately, this recognition has been consistently accompanied by outright complicity in the establishment and perpetuation of residential segregation and the resulting inequities. For over a century, the federal government has carried out, reinforced, or intentionally ignored discriminatory practices and systems in the housing market against racial minorities and low-income households, undermining equal opportunity at every turn. When opportunities to further the cause of fair housing have arisen, often as the result of courageous leadership and progressive legislation, they have been squandered by some combination of political cowardice and haphazard implementation. Until legislators and policymakers finally decide to directly—and sufficiently—address the obstacles that prevent universal access to safe, high-quality, affordable housing, the United States will continue to underdeliver on its promises within this hugely important aspect of American life.

### INITIAL HOUSING LEGISLATION

As with many issues that involve racial disparities in the United States, the roots of housing segregation can be traced back to the legacy of slavery and the failed promise of Reconstruction. In the aftermath of the Civil War, despite initial promises by governmental actors and widespread political advocacy by Black leaders, African Americans were systematically denied access to private land ownership, beginning a pattern of governmental overpromising and underdelivering around issues of fair access to

quality housing that continues to the present day (Von Hoffman, 2021).

Abandoned by federal policymakers, Black Americans took matters into their own hands by participating in the broader urbanization of American society, a movement known as the Great Migration. By 1920, half of Americans were living in cities, including the first wave of African Americans in Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit, and New York City. In many cases, private actors and local governments responded with racial hostility and enforced both formal and informal boundaries, but in other cases this mass migration resulted in the country's first integrated neighborhoods. Indeed, during this era, most African Americans moved into neighborhoods that were less than 30% Black (ProPublica, 2015).

In the early 1930s, the Great Depression provided the first political opportunity for large-scale government involvement in the housing market. According to housing scholar Bradford Hunt, “High unemployment, the continued presence of slums, and the collapse of new housing construction opened the door to state action.” The first major piece of modern federal housing legislation, the “National Housing Act of 1934” was a New Deal program designed to shore up the housing market after catastrophic bank foreclosures. The act aimed to curb private mortgage lending by establishing a public loan insurance program and to motivate new residential construction by increasing available credit. To accomplish these aims, the bill established the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation (FSLIC).

As soon as the FHA started insuring loans, however, it began deploying discriminatory practices against Black Americans and households with low incomes. Local governments

had already demonstrated their willingness to establish segregated living patterns through the explicitly racial zoning ordinances that arose in the 1910s, but now the federal government got involved. The FHA selectively insured mortgages in racialized patterns, thereby directly contributing to housing segregation in cities across America. And while the shaded Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) maps are the most well-known examples of redlining, the practice of denying coverage to entire neighborhoods based on racial and socioeconomic composition was already in place by the time of their publication and was the default practice for decades to come (Fishback et al., 2021). FHA underwriting manuals, for example, urged employees not to insure loans in areas that were or could become integrated.

In 1935, another New Deal program, the Public Works Administration, constructed Techwood Homes in Atlanta, GA—the first federal public housing project. This initiative, however, was also marred by discriminatory behavior; the Techwood project displaced hundreds of Black households to establish an all-white public housing community (NLIHC, 2019). The PWA later employed a “neighborhood composition rule,” which prevented new projects from changing the racial makeup of an area, thereby preventing racial integration at projects in all-white neighborhoods (Hunt, 2018). In this way, the United States’ first large-scale attempts at improving housing outcomes for all its citizens were immediately undermined by its own discriminatory actions, a pattern that would prove recurrent.

The next major housing bill, the “US Housing Act of 1937,” was passed only three years later. The focus now was on a growing list of urban housing challenges, including ‘slum removal’. The presence of unsafe, unsanitary, low-income housing in neighborhoods across the United States was, of course, an entirely predictable outcome of the intentional redlining practices carried out by the FHA but addressing state-sanctioned segregation was not included in the bill’s priorities. The bill did manage to create a

United States Housing Authority (USHA) and funded the first large-scale public housing initiative in the country’s history, but these accomplishments were also undermined by discriminatory actions.

Indeed, the segregationist tendencies of federal, state, and local officials continued in full force. In fact, in many cases, federal action made segregation much worse than it had been before. New public housing and urban renewal initiatives were highly racialized, in effect bulldozing previously integrated neighborhoods and building segregated housing projects. When integrationists such as Frank Horne at the USHA and Elizabeth Wood at the Chicago Housing Authority tried to further fair housing aims, they were met with private and public backlash (Von Hoffman, 2021). This process of government engineered resegregation is a forceful rejoinder to arguments that present-day segregation reflects individual choice and personal preference, rather than intentional policy decisions.

## **GROWING RECOGNITION OF HOUSING’S IMPORTANCE: THE “HOUSING ACT OF 1949”**

With the federal government’s chosen policies actively contributing to entrenched segregation and concentrated poverty, challenges continued to grow. Recognizing the immense housing challenges facing the country, in 1944 President Roosevelt included the right of every family to a decent home in his ‘Second Bill of Rights’. Under President Truman, housing issues became a substantial component of the “Fair Deal” program, with the stated goal of “a suitable home for every American.” These efforts to elevate housing’s importance culminated in the passage of the “Housing Act of 1949,” which was accompanied by lofty rhetoric about the importance of housing to daily life:

*The Congress hereby declares that the general welfare and security of the Nation and the health and living standards of its people require housing production and related community development sufficient to remedy the serious housing shortage, the elimination of substandard and other inadequate housing through*

*the clearance of slums and blighted areas, and the realization as soon as feasible of the goal of a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family, thus contributing to the development and redevelopment of communities and to the advancement of the growth, wealth, and security of the Nation.*

In practice, however, the bill essentially served as an extension of earlier housing policies, just on a larger scale, with funding going to ‘slum clearance’ and ‘urban renewal’, increased authorization for federal provision of mortgage insurance, and funding for housing research and farm buildings. In the words of housing scholar Alexander von Hoffman (2000): the bill “set lofty goals—to eliminate slums and blighted areas and provide a decent home for every American family—but provided only the limited mechanisms of public housing and urban renewal to meet them.”

Perhaps the most important aspect of the bill—funding for the development of more than 800,000 public housing units—was again undermined by racial and socioeconomic segregation. Congressional Republicans used Southern fears of residential integration to defeat an amendment that would have prohibited segregation, and new housing projects constructed during this time were often segregated. At the same time, the Federal Housing Administration actively contributed to the creation of all-white suburbs, encouraging the use of racially restrictive covenants in newly constructed developments (Rothstein, 2017). The result was rampant segregation in metropolitan areas across the country. Indeed, historian Alfred Hirsch has analogized the use of federal housing policy in this era to “domestic containment” of Black Americans, similar to the strategies employed to prevent the spread of communism in Europe.

## **FINALLY, FAIR HOUSING LEGISLATION**

Over the next 20 years, the booming post-war economy dramatically increased housing construction, especially in the suburbs, but

did little to solve the issues arising from the segregated housing patterns that the federal government had helped to create. Momentum had been building for years for a housing component to civil rights legislation passed in the mid-1960s, but a major push by President Lyndon Johnson in 1966 failed to generate sufficient momentum. However, after the dramatic conclusions of the Kerner Commission (“Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.”) and the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4, 1968, Congress finally passed the “Fair Housing Act.”

Reading the statements of the act’s co-sponsors, Walter Mondale and Edward Brooke, one can sense the recognition of housing’s primacy in relation to other social ills and—more importantly—that segregation had continually undermined previous attempts at well-intentioned housing reform. Mondale argued:

*But every solution and every plan for the multiple evils in our cities and their ghettos is drastically and seriously affected by racial segregation in housing. With high concentrations of low-income, poorly educated, and unemployed persons in our cities—and without dispersal or balance throughout our communities—our cities will never be able to solve the problems of de facto school segregation, slum housing, crime and violence, disease, blight, and pollution.*

Gone were the denials that the federal government had been a major contributor to this intractable problem. In a speech urging the passage of the bill, Senator Brooke noted that “the prime carrier of galloping segregation has been the Federal Government. First it built the ghettos; then it locked the gates; now it appears to be fumbling for the key.”

The Fair Housing Act is most well-known for banning discrimination across race, color, religion, or national origin in housing transactions (including mortgage lending and renting). In 1974, sex was added as a protected characteristic, and the 1988 amendments to the bill expanded the list to include familial status (covering households with children)



and disability. Most of the enforcement activity that has arisen under the FHA has fallen under this umbrella, with individuals and HUD filing complaints against discriminatory parties.

But the FHA has a second, explicitly stated goal: to reverse housing segregation and promote “truly integrated and balanced living patterns.” Importantly, the FHA included language that required HUD to administer its programs in such a way that *affirmatively furthers fair housing* (often referred to as AFFH), with accompanying responsibilities for local governments that received HUD funds. The goal, in other words, was to infuse integrationist, fair housing principles into all HUD programs, including the FHA, public housing, and urban renewal initiatives, among others.

The Fair Housing Act was complemented by the “Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968,” which contained another large expansion of public housing construction as well as the initiation of public-private partnerships designed to increase the supply of housing and reduce rents for low-income households. These were precisely the type of initiatives that were now supposed to be imbued with fair housing principles under the AFFH provision.

In fact, following the passage of the Fair Housing Act, multiple circuit court cases (*Otero vs. NYCHA* 1973, *NAACP Boston vs. HUD* 1987) have ruled that the bill’s language requires government action in pursuit of integrated living patterns, rather than the mere absence of discriminatory practices. However, despite the attempts of advocates such as Senator William Proxmire to incorporate ‘carrot and stick’ provisions into the text of the bill, which would have outlined the specific incentives and penalties behind the AFFH mandate, its practical implications were left intentionally vague (Van Hoffman, 2021).

## **A PIVOTAL BATTLE BETWEEN ROMNEY AND NIXON**

For a brief period, it seemed as though policymakers had finally recognized fundamental truths about the importance of housing and the perils of segregation. Indeed, as described

more fully in this excellent [ProPublica article](#), George Romney—Nixon’s HUD secretary and a Republican presidential candidate in 1968—sought to leverage the FHA’s “affirmatively further” language to address suburban segregation almost immediately. Romney, according to ProPublica, “ordered HUD officials to reject applications for water, sewer and highway projects from cities and states where local policies fostered segregated housing.”

In describing his rationale for forceful political action, Romney argued, “The youth of this nation, the minorities of this nation, the discriminated of this nation are not going to wait for ‘nature to take its course.’ What is really at issue here is responsibility—moral responsibility” (Lamb, 2005). One can see a path towards equitable housing patterns emerging in this moment, emboldened by federal legislation and strong political leadership.

Unfortunately, that path never materialized. Facing pressure from reactionary Southern and suburban constituencies, President Nixon stepped in and prevented Romney’s proactive integrationist approach, noting that he was convinced “forced integration of housing or education is just as wrong” as legal segregation. Eventually, he pushed Romney out of his cabinet altogether. In his resignation letter, [Romney](#) decried politicians’ tendency to “avoid specific positions concerning, and discussion of, ‘life and death’ issues in their formative and controversial stage for fear of offending uninformed voters and thus losing votes.”

With Romney gone, Nixon continued his efforts to undermine substantive progress related to affordable and integrated housing. In 1974, Nixon’s moratorium on the construction of new public housing effectively signaled the end of hopes that such housing would contribute to integrated, rather than segregated, housing patterns. The “Housing and Community Development Act of 1974,” passed in the same year, established the Section 8 voucher program, part of a larger shift from a focus on publicly constructed housing to an emphasis on public-private partnerships.

## NEW POLICIES, MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Despite vouchers' potential as an integrative tool—in a perfect world, low-income individuals and families could use them to access well-resourced, safe neighborhoods they couldn't otherwise afford—implementation challenges including source-of-income discrimination, underfunding, and a lack of complementary supports have resulted in a situation where vouchers primarily subsidize the cost of living in under-resourced, segregated neighborhoods (DeLuca et al., 2012, DeLuca et al., 2013). For example, a recent study found that nine in 10 voucher holders in Massachusetts were turned away from rental units in high-opportunity neighborhoods. As a result of these barriers and others, only around 20% of voucher households lived in low-poverty neighborhoods as of 2010, falling well short of accomplishing significant integrationist aspirations (Collinson et al., 2019)

Relatedly, the “Tax Reform Act of 1986” established the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), which allocates tax credits to states on a per capita basis. States in turn award credits to developers to support the construction and rehabilitation of low-income, rental housing. The LIHTC quickly surpassed public housing and project-based housing as the primary form of affordable housing construction in the United States. While LIHTC has successfully increased the number of affordable units in states across the country, it has failed to improve fair housing outcomes. Studies show that LIHTC units are built in neighborhoods with higher rates of poverty compared to the average rental unit.

Making matters worse, following the passage of the Fair Housing Act, affluent, well-resourced, predominantly white neighborhoods began to turn to ostensibly colorblind single-family zoning ordinances to prevent denser housing patterns that might yield more mixed-income, racially diverse communities. These ordinances drove up housing prices for current property owners at the expense of lower-income renting households and voucher holders.

In the decades that followed, progress around fair housing policy was halting, and even when new initiatives arrived, they were often held back by a lack of practical measures—especially related to enforcement. For example, in 1988, lawmakers updated the criteria for HUD's largest program, the Community Development Block Grant, mandating that any communities requesting funding submit an ‘Analysis of Impediments,’ (AIs) which outlined local barriers to fair housing along with potential solutions. Unfortunately, HUD rarely reviewed these documents and even more rarely withheld funding for non-compliance.

Despite HUD delivering \$137 billion to local housing authorities between 1972 and 2012, ProPublica “could find only two occasions since Romney's tenure in which the department withheld money from communities for violating the Fair Housing Act.” Indeed, across the decades, HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity has remained the smallest of the four major divisions within the agency. Instead, for more than 45 years after the FHA passed, “affirmatively furthering fair housing” consisted of local governments self-certifying their own compliance every few years, without any formal oversight or review by HUD.

Prior to the Obama Administration, the Clinton Administration was the most ambitious in its approach to fair housing since LBJ. In 1994, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12892, which established the President's Fair Housing Council, with the authority to “review the design and delivery of Federal programs and activities to ensure that they support a coordinated strategy to affirmatively further fair housing.” Later, under Secretary Henry Cisneros, HUD published the *Fair Housing Planning Guide* in 1996, which aimed to provide scaffolding for local communities' pursuit of fair housing goals.

Both of these initiatives, however, were accompanied by a lack of practical implementation. Insufficient technical assistance was provided for the AI process, and the AIs that were submitted were rarely reviewed and never enforced (GAO, 2010). Later in Clinton's

term, HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo attempted to provide greater clarity around the AFFH rule but was met with pushback from the Council of Mayors, among other stakeholder groups (ProPublica, 2015). Another Clinton-era housing initiative, HOPE VI, which included the demolition of large-scale housing projects in favor of mixed income housing also fell short of its fair housing potential, in many cases actually reducing the supply of affordable housing and leading to widespread displacement (NLHC, 2007).

## PROGRESS UNDER OBAMA, BACKSLIDING UNDER TRUMP

Early in President Obama's first term, several factors led to an uptick in interest around improving the federal approach to fair housing. First, the housing crisis's disproportionate impacts on highly segregated communities led to an increased sense of urgency around the concentration of poverty and racial disparities in the housing market. Second, HUD conducted an internal review of its fair housing protocols and found them to be severely lacking. Finally, the GAO conducted its own review of the AFFH compliance process, and its conclusions were also damning. The GAO report "detailed a lack of clarity for grantees" and noted that HUD had overseen "inconsistent compliance requirements" for decades; more than half of jurisdictions receiving HUD funding could not produce their AIs and those that could were largely out of date (Bostic et al., 2021).

In response, the Obama Administration, led by HUD Secretaries Shaun Donovan and Julian Castro, adopted a much more aggressive interpretation of the AFFH rule. This new policy, published in 2015 after years of internal debate, provided cities and towns applying for HUD funding with an extensive data and mapping tool to analyze demographic trends—including race, disability, familial status, socioeconomic status, and English proficiency—across neighborhoods to identify specific barriers that explain segregated patterns and come up with potential strategies to address them, a process known as Assessment

of Fair Housing (AFH). Communities were also required to publish public reports on their progress, and to set and track goals in pursuit of fully integrated housing patterns.

This rule was rolled back by President Trump HUD Secretary Ben Carson, who cited complaints about the burden of reporting, and while the Biden Administration has reimposed some of the language from the Obama rule, it has kept the reporting requirements light to alleviate unnecessary administrative mandates. Even supporters of the more assertive AFFH regulations noted that there were issues with the quality of the data and mapping tool and that the reporting requirements were unwieldy and hard to navigate without extensive technical support well beyond HUD's current capacity (Pritchett et al., 2021). The appropriate balance between transparency and autonomy is an open question that will continue to be debated in the future. Indeed, the Biden Administration has committed to providing an updated rule in the near future.

## THE CURRENT STATE OF FAIR HOUSING

Since the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968, the rate of white homeownership has increased, from 66% of white households owning a home to 71%. During this same time, the Black homeownership rate has remained low—roughly 44%—despite a brief climb to 49% prior to the financial crisis in 2007. Furthermore, while metropolitan areas have, on the whole, become more diverse in the last half century, neighborhood composition tells a different story. In the largest 100 cities in the United States, the average white person lives in a very segregated neighborhood, with over 70% white neighbors. Additionally, suburbs and rural areas are even more segregated than metropolitan areas. This is at least partially due to discrimination—studies have routinely found that minority renters are told about and shown fewer homes and apartments than equally qualified whites (Christensen et al., 2021).

Even in neighborhoods where integration has increased, it is largely Latino or Asian households

moving in, rather than Black households, a trend that indicates the seemingly intractable nature of Black-white racial prejudice in the United States. Nor has the limited racial integration that has occurred led to equivalent rates of socioeconomic integration. Over the last 40 years, the percentage of low-income households living in predominantly low-income census tracts has increased (from 23% to 28%), and so has the level of high-income households in predominantly high-income census tracts (9% to 18%), coming at the expense of middle-class and mixed-income neighborhoods, which have declined over the same time period (Pew, 2012).

The FHA's failure to live up to its author's hopes has not been lost on co-sponsor Walter Mondale. In a 2015 [speech](#) at HUD, he noted:

*When a black family with an income of \$157,000 a year is less likely to qualify for a prime loan than a white family with an income of \$40,000 a year, the goals of the Fair Housing Act are not fulfilled. When real estate agents only show integrated schools and suburbs to black and Latino middle-class families, and steer white families away from those same neighborhoods and schools, the goals of the Fair Housing Act are not fulfilled. When the federal and state governments will pay to build new suburban highways, streets, sewers, schools, and parks, but then allow these communities to exclude affordable housing and non-white citizens, the goals of the Fair Housing Act are not fulfilled.*

An early [memo](#) from the Biden Administration, *Memorandum on Redressing Our Nation's and the Federal Government's History of Discriminatory Housing Practices and Policies*, echoes similar challenges, noting—among other concerns—the racial gap in homeownership, persistent undervaluation of properties owned by families of color, a disproportionate burden of pollution and exposure to climate change falling on low-income communities of color, and the presence of systemic barriers to safe, accessible, and affordable housing for all. Since the passage of the FHA, the memo notes, “access to housing and creation of wealth through homeownership have remained persistently unequal.”

Racial discrimination, such as steering by real estate agents and selective renting by landlords, remains an issue. Perhaps more importantly, however, the rights-based approach that has defined the implementation of the Fair Housing Act neglects the importance of socioeconomic status in determining access to certain societal benefits. In the words of housing scholar Wendell Pritchett, “in a society in which property ownership provided one of the primary means to achieving middle class status, the use of rights-based strategies was of limited assistance to persons who lacked the financial means to take advantage of newly won rights.” Richard Rothstein also notes that following the act's passage, lack of affordability became the primary driver of segregation (Rothstein, 2017). Without concrete measures to enable households with limited financial means the ability to move to well-resourced areas, protection from racial (or any other protected characteristic) discrimination offers little consolation. In other words, to achieve the goal of integrated living patterns, the federal government must fulfill its affirmative duty to further fair housing.

## THE NEED FOR AN AFFIRMATIVE AGENDA

In a speech advocating for passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968, Senator Phillip Hart argued, “this problem of where a family lives, where it is allowed to live, is inextricably bound up with better education, better jobs, economic motivation, and good living conditions.” Exactly 50 years later, in 2018, the National Low Income Housing Coalition launched the Opportunity Starts at Home Campaign (OSAH) in recognition of this exact premise: that where one lives dramatically influences all other facets of their life. But as the implementation of the Fair Housing Act has failed to fundamentally address the profound legacy of segregation in our housing patterns, and because those patterns are in many ways more entrenched and damaging today, there is an urgent need to imbue the fair housing effort with new meaning—and new policies.

The Biden Administration's *Memorandum*

*on Redressing Our Nation's and the Federal Government's History of Discriminatory Housing Practices and Policies* contains a pledge to rectify the government's discriminatory history, particularly noting the repealed AFFH rule as an area of focus. So, nearly one year after this initial pledge, where do we stand, and where should we go from here?

#### **AFFH Rule:**

First, the Biden Administration needs to issue a final version of the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Rule. A successful rule will balance the legitimate concerns about regulatory burden and efficiency with the moral and political imperatives of making substantive progress towards equalizing access to opportunity. After interviewing both federal and local fair housing stakeholders, a group of housing experts from the University of Pennsylvania and the Reinvestment Fund offered a set of recommendations for a revised rule (and process): provide additional financial and expert assistance for communities (especially around identifying action steps) completing the AFH, improve the quality of the data and mapping tool, allow communities to focus on a smaller number of meaningful goals, and expand all-government fair housing efforts grounded within the Domestic Policy Council.

Additionally, as noted by Megan Haberle of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, even the efforts under the Obama Administration to fulfill the intentions of the AFFH provision largely existed within the purview of the EEO office within HUD. Truly fulfilling the mandate of AFFH, however, requires that fair housing is not merely a compliance process; fair housing principles should infuse all HUD programs. With this in mind, an improved AFFH process would align the grant and implementation processes for key programs such as Housing Choice Vouchers and the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit with fair housing goals.

#### **Build Back Better Legislation:**

In addition to delivering on the unfulfilled promise of the AFFH rule, Congress must deliver on the ambitious housing policies included in

the House-passed "Build Back Better Act." The expansion of Housing Choice Vouchers, along with supplemental mobility services to assist voucher recipients, would allow greater numbers of low-income households to access neighborhoods that would otherwise be unaffordable. Again, it is important that such program expansions are carried out with fair housing principles in mind.

Build Back Better also included funding for the construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing units via the Housing Trust Fund. By using this funding to build new, affordable units in affluent, segregated neighborhoods, states could provide greater levels of access to areas with important resources that improve opportunities for children and their families.

Finally, the bill included \$1.75 billion for an innovative, race-to-the-top style incentive program, the Unlocking Possibilities Program, which is designed to spur local action around reforms to exclusionary zoning policies. These zoning reforms are a critical complement to vouchers, HTF construction, and NLIHC; they would open the door for needed private investment in multi-family, affordable housing in neighborhoods that have systematically prevented socioeconomic diversity for decades.

#### **Additional Improvements:**

There are also a number of important legislative proposals that have been introduced in Congress that could make important fair housing contributions. The "Fair Housing Improvement Act," for example, would ban source-of-income discrimination and discrimination based on veteran status. The "Fair and Equal Housing Act," meanwhile, expands the FHA to cover sexual orientation and gender identity. Finally, the "Housing Fairness Act of 2021" makes more general improvements to the fair housing programs at HUD. Furthermore, the "Housing Supply and Affordability Act," the "American Housing and Economic Mobility Act," and the "Yes In My Backyard Act" focus specifically on zoning reform, but each would make important contributions to advancing the cause of fair

housing if enacted because of the discriminatory impact of exclusionary zoning.

Additionally, other pieces of housing legislation make indirect but important contributions to furthering integration and equalizing access to opportunity. For example, the “Eviction Crisis Act” is a bipartisan bill that would create a fund for short term financial assistance for low-income households experiencing financial shocks, thereby avoiding the catastrophic consequences of an eviction. Because evictions often start a downward spiral that results in moving to neighborhoods with fewer resources, the “Eviction Crisis Act” would likely have significant fair housing consequences.

If implemented, these policies would finally take a much-needed affirmative and resource-intensive approach to promoting integration and addressing the segregative nature of housing that has been embedded in American society throughout the modern era. After nearly a century of missed opportunities, it is time to act on the lessons of our mistakes and time to implement policy that we know is feasible, sound, and fundamentally right.

#### **Works Cited** (in order of appearance):

Von Hoffman, Alexander (2021). “The Origins of the Fair Housing Act.” In Stell, Kelly, Vale & Woluchem, *Further Fair Housing: Prospects for Racial Justice in America’s Neighborhoods*. Temple University Press.

Fishback, Price, Rose, Jonathan, Snowden, Kenneth & Storrs, Thomas (2021). *New Evidence on Redlining by Federal Housing Programs in the 1930s*. National Bureau of Economic Research.

Hunt, D. Bradford (2018). *Public Housing in Urban America*. American History.

Van Hoffman, Alexander (2000). *A Study in Contradictions: The origins and legacy of the housing act of 1949*. Housing Policy Debate.

Rothstein, Richard (2017). *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. W.W. Norton.

Lamb, Charles (2005). *Housing Discrimination*

*in Suburban America since 1960: Presidential and Judicial Politics*. Cambridge Press.

DeLuca, Stefanie & Garboden, Phillip (2013). *Segregating Shelter: How Housing Policies Shape the Residential Locations of Low-Income Families*. Annals.

DeLuca, Stefanie & Garboden, Phillip (2012). *Why Don’t Vouchers Do A Better Job of Deconcentrating Poverty? Insights from Fieldwork with Poor Families*. Poverty & Race.

Collinson, Robert, Ellen, Ingrid, & Ludwig, Jens (2019). *Reforming Housing Assistance*. Annals.

Bostic, Rafael, O’Regan, Katherine, & Pontius, Patrick with Kelly, Nicholas. (2021). Fair Housing from the Inside Out: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at the Creation of the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Rule . In Stell, Kelly, Vale & Woluchem, *Further Fair Housing: Prospects for Racial Justice in America’s Neighborhoods*. Temple University Press.

Pritchett, Wendell, Rodarte Costa, Erica, Goldstein, Ira, Dowdall, Emily (2021). *An “All Out” Effort to Achieve Desegregation and Equality of Opportunity: Assessment of Fair Housing 2.0*. Penn Law and the Reinvestment Fund.

Christensen, Peter & Timmins, Christopher (2021). *The Damages and Distortions from Discrimination in the Rental Housing Market*. National Bureau of Economic Research.

# Resident and Tenant Organizing

---

By Sidney Betancourt, Housing Advocacy Organizer, NLIHC

## WHY ORGANIZE?

Organizing balances power. When ordinary people come together to take collective action on their own behalf, they have a greater ability to influence people in decision-making positions. Organizing alters existing social structures and creates a more just distribution of power.

## WHY DO TENANTS ORGANIZE?

Tenants organize to address immediate problems and create ongoing solutions. If tenants have mold in their apartments and the landlords keep saying that they will address it but never do, chances are that other tenants in the building are facing the same problem. It is easy for the landlord to avoid each person individually, but when tenants come together and put pressure on the landlord as a group, they become much harder to ignore.

Organizing does not stop when an immediate problem is fixed. As a group, tenants can identify systemic problems in their building. They can see patterns of neglect or harassment and demand long-term solutions that prevent problems instead of only dealing with them once they occur. It does not have to stop at the building level; an organized group of tenants may identify issues, such as local school conditions, that need to be addressed on their block or in their neighborhood. A united tenant organization with experience dealing with their landlord and building management knows how to work together as a group to demand accountability from people in positions of power, like the local school board.

Ultimately, tenants organize to gain power. In an apartment building, a small minority of people hold almost all the power. Landlords and management companies have the power to withhold repairs, to raise rents in many cases,

and to refuse to renew leases and even evict people. In federally assisted buildings, tenants have rights and protections provided by the government. Some cities and states also provide additional protections, but even these are more effective if tenants are organized. Organizing gives tenants more power to draw attention to problems and get them resolved.

Typically, there are several types of issues that prompt tenants to organize:

- Substandard living conditions.
- Systematic harassment or intimidation.
- The threat of an end to assistance programs that keep units affordable to existing tenants.

## TENANT ORGANIZING TIPS

### Learn From Others

Unfortunately, tenants around the country, if not the world, must organize against unfair housing practices. Organizing, however, presents a learning opportunity as there are many examples to use. Find out what other communities have done, what was successful, and what challenges they faced.

### Be Open

To function well, a tenant association must be open to all residents in a building. If it is not, competing tenant organizations can develop and landlords or management companies can exploit this lack of unity among residents. Look for unlikely partners or allies and tap into existing networks.

### Be Democratic

For long-term success, it is crucial for a group to function democratically. When the special interests of only a few members begin to dictate group decisions and interactions with landlords or management companies, the cohesion of a group is weakened and therefore so is its strength.

## Keep an Eye on Process

While there is no one-size-fits-all decision-making process or leadership structure for tenant associations, it is important for residents to figure out what works well for them, build consensus, and formalize their processes in some way. A group may re-evaluate and change its structure at some point, but it is critical to have a defined and agreed upon method so that when decisions need to be made, they can be made without conflict or disarray.

## Be Informed

Tenants need to know what is going on in their building and in their community. Tenants should determine whether their landlord owns other buildings in the neighborhood or city and if residents in those buildings experience similar problems. Tenants should also learn about federal, state, or local laws that apply to the right to organize, affordability restrictions, or living-condition standards. They should figure out who can help them get the resources they need to be successful.

## Know Your Elected Officials

Tenants should learn who their elected officials are at every level of government and engage them on the issues facing residents in the building. For local offices, attending neighborhood and city meetings can often be a great way to make connections with elected officials or their staff.

## Find a Location to Hold Meetings and Access Community Resources

A public library, community center, or local church may be willing to provide space. Does the group need to create and photocopy meeting notices? A community-based organization in your neighborhood may be able to help you access a computer, a photocopier, and other useful resources.

## Set a Goal or Goals as a Group

Most importantly, tenants must determine their goal(s) as a group, identify and engage allies who can help achieve the goal(s), make sure that all interested residents have a role to play, and

develop solidarity within the group. Strength in numbers and unity of purpose are instrumental forces in organizing.

Ultimately, an organized tenant group becomes a critical resource for advocates. No one knows the direct implications and effects of housing policy better than the residents who live each day in subsidized housing properties. A tenant organization can solve immediate problems in an individual building and can also play an important role in advocating for better, more just public policy over the long term.

## Timeline of a Tenant Association

The timeline for developing a tenant association will vary from building to building, depending on the issues facing residents in the building, the dynamics among residents, and other factors unique to any given community. Here is a sample timeline that contains some useful tips.

### WEEK 1: RESEARCH

To start, ask yourself the following questions:

- What issues do residents in the building experience?
- What are the relevant affordability programs affecting the building, such as the national Housing Trust Fund, HOME, or the Low Income Housing Tax Credit?
- Does the building have a subsidized mortgage?
- Is there a federal rental assistance program in place?
- Are there state or local assistance programs supporting the building or its tenants?
- Who governs and regulates these programs?
- Are there protections in place for the tenants as a result of these programs?
- Who are the elected officials representing the area where the building is located?
- What other issues do community members face?



## WEEK 2: DOOR KNOCKING

Prepare. Make sure you have everything you need to door knock effectively: a clipboard or an electronic tablet that includes both a sign-up sheet where people can share contact information and a place to make notes about the conversations you have with people. Bring a copy of any regulations, federal or local, ensuring your right to organize in case you are confronted by the landlord, property manager, or building security. Bring business cards or information about your organization.

Knock on doors. There is no more effective way to find out about the issues facing tenants and how likely they are to organize than by talking to them face to face. It is usually most effective to door knock in the evening, since that is when most people will be home from work.

Identify potential leaders. Use door knocking as a way to identify both problems and potential leaders. Note whether there are any tenants who people seem to defer to, listen to, and respect. Who are the long-time tenants? Who seems enthusiastic about taking action? Don't predetermine leaders; let leaders emerge.

Door-knocking is about listening, observing, and beginning to build trust.

## WEEKS 3 AND 4: PLANNING AND MEETINGS

Get the group started. After door knocking, engage a small group of tenants who seem the most enthusiastic about addressing the problems facing residents in the building.

Organize one or two smaller meetings. Meetings will likely take place in one of the tenants' apartments. Brainstorm with this small group about the following:

- What are the underlying common issues facing the building?
- Who seems to be the decision maker?
- How should things change?
- How can things change?

Determine a goal for the building that has consensus among the small group. Pick a date for a building-wide meeting. Develop an agenda for

the big meeting. Delegate roles and tasks among the group:

- Who is going to create, copy, and distribute meeting notices?
- Who is going to facilitate the meeting?
- Who is going to take notes?
- Will you need spoken-language translation or sign-language interpretation?
- If so, what community resources are available to provide translation or interpretation?

Make sure that everyone who wants a responsibility has one. Remember that the role of the organizer is not to lead, or even talk much; it is to provide the resources that the tenants need to meet their goals and to facilitate this small group's leadership.

Consider a resident survey. Organizers should consider developing and conducting a resident needs/satisfaction survey to measure resident perceptions about building maintenance, security, responsiveness of management and maintenance, interest in social activities, etc. Organizers could conduct in-person interviews and/or distribute surveys under tenant doors with return information included.

## WEEK 5: FIRST BUILDING-WIDE MEETING

Once a date is determined, choose a location that is physically accessible to all who may want to attend. Many buildings have a community room, which is a great resource because these rooms don't require people to travel anywhere to get to the meeting. If the building does not have a meeting place, try to find a space in the neighborhood. Public libraries, community centers, or churches often have adequate space that is open to the community.

Create and distribute flyers detailing the logistics of the meeting. Make sure that everyone is aware of the meeting. Not every tenant will come, but everyone should have the opportunity to attend if they choose.

Consider multilingual and sign language needs. Not all residents may speak the same language. Additionally, some residents may be hearing

impaired and need sign language interpretation. Therefore, it is important to consider interpreter needs in terms of fliers and translation. A great way to accomplish this is by reaching out to bilingual and hearing-impaired residents for help with translation.

Finalize the agenda. Make sure that everyone who will speak knows their role. Keep the agenda very tight. Address why you are meeting, build consensus around your goal(s), and determine the date for your next meeting and the next steps that need to happen. Make sure that every action item has a person assigned to it.

#### **WEEK 6: DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN**

Once you have determined your goal(s) as a group and have developed some immediate next steps, begin the process of creating an action plan.

Figure out contingency plans. For example, if you are writing the landlord a letter asking them to meet with your group, what are your next steps if they say yes? What are your next steps if they say no? If your city has a tenant advocate or public advocate within the local government, at what point will you involve that office? At what point will you engage your elected and appointed public officials? At what point might you go to the media? How might a combination of your local media and public officials place pressure on your landlord, if your group considers it necessary?

Your action plan will develop and change over the course of your campaign as events unfold, but it is useful to plot out your steps and expectations as a group in advance.

#### **WEEKS 7 THROUGH 10: ELECTIONS AND BY-LAWS**

After you have developed your action plan and taken initial steps in your campaign, it is useful to begin formalizing leadership and decision-making processes.

Determine the group's leadership and bylaws. There are many different leadership structures. Tenants should consider different options and determine what makes the most sense for their group. Do they want a president? Co-chairs? Does a non-hierarchical structure make the most sense? Does a committee structure make

the most sense? Tenants must determine the basic functions that need to be fulfilled within their group and then craft a leadership structure that meets those needs. The organization's bylaws document should answer these questions and provide processes for your organization's operation.

Determine the decision-making process. This should be a process that all active members of the group are comfortable with, and one that is formalized in writing. Without basic rules and regulations in place, a group can fracture, and a fractured group loses power.

#### **Professional Development Workshops**

New York State's Tenants & Neighbors holds monthly Tenant Leadership Development Workshops to help tenants learn important organizing skills that they can apply to the work in their buildings and communities. Workshops are currently happening virtually over Zoom. For information on how to get involved, please call 212-608-4320.

### **SUSTAINING THE TENANT ASSOCIATION**

Many tenant groups emerge in moments of crisis. After the immediate problem that brought a group together is addressed, the group may lose momentum, stop meeting, and begin to dissolve.

#### **Stay Engaged, but Set Realistic Expectations**

It is important to keep residents engaged, but it is just as important to understand that the level of activity within a tenant group can vary depending on how urgently tenants wish to address issues at hand. During an active campaign a group may meet every week. Once the issue is resolved, the group may decide to scale back to meeting once a month. Scaling back is okay. Although you want to keep the group going, you don't want to burn people out or make them feel like they are meeting for no reason.

#### **Look to the Community**

Although it is usually a problem in the building that brings tenants together, there may be broader issues in the community around which a

tenant group can organize or stay organized once initial problems are resolved, such as conditions of the local schools or public transportation systems. Give members of the tenant association space to raise issues of greater concern. If common issues arise, brainstorm ways the tenant association can address those issues and influence the community.

### **Look Beyond the Community**

- Does the tenant group have concerns about the way a federal or local program is regulated or run? How can they best advocate for themselves and their neighbors?
- Finding ways to maintain a strong tenant association is important. Although the group may win one fight, another crisis could arise at any point and having a strong and unified body in place means you will be ready to respond quickly and effectively.

Adapted from *New York State Tenants & Neighbors' 2008 Organizers' Manual*, by Michele Bonan. For more information, visit the Tenants & Neighbors website at <http://tandn.org/>.

# Our Homes, Our Votes

---

## A GUIDE TO VOTER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES FOR NONPROFIT HOUSING PROVIDERS AND RESIDENT ORGANIZATIONS

By Joey Lindstrom, Director for Field Organizing, NLIHC

**O**ur Homes, Our Votes is NLIHC's effort to expand election engagement work conducted by community organizations dedicated to expanding affordable housing. This guide is designed to help advocates through the steps of planning your agency's election engagement work. The materials presented here offer resources for organizations seeking to engage traditionally underrepresented people in the civic process. Be sure to visit [www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org](http://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org) for the most updated materials and announcements.

The *Our Homes, Our Votes* Guide provides an overview of the steps necessary to implement a campaign to integrate election engagement work without overtaxing staff or resources and while staying within legal guidelines for nonprofits. This document outlines strategies to engage with voters, your networks and partners, and candidates in the three phases of election engagement – voter registration, education, and mobilization.

The *Our Homes, Our Votes* website includes a complementary set of resources, including an interactive election engagement plan that presents a menu of election activities for your group to consider. Your organization may or may not be able to undertake all the suggested activities, so plan according to available resources. If this is your first election engagement project, remember to think long-term. It is usually best to start small and build your project over several election cycles.

Please contact NLIHC for support and information sharing if you are conducting a voter engagement effort so that we can provide assistance, connect you with helpful resources, and/or spotlight your election-related work on



BECAUSE HOUSING IS BUILT WITH BALLOTS



our blog or in other NLIHC publications such as *Tenant Talk*. Call NLIHC's Field Team at 202-662-1530, or email us at [outreach@nlihc.org](mailto:outreach@nlihc.org).

### WHY ENGAGE IN ELECTION WORK?

Raising housing on the national agenda will happen only when candidates for elected office understand that the issue of affordable housing is important to voters. At the same time, it is vital that low-income voters understand how the decisions made by federal elected officials directly affect their lives, know how to register to vote, and know how to get to the polls on Election Day.

Census data confirm that low-income voters are registered and vote at lower rates than high-income citizens. While 88% of people with incomes over \$150,000 were registered to vote in 2020 and 85% voted, just 66% of people with incomes below \$30,000 were registered, and only 56% actually voted (U.S. Census Bureau. *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2020*, April 2021).

Low-income people face several challenges to voting, such as less-flexible work schedules that may not allow time off to vote, more difficulty obtaining legal identification, transportation impediments that may make getting to the polls more difficult, and a greater likelihood of having been given misinformation about their rights as

voters. People experiencing homelessness, ex-offenders, and survivors of a natural disaster may face especially tough barriers to voting.

Nonprofit organizations, which benefit from close ties with their clients, are a natural fit in helping people overcome these challenges. Among the many benefits of election engagement:

- Residents engage in civic life and learn how decisions of elected officials affect their lives.
- The issue of homelessness and housing scarcity is elevated in public debate.
- Elected officials become educated on low-income housing issues and on how their decisions affect residents.
- Influential relationships are built with elected officials.
- Impacted people can develop leadership skills.
- Positive press is earned for the program or project.

## PLANNING ELECTION WORK

Nonprofit organizations can, and should, engage in nonpartisan election-related activity, including voter registration, education, and mobilization.

To help determine a course for election activities, consider engagement with three audiences: voters, networks and partners, and candidates.

Depending on your audience, resources, and timeline, you can assess how best to focus your efforts. If you plan to conduct voter engagement, you will want to think of your work in parts – registration, education, and mobilization.

Organizations should be mindful of legal considerations and organizational capacity when exploring election engagement work and deciding where to focus their attention. For example, in designing a plan for engagement, organizations should assess and familiarize themselves with community needs, time constraints, staff and volunteer time, available funding, and potential partnerships.

An important first step is understanding legal parameters for nonprofit engagement

in nonpartisan election-related activities and identifying any local guidelines on voter engagement. Your local board of elections, secretary of state, or county clerk's office can offer guidance on important voter engagement details and deadlines specific to your locality.

### Legally Speaking

In approaching voter engagement activities, nonprofit organizations should become familiar with legal parameters concerning election work. The basic rule is that 501(c)(3) organizations cannot in any way support or oppose candidates or political parties. 501(c)(3) organizations can register and educate voters, engage with candidates on issues, host election-related public events, and get voters to the polls. While 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations cannot endorse candidates, they can endorse ballot initiatives that fit within the organization's mission. Engagement on ballot initiatives is thought of as lobbying on a bill, but with the voters acting as the legislators. Finally, if any staff member engages in partisan political activities, they must do so without representing the organization or using organizational resources. For detailed legal guidance, you may want to consult:

Nonprofit VOTE, [www.nonprofitvote.org](http://www.nonprofitvote.org)

- Specifically, Nonprofit VOTE's factsheets, templates, and webinar series can be a great starting point when planning election engagement.

Bolder Advocacy, [www.bolderadvocacy.org](http://www.bolderadvocacy.org).

- Through their Bolder Advocacy campaign, Alliance for Justice (AFJ) works to ensure that nonprofit groups are up to date on rules governing campaign involvement. Review their materials and sign up for upcoming webinars at [www.bolderadvocacy.org](http://www.bolderadvocacy.org).

League of Women Voters, [www.vote411.org](http://www.vote411.org).

- The League offers Vote411.org, an online resource providing nonpartisan information to the public, with both general and state-specific information on all aspects of the election process. An

important component of Vote411.org is the polling place locator, which enables users to type in their address and retrieve the polling location for the voting precinct in which that address is located.

Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, [www.brennancenter.org](http://www.brennancenter.org)

- The Brennan Center for Justice understands that voting is the foundation of our democracy. They fight to preserve and expand the right to vote for every eligible citizen. Through practical policy proposals, litigation, advocacy, and communications, the Brennan Center works to make sure that voting is free, fair, and accessible for all Americans. They track and publish analyses of voting rights policies in every state legislature across the country.

Fair Elections Center, [www.fairelectionscenter.org](http://www.fairelectionscenter.org)

- Fair Elections Center is a national, nonpartisan voting rights, legal support and election reform organization whose mission is to remove barriers to registration and voting for traditionally underrepresented constituencies. Fair Elections Center works to improve overall election administration through reforms. They also provide legal and technical assistance to voter mobilization organizations. Their state-specific resources include information on voter registration deadlines, ID requirements for voting, and how to vote early or by mail in any state. For more information, visit: [www.fairelectionsnetwork.com](http://www.fairelectionsnetwork.com).

HUD, [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov).

- Public housing agencies are often under the impression that they are not able to register residents to vote. That is not the case; in fact, HUD issued a Notice (FR-3968-N-01) in 1996 that encouraged housing agencies, Indian housing authorities, and resident management

companies to become involved in voter registration activities.

Organizations with specific types of federal funding might have additional limitations on electoral engagement. After consulting the above resources, organizations with additional legal questions are encouraged to contact an attorney who specializes in election law. It is important to remember that 501(c)(3) organizations cannot consult with campaign staff or political parties, even on simple technical questions.

### **Get to Know Your Local Election Officials**

It is important to establish relationships with your local election officials. Your local board of elections or county clerk's office can be a wealth of information as you plan to register low-income renters to vote. Because voter registration specifics differ by state, you will want to check with your local officials about voting options (mail-in, absentee, early, and in-person) and important deadlines for the general election in your state. You will also want to inquire about identification requirements for registration and voting. Ask whether anyone can register voters in your state or whether a person must first become deputized or meet other requirements.

If you are planning on voter engagement, you can request the voter rolls for your community so you will know who in your target audience is already registered. There may be a small charge for this, but you can use this list to determine which of your residents and clients are already registered and which need to change their official voting address. Request enough voter registration forms to meet your registration goals.

In many places, the role of the board of elections will be conducted out of the office of the county or city clerk. Please contact NLIHC if you need help determining who is the best local authority for your organization.

### **Consider Resources**

Whether simple or expansive, all voter engagement projects will include some investment of resources. You should assess your existing resources to determine the scope

of your election involvement. Once you know what you would like to accomplish, plan out how to maximize staff and volunteer capacity. Delegate tasks to ensure that everyone has a role in realizing your election goals. There may be opportunities to leverage partnerships or bolster ongoing efforts. Other organizations may have resources that your organization can access. Student groups may be interested in registering voters as part of a community service project or a civic group may already be providing rides to the polls and could include your clients in its plans. Remember to partner only with nonpartisan organizations.

In allocating resources, identify potential funding sources for your project or in-kind donations. Funding will potentially cover things like voter databases, supplies, transportation, training, and events. Other organizations may have resources that your organization can access such as meeting space, access to volunteers, or machines for printing materials. Take time to gather information on existing election efforts and identifying critical gaps where you could plug in.

## **VOTER ENGAGEMENT: BEFORE YOU START**

Once you understand local voter registration guidelines, you can begin preparing for outreach efforts. You will want to prepare in several ways:

### **Set Goals**

Setting goals for voter registration, education, and mobilization can be an important part of your plan. The staff and volunteers involved in the project will have something to work toward and you will have a way to evaluate your project after the election. In setting goals for voter registration consider the percentage of your clients you would like to engage and if you will also register community members, beyond those served by your programs. When determining the pace at which you need to register voters, consider the amount of time remaining prior to registration deadlines. You will also want to ensure that staff or volunteers conducting registration meet local requirements and have been adequately trained. The *Our Homes, Our Votes* Engagement Plan,

which can be found online at [www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/additional-resources](http://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/additional-resources), provides a framework for setting these goals.

### **Consider Early Vote and Absentee Ballots**

In planning voter registration activities, consider opportunities for early voting and absentee voting, if available in your state. Consider facilitating these options for the people your organization serves. Again, your local Board of Elections can share information on restrictions and requirements in your state. People with low incomes often have more rigid work hours, limited transportation options, and challenging childcare responsibilities. Because so many people will have already cast their votes, early voting usually provides for much shorter lines both at the early voting site and at the polls on Election Day. Long lines are a barrier to voting, and they are more common in voting precincts that are predominantly populated by people of color. Voting early also allows voters more time to address potential registration errors, discrepancies for voters who have recently moved, or additional time for voters that do not have the correct documentation to acquire them.

Much like voter mobilization on Election Day, early voting requires an effective campaign for it to have the highest impact. You may have to explain early voting to new voters, especially because early voting sites may differ from Election Day polling locations. For early voting, consider coordinating rides to early voting sites or holding ballot parties where voters gather to go and vote as a group, perhaps after a discussion of affordable housing issues. Where it is allowed, you might also want to send volunteers to gather early voting ballots and submit them to your local clerk's office.

Another potential voting option is absentee voting. Absentee ballots can be requested by residents in all states who are unable to get to the polls on Election Day. In some states, there is no reason required for absentee voting and all voters have the option to vote by absentee ballot or to vote before Election Day. Providing your clients with absentee ballot request forms or

helping them to take advantage of early voting, if available, is a great way to increase voter turnout. Voting by absentee ballots generally involves two steps. First, voters fill out forms requesting their ballots. Once they receive their ballots, voters fill them out and return them.

### **Offer Registration Trainings**

Residents and staff who plan to register voters will often benefit from receiving training on the process. You may want to bring in someone from the local board of elections or county clerk's office who can explain the state's registration requirements and how voter registration forms must be filled out. It can also help to spend a bit of time role-playing so that people who are registering voters are not discouraged when confronted with apathy.

### **Keep Records**

It is crucial to have a plan for how you will keep a record of who you have registered to vote, as well as who is already registered, so that you will be able to contact these people as part of mobilization activities. You will be able to compile a list of residents who are already registered from the voter rolls maintained by local board of elections or county clerk.

For new registrants, there are two ways to collect this information. One easy way, if allowed by the laws in your state, is to collect voter registration forms from new registrants, then photocopy the forms before submitting. Note that some states require forms to be returned within a specific number of days after they have been completed. This also allows you to review and catch mistakes before a form is submitted. You may also ask registrants to fill out two-part pledge cards. They will keep the half of the card that reminds them of their pledge to vote and you will keep the half with their contact information.

Once you have collected voters' information, it is important to enter it into a database so the data can be easily accessed for mobilization purposes.

## **REGISTERING VOTERS**

Once you know the voting guidelines for your state, have set registration goals for your agency, and provided trainings, you are ready to begin registering voters. In registering low-income voters, you may be faced with voter apathy and frustration. To overcome these challenges, use positive messaging, turn frustrations into a reason to vote, and remind renters that they have something at stake. There have been numerous studies that indicate low-income people are more likely to register to vote and turnout on Election Day if they are engaged with a positive message. Remind low-income renters that their vote is about a new future for their neighborhood, community, or family. If you encounter frustrated voters, pivot to discuss solutions to the problems they are describing.

There are several ways, that vary in the level of involvement required, to approach voter registration.

### **Fit Voter Registration into Your Agency's Regular Contact with Residents**

The first option is to incorporate registration into day-to-day activities that already take place at your agency. Registration can usually be incorporated with few resources and little hassle into the intake process, training sessions, tenant association meetings, and social events.

### **Plan Specific Voter Registration Activities**

A second way to think about registration at your agency is to plan special registration activities or campaigns. Many organizations have had success holding social or other events at which residents are encouraged to register to vote. Consider hosting an event for National Voter Registration Day, September 20, 2022.

### **Organize a Door-To-Door Campaign**

The third and most effective way for larger organizations to systematically register clients is through a door-to-door campaign. If your agency is a housing provider or a resident council, such a campaign can be especially effective. In particular, resident leaders can volunteer to receive training and serve as 'building



captains’ or ‘floor captains.’ Captains can take on responsibility for registering, keeping registration records, and then turning out the people in their building or on their floor, etc. Such a system can be a great way to get residents or clients involved while ensuring that staff does not become overwhelmed with additional responsibilities. The key is to have personal and organized contact with potential voters by people they know or trust. Especially in this type of campaign, you will want to use the voter list from your county to see who in your buildings is already registered or whose registration needs updating. Also, consider offering public recognition to those who register the most voters or highest percentage in their area.

### **Go into the Community**

Finally, especially if you have a smaller membership or client base, you may also want to think about having your volunteers reach out into the community to register other low-income, homeless, or underrepresented people. Consider staffing voter registration and information tables at community events. Also, make sure to promote your voter registration efforts through your website and other social media platforms. Do not forget to make sure that everyone on the staff and board is also registered!

## **EDUCATING VOTERS**

Once voters are registered, they need to be familiar with voting logistics, their rights as voters, and candidate positions on issues.

### **Educate Renters on Voting Logistics**

The date of the election, options for early voting, the hours that polls are open, and the polling locations are all basic elements to voting successfully. These logistics are easy to overlook but remember that many potential voters might be new to voting and need to be reminded. Clients should be informed of options for early or mail-in voting, where their polling place is, and what documentation they will need to have with them to vote. Many states have new requirements for showing identification during the registration process or at the voting booth. The League of

Women Voters has updated information about the rules in each state at [www.Vote411.org](http://www.Vote411.org). This resource also includes a polling place lookup tool where voters can find the address and hours of their polling location.

You can obtain sample ballots from your board of elections or county clerk’s office and distribute to residents. This is especially helpful if you are working with many first-time voters. Arranging for local election officials to demonstrate how voting machines work can be helpful in easing fears about voting for the first time. You may also want to coordinate with a group like the Election Protection coalition, a national, nonpartisan coalition that provides a range of tools and activities with comprehensive information on all stages of voting. This organization also hosts the election protection hotline. More information can be found at: [www.866ourvote.org](http://www.866ourvote.org).

### **Educate Renters on Their Rights as Voters**

It is also critical that voters are aware of their rights because many misinformation campaigns are designed to intentionally confuse people with limited resources. Producing a “What to Bring with You” sheet for voters can be helpful. This sheet should include the voter protection hotline 866-OUR-VOTE for voters to call if they are facing voter intimidation or if their vote is being challenged.

There are also common misconceptions that are important to address. Firstly, **all** registered voters should know that all voters who show up to the polls should cast a ballot. If voters are in line at the time the polls close, they must be allowed to vote. Encourage voters to bring a charged phone, water, or snacks to ensure they are prepared to wait in line.

If there is a question about any person’s identification or residency in the ward where they are voting that voter should cast a provisional ballot that will be counted after the initial run of results. Provisional ballots should always be completed, especially as protection from “voter caging.” Voter caging is defined by The Brennan Center as, “the practice of sending mail to addresses on the voter rolls, compiling a list of

the mail that is returned undelivered, and using that list to purge or challenge voters' registrations on the grounds that the voters on the list do not legally reside at their registered addresses." This practice largely targets low-income renters as they change addresses at higher rates than homeowners.

People who are experiencing homelessness, including those who do not reside in a shelter, still have the right to vote. In most cases, the address is really needed to determine what districts a voter should be voting in for local office or state legislature. Different states approach this in different ways, so this is another instance where getting more information from your local board of elections or county clerk is a best practice. The National Coalition for the Homeless' "You Don't Need A Home to Vote" voting rights campaign seeks to protect and promote the rights of homeless people to vote. It offers materials on all aspects of a voter engagement campaign, including specific, state-by-state information on the legal issues affecting the rights of people experiencing homelessness to vote. Find the campaign at [www.nationalhomeless.org/campaigns/voting](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/campaigns/voting). NLIHC also produced state-by-state voter information pages that include state requirements for voting without an address, which can be found at [www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/voterinformationbystate](http://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/voterinformationbystate).

Another common misconception is that people who have been convicted of a felony are permanently barred from voting. This is only true in the states of Kentucky and Virginia. In most states, people who have been incarcerated have their voting rights restored when their sentence is completed or when they are released. In the states of Vermont and Maine, people convicted of felonies never lose the right to vote and can vote while incarcerated. For a state-by-state breakdown of these voting rights, see the map on felony disenfranchisement that the ACLU maintains at [www.aclu.org/issues/voting-rights/voter-restoration/felony-disenfranchisement-laws-map](http://www.aclu.org/issues/voting-rights/voter-restoration/felony-disenfranchisement-laws-map).

## Educate Renters on the Issues

It is important you provide voters with opportunities to hear from candidates. You can organize events that clarify who your community's elected officials are and the connection between what those officials do and the lives of renters. One potential example is hosting a debate watch party to bring voters together to hear candidate perspectives and discuss the issues. If candidates are participating in events, consider encouraging voters to attend, raise concerns, and ask questions. The *Our Homes, Our Votes* toolkit includes example questions and tips for getting questions heard by candidates.

## Strategies for Voter Education

Nonprofits can use a variety of strategies to assist low-income voters in becoming familiar with upcoming election information, campaign issues, and candidates. You can disseminate information through both printed and digital media. Displaying information such as posters, flyers, and bulletins at your organization or within your community can help raise the visibility of the upcoming election. You may also want to send out regular newsletters and mailings with relevant information. Creating and sharing information through social media or email can help expand your reach and allows voters to share information more widely with their networks.

One strategy is to create voter guides to share with voters. Voter guides seek to provide voters with general information on Election Day details, voters' rights, and each of the candidates. For a sample voter guide, visit [www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/additional-resources](http://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/additional-resources).

## MOBILIZING VOTERS

Your voter mobilization, or Get Out the Vote (GOTV) plan, can be the most important and rewarding piece of your project. Just registering voters is not enough; it has been consistently shown that voters are much more likely to go to the polls if they are contacted on several occasions and reminded to vote by someone they trust. Further, once someone has voted,

they are more likely to vote in future elections. Considerable attention should be paid to mobilizing the people you have registered.

### **Aim for at Least Three Contacts with Each Registered Voter**

If possible, contact each potential voter three times between the day they register and Election Day: a few weeks before the election, a few days before the election, and at least once on Election Day. On Election Day, you may want to contact voters until they have affirmed that they have voted. For example, if someone tells you at noon that they have not yet had a chance to vote, call back at 4:00pm to see whether they have been able to get to their local polling location.

You can also coordinate transportation or childcare services to reduce potential barriers to voting. Make sure to coordinate rides for voters so that they can get to the polls; offering a ride is not offering an illegal incentive to vote, though some states are changing these rules, and you should be sure to check with election officials. Recruit volunteers, or perhaps fundraise to rent vans for Election Day so that low-income residents with disabilities or mobility concerns can access the polls. Volunteers can also provide childcare at subsidized properties for residents who need flexibility to get to polls and cast their ballot.

You should make sure that the voter commits to voting, knows when Election Day is, and knows where the polling place is. One strategy is to ask voters to fill out a voter pledge card where they commit to voting and identify a date and polling location. When a voter envisions their steps to vote, they are more likely to act on that plan. Asking voters to express this plan can also allow organizers to verify the polling location and hours with the voter and learn if there are transportation issues that need to be addressed. A sample fillable voter pledge card can be found on the *Our Homes, Our Votes* website at [www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/additional-resources](http://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/additional-resources). Ideally, contacts should be made in person through a knock at the door, but phone calls, emails, and postcards can also work. Not everyone will be home when your canvassers

visit, so you may want to create a pre-printed note that can be left on people's doors on Election Day.

Recruit volunteers from staff, residents, or community members and assign them to assist in making GOTV contacts. If you have had building or floor captains who have been in regular contact with their voters, they should conduct these mobilization activities to the greatest extent possible. They can also support group voting. Many voters are more likely to make it to the polls if they are joined by their neighbors. Resident councils and other low-income peer organizing efforts should consider selecting times when groups of residents can walk or ride to the polls altogether, making it a community activity.

Again, it is personal contact from a known and trusted partner or neighbor that will make an impact. Research shows that nonprofit agencies can have an impact on voter turnout in their communities by incorporating engagement efforts such as active tabling and voter pledge cards, which have shown to increase the turnout of low propensity voters by 29%. See *Engaging New Voters: The Impact of Nonprofit Voter Outreach on Client and Community Turnout* for further reading.

### **Work the Polls**

In addition to recruiting volunteers for your Election Day GOTV efforts, you may also want to encourage other residents to sign up with the county as poll workers. This provides an additional, and often paid, way for low-income renters to participate in the election process.

### **Host a Polling Location**

Some nonprofits or housing providers have increased their turnout rates by asking the county to use their organization's location as a polling place. It is much easier to vote when you only need to go to the lobby! This arrangement also offers community members an opportunity to visit your agency.

### **Protect the Right to Vote**

Nonprofits can play an important role in making sure that people's rights are protected when

they get to the polls. You may want to designate leaders in your voter engagement effort to be poll watchers who spend their day at the polls to record and report instances of voter harassment or unlawful suppression. Poll watchers can help identify potential issues in your community and can also be on call on Election Day if anyone experiences problems voting.

## **NETWORK AND PARTNER ENGAGEMENT**

The strongest election engagement exists in the context of other efforts taking place throughout the community. Your election engagement should work to bolster overall impact with voters and reduce unnecessary duplication of work. Begin by surveying your existing partners to learn about their plans for election engagement, or their willingness to support efforts your organization is leading.

Consider formalizing a coalition devoted to increasing voter participation among low-income renters, people experiencing homelessness, and other underrepresented communities. A coalition can bring a greater diversity of resources, volunteers, and audiences into your efforts. Some of the benefits of an election engagement include the following:

- Social media – Have your messages about the election, issues, and candidates seen by more people by cross-posting with other organizations.
- Spotlights – By featuring the efforts of key partners on your website in your newsletter, you can direct your members, renters, or clients to other resources that might be beyond your capacity to provide such as attending a candidate forum or accessing rides to the polls.
- Website – Joining with other community organizations to house all relevant and important election information on one website can prevent confusion and provide greater clarity.
- Pooling volunteers – Different coalition partners will have varying support from

volunteers willing to help with the election. Sharing volunteers across coalition partners can maximize impact.

- Calendar for engagement efforts and events – A calendar can provide crucial guidance for collaboration within a coalition. For example, it's never wise for two different organizations to knock on the same doors on the same afternoon or to host two competing "Know Your Rights" seminars simultaneously. A calendar can help to prevent overlap.

## **CANDIDATE ENGAGEMENT**

Engaging with candidates during the election cycle can be important to communicating your affordable housing priorities and laying the groundwork for future relationships with newly elected officials. Raising housing on the political agenda will happen only when candidates for elected office understand that the issue of affordable housing is important to voters, so it is important to educate and engage candidates early and often. Candidate engagement can take many forms: candidate forums, town hall meetings, candidate surveys, and candidate fact sheets. There are also opportunities to invite candidates to interact with residents or community members through meetings and site visits.

### **Educate Candidates**

Election engagement can help educate candidates on affordable housing and raise the profile of your organization as a critical voice in their district. When educating candidates, it is important to stay nonpartisan and to not endorse, rank, rate, or score candidates. While your organization cannot criticize candidate statements, you can add perspective or correct misinformation. In engaging with candidates, you may also want to report the number of new voters your organization has been able to register to emphasize your commitment to election activities.

Asking candidates to fill out a questionnaire can be a way to learn more about their positions while making them aware of your organization and the issues that are important to renters.

Candidate questionnaires should go to all candidates, provide clear guidance, and give a reasonable amount of time for response. Once a questionnaire is completed, you can distribute to voters to help inform them of candidate positions. NLIHC produced a sample candidate questionnaire, which can be found in the *Our Homes, Our Votes* toolkit. Please contact NLIHC if you would like help putting together a candidate questionnaire that includes federal policy.

Candidates also learn what issues are important to voters by reading the letters to the editor page of the newspaper. Consider having impacted renters write letters about issues that are important to them; letters can often be published as a response to a story in which candidates have discussed poverty issues.

### **Host Candidate Events**

The best way to get candidates to acknowledge the importance of low-income renters as part of the electorate is to provide opportunities for them to interact with people who have lived experience in the housing crisis. A later section of the *Advocates Guide* will detail how housing providers can organize candidate events.

There are several types of candidate events – visits, forums, and town halls – that can be effective tools for candidate engagement. If you are inviting candidates to visit your organization, consider including a tour or provide a chance to hear directly from residents or clients. It can often be very powerful when candidates are asked about housing issues or homelessness in public forums or town hall meetings. While both public events allow candidates to have open discussion of topics and issues, forums tend to be more moderator-led discussions and town halls encourage larger audience participation. Hosting an effective candidate event requires sufficient planning time. You will want to ensure that both candidates and attendees know about the event in advance. To increase attendance, consider involving multiple groups in hosting the event and minimizing barriers to participation, like offering food, childcare services, or transportation.

In hosting events with candidates in attendance, be sure not to show support or endorsements. Candidates can visit your organization as public figures (elected officials or field experts), as a candidate, or of their own initiative. If a candidate is visiting your organization as a public official, there should be no mention of their candidacy, however, they can discuss their legislative accomplishments. It is also fully legal and acceptable for an elected official to receive an award from your organization for work on housing. If candidates are visiting as part of a campaign, then they should not be fundraising. An important best practice is to invite all candidates to events equally lest you be perceived as favoring one candidate.

## **CAPITALIZING ON YOUR PROJECT**

Once Election Day is over, take a few days to rest. You deserve it! Then, it is time to do a few things: celebrate your accomplishments and honor your volunteers. Evaluate your project and your results and plan what you will do differently in the next election cycle.

Next, set up appointments for elected officials to meet with the renters or clients you serve to discuss housing issues important to your organization and be prepared with statistics showing the increased voting rates in your community. Now that renters and staff have been energized by being involved in the election process, talk to them about who might be interested in running for local office themselves.

Most importantly, consider your voter engagement project to be an ongoing effort; continue to make registration, education, and mobilization a part of your agency's day-to-day activities.

# Our Homes, Our Votes Engagement Plan

---

## GET STARTED BY ANSWERING THESE QUESTIONS AND FILLING IN THE BLANKS OF THE TEMPLATE BELOW.

Completing a voter engagement plan for your agency will help you assess how best to incorporate voter registration, education, and mobilization into your agency's work. This template presents a menu of activities that your organization may want to consider.

Please let NLIHC know that you are participating! Contact NLIHC's Field Team at 202-662-1530 or [outreach@nlihc.org](mailto:outreach@nlihc.org) with a description of your project.

## WHY PARTICIPATE IN ELECTIONS?

Below are some goals driving organizations' efforts with voter engagement projects. Check those that apply to your organization and add any others.

- Engage renters in civic participation and help them become familiar with how the decisions of elected officials affect their lives.
- Elevate the issue of homelessness and housing scarcity in public debate.
- Educate elected officials on low-income housing issues and on how their decisions affect residents.
- Build influential relationships with elected officials. Help develop residents' leadership skills.
- Assist residents in meeting community service requirements, if applicable. Earn positive press for your program or project.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## LEGALLY SPEAKING

501(c)(3) organizations can, and should, engage in nonpartisan election-related activity, including voter registration, education, and mobilization. 501(c)(3)s cannot in any way support or oppose particular candidates. For detailed information on these issues:

\_\_\_\_\_ Contact the Office of the Secretary of State or Board of Elections in your state to learn your state's rules for voter registration drives.

\_\_\_\_\_ Look at the *Permissible Activities Checklist* put together by Nonprofit VOTE at: [nonprofitvote.org/resource/staying-nonpartisan-permissible-election-activities-checklist-2/](https://nonprofitvote.org/resource/staying-nonpartisan-permissible-election-activities-checklist-2/)

\_\_\_\_\_ Visit the League of Women Voters at [www.vote411.org](http://www.vote411.org) for the latest information on voting in your state.

\_\_\_\_\_ Read and review *Keeping Nonpartisan During Election Season* by Bolder Advocacy at: [bolderadvocacy.org/resource/keeping-nonpartisan-during-election-season](https://bolderadvocacy.org/resource/keeping-nonpartisan-during-election-season).

## Setting Goals for Registering Voters

1. What percentage of your residents, members, or clients will you register? What number?
2. Will your agency also register other low-income members of the community, beyond those served by your programs?
3. How many weeks do you have until the deadline to register voters?
4. How many people must you register on average per week to meet your goal?

## Assigning Responsibilities

1. Which staff person will ultimately be responsible for meeting registration goals?
2. Which resident leaders will have responsibility for meeting registration goals?

## Preparing to Register Voters

Your local Board of Elections or County Clerk's office can be a valuable source of information as you plan to register clients to vote. You should check with them to:

1. Learn the registration deadline for the general election in your state.
2. Ask whether anyone can register voters in your state or whether a person must first become deputized or meet other requirements.
3. Request the voter rolls for your locality. There may be a small charge for this, but it is important; you will use this list to determine which of your residents, members or clients are already registered and which need to change their official voting address.
4. Request enough voter registration forms to meet your registration goals.
5. Determine whether there are special requirements before registering voters.
6. Determine who will obtain the county voter list and pick up the voter registration forms.

## REGISTRATION CHECKLIST

For each section, check the ways in which your agency will register voters. In the space after the activity, list the staff, volunteer, or resident leader who will carry out the activity and the timeframe with a deadline.

### Fitting Voter Registration into Your Agency's Regular Contact with Residents

\_\_\_\_\_ Add voter registration to the client intake process. Ask people directly to register and assist them with completing the form; do not just provide the form.

\_\_\_\_\_ Register clients when they come in to receive your services, or new renters when moving into new buildings.

\_\_\_\_\_ Train all staff and volunteers who work directly with renters or clients to be able to answer questions and assist with registration forms.

\_\_\_\_\_ Add a voter registration component to all job training, computer skills, financial literacy, or other classes offered by your agency.

\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff or volunteer responsible for organizing these activities: \_\_\_\_\_

### Planning Specific Voter Registration Activities

\_\_\_\_\_ Hold a social or other event at which voter registration is an emphasis.

\_\_\_\_\_ Host an event for National Voter Registration Day (September 20, 2022), <http://nationalvoterregistrationday.org/>.

\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff or volunteer responsible for organizing these activities: \_\_\_\_\_

## Organizing a Door-To-Door Campaign

\_\_\_\_\_ Train residents, staff, and other volunteers who are already registered to go door-to-door to register low-income renters. Use the county voter list to determine who needs to be registered and whose registration needs to be updated.

\_\_\_\_\_ Appoint residents as building captains, floor captains, etc. Ensure they are trained on the rules in your state and make them responsible for registration and turnout where they live.

\_\_\_\_\_ For locked buildings where you have not recruited a resident captain, approach landlords to ask if they will allow door-to-door registration or a registration table in the lobby.

\_\_\_\_\_ Consider offering public recognition to those who register the most new voters or the highest percentage of their area.

Staff or volunteer responsible for organizing these activities: \_\_\_\_\_

## Reaching Out to the Community

\_\_\_\_\_ Have your registrars reach out into the community to register other low-income, homeless, or underrepresented people.

\_\_\_\_\_ Provide a voter registration and information table at neighborhood events.

\_\_\_\_\_ Make sure everyone on the staff and board is registered.

Staff or volunteer responsible for organizing these activities: \_\_\_\_\_

## KEEPING RECORDS

Keeping records of the people you register to vote helps both with determining whether you have met your registration goals and with planning Get Out the Vote activities. There is a sample database for recordkeeping at the end of this section.

Where allowable by law, one easy way to gather the information for your list is to collect voter registration forms from new registrants, then photocopy the forms or portions of forms before mailing them in. You can also have new registrants fill out a two-part pledge card. They will keep the half of the card that reminds them of their pledge to vote and you will keep the half with their contact information.

Who will be responsible for keeping records of who becomes registered to vote? \_\_\_\_\_

## EDUCATING CLIENTS AND ELECTED OFFICIALS

1. Which staff person will ultimately be responsible for meeting education goals?
2. Which resident leaders will have responsibility for meeting education goals?

### Education Checklist

For each section, check the ways in which your agency will educate voters and candidates.

### Educating Renters on Voting and Their Rights as Voters

\_\_\_\_\_ Educate clients and low-income renters on identification requirements for voter registration and voting in your state, especially if these rules have recently changed.

\_\_\_\_\_ Obtain sample ballots from your board of elections or county clerk's office and distribute to residents.



\_\_\_\_\_ Arrange for someone from your board of elections or county clerk's office to come to your agency to provide a demonstration of your county's voting machines and explain people's rights as voters.

\_\_\_\_\_ Host a discussion on the importance of voting and what can be gained by increasing the percentage of voters who are low-income renters and allies.

\_\_\_\_\_ Encourage residents to sign up as poll workers.

### **Educating Voters on the Issues**

\_\_\_\_\_ Obtain materials on current federal affordable housing issues from NLIHC at <http://nlihc.org/explore-issues>.

\_\_\_\_\_ Host a discussion to clarify who your community's elected officials are and the connection between what those officials do and your clients' lives.

\_\_\_\_\_ Arrange for clients to attend or watch a candidate debate or public forum.

\_\_\_\_\_ Ask all candidates to complete a candidate questionnaire and distribute their answers. Publish the answers on your website, if possible. For information on putting together a questionnaire or hosting a forum, see the *Our Homes, Our Votes* toolkit [www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org](http://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org).

\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Educating Candidates**

\_\_\_\_\_ Provide factsheets to candidates so that they can speak knowledgeably about the housing shortage, cost burdens, and homelessness in your area.

\_\_\_\_\_ Include information on your agency when sending candidates your questionnaire.

\_\_\_\_\_ Encourage renters, members, or clients to write letters to the editor explaining why affordable housing is an important issue as they consider how they will vote.

\_\_\_\_\_ Prepare low-income voters to ask questions at candidate forums or town hall events. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Arrange for each candidate for office to take a tour of your agency and speak with clients.

\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## **PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO VOTE**

Some low-income people, including people experiencing homelessness and ex-offenders, are at a greater risk of being turned away from the polls on Election Day or otherwise being disenfranchised. Many national organizations participate in the non-partisan Election Protection coalition which staffs a voting rights hotline at 866-OUR-VOTE. In addition to the hotline, you can find more information about voting requirements and potential voter suppression issues in your state by visiting [www.866ourvote.org/state](http://www.866ourvote.org/state).

You may also want to contact a local attorney who is experienced in voter protection. He or she can help identify potential local issues and can also be available on Election Day in case anyone experiences problems voting.

Who will be responsible for ensuring that the rights of the people you work with are protected on Election Day? \_\_\_\_\_

# MOBILIZING VOTERS

## Setting Goals for Getting Out the Vote (GOTV)

1. What is the total number of people your agency plans to register to vote? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many additional renters are already registered (from the voter list you obtained from your county clerk or board of elections)? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your total number of potential voters (A+B)? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What percentage of these people would you like to see vote on Election Day? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is the total number of people you would like to see vote on Election Day? \_\_\_\_\_

## Reminding People to Vote

1. Which staff person will ultimately be responsible for meeting mobilization goals? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Which resident leaders will have responsibility for meeting mobilization goals? \_\_\_\_\_

# PLANNING FOR ABSENTEE BALLOTS AND EARLY VOTING

Absentee ballots can be requested by voters in all states who are unable to get to the polls on Election Day. This option is available in all states, but the rules about eligibility and process vary. In some states, there is no reason required for absentee voting and all voters have the option to vote by absentee ballot or to vote before Election Day. Providing your clients with absentee ballot request forms or helping them to take advantage of early voting, if available, is a great way to increase voter turnout.

Voting by absentee ballots generally involves two steps. First, clients fill out forms requesting their ballots. Once they receive their ballots, clients fill them out and return them.

Check with your county clerk or board of elections on each of the following questions:

1. What is the deadline in your state for requesting absentee ballots?
2. When must ballots be returned to the county?
3. Does your state allow for no-excuse absentee ballots (residents may vote absentee even if they are able to go to the polls on Election Day)?
4. Does your state allow for early voting?
5. Who will be responsible for coordinating absentee ballots and early voting?

# MOBILIZATION CHECKLIST

For each section, check the ways in which your agency will mobilize voters and candidates.

## The Months and Weeks Before Election Day

\_\_\_\_\_ If time allows, request an updated list of registered voters from your Board of Elections to ensure that the voters you registered are included.

\_\_\_\_\_ Investigate the possibility of adding a polling place at your agency.

\_\_\_\_\_ Download and print GOTV materials, including posters, from [www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org](http://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org).

\_\_\_\_\_ Host voting-related events on the first Tuesday of the month to get residents accustomed to participating in civic engagement activities on that day.

\_\_\_\_\_ Make first contact with each voter in your database. Call them, thank them for registering, and remind them to vote.

\_\_\_\_\_ Recruit residents or other volunteers who will spend Election Day going door-to-door to get out the vote. Prepare captains to turn out all registered people on their floor or in their building, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_ Obtain an updated voter registration list once the deadline for registering new voters has passed. Check against your database and prepare a final list of voters to be mobilized.

### **One to Two Weeks Before Election Day**

\_\_\_\_\_ Make second contact with voters in your database. Call them, remind them to vote on Election Day, and provide them with their polling place. Ask whether voters will need a ride to the polls.

\_\_\_\_\_ Continue to plan for Election Day:

- Hold a training session for Election Day volunteers.
- Print lists of all of your registered clients from your database whose doors will be knocked on when Election Day comes. Print in groups of 20-30 people based on geography and the number of Election Day volunteers.
- Arrange to provide rides to the polls for those who need them.
- Plan to provide lunch for your Election Day volunteers.
- Plan a party for after the polls close.
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### **The Day Before Election Day**

\_\_\_\_\_ Make your third contact with each voter in your database. Call and ask them to commit to vote the following day. Remind them of the location of their polling place and the times that polls will be open.

\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Election Day**

\_\_\_\_\_ Have volunteers with lists of registered residents knock on the doors of everyone on their list, crossing off the names of those who have voted. If a voter is not home, leave a pre-printed note on the door. Call or knock again until everyone has voted, or until the polls are closed.

\_\_\_\_\_ Provide rides to the polls for residents who need them.

\_\_\_\_\_ Celebrate! Host a party for voters and volunteers. Watch the election results.

\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Post-Election Day**

\_\_\_\_\_ Thank voters and volunteers and share your success stories.

\_\_\_\_\_ Evaluate your program and plan your next project. Continue with registration and education activities.

\_\_\_\_\_ Meet with newly elected officials and discuss your priority issues.

\_\_\_\_\_ Consider if there are staff or residents who should be encouraged to run for office.

\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## CONSIDERING RESOURCES

Once you have gone through all the items in this template you will have a better sense of what resources will be required to implement your voter engagement project. Whether simple or more advanced, all voter engagement projects will involve some level of resources. Now that you know what you would like to accomplish, you should identify what funding sources you can access and how you might work with other organizations to leverage resources.

How much funding do you anticipate needing? This funding should cover things like voter databases, supplies, transportation, training, events, etc.

What sources of funding can you access?

Other organizations may have resources that your organization can access such as meeting space, access to volunteers, or machines for printing materials. Student groups may be interested in registering voters as part of a community service project. A civic group may already be providing rides to the polls and could include your targeted voters in their plans. Remember to partner only with non-partisan, nonprofit organizations.

What groups in your area might you partner with, and in what ways?

## APPENDIX: SAMPLE RECORD KEEPING DATABASE

Just registering voters will not ensure an increase in voter turnout. To have a successful mobilization operation, you must contact your newly registered voters in the weeks and days leading up to the election. To do this effectively, you will need to have a record of who is registered to vote.

The easiest way to keep records is in a database format. There are numerous voter data tools available, and some are quite expensive. In many states, there might be a Civic Engagement Roundtable or other such organization that is providing nonprofits with access to voter lists. This will be for more advanced operations that intend to register and mobilize voters over several election cycles.

Your voter database does not have to be complex or have numerous fields, but should include the following:

First Name	Last Name	Street Number	Street Name	City	State	Zip Code	Phone	Email	Polling Place
------------	-----------	---------------	-------------	------	-------	----------	-------	-------	---------------

Note that street number and street name are kept as two separate fields. If you plan to knock doors on Election Day, the ability to sort by street will be useful for organizing a door-to-door Election Day outreach drive.

There are many ways to compile this data. One way is to enter the data straight from the voter registration card once the new registrant fills it out. Another way is to have the new registrant fill out both sides of a pledge card. They give you one side and keep the other side. Once you have this information recorded you are well on your way towards a successful Get Out the Vote operation.

# Housing Providers and Election Participation – Tips and Best Practices

---

By Tori Bourret, ERASE Coordinator,  
NLIHC

**R**enters care deeply about voting, but they face many institutional barriers to doing so successfully. One of the simplest barriers to address is the circumstance of changing addresses and updating voter registrations when moving into new properties. Moving more frequently than homeowners is one of the many reasons that renters are registered and turning out at lower rates. The disproportionate rate of voter participation among renters is at the core of why housing policy often skews toward wealthy homeowners.

Numerous owners and operators of rental housing are working to partner with their residents to increase election participation. In 2020, NLIHC joined with many partners to launch the Housing Providers Council of the *Our Homes, Our Votes* project. The Housing Providers Council is a network created to support affordable housing property managers and owners in their efforts to increase voter registration and turnout among their residents. By the November 2020 elections, the Housing Providers Council included 45 housing providers representing over 700,000 units of rental housing in 46 states and DC. A full list of participants is available at: <https://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/housing-providers-council>.

NLIHC provides technical support, voter registration lists, templates, peer spaces for sharing, and volunteers to help providers' engagement efforts come to fruition. While these efforts continue to grow, 2020 provided numerous insights that inform the following series of recommendations for other developers and property managers to follow when engaging renters in the political process.

## 1. Research relevant election laws!

Before planning and implementing any voter engagement efforts, developers

and housing providers should research voter regulations. Each state has different rules for registering voters, early voting, absentee voting, voting in person, hosting a polling location, and transporting voters to the polls. NLIHC has basic guidance available at <https://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/voterinformationbystate>. Each state's board of elections or secretary of state's office website will be the best resource for a comprehensive list of election rules.

## 2. Build engagement efforts into ongoing programs and services already being offered.

It can be simple to provide voter registration opportunities in everyday functions of resident services. For example, adding registration forms to a welcome packet for new residents is a great way to prompt residents to update their registration status. This can also be part of a checklist for annual recertification for renters in subsidized properties. During the coronavirus pandemic, residential services coordinators (RSCs) at many properties called tenants on a weekly or monthly basis to make sure they were doing well and had necessary medical and other supports; voter registration and absentee updates should be part of these check-in calls.

## 3. Establish partnerships with external organizations to add capacity.

Property managers, developers, RSCs and other property staff are often stretched over too many tasks and struggling with capacity. Asking them to take on voter registration of residents as one more role can seem impossible. One way to decrease staff burden is by coordinating voter engagement activities with external partners such as the local League of

Women Voters. External partners can help by providing voter guides, staffing voter registration tables, or going door-to-door to provide information about election day voting options.

**4. Coordinate with tenant associations.**

Many developers partnered with tenant associations as part of their 2020 voter engagement efforts. At many properties, tenant leaders coordinate rides to the polls for residents or organize groups walks to nearby polling locations. Tenants' associations can be a trusted voice to provide trainings on civic responsibilities, including voting, and information on how to vote. These updates and trainings can be paired with other tenant events such as barbecues, social events, or volunteer and food drives at the property. Tenant associations and housing providers are sometimes opposed to one another, but increasing tenant participation in elections is an activity where partnership is in the best interest of everyone.

**5. Utilize the space you have!** One benefit of having a multifamily residential property at one's disposal is the space! Meeting rooms and common areas can be utilized when organizing voter engagement efforts. Sometimes just having a physical presence and the needed forms is a great reminder for tenants to engage in the civic process. When social gatherings are considered safe again, many housing providers and tenant associations should resume organizing candidate forums with various officials running for local office. Bringing the candidates face-to-face with renters gives the residents a chance to share their concerns, and for the candidates to see the impact affordable housing makes on people's lives.

**6. Be the polls.** Available community rooms and meeting spaces can easily be turned into polling locations on Election Day. Housing providers should consider registering properties as polling locations.

The first step is to connect with the local board of elections or county clerk to begin the process. Low-income renters will have better turnout if they only have to go to the first floor to vote!

**7. Get visual.** Displaying visuals throughout a property is a great way to provide simple reminders to residents about the voting process. Posters don't have to be the only visuals displayed. *Our Homes, Our Votes* provides templates for door hangers, flyers, and posters to housing providers and other organizations to aid in distributing information like polling locations, early voting dates, registration deadlines, etc. Keeping visuals simple and straight forward is a great way to get the message across to people with language and communication barriers.

**8. Track the data.** Utilizing voter records is a great way to pinpoint voter and registration outreach and measure success. This information is publicly available and can be obtained for a small fee. Voter lists were provided to housing providers that signed on the Housing Developers Counsel and these lists were utilized in the weeks leading up to the elections to alert potential voters about their registration status and then again to remind them to vote. The records can also be obtained after the elections to determine the success of the outreach efforts. If the number of registered voters and actual voters increased from before the elections and previous years, then its easy to quantify the extent your efforts helped increase registration and voter turnout.

These best practices will guide housing providers working to increase democratic participation and full community engagement among residents. Housing providers can play a key role in addressing low voter turnout among renters, which could lead to the passage of policies that adequately address the shortage of affordable housing and end homelessness.

# Best Practices and Tips for Advocacy and Lobbying

---

By Brooke Schipporeit, Housing Advocacy Organizer, NLIHC

**A**dvocacy is the act of providing information about an issue and organizing support for a cause. Anyone can participate in advocacy, including individuals and nonprofits. Advocacy can be done at all levels of government. NLIHC focuses on federal advocacy, but many of the best practices and tips included here also can be applied to state and local advocacy.

Lobbying is a specific type of advocacy when a position is taken on a certain piece of legislation. All lobbying is advocacy, but not all advocacy is lobbying. Most nonprofit organizations can lobby if it fits within their mission (see *Lobbying: Individuals and 501 (c) (3) Organizations* for more information about the permissions and limitations of lobbying for individuals and organizations).

Advocacy can take many forms, including organizing, educating decisionmakers and the public, engaging the media, hosting events, and lobbying. The most common type of advocacy is through contact with elected officials or their staff, but housing advocacy should not be limited to legislators. At the federal level, it is often important to advocate with the White House or officials at HUD and other agencies. The president's budget proposal each year sets the tone for budget work to come in Congress, so annual advocacy work around this is especially important.

Whether engaging with Members of Congress or officials in the Administration, it is important to remember that constituent feedback is a valued and necessary part of the democratic process. You do not have to be an expert on housing policy to advocate for it. Providing your perspective on the housing situation in your state and local community is extremely valuable to officials in Washington, DC, and can make a real difference

on the decisions made that impact advocates and their communities.

The most effective advocacy involves positive, ongoing relationships with policymakers and their staff. This ongoing education and relationship building can sometimes shift decisionmakers from staunch opponents to allies, but it can be a slow process. After establishing an initial relationship with officials and staff, advocates should engage with them on a regular basis. A best practice is to expose them to the issues of homelessness and affordable housing by inviting them to your events or to tour your organization or an affordable housing development. Officials who are supportive of your issues also should be engaged regularly so that housing remains a top priority on their agenda. Legislative allies are more likely to continue their support when they feel their efforts are noticed, so make sure to offer thanks often and publicly when possible.

## DETERMINING ADVOCACY TACTICS

There are several important factors to consider for successful advocacy. The first is to determine the goal you wish to achieve with your advocacy. This will inform the steps that follow. The next step is to identify the proper target of your advocacy efforts. On federal issues, you will want to decide whether it is best to bring your message to a Member of Congress for legislative action or to Administration officials in either the White House or agencies for executive or regulatory actions. Next, consider whether advocating is on behalf of oneself or an organization. Determining who is represented will shape the type of message you present. If advocating or lobbying on behalf of an organization, specific records of activity may need to be kept.

Once the audience is identified, craft the key points to convey, then determine how you will

share this information. There are several ways to advocate with government officials and their staff. Meetings are an important and effective tool for both starting conversations on housing issues and strengthening relationships with housing champions. Meetings can take place in person, over the phone, or virtually on an online video platform. The overall location, timing, materials, and structure of a meeting can dictate how effective your efforts will be. An alternative strategy to meeting with officials in their office is to organize or attend events in your local community or online, like townhalls, community events, or webinars, and invite your targeted officials to attend. Outside of face-to-face interactions, sending emails, making phone calls, writing letters, and engaging the media are also effective strategies to encourage support and build momentum around housing efforts.

## EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

A face-to-face meeting is often the most effective way to get your voice heard. If you have never participated in an advocacy meeting before, it can be helpful to think of it as a simple conversation in which you can briefly share your experiences, insight, and positions on affordable housing issues and solutions.

Consider your meeting an opportunity to build working relationships with decision makers and to educate them on the issues you care about and how these impact your community. Remember, advocates do not need to be experts. Oftentimes staff and elected officials will have less information about the topic than advocates, and additional information can be provided by the advocate after the meeting. If a housing or service provider group is being represented, you can also use the meeting as an opportunity to share examples of the impact of advocate work in the area that the elected official represents.

Given the busy schedule of elected officials, they may ask you to meet with a staff person who handles housing issues. Oftentimes, meeting with staff members is just as good or better than meeting with the official. Staffers often have more time to discuss concerns than an elected

official would be able to devote, so getting to know influential staff people and building relationships with them is crucial.

During the meeting, it is a best practice to frame your message in a way that connects the information you wish to share to the official's interests as much as possible. Connecting advocate work on affordable housing issues to the elected official's interest in, for example, veterans' issues, will often have a greater impact and can create a key connection that will lead to a stronger relationship with the office as you move forward.

The steps to planning and executing an effective meeting include scheduling the meeting, crafting an agenda that is mindful of your priorities and the limited time you will have, walking through your priorities with any others who will be joining the meeting, reviewing logistics, and maintaining momentum after the meeting.

### Scheduling a Meeting

The first step to arranging a meeting is to call the office you hope to meet with to request an appointment. A best practice is to call about two to four weeks ahead of your intended meeting date. It may take a while for the office to schedule the meeting once you have made the request. In some cases, legislative offices do not assign specific staff to meetings more than one week in advance to remain flexible as committee hearings and floor votes are being scheduled. However, offices receive many meeting requests, so do not hesitate to follow up as your requested meeting time gets closer.

Members of Congress have offices in Washington, DC, as well as in their home states. If you are setting up a local meeting, locate the contact information for your Congressperson's local office or for the local field office of the administrative agency you wish to meet with. This can usually be found on their respective websites. If planning to visit Washington, DC, contact congressional members' Capitol Hill offices or the appropriate federal agency (for key Members of Congress and offices of the Administration, see *Congressional Advocacy and Key Housing Committees* and *Federal Administrative Advocacy*). Members of Congress



can be reached by calling the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121 or by dialing their direct number listed on their office's website. Find who your Members of Congress are at [www.govtrack.us](http://www.govtrack.us).

When calling to schedule a meeting with elected officials, identify yourself by how you are connected to the official, such as being a constituent or working in the official's area of representation. Many offices give priority to arranging meetings with people connected to the area they represent. Once you have identified yourself, ask to schedule a meeting with the official. If the scheduler indicates that they will not be available during the timeframe you request, ask to meet with the relevant staff person. This will most often be the legislative assistant who covers housing issues. Some offices will ask you to fill out an online form, but a phone call will usually suffice.

Be sure to tell the office where you are from or where you work in the district or state, the purpose of the meeting, the organization you represent if applicable, and the number of people who will be attending the meeting so the staffer can reserve an appropriately sized meeting room. The scheduler may ask for a list of names of attendees; this information can often be sent closer to the date of the meeting if needed.

If scheduling a meeting that will take place over a virtual platform or conference call, be sure to specify this in your meeting request. Once the meeting is scheduled, confirm with the office which virtual platform will be used and who will be setting up and sharing the virtual meeting details.

Call or email the office at least 24 hours before the meeting to confirm the details of your meeting. If you are meeting with a specific staff person, you can call or email them directly. Be sure to confirm the meeting date and time, the meeting location (i.e., the building and room number, or virtual platform and login or call-in instructions), and reiterate the purpose of the meeting. You can also send relevant materials for them to review in advance such as factsheets. If

there are others attending the meeting with you, be sure they also have this information and your contact information in case they need to reach you the day of the meeting.

### **Crafting Agenda and Talking Points**

Developing an agenda for your meeting will help you maximize your time to ensure that the main points and priorities are addressed. Set an agenda based on how much time you have, usually no more than 20 or 30 minutes. Important elements to consider including in your agenda are introductions of the people in the meeting, an overview of the issue and how it impacts your community, two or three key elements of the issue or solutions to discuss, and a specific yes or no question to ask the official or staff member. Determine how long you think you will need for each section to ensure you have time to make it to all your agenda items during the meeting.

Once you have determined the key items you want to discuss, it can be helpful to prepare a set of talking points for each. Include data, stories, and your own experiences where possible. Use the goal of your meeting to develop a specific "ask" on the issues you raise in the form of a yes or no question. The ask should be a concrete action you would like to see them take as a step in resolving the affordable housing challenges you have presented. For example, ask if the Member of Congress will commit to supporting an expansion of funding for affordable housing programs in this year's budget.

When deciding how to frame your message, it is useful to research the official you are meeting with to gain insight on their interests, affiliations, committee assignments, and past positions and statements on housing issues. Committee assignments and interests are often listed on the official's website. You can find out how a Member of Congress has voted on key affordable housing legislation at [www.govtrack.us/congress/votes](http://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes). If you need help, do not hesitate to contact the NLIHC Housing Advocacy Organizer for your state at [www.nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NLIHC\\_Field-Team-Map.pdf](http://www.nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NLIHC_Field-Team-Map.pdf).

If you will be joined by a group of people, decide what roles everyone will play, including who will open the meeting, speak to each key point, and deliver your asks, and who will run the technology if meeting virtually. It can be helpful to host a planning call with your group a couple of days before your meeting to review the agenda and roles, talking points, and any relevant materials you plan to share. If meeting virtually, test the technology beforehand to make sure you and other group members feel comfortable using it and everything is working smoothly. It also can be helpful to establish cues for when each person should speak to avoid long pauses or talking over each other.

### **Leave Behind Written Materials**

It is useful to have information to reference throughout your meeting and leave with the official or staffer for further review and reference as needed. To emphasize the extent of the housing crisis in your community, provide information such as your state's section of *Out of Reach*, which shows the hourly housing wage in each county; the appropriate NLIHC Congressional District Profile or State Housing Profile that shows rental housing affordability data by congressional district and state; and your state's Housing Preservation Profile, which can be found under "Reports" at [preservationdatabase.org](http://preservationdatabase.org). These and other NLIHC research reports can be found at [nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state](http://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state) under "Resources." Legislation-specific resources can be found on NLIHC's Legislative Action Center at [nlihc.org/take-action](http://nlihc.org/take-action). The Opportunity Starts at Home campaign also offers factsheets about the intersection of housing with other sectors which can be found at [www.opportunityhome.org](http://www.opportunityhome.org).

### **Meeting Logistics**

Running through the logistical details of your meeting beforehand will contribute to a successful meeting. Make sure you know the building address and room number where your meeting is being held, or the call-in or login information if using a virtual meeting platform. It is important to arrive early to allow for time to get

through security and find the meeting location, or to troubleshoot any potential technology issues if applicable. Capitol Hill office buildings are large, and it takes time to navigate to the office where your meeting will be held. It is helpful to have the name of the person with whom you are meeting and the room number readily available in case you need to ask for directions.

Security can be tight at federal offices, especially those on Capitol Hill. To ensure that you do not bring items that may trigger a security concern and delay your entry into a building, review the list of prohibited items in Capitol Hill offices at [www.visitthecapitol.gov/plan-visit/prohibited-items](http://www.visitthecapitol.gov/plan-visit/prohibited-items).

### **Conducting the Meeting**

A successful meeting starts with dressing professionally and being punctual. If the meeting is being held virtually, avoid background clutter and background noise. Whether in person or virtual, a best practice is to arrive about ten minutes before the start time. During the meeting, remember to stick to your agenda and the speaking times you previously set for each item. If meeting virtually, remember to pause and allow the next speaker to unmute when switching speakers. Take detailed notes when possible, especially of any feedback you receive or any follow-up information you promise.

At your meeting, have each attendee briefly introduce themselves. Each introduction should mention your connection with the official, whether you are a constituent or whether your organization serves their constituents, and your connection to the meeting's topic. If your organization does not allow you to advocate or lobby as their representative, you can say you are speaking for yourself but still refer to your work as informing your perspective on any given issue during the meeting.

If you are meeting with an ally of affordable housing efforts, acknowledge the official's past support at the beginning of the meeting by thanking them. If meeting with an office that has an unfavorable record on your issues, indicate that you hope to find common ground

to work together on issues critical to your local community. Keep in mind that as you educate policymakers and develop positive relationships with them over time, they may eventually shift their positions favorably. Be sure to make the meeting conversational by asking the perspective of the official in addition to making your points.

Next, provide a brief overview of the affordable housing challenges in your community and the nation. Unless you already have a relationship with the person you are meeting with, do not assume they have a deep understanding of the problem. Be sure to keep these first portions of the meeting brief so that you have time to substantively discuss your key issues of concern. You can find national and state-specific housing data and factsheets at <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state> under “Resources.”

Move into the main portion of the meeting by going over the top two or three specific housing issues you want to discuss. Try to present the issues positively as solvable problems and share data, personal stories, and experiences where possible. Utilize what you know about the official you are meeting with to frame your message in a way that connects with their professional interests, personal concerns, memberships, affiliations, and congressional committee assignments. The Opportunity Starts at Home multisector factsheets mentioned previously can be helpful to make this connection and are available at [www.opportunityhome.org/related-sectors](http://www.opportunityhome.org/related-sectors).

Remember, do not feel like you must know everything about the topic. If you are asked a question you cannot sufficiently answer, it is perfectly acceptable to say you will follow up with more information. In fact, offering to provide further detail and answers is an excellent way to continue engaging with the office after the meeting. If the conversation turns to a topic that is not on your agenda, listen and respond appropriately but steer the meeting back to your main points since you have limited time.

Before you end your meeting, make a specific ask about something that the official can support or

oppose, such as a solution you discussed, a piece of legislation, or the budget for affordable housing programs. Explain how your ask fits within the official’s priorities where possible. The office will agree to this ask, decline, or say they need time to consider.

After your meeting make a follow-up plan based on this response, including additional information or voices. Confirm with whom in the office you should follow up and ensure you have their contact information. If they say no to your ask, ask how else they might be willing to address the issues you have raised, and keep the door open for future discussion.

In closing the meeting, be sure to express thanks for their time and interest in the topics discussed, share any materials you would like to leave behind with the office if you have not already, and encourage the office to be in touch any time you or your office can be helpful in achieving the end goal of solving housing poverty. Finally, asking for a picture together to share on social media afterwards can be a great way to publicly thank the office for their time. If meeting virtually on video, you can ask to take a screenshot of everyone on screen or a selfie with the screen to share later.

### **Follow Up After Your Meeting**

Because the best advocacy focuses on sustained relationship building, it is important to continue conversations with officials and staff after your meeting. Following your visit, send a letter or email thanking the official or staff member for their time, reaffirming your views, and referencing any agreements made during the meeting. Include any additional information that you promised to provide.

Social media and online blogs are great tools for publicly thanking officials and their staff. Be sure to tag the official in your social media posts and include the photo from your meeting if you have one. Utilizing online platforms allows you to publicly express your gratitude for the availability of the official and their staff and is an opportunity to strengthen your relationship. Sharing about your meeting publicly also reminds the office

that they are accountable to follow up on the commitments they made to you or get information on questions they had.

Once you have thanked the office and provided any promised follow-up information, monitor action on your issues and asks over the coming months. Contact the official or staff member to encourage them to act during key moments or to thank them for acting in support of these issues. Be sure to share any relevant feedback you receive from the office with your statewide affordable housing coalition or NLIHC. Feedback related to each group's priorities helps build on your efforts and keep you informed as issues move forward. If you met with an office on behalf of your organization, it is also helpful to share what you learn during your meeting with your network where applicable, including your members, your board, and your volunteers.

## CONGRESSIONAL RECESS

Throughout the year, Congress takes breaks from being in session called “recesses” or district work periods when senators and representatives leave Washington, DC to spend time in their home communities. Recess provides advocates with a great opportunity to interact with Members of Congress face-to-face without having to travel to Washington, DC. Members spend time on recess meeting with constituents and conducting other local work. You can take advantage of congressional recesses by scheduling district meetings with your Senators and Representative or inviting them to attend your events or tour your organization or property.

Many Members of Congress also hold town hall meetings during recesses. These events provide the opportunity to come together as a community to express concerns and ask questions about an official's positions on important policy issues. If your Members of Congress are not planning to convene any town hall meetings during a recess, you may be able to work with others in the district to organize one and invite your senators or representative to participate.

It is important to note that Members of Congress cannot officially introduce, co-sponsor, or vote on

legislation during recess because these actions can only take place when in session. It is therefore especially important to follow up on any meetings held during recess once Congress resumes session.

To find out when Congress is not scheduled to be in session and therefore will be on recess, visit <https://www.rollcall.com/congressional-calendar/>, or contact NLIHC's Field Team at [outreach@nlihc.org](mailto:outreach@nlihc.org) for the latest, as these schedules can sometimes change at the last minute.

## SENDING EMAILS

Email is the most common way to communicate with Members of Congress and their staff. Many congressional staff prefer emails because they can be easily labeled, archived, and tallied, and emails do not have to go through the lengthy security process that mailed letters do. Congressional offices can receive tens of thousands of emails each month, so it is important to present affordable housing concerns concisely and reference specific solutions or bills when possible.

The best way to ensure your email is received is to reach out to the dedicated housing staff person in a congressional office when possible. If you do not know how to find the email address of the best person for a particular office, contact NLIHC's Field Team at [outreach@nlihc.org](mailto:outreach@nlihc.org). NLIHC provides email templates for key legislation on our Legislative Action Center at [nlihc.org/take-action](https://nlihc.org/take-action).

## MAKING PHONE CALLS

Calls can be an effective strategy, especially if an office receives several calls on the same topic within a few days of each other. You may want to encourage others in your district or state to call around the same time that you do to reinforce your message.

When you call, ask to speak to the staff person who deals with housing issues. If calling a Member of Congress, be sure to identify yourself as a constituent, say where you are from, and if applicable, have the names and numbers of specific bills you plan to reference. The days before a key vote or hearing are an especially

effective time to call. Factsheets and other resources for key legislation can be found and used as talking points on NLIHC’s Legislative Action Center at [nlihc.org/take-action](http://nlihc.org/take-action).

To call your Members of Congress, locate Members of Congress at [www.govtrack.us](http://www.govtrack.us), then call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121, and an operator will connect you directly with the office you request. Additionally, Members of Congress each have their own website that will list the direct phone numbers for each of their offices.

## WRITING LETTERS

Mailing written letters is a decreasingly effective tool for advocating with Members of Congress and other decision-makers because of extensive security screening that delays delivery, but letters can still be used as an advocacy tool for less pressing matters. For Members of Congress, address the letter to the housing staffer to ensure it ends up in the right hands. Use the following standard address blocks when sending letters to Congress:

### Senate

The Honorable [full name of official]  
ATTN: Housing Staffer  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

### House of Representatives

The Honorable [full name of official]  
ATTN: Housing Staffer  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

## ADDITIONAL WAYS TO ENGAGE ELECTED OFFICIALS

Meetings, emails, calls, and letters are not the only effective ways to engage with officials about issues that concern you. Other ways to advocate include:

### In-Person and Virtual Engagement

- Inviting an official to speak at your annual meeting or conference (in person or virtually).
- Organizing a tour of your organization

or affordable housing developments and featuring people directly impacted sharing their stories and expertise.

- Holding a public event and inviting an official to speak (in person or virtually).
- Hosting a community discussion and inviting an official to participate (in person or virtually).

### Social Media and Traditional Media

- Tweeting at officials or commenting on their social media posts.
- Getting media coverage on your issues and forward the coverage to housing staffers of Members of Congress. For example:
  - Organize a tour for a local reporter or set up a press conference on your issue.
  - Call in to radio talk shows.
  - Write letters to the editor of your local paper or submit opinion pieces.
  - Call local newspaper editorial page editors and set up a meeting to discuss the possibility of the papers’ support for your issue.

### Utilizing Influential Supporters

- Eliciting the support of potential allies who are influential with officials, like your city council, mayor, local businesses, unions, or religious leaders. Asking them to speak out publicly about the issue and weigh in with your state’s congressional delegation.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- For information about NLIHC’s policy priorities and opportunities to take action, visit NLIHC’s Legislative Action Center at [www.nlihc.org/take-action](http://www.nlihc.org/take-action).
- For state and local data and other resources, visit [www.nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state](http://www.nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state).
- Contact NLIHC’s Field Team by visiting [www.nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NLIHC\\_Field-Team-Map.pdf](http://www.nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NLIHC_Field-Team-Map.pdf) to find the Housing Advocacy Organizer for your state or email [outreach@nlihc.org](mailto:outreach@nlihc.org).

For information on key Members of Congress and offices of the Administration, see *Congressional Advocacy and Key Housing Committees* and *Federal Administrative Advocacy*, and find your members of Congress at [www.govtrack.us](http://www.govtrack.us).

# Best Practices and Lessons Learned: Building Multi-Sector Coalitions

---

By Mike Koprowski, Campaign Director for Opportunity Starts at Home, and Chantelle Wilkinson, Housing Campaign Manager, Opportunity Starts at Home

**R**esearch clearly demonstrates that housing is inextricably linked to an array of outcomes in other sectors. The consequences of our current housing affordability crisis are spilling over into many other areas of life, including education, health, civil rights, economic mobility, food security, criminal justice, and more.

These sectors are increasingly recognizing that affordable homes are closely linked to their own priorities and concerns. It makes sense, then, that these sectors are growing more ready to join in on advocacy efforts to expand affordable housing for the most vulnerable people. The work to expand affordable housing solutions cannot be done by housing advocates alone. In the face of an unprecedented housing affordability crisis, along with the undeniable, cross-cutting realities demonstrated by research, powerful new constituencies are now possible in ways that they have not been before.

## ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY STARTS AT HOME CAMPAIGN

The *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign launched in March 2018 with the goal of broadening the affordable housing movement into other sectors. The campaign's Steering Committee represents a wide range of leading national organizations working shoulder-to-shoulder to advance federal policies that expand affordable housing for renters with the lowest-incomes: NLIHC, National Alliance to End Homelessness, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Children's HealthWatch, Catholic Charities USA, Children's Defense Fund, Community Catalyst, Food Research & Action Center, NAACP, JustLeadershipUSA, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Association



OPPORTUNITY  
STARTS AT HOME

of Community Health Centers, National Association of Social Workers, National Education Association, National League of Cities, National LGBTQ Task Force, National Women's Law Center, Natural Resources Defense Council, and UnidosUS. Together, these multi-sector partners are working to advance federal housing policies that: 1) expand rental assistance for every income-eligible household, 2) expand the supply of deeply affordable housing, and 3) provide emergency assistance to people experiencing unforeseen economic shocks to avert housing instability and homelessness.

The campaign deploys policy analysis, communications, and advocacy to impact opinion leaders, policymakers, and the public. It has full-time dedicated staff at the national level and is leveraging the capacity of participating organizations. Moreover, the national campaign is providing technical assistance to 20 state-based organizations to help the organizations build multi-sector coalitions and to support their advocacy efforts to impact federal policy. The 20 state-based organizations are: Housing California, Idaho Asset Building Network, Maine Together, Oregon Housing Alliance, Utah Housing Coalition, Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio, Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey, Housing Network of Rhode Island, Prosperity Indiana, Housing Action Illinois, Partnership for Strong Communities, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, Minnesota Housing Partnership, NC Child, Texas Homeless Network, Hawaii Appleseed, Mississippi Center for Justice, Empower Missouri, Arizona Housing Coalition, and Wisconsin Community Action Program Association.

To further expand the multi-sector network, raise awareness about the intersections of housing and other sectors, and reach a diverse array of new stakeholders, the campaign has a Roundtable. Representatives from roughly 91 multi-sector organizations, including housing, education, healthcare, civil rights, anti-poverty, seniors, faith-based, anti-hunger, veterans, LGBTQ, and more have joined the Roundtable, which is designed to foster cross-sector engagement.

## WHY BUILD MULTI-SECTOR COALITIONS TO ADVANCE HOUSING POLICY?

### Enrich Your Content

Multi-sector partners enrich content by adding diversity in expertise. For example, when the campaign began creating a “Fact Sheet” that demonstrated how housing is connected to health, it relied heavily on the knowledge of its health-sector partners to assist with framing, messaging, and research. The healthcare organizations were aware of powerful research unknown to campaign staff and helped incorporate language and messages that they knew would resonate with healthcare professionals. This type of collaboration is simply not possible if multi-sector voices are not at the table. The same process happened in the development of other fact sheets such as education/housing, civil rights/housing, food security/housing, and more. Having “unusual suspects” in a campaign will also help mainstream communications so that non-housing experts and novices can understand the message.

### Pique the Interest of Policymakers

The use of non-housing voices advocating for housing policies will pique the interest of policymakers in ways that traditional housing groups cannot do alone. For example: the national campaign’s Steering Committee sent a letter to Congress advocating for robust investments in the Build Back Better Act for housing vouchers, public housing, and the national Housing Trust Fund. Signatories included 45 leading

national organizations from an array of sectors. The endorsement of this bill by Children’s HealthWatch sends a clear signal to policymakers that it has implications for child health. Similarly, endorsement by the NAACP highlights implications for racial equity, endorsement by the National Education Association highlights implications for student achievement, and endorsement by the Food Research & Action Center highlights implications for food security. Not only does this grab the attention of policymakers, it also provides housers with new inroads to policymakers. Housing advocates often lament that certain elected officials “just don’t care about housing.” Chances are, though, that policymakers have prioritized an issue in their agenda to which housing is deeply connected. If a policymaker is, for example, primarily concerned with education, then housers can deploy their education partners to help make the case for why better housing policies will improve educational outcomes. When housers are working alongside educators, doctors, anti-hunger advocates, civil rights attorneys, anti-poverty experts, and faith-based leaders, it enables housers to approach policymakers in new ways.

## HOW TO BRING NON-HOUSING PARTNERS TO THE TABLE

### Be Armed with Facts and Research

Mountains of research demonstrate how housing is connected to other sectors, but it is often surprising how little of that research is known to other sectors. For example, education professionals may not be aware of the research showing that low-income children in affordable housing score better on cognitive development tests than those in unaffordable housing, or the research showing that local inclusionary zoning policies have been proven to dramatically improve the performance of low-income students and narrow the achievement gap between them and their more affluent peers. Fact sheets will help make the case: provide the hard numbers, the infographics, and the landmark studies showing that success in a partner’s own field of work depends on whether people have access



to safe, decent, affordable housing. The national campaign's [Fact Sheets](#) are a great resource.

### **Stress Mutual Interdependencies**

Once the facts are established, stress to prospective non-housing partners that you both need each other to be successful and that their goals are advanced with better housing policies. It is also important to emphasize that you are more likely to be successful if they add their sector's voice to the mix. The goal is to convince prospective non-housing partners that affordable housing is not simply a "nice to have," but rather a "need to have."

### **Do Your Homework on Their Language**

Before you even approach potential non-housing partners, study their work in advance, including their websites, goals, videos, reports, and published works. Learn the language with which they speak and then use their own language when explaining the importance of housing. The reality is that each sector has its own unique language and chances are high that you will talk past each other if you use language comfortable only to housers.

### **Be Patient and Have Flexible "Entry Points"**

Multi-sector work is the long game. Most non-housing organizations are unlikely to pivot overnight to housing issues. It takes persistence. Some organizations have been thinking about the intersections of housing for a long time and might be primed to align with housing advocacy efforts quickly, but many will be unsure exactly how they want to approach cross-sector work. Therefore, it is important to have flexible "entry points" through which organizations can participate in advocacy efforts. On the campaign's Roundtable these flexible "entry points" are possible. Participating in the Roundtable does not indicate endorsement of the campaign's policy goals, but rather a general commitment to ongoing dialogue and engagement. If the commitment you are asking for is too big and too fast, then you run the risk of potential multi-sector partners balking. Many want the space and freedom to learn about the campaign, stay updated on its progress, and occasionally engage in advocacy

where it makes sense for them. Even though the Roundtable is a lighter commitment, these types of structures enable advocates to get their foot in the door. Subsequently, you can start to build meaningful relationships and formalize regular communication channels, which eventually could blossom into something more robust. It is also important to regularly ask multi-sector partners for feedback about your work; after all, people are more likely to support what they help build.

## **THE CHALLENGES OF BUILDING MULTI-SECTOR COALITIONS**

Building multi-sector coalitions is hard work and is time-consuming. There are certainly inherent challenges, but they can be navigated successfully.

### **Bandwidth of Multi-Sector Partners**

Organizations that do not specialize in housing will have a myriad of other priority issues and limited bandwidth to expand their focus. They may want to participate and be supportive of your housing work but will have limited capacity to advance your priorities while focusing on their own issues. To overcome this, you must be prepared to shoulder the workload: provide them with the tools and resources in "bite size" pieces, write the first drafts of every call to action, sign-on letter, and fact sheet, and email simple instructions when the time is right to act.

### **Lack of a Common Language**

As mentioned earlier, each sector has its own unique language. For example: housers tend to talk about area median income, anti-hunger advocates tend to talk about the federal poverty level, and educators often talk about free/reduced priced lunch. Language barriers can be mitigated through consistent dialogue and by deeply researching other sectors to learn how they speak.

### **Sectors Are Not Monolithic**

When building your multi-sector table, it is never as simple as having one seat for education, one seat for health, one seat for hunger, and so on. Just as there are different "camps" within the

housing sector, there are also different “camps” in other sectors. For example, in the education sector, there are organizations that are pro-charter schools and anti-charter schools, and they each tap into different types of advocacy within their respective sector. Sectors are diverse within themselves, and these realities must be considered and discussed from the outset.

### **Lack of Relationships Across Siloes**

The staff of housing organizations might not have deep relationships with staff in other sectors. Those in the same sector tend to flock together, which certainly poses a challenge when building cross-sector tables. You may be able to identify a specific organization from another sector that you would like to engage with, but there is often the practical reality of “who do you email first?” This can be time-consuming and requires being intentional about building relationships across sectors.

### **Not Getting into the Weeds of Housing Policy**

When building multi-sector coalitions, you will be bringing in organizations that do not have expertise in housing policy. Non-housing organizations will not know the nuances of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, the Community Development Block Grant, or Housing Choice Vouchers. Yet the whole point of bringing them to the table is to eventually advocate for specific types of housing policy. This poses an inherent challenge: on the one hand, you must make sure that you do not lose them by getting too in the weeds about specific housing policies. Yet, as a houser, you know well that whether a particular housing policy is effective depends on the details. The devil is indeed in the details, but your partners from other sectors will not necessarily be equipped to discuss those details with you. You may have some multi-sector partners that are ready and willing to dive deep into the weeds of housing policy, but chances are that many will have neither the bandwidth nor interest in becoming housing policy wonks. An effective multi-sector coalition does not seek to make everyone an expert on housing policy but rather seeks to leverage the respective expertise already

in the room. Your multi-sector partners will eventually get to the point where they defer to you as the housing expert and trust your judgment on which housing policies will be most effective. Also, it can be helpful to identify a smaller working group that is reflective of your broader coalition but specializes in day-to-day policy advocacy work, such as identifying prospective legislative champions and coordinating meetings with policymakers.

# The HoUSed Campaign

---

By Sarah Saadian, Vice President of Public Policy, NLIHC

**W**ith congressional champions and national, state, and local partners, NLIHC in March 2021 launched the HoUSed campaign to advance anti-racist policies and achieve the large-scale, sustained investments and reforms necessary to ensure renters with the lowest incomes have an affordable and accessible place to call home.

## SOLUTIONS TO THE HOUSING CRISIS

The HoUSed campaign advocates for four solutions to America's housing crisis:

1. Bridge the gap between incomes and housing costs by expanding rental assistance to every eligible household.
2. Expand and preserve the supply of rental homes affordable and accessible to people with the lowest incomes.
3. Provide emergency rental assistance to households in crisis by creating a national housing stabilization fund.
4. Strengthen and enforce renter protections.

### Expanding Rental Assistance

A major cause of today's housing crisis is the fundamental mismatch between growing housing costs and stagnant incomes for people with the lowest incomes. In the U.S., renters need an annual income of nearly \$50,000 or \$23.96 an hour on average to afford a modest, two-bedroom apartment. This is far above the incomes of many working families, seniors, and people with disabilities. Since 1960, renters' incomes have increased by 5%, while rents have risen 61%. In only 5% of all U.S. counties can a full-time minimum-wage worker afford a one-bedroom rental home at fair market rent. There are no counties where a minimum wage worker can afford a two-bedroom rental home at fair market rent. Eight million of the lowest-income renters



pay at least half of their income on rent, leaving them without the resources they need to put food on the table, purchase needed medications, or make ends meet.

People of color are most harmed. Black households account for 13% of all households, yet they account for 26% of all extremely low-income renters and 40% of people experiencing homelessness. Latino households account for 12% of all U.S. households, 21% of extremely low-income renters, and 22% of people experiencing homelessness. Native Americans are dramatically overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness. This harm is compounded for women of color.

Despite the clear and urgent need, only one in four households who qualify for housing assistance receives it due to decades of chronic underfunding by Congress. Millions of eligible households are on waiting lists – often for several years – waiting for help. While people wait for assistance, many are pushed into homelessness, institutionalization, or incarceration.

Making rental assistance available to all eligible households – a core element of President Biden's housing platform – is central to any successful strategy to solve the housing crisis. A growing body of research finds that rental assistance can improve health and educational outcomes, increase children's chances of long-term success and increase racial equity. Rental assistance is a critical tool for helping the lowest-income people afford decent, stable, accessible housing, and the program has a proven track record of reducing homelessness and housing poverty.

Additional reforms are needed to ensure equitable access to these resources, including employing small area Fair Market Rents, simplifying applications, aggressively enforcing fair housing and civil rights, expanding the “Fair Housing Act” to ban discrimination on the basis of source of income, sexual orientation and gender identity, and marital status, among others.

### **Building and Preserving Homes Affordable to People with the Lowest Incomes**

A major cause of today’s housing crisis is the severe shortage of rental homes affordable and available to people with the lowest incomes. Nationally, there is a shortage of 7 million homes affordable and available to the lowest-income renters. For every 10 of the lowest-income renter households, there are fewer than four homes affordable and available to them. There is not a single state or congressional district in the country with enough affordable homes to meet this demand.

The shortage of affordable homes disproportionately impacts Black people, Native Americans, and Latinos, who are more likely than white households to have extremely low incomes, pay more than half of their income on rent, or experience homelessness. People with disabilities face barriers to affordable housing because of the lack of accessibility or locations far from critical services. Decades of structural racism and ongoing discrimination have created racial disparities in housing, which contribute to inequities in wealth, education, health, and more. Housing segregation was designed through intentional public policy, resulting in highly segregated communities today.

The private sector cannot – on its own – build and maintain homes affordable to the lowest-income renters without federal support. Zoning and land use reforms at the local level are needed to increase the supply of housing generally, and federal investments are needed to expand rental assistance and build and preserve decent homes affordable to the lowest-income renters.

To increase and preserve the supply of affordable rental homes, Congress should expand the

national Housing Trust Fund to at least \$40 billion annually to build and preserve homes affordable to people with the lowest incomes. Congress should also provide at least \$70 billion to preserve and rehabilitate our nation’s public housing infrastructure, make energy-efficient upgrades, and guarantee full funding for public housing in the future. By using federal transportation investments to require inclusive zoning and land use reforms, Congress can help reverse residential segregation and increase the supply of affordable and accessible homes.

Congress should also ensure states and communities use investments to affirmatively further fair housing, build the capacity of community-based organizations, including those led by Black and Asian people, Native Americans, and Latinos, and prioritize ownership by nonprofit entities, among other reforms.

Increasing the supply of deeply affordable housing not only helps the lowest-income people, but it can also alleviate rent pressure on those with higher incomes. Millions of low-income renters occupy units they cannot afford, and a greater supply of affordable, accessible rental housing for those with the lowest incomes would allow these renters to move into affordable units and free up their original units for renters who can better afford them.

### **Providing Emergency Rental Assistance to Stabilize Households**

Today, tens of millions of households are one crisis away from major economic hardship that could quickly spiral out of control. Most families in poverty who rent spend at least half of their incomes on housing, leaving virtually no margin for an unexpected expense. Broken-down cars, unreimbursed medical bills, or temporary declines of income can quickly send vulnerable households down the spiral of housing instability, eviction, and even homelessness.

Black women face the greatest threat of losing their homes to eviction. Black women renters are twice as likely as white renters to have evictions filed against them. Families with children are also at particularly high risk of eviction.

Eviction is not just a condition, but a cause, of poverty. An eviction record makes it harder for a family to find decent housing in a safe neighborhood and negatively impacts employment, as well as physical and mental health.

Emergency rental assistance can stabilize households experiencing economic shocks before these shocks cause instability and homelessness, which often require more prolonged and extensive housing assistance. A National Housing Stabilization Fund would provide emergency assistance to cover the gaps between income and rental costs during a financial crisis. Resources could also be used to provide housing stability services, such as counselors and legal aid. When combined, emergency housing assistance and support services can significantly reduce evictions and homelessness.

During the pandemic, Congress provided \$46 billion in emergency rental assistance to help millions of struggling renters at risk of losing their homes. Congress should build on the successes and lessons learned from this program by creating a permanent National Housing Stabilization Fund.

Congress should enact the “Eviction Crisis Act,” introduced by Senators Bennet (D-CO) and Portman (R-OH). The bill would create a National Housing Stabilization Fund to provide short-term, emergency assistance to help renters avoid eviction and remain stably housed.

### **Strengthening and Enforcing Renter Protections**

Affordable, stable, and accessible housing and robust housing choice are the foundation upon which just and equitable communities are built, but the power imbalance between renters and landlords puts renters at greater risk of housing instability, harassment, and homelessness, and it fuels racial inequity.

Congress should enact legislation to establish vital renter protections. A national right to counsel would help more renters stay in their homes and mitigate harm when eviction is unavoidable. “Just cause” eviction protections would ensure greater housing stability and

prevent arbitrary and harmful actions by landlords. Reforms are needed to ensure immigrants, people exiting the criminal legal system, and other marginalized people can fully access housing resources, among other needed changes.

### **“BUILD BACK BETTER ACT”**

The best opportunity to advance the HoUSed campaign agenda was through the “Build Back Better Act.” The House-passed bill included the largest single investment in quality, affordable, accessible homes for the country’s lowest-income people in history: \$25 billion to expand rental assistance to more than 300,000 households; \$65 billion to preserve public housing for its 2.5 million residents; and \$15 billion for the national Housing Trust Fund to build and preserve over 150,000 affordable, accessible homes for households with the lowest incomes.

At the time of publication, however, these housing investments are at risk. After centrist Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) announced in December 2021 that he would not vote for the House-approved bill, President Biden and congressional leaders are focused on enacting a scaled-back version of the economic recovery package that includes only those components that can garner the support of – and cost within the total amount approved by – all Senate Democrats.

Parts of the bill that do not make it into a scaled-back version could be repackaged into stand-alone bills. These would require support from all Senate Democrats and at least 10 Senate Republicans, as well as separate floor time during an election year, ensuring virtually no chance of enactment in 2022.

NLIHC and its members and partners continue to urge Congress to protect and advance the bill’s historic investments in rental assistance, public housing, and the Housing Trust Fund as part of any reconciliation bill that advances. As homelessness increases and millions of the lowest-income renters struggle to stay housed, we cannot let Congress miss this moment of opportunity.

## OTHER LEGISLATION

NLIHC worked with members of Congress to introduce or advance legislation supported by the HoUsed campaign, including:

- “Housing is Infrastructure Act of 2021” (H.R.4497) – a bill introduced by House Financial Services Committee Chairwoman Maxine Waters (D-CA) that includes NLIHC’s top priorities for an infrastructure and economic recovery package: \$75 billion to fully address the capital needs to repair public housing, \$45 billion in the national Housing Trust Fund, and a major expansion of rental assistance.
- “Ending Homelessness Act of 2021” (H.R.4496) – a bill introduced by Representatives Waters (D-CA), Emanuel Cleaver (D-MO), and Ritchie Torres (D-NY) that proposes to establish a universal voucher program, bans source-of-income discrimination, increases housing choice, and invests \$5 billion over 5 years in the national Housing Trust Fund.
- “Family Stability and Opportunity Vouchers Act” (S.1991) – a bill that would provide 500,000 new housing vouchers and counseling services to help families with children move to areas of opportunity.
- “Eviction Crisis Act” (S.2182) – a bill to establish a national housing stabilization fund to help families facing a financial shock avoid eviction. The bill is supported by the Opportunity Starts at Home campaign.
- “American Housing and Economic Mobility Act” (S.1368; H.R.2768) – a bill introduced by Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Representative Emanuel Cleaver (D-MO) that would invest nearly \$45 billion annually for the national Housing Trust Fund, provide resources to repair public housing, expand Fair Housing protections, and include additional resources to help end housing poverty and homelessness.

A full list of legislation endorsed by the HoUsed campaign is [here](#).

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

- Advocates should weigh in with the Administration and Congress on the importance of the HoUsed campaign and its top policy priorities.
- Advocates should encourage members of Congress to cosponsor legislation endorsed by the HoUsed campaign.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the HoUsed campaign website at [www.NLIHC.org/housed](http://www.NLIHC.org/housed).

# Working with the Media

---

By Jen Butler, Senior Director of Media Relations and Communications, NLIHC

**M**edia relations is the process of working with the media with the goal of informing the public of an organization's mission, policies, and practices in a positive, consistent, and credible manner. Cultivating and building strong relationships with the media are important to any organization's ability to advocate effectively. To successfully share key messages and campaigns, strategize and consider the communication tactics that will be the most useful in ensuring that the right audience is reached, and meaningful allies are secured. Comprehensive communication strategies will lead to deeper audience engagement and an increase in media activation.

## CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Working on a campaign can be labor-intensive. Advocates may work for months, even years, to develop and implement a campaign. A campaign may involve researching, branding/messaging, sharing, and measuring success. The success of a campaign could be measured by media engagement, social media metrics, and/or member/network participation. Think through the tools needed for a higher likelihood of success before deciding which to use to help share your campaign. Tease the campaign for people outside of your network, including the media.

### Media Toolkits

Develop a media toolkit and share it with your partners and stakeholders. A media toolkit compiles top-line information about your campaign into one document and can be used as a quick and handy guide for consistent messaging. Partners can quickly refer to the toolkit for source information. Share your toolkit ahead of the launch of your campaign and provide guidance for its use. A toolkit may include:

- **National & State Talking Points** – Identify between ten and 15 points of interest that can be referenced in a press release and/or in an interview.
- **Frequently Asked Questions** – Review news stories and social media for what people are talking about related to your campaign. Include popular questions and their answers to assist with messaging control.
- **Social Media Suggestions** – Research shows that reporters and stakeholders use social media as a resource for news. Social media is an important communications tool because it is designed to quickly disseminate information and reach wide audiences. Reporters often use Twitter to identify possible news stories, and stakeholders often use LinkedIn to share company updates. Include five or six sample posts for Twitter and Facebook as these are the most popular platforms for reaching audiences relevant to affordable housing issues. Include a hashtag in your samples so that you and others can track discussions about your issue.
- **Images, Graphs, Factsheets, and Infographics** – Posts with images trend at a higher impression and engagement rate than posts without images. Include approximately three images related to your campaign that may involve a “Coming Soon”, “Now Available”, or creative tagline from your campaign. Also, if any graphs or charts are a part of your campaign, include them in the toolkit with a suggestion to circulate on social media. Use factsheets and infographics to help promote snapshots of your message.
- **Testimonies** – Gather quotes from key leaders and influencers about your campaign. Testimonials from outside your organization or network are preferred. Suggest including a testimonial in a press release or reference one in an interview with the media. This helps to legitimize your campaign as being relevant beyond your network.

- **Press Release and Op-ed Templates** – Include a press release and op-ed sample/template that includes quotes from key state and organization leaders. Quotes from partnering national organizations could be included as well. Reporters tend to copy and paste press releases, so including quotes will help the reporter write the story and highlight your message. Include no more than three quotes in the press release from three different sources. Op-eds will help mobilize your campaign and garner more attention and reach, utilizing the media publication’s platform.

## INTERACTIONS WITH THE MEDIA

Interactions with the media often start with a cold call or email to a specific outlet to pitch (sharing relevant key points of your campaign to garner media interest) a story. The first interaction is often quick. Regardless of the type of interaction, reporters usually devote about 30 seconds to listen to or read a pitch. Therefore, your initial pitch must be pithy, precise, and honest.

Pitches are sometimes made on Twitter to generate an organic buzz around a topic. Pitching on Twitter is an effective strategy to increase earned media. This strategy circumvents cold calls or relying on one outlet to show interest in covering your campaign. Pitching on Twitter gets your message out using a platform that you control.

When pitching a story:

- Pitch the right news hook: think about current events and how they relate to the campaign. Ask the questions:
  - Why is this story important right now?
  - What makes the story or the angle unique?
  - Why should anyone care?
  - Is this story the first of its kind?
  - Is the event or development the largest or most comprehensive of its kind?
- Pitch the right person: use tools like [Meltwater](#), [Muck Rack](#), or [Google Alerts](#) to track and identify the right reporter for the right beat.
- Include a Press Release: circulate a press

release to all media contacts using tools like email, Meltwater, or a wire service about one week before the campaign starts but pitch the press release to key reporters prior to the wide release. Connect with a few key reporters that you’ve fostered relationships with or reporters who have recently covered your campaign topic. Share an embargoed copy of a report or highlight new data/research discussed in your campaign. On the date the press release is widely distributed, circulate it on Twitter and tag a few additional key reporters who are active on Twitter.

## GENERAL TIPS FOR SPEAKING WITH THE PRESS

It is important to foster relationships with appropriate media outlets to increase the opportunity for leading the narrative. This may require tracking coverage of your issue on social media and through media hits. Stay aware of a reporter’s beat and track reporters who may be new to the affordable housing beat. Shift your communication accordingly and respect a reporter’s preferred method of communication. If you are interested in fostering a relationship with a reporter, share relevant new research with that reporter ahead of a wide release.

Media relationships are reciprocal and should generate benefits for both parties. Before initiating any relationship, it will be important to determine your overall goal in reaching out to press and to identify your key messages around ending homelessness and increasing housing affordability. Gather background on your key press contacts to determine if they are the right press contacts for your campaign. Determine if they are currently on the housing beat and if they work for traditional newspapers, online media, television, or radio. If you encounter difficulty generating national press, utilize your local press to generate interest on a national level.

Once you’ve successfully managed to schedule a phone or in-person interview with a member of the media, be prepared with talking points, citations, and testimonials. Other tips for an interview are:



- Review your main points before the interview: decide on two to three key messages to convey.
- Remember that everything is on the record.
- Steer reporters toward the big picture: this is a systemic problem.
- Learn to pivot.
- Connect local issues to national problems.
  - Share affordable housing challenges specific to your community,
  - Share examples of what life is like for extremely low-income renters in your state, or
  - Use data to emphasize the importance of state or local housing initiatives and funding.
- Make your points brief and simple and avoid jargon.
- It's ok to say, "I don't know."
- Always end the interview by repeating your key messages or the one key takeaway.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

The OpEd Project: <https://www.theopedproject.org/>.

HubSpot *23 PR Tools for Monitoring & Managing Media Relations in 2021*: <https://bit.ly/2EiUOzr>.

*Extraordinary PR on Ordinary Budget*: <https://bit.ly/2qauZf3>.

Nonprofit Tech for Good: <https://nptechforgood.com/>.



---

# **Chapter 3:** NATIONAL HOUSING TRUST FUND

---



# The National Housing Trust Fund

---

By Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, NLIHC

**Administering Agency:** HUD’s Office of Affordable Housing Programs within the Office of Community Planning and Development.

**History:** The trust fund was enacted by the “Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008” on July 30, 2008 and was implemented in May, 2016.

**Population Targeted:** Extremely low-income renters.

**Funding:** In FY22, \$739.6 million was available, up from \$689.7 million in FY21.

**See also:** The *National Housing Trust Fund: Funding, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac* section of this guide.

The national Housing Trust Fund (HTF) was established as a provision of the “Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008,” which was signed into law by President George W. Bush. The primary purpose of the HTF is to close the gap between the number of extremely low-income renter households and the number of homes renting at prices they can afford. NLIHC interprets the statute as requiring at least 90% of the funds to be used to build, rehabilitate, preserve, or operate rental housing (HUD guidance sets the minimum at 80%). In addition, at least 75% of the funds used for rental housing must benefit extremely low-income households. One hundred percent of all HTF dollars must be used for households with very low income or less.

In the years since enactment of the HTF, the shortage of rental housing that the lowest-income people can afford has only gotten worse. The HTF offers the means to prevent and end homelessness if funded at the level advocated by NLIHC.

## HISTORY AND ADMINISTRATION

The HTF was created on July 30, 2008 when the president signed into law the “Housing

and Economic Recovery Act of 2008” (HERA), Public Law 110-289, 12 U.S.C 4588. The statute specified an initial dedicated source of revenue to come from an assessment of 4.2 basis points (0.042%) on the new business of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac (this is unrelated to profits). The HTF was to receive 65% of the assessment, and the Capital Magnet Fund (CMF) was to receive 35%. However, due to the financial crisis in September of 2008, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac were placed into a conservatorship overseen by the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA), which placed a temporary suspension on any assessments for the HTF and CMF.

On December 11, 2014, the new FHFA director lifted the temporary suspension of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac assessments for the HTF and CMF, directing Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to begin setting aside the required 4.2 basis points on January 1, 2015. Sixty days after the close of calendar year 2015, the amounts set aside were to be transferred to HUD for the HTF and to the Department of the Treasury for the CMF.

On April 4, 2016, HUD announced that there was nearly \$174 million for the HTF in calendar year 2016. On May 5, 2016, HUD published a [notice in the \*Federal Register\*](#) indicating how much HTF money each state and the District of Columbia would receive in 2016. The amounts available in subsequent years were \$219 million (2017), \$267 million (2018), \$248 million (2019), \$323 million (2020), \$690 million (2021) and 739.6 million (2022).

HUD published proposed regulations to implement the HTF on October 29, 2010. NLIHC and others provided extensive comments on how the regulations could be improved. On January 30, 2015, an HTF Interim Rule was published in the *Federal Register*. HUD explained that after states gained experience implementing the HTF, HUD would open the interim rule for public comment and possibly amend the rule. HUD published a [notice in the \*Federal Register\*](#) on April 26, 2021, inviting public comment about the

HTF Interim Rule; as of the date this article was drafted, a final HTF rule had not been published.

The HTF is administered by HUD's Office of Affordable Housing Programs (OAHP) within the Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD). The interim HTF regulations are at 24 CFR part 93. Where the HTF statute did not require specific provisions, HUD modeled the HTF interim rule on the Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME) regulations.

NLIHC has an interim report summarizing how states have awarded their 2016 HTF allocations, called *Getting Started*, available at [https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NHTF\\_Getting-Started\\_2018.pdf](https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NHTF_Getting-Started_2018.pdf). NLIHC will have a similar report regarding 2017 HTF awards by the time this *Advocates' Guide* is published and intends to have reports on 2018 HTF awards later in 2022 followed by another report on 2019 HTF awards by the end of 2022.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

The HTF is principally for the production, rehabilitation, preservation, and operation of rental housing for extremely low-income households (ELI), those with income less than 30% of the area median income (AMI) or with income less than the federal poverty line. It is funded with dedicated sources of revenue on the mandatory side of the federal budget and thus does not compete with existing HUD programs funded by appropriations on the discretionary side of the federal budget.

The HTF is a block grant to states. The funds are to be distributed by formula to states based on four factors that only consider renter household needs. Seventy-five percent of the value of the formula goes to the two factors that reflect the needs of ELI renters because the HTF statute requires the formula to give priority to ELI renters. The other two factors concern the renter needs of very low-income (VLI) households, which are households with income between 31% and 50% of AMI.

A state entity administers each state's HTF program and awards HTF to entities to create

new affordable housing opportunities. The state designated entity might be the state housing finance agency, a state department of housing or community development, or a tribally designated housing entity. HUD's list of designated entities is available at <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/htf/grantees> (although the staff on that list is not kept up-to-date). NLIHC attempts to keep the key staff of state designated entities up-to-date at <https://nlihc.org/explore-issues/projects-campaigns/national-housing-trust-fund/allocations> (scroll down to select a state).

## KEY PROGRAM DETAILS

### Funding

As a result of the decision by FHFA to lift the suspension on Fannie Mae's and Freddie Mac's obligations to fund the HTF and the CMF, the first funds for the HTF became available for distribution to the states in summer 2016. The amount of funding was determined by the volume of the business conducted by Fannie and Freddie in calendar year 2015, which yielded nearly \$174 million for the HTF for 2016. Based on their total business for 2017, 4.2 basis points provided \$219 million for the HTF in 2017, \$267 million in 2018, \$248 million in 2019, \$323 million in 2020, \$690 million for 2021, and 739.6 million for 2022.

### Targeted to Rental Housing

The overview section of the interim rule declares that the HTF program will provide grants to states to increase and preserve the supply of housing with primary attention to rental housing for ELI and VLI households. ELI is defined as income less than 30% of the area median income (AMI) or income less than the federal poverty line. VLI is generally defined as income between 31% and 50% AMI; the HTF statute adds that for rural areas VLI may also be income less than the federal poverty line. The statute limits the amount of HTF used for homeownership activities to 10%, inferring that at least 90% of a state's annual HTF allocation must be used for rental housing activities. However, the preamble to the interim rule interprets the law differently,

asserting that only 80% must be used for rental activities.

### **Income Targeting**

The HTF statute requires that at least 75% of each grant to a state be used for rental housing that benefits ELI households and that no more than 25% may be used to benefit VLI renter households. For homeowner activities, the statute requires that all assisted homeowners have income less than 50% of AMI. When there is less than \$1 billion for the HTF, the rule requires 100% of a state's allocation benefit ELI households.

### **HTF Distribution Formula**

To distribute HTF dollars, the statute established a formula based on the number of ELI and VLI households with severe cost burden (households paying more than half of their income for rent and utilities), as well as the shortage of rental properties affordable and available to ELI and VLI households, with priority for ELI households. Low-population states ("small states") and the District of Columbia are to receive a minimum of \$3 million. On December 4, 2009, HUD issued a proposed rule, endorsed by NLIHC, describing the factors to be used in the formula.

Responding to the statute's requirement that the formula give priority to ELI households, HUD's interim rule formula assigns 75% of the formula's weight to the two ELI factors. The interim rule adds a provision for instances in which there are not sufficient funds in the HTF to allocate at least \$3 million to each state and the District of Columbia; in such a case, HUD will propose an alternative distribution and publish it for comment in the *Federal Register*.

NLIHC has estimated state allocations when the HTF reaches \$5 billion, available at <http://bit.ly/1m9orp0>.

### **State Distribution of HTF Money**

States are to designate an entity, such as a housing finance agency, housing and community development entity, tribally designated housing entity, or any other instrumentality of the state to receive HTF dollars and administer an HTF

program. Each state must distribute its HTF dollars throughout the state according to the state's assessment of priority housing needs as identified in its approved Consolidated Plan (ConPlan). HUD's list of designated entities is available at <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/htf/grantees> and more up-to-date staff of these entities is available from NLIHC at <https://nlihc.org/explore-issues/projects-campaigns/national-housing-trust-fund/allocations> (scroll down to Select a State). See also the *Consolidated Planning Process* section in Chapter 7 of this guide.

### **Allocation Plans**

The HTF statute requires each state to prepare an Allocation Plan every year showing how it will distribute the funds based on priority housing needs. The interim rule amends the ConPlan regulations by adding HTF-specific Allocation Plan requirements to the ConPlan's Annual Action Plan rule.

The interim regulation gives states the option of passing funds to local governments or other state agencies as subgrantees to administer a portion or all of a state's HTF program and in turn provide funds to recipients to carry out projects. If a local subgrantee is to administer HTF dollars, then it too must have a local ConPlan containing a local HTF Allocation Plan that is consistent with the state's HTF requirements. Due to the limited amount of funds in the HTF so far, only Alaska and Hawaii opted to use subgrantees.

A recipient is an agency or organization (nonprofit or for-profit) that receives HTF dollars from a state grantee or local subgrantee to carry out an HTF-assisted project as an owner or developer. To be eligible, a recipient must meet four requirements:

- Have the capacity to own, construct or rehabilitate, and manage and operate an affordable multifamily rental development; or construct or rehabilitate homeownership housing; or provide down payment, closing cost, or interest rate buy-down assistance for homeowners.
- Have the financial capacity and ability to undertake and manage the project.

- Demonstrate familiarity with requirements of federal, state, or local housing programs that will be used in conjunction with HTF money.
- Assure the state that it will comply with all program requirements.

A state's or subgrantee's Allocation Plan must describe the application requirements for recipients, and the criteria that will be used to select applications for funding. The statute requires Allocation Plans to give priority in awarding HTF money to applications based on six factors listed in the statute, including:

- The extent to which rents are affordable, especially for ELI households.
- The length of time rents will remain affordable.
- The project's merit. The interim rule gives as examples, housing that serves people with special needs, housing accessible to transit or employment centers, and housing that includes green building and sustainable development elements.

### **Public Participation**

The statute requires public participation in the development of the HTF Allocation Plan. However, the interim rule does not explicitly declare that in order to receive HTF money, states and subgrantees must develop their Allocation Plans using the ConPlan public participation rules. The interim rule merely requires states to submit an HTF Allocation Plan following the ConPlan rule, which does have public participation requirements.

### **Period of Affordability**

The statute does not prescribe how long HTF-assisted units must remain affordable. The interim regulation requires rental units to be affordable for at least 30 years, allowing states and any subgrantees to have longer affordability periods. The 30-year affordability period reflects HUD's prediction that the HTF will be used in conjunction with Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) equity. The HTF campaign had recommended a 50-year affordability period.

Twenty-one states addressed longer affordability plans in their draft 2016 HTF Allocation Plans. Of these, three states and the District of Columbia required longer affordability periods (California, 55 years; Maine, 45 years; and the District of Columbia and Maryland, 40 years). The other states either awarded competitive points or gave priority to projects with longer affordability periods.

### **Maximum Rent**

NLIHC recommended that the regulations adopt the Brooke rule so that ELI households would not pay more than 30% of their income for rent and utilities. However, the interim rule sets a fixed maximum rent, including utilities, at 30% of 30% AMI, or 30% of the federal poverty level, whichever is greater. Consequently, households earning substantially less than 30% of AMI will almost certainly pay more than 30% of their income for rent, unless additional subsidies are available. HUD acknowledged in the preamble to the proposed rule that some tenants will be rent burdened, but that a fixed rent is necessary for financial underwriting purposes.

NLIHC urges advocates to convince their states to have their Allocation Plans require HTF-assisted units have maximum rent set at "the lesser of" 30% of 30% AMI or 30% of the poverty line. Wherever the federal poverty guideline is higher than 30% of AMI, renters with household income at 30% of AMI will be cost burdened by the maximum rent. Households with income around 20% of AMI (approximately the income of households with Supplemental Security Income) will almost always be severely cost burdened, paying more than 50% of their income.

In 2016 NLIHC alerted HUD to the fact that in 92% of the counties in the nation, 30% of the poverty line was greater than 30% of 30% AMI. Advocates can find the 2016 values for their states and counties at <http://bit.ly/2bnPRYZ>.

In 2021 NLIHC took another look at this problem and found that maximum rents are set at 30% of the federal poverty guideline in the vast majority of all HUD Fair Market Rent (FMR) areas for apartments larger than one bedroom: 87.7% for



two-bedroom units, 94.8% for three-bedroom units, and 96.7% for four-bedroom units. Even 49.6% of FMR areas used the federal poverty guideline for one-bedroom units. Maximum rents based on the federal poverty guideline are even more common in non-metro FMR areas than in metro FMR areas. Absent rental assistance, households at 30% AMI renting units with at least two bedrooms will be cost-burdened by maximum HTF rents in most HUD FMR areas.

This is particularly concerning given the 30% standard of affordability already overestimates what poorer and larger households can afford in terms of housing costs. Using the federal poverty guideline disproportionately impacts larger, poorer households who already have greater difficulty affording rents limited to 30% of their income. The negative impacts, moreover, are most apparent in the poorest communities where the federal poverty guideline is much higher than 30% of AMI. NLIHC included this analysis in response to HUD's April 26, 2021 request for comments regarding the interim regulation. NLIHC also urged HUD to change the rent HTF-assisted tenants pay to **the lesser** of 30% of AMI or 30% of the poverty guideline in order to minimize tenants paying more than 30% or even 50% of their income for rent.

Although NLIHC does not support cost-burdening of HTF-assisted households, underwriting developments with variable Brooke rents (households paying 30% of their actual income) can be very difficult. One possible approach to avoid or minimize factors causing HTF-assisted households to be cost-burdened is to give priority to HTF projects that have a mix of units with fixed rents set at 30% of 30% AMI, 30% of 20% AMI, 30% of 15% AMI, and 30% of 10% AMI.

A volunteer Developer Advisory Group prepared two papers addressing *Funding Strategies for Developing and Operating ELI Housing* and *HTF Operating Assistance Options and Considerations*.

### Tenant Protections and Selection

According to the HTF statute, activities must comply with laws relating to tenant protections and tenants' rights to participate in the decision

making regarding their homes. The interim rule does not address tenants' rights to participate in decision making. However, the interim rule provides numerous tenant protections, including:

- Owners of HTF-assisted projects may not reject applicants who have vouchers or are using HOME tenant-based rental assistance.
- There must be a lease, generally for one year.
- Owners may only terminate tenancy or refuse to renew a lease for good cause.
- Owners must have and follow certain tenant selection policies. Tenants must be selected from a written waiting list, in chronological order, if practical.
- Eligibility may be limited to or preference may be given to people with disabilities if:
  - The housing also receives funding from federal programs that limit eligibility; or
  - The disability significantly interferes with the disabled person's ability to obtain and keep housing, the disabled person could not obtain or remain in the housing without appropriate supportive services, and the services cannot be provided in non-segregated settings.

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities has been trying to convince HUD that these preference provisions might cause states to misinterpret the rule to mean that they can only do single-site permanent supportive housing, not integrated supportive housing.

### Homeowner Provisions

As provided by the statute, up to 10% of HTF money may be used to produce, rehabilitate, or preserve homeowner housing. HTF money may also be used to provide assistance with down payments, closing costs, or interest rate buy-downs. As required by the statute, homes must be bought by first-time homebuyers with income less than 50% of AMI who have had HUD-certified counseling, and the home must be their principal residence. The affordability period is generally 30 years (see exception below). To date, no state has used HTF for homeowner activities.

Although not in the statute, the interim rule requires the assisted housing to meet the HOME program definition of single-family housing, which includes one- to four-unit residences, condominiums and cooperatives, manufactured homes and lots, or manufactured home lots only. Following the statute and echoing the HOME regulations, the value of an assisted home must not exceed 95% of the median purchase price for the area.

As required by the statute, the interim rule's homeowner resale provisions echo the HOME regulations. If a homeowner unit is sold during the affordability period, the state or subgrantee must ensure that the housing will remain affordable to a reasonable range (as defined by the state or subgrantee) of income-eligible homebuyers. The sale price must provide the original owner a fair return, defined as the owner's original investment plus capital improvements. The interim rule added a recapture alternative for states and subgrantees to use instead of a resale provision. The purpose of a recapture option is to ensure that a state or subgrantee can recoup some or all of its HTF investment. It modifies the affordability period based on the amount of the HTF assistance: 30 years if more than \$50,000, 20 years if between \$30,000 and \$50,000, and 10 years if less than \$30,000.

### **Lease-Purchase**

Mirroring the HOME regulations, the interim rule allows HTF money to help a homebuyer through a lease-purchase arrangement, as long as the home is purchased within 36 months. Also, HTF dollars may be used to buy an existing home with the intent to resell to a homebuyer through lease-purchase; if the unit is not sold within 42 months, HTF rent affordability provisions apply.

### **General Eligible Activities**

The interim regulation echoes the statute by providing a basic list of eligible activities such as the production, rehabilitation, and preservation of affordable rental homes and homes for first-time homebuyers through new construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, or acquisition. No

more than 10% of a state's annual allocation may be used for homeownership. HTF-assisted units may be in a project that also contains non-HTF-assisted units. Assistance may be in the form of equity investments, loans (including no-interest loans and deferred payment loans), grants, etc. The interim rule limits HTF assistance to permanent housing (use of HTF for transitional housing or emergency shelter is not allowed).

### **Manufactured Housing**

The interim rule allows HTF money to be used to buy or rehabilitate manufactured homes or to purchase the land on which a manufactured home sits. The home must, at the time of project completion, be on land that is owned by the homeowner or on land for which the homeowner has a lease for a period that is greater than or equal to the affordability period.

### **Timeframe for Demolition or for Acquisition of Vacant Land**

Use of HTF money for demolition or for acquiring vacant land is limited to projects for which construction of affordable housing can reasonably be expected to start within one year.

### **Eligible Project Costs**

Eligible project costs include property acquisition, relocation payments, development hard costs such as construction, soft costs associated with financing and development, and refinancing existing debt on rental property if HTF is also used for rehabilitation. Operating costs are also eligible project costs.

- **Development Hard Costs**

Development hard costs are the actual costs of construction or rehabilitation, including demolition, laundry and community facilities, utility connections, and site improvements, which include onsite roads, sewers, and water connections.

- **Related Soft Costs**

Mirroring the HOME regulations, other soft costs associated with financing and/or development include: architectural and engineering services, origination fees and

credit reports, builder's or developer's fees, audits, affirmative marketing and fair housing information to prospective occupants, initial operating deficit reserves to meet any shortfall in project income during the first 18 months of project rent-up, staff and overhead of the state or subgrantee directly related to carrying out the project (such as work specs, inspections, loan processing), impact fees, and costs to meet environmental and historic preservation requirements.

- Loan Repayments

HTF may be used to pay principal and interest on construction loans, bridge financing, a guaranteed loan, and others.

- Operating Costs and Operating Cost Assistance Reserve

According to the statute, HTF dollars may be used to meet operating costs at HTF-assisted rental housing. The interim rule allows HTF resources to be used to provide operating cost assistance and to establish an operating cost assistance reserve for rental housing acquired, rehabilitated, preserved, or newly constructed with HTF money. The interim rule strictly defines operating costs as insurance, utilities, real property taxes, maintenance, and scheduled payments to a reserve for replacement of major systems (for example, roof, heating and cooling, and elevators). The purpose of an operating cost assistance reserve is to cover inadequate rent income to ensure a project's long-term financial feasibility.

The interim rule caps at one-third of the amount of a state's annual grant that may be used for operating cost assistance and for contributing to an operating cost assistance reserve. The preamble to the rule explains that HUD established the cap because it views the HTF as primarily a production program meant to add units to the supply of affordable housing for ELI and VLI households. HUD assumes that the HTF will be used in combination with other sources to produce and preserve units, mostly in mixed-income projects.

The preamble indicates that states have discretion in how to allocate operating cost assistance. For example, states may decide to limit each development to the one-third cap, or to raise the cap for developments that need more operating cost assistance while lowering the cap for those that do not need as much, as long as no more than one-third of a state's annual grant is used for operating cost assistance and reserves.

States and subgrantees may provide operating cost assistance to a project for a multiyear period from the same fiscal year HTF grant as long as the funds are spent within five years. An operating cost assistance agreement between a state or subgrantee and a property owner may be renewed throughout the affordability period.

For non-appropriated sources, such as the proceeds from the 4.2 basis point assessments on Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac as called for in the HTF statute, the interim rule provides that an operating cost assistance reserve may be funded upfront for HTF-assisted units for the amount estimated to ensure a project's financial feasibility for the entire affordability period. If this amount would exceed the one-third operating cost assistance cap, it could be funded in phases from future non-appropriated HTF grants. This provision can be very helpful for developers of rental homes at rents that ELI households can afford.

Some general thoughts about using the HTF for operating cost assistance were prepared by NLIHC's volunteer Developer Advisory Group, *HTF Operating Assistance Options and Considerations*.

Several states wanted to use HTF for operating assistance in 2016 but found that the interim rule's limited definition of operating costs rendered the option financially infeasible. These states noted that the interim rule's definition did not include components typically considered to be part of operating cost by the development industry, such as property management and personnel

costs associated with maintenance. When brought to HUD's attention, HUD indicated a willingness to consider waivers in the future, as well as to modify the rule in its final stage. In response to HUD's April 26, 2021 request for comment regarding the interim rule, NLIHC urged HUD to expand the allowable components eligible under the definition of operating costs.

In 2017 Oklahoma awarded HTF funds to one project to fund an operating cost reserve. In 2018 California made four such awards. As the HTF grows, other states are likely to also use some portion of their annual HTF allocation to fund a project's operating cost reserve.

- Administration and Planning Costs

The statute limits the amount of HTF dollars that may be used for general administration and planning to 10% of each state's annual grant. The interim regulation adds that 10% of any program income (for example, proceeds from the repayment of HTF loans) may also be used for administration and planning. The interim rule also provides that subgrantees may use HTF for administration and planning, but subgrantee use counts toward the state's 10% cap.

- General Management, Oversight, and Coordination Costs

HTF may be used for a state's or subgrantee's costs of overall HTF program management, coordination, and monitoring. Examples include staff salaries and related costs necessary to ensure compliance with the regulations and to prepare reports to HUD. Other eligible costs include equipment, office rental, and third-party services such as accounting.

- Project-Specific Administration Costs

The staff and overhead expenses of a state or subgrantee directly related to carrying out development projects may also be eligible administration and planning costs. Examples include loan processing, work

specs, inspections, housing counseling, and relocation services. As with HOME, staff and overhead costs directly related to carrying out projects (as distinct from the HTF program in general) may instead be charged as project-related soft costs or relocation costs and therefore not be subject to the 10% cap. However, housing counseling must be counted as an administration cost as per the statute.

- Other Administration and Planning Costs

- a. Costs of providing information to residents and community organizations participating in the planning, implementation, or assessment of HTF projects.
- b. Costs of activities to affirmatively further fair housing.
- c. Costs of preparing the ConPlan, including hearings and publication costs.
- d. Costs of complying with other federal requirements regarding non-discrimination, affirmative marketing, lead-based paint, displacement and relocation, conflict of interest, and fund accountability.

### Public Housing

In general, the interim regulation prohibits the use of HTF to rehabilitate or construct new public housing. HTF-assisted housing is also ineligible to receive public housing operating assistance during the period of affordability. The interim rule does allow a project to contain both HTF-assisted units and public housing units.

The interim rule allows HTF use for two categories of public housing:

- HTF resources may be used to rehabilitate existing public housing units that are converted under the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) to project-based rental assistance. Currently, up to 455,000 public housing units may be converted under RAD.
- HTF resources may be used to rehabilitate or build new public housing as part of the

Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) and to rehabilitate or build new public housing units that will receive LIHTC assistance. Public housing units constructed with HTF must replace public housing units removed as part of a CNI grant or as part of a mixed-finance development under Section 35 of the “Housing Act of 1937.” The number of replacement units cannot be more than the number of units removed. Public housing units constructed or rehabilitated with HTF must receive Public Housing Operating Fund assistance and may receive Public Housing Capital Fund assistance.

NLIHC is extremely concerned about these provisions regarding public housing because using HTF to rehabilitate or build new public housing units to replace demolished units will not increase housing opportunities for ELI households. RAD projects are generally multi-million dollar endeavors (in the range of \$20 million to \$35 million), relying heavily on the LIHTC and other sources such as conventional mortgages. Scarce HTF funds should not be diverted for these very large-scale conversions. In addition, extensive use of HTF for RAD could result in an overall loss of resources for housing if Congress chooses to reduce appropriated resources for public housing due to the availability of HTF resources.

### **Ineligible Activities**

Although not in the statute, the interim rule prohibits the use of HTF money for a project previously assisted with HTF during the period of affordability, except for the first year after completion. Fees for administering the HTF program are not eligible uses (e.g., servicing or origination fees). However, annual fees may be charged to owners of HTF-assisted rental projects to cover a state’s or subgrantee’s cost of monitoring compliance with income and rent restrictions during the affordability period. The statute expressly prohibits use of HTF dollars for “political activities, lobbying, counseling, traveling, or endorsements of a particular candidate or party.”

### **HTF Must be Committed Within Two Years**

As required by the statute, the interim regulation requires HTF dollars to be committed within 24 months, or HUD will reduce or recapture uncommitted HTF dollars. “Committed” is defined in the interim rule as the state or subgrantee having a legally binding agreement with a recipient owner or developer for a specific local project that can reasonably be expected to begin rehabilitation or construction within 12 months. If HTF is used to acquire standard housing for rent or for homeownership, commitment means the property title will be transferred to a recipient or family within six months. The interim rule adds that HTF money must be spent within five years. [Notice CPD 18-12](#) provides guidance to grantees about the commitment and expenditure requirements and explains how HUD determines compliance. In recent appropriations acts, Congress has suspended the two-year commitment provision for HOME; NLIHC continues to advocate for suspension of the two-year commitment requirement for HTF.

### **Public Accountability**

The statute requires each state to submit an annual report to HUD describing activities assisted that year with HTF dollars and demonstrating that the state complied with its annual Allocation Plan. This report must be available to the public. The interim rule requires jurisdictions receiving HTF dollars to submit a performance report according to the ConPlan regulations. The HTF performance report must describe a jurisdiction’s HTF program accomplishments and the extent to which the jurisdiction complied with its approved HTF Allocation Plan and all the requirements of the HTF rule.

The interim regulation presents numerous data collection obligations, including actions taken to comply with Section 3 hiring and contracting goals, and the extent to which each racial and ethnic group, as well as single heads of households, have applied for, participated in, or benefitted from the HTF.

HUD has been posting [HTF National Production Reports](#) each month showing fairly detailed information. Advocates might be interested in units by: number of bedrooms (page 3), race and ethnicity (page 4), median income, type of rental assistance, and size of household (page 5), and on page 6 type of household, and unit characteristics (e.g. targeted to special needs populations).

In general, records must be kept for five years after project completion. Records regarding individual tenant income verifications, project rents, and project inspections must be kept for the most recent five-year period until five years after the affordability period ends. Similar language applies to homeowner activities. Regarding displacement, records must be kept for five years after all people displaced have received final compensation payments. The public must have access to the records, subject to state and local privacy laws.

## INFLUENCING HOW THE NATIONAL HOUSING TRUST FUND IS USED IN YOUR STATE

Advocates are urged to be actively engaged in HTF implementation at the state level, and perhaps also at the local level.

### The HTF Allocation Plan

The law requires states to prepare an Allocation Plan every year showing how the state will allot the HTF dollars it will receive in the upcoming year. Action around the HTF Allocation Plan begins at the state level and could then flow to the local level if a state decides to allocate some or all of the HTF to local subgrantees. The state HTF Allocation Plan is woven into a state's ConPlan, and if there is a local subgrantee, then a local government's HTF Allocation Plan will be woven into a locality's ConPlan.

- For advocates only accustomed to ConPlan advocacy at the local level because they have focused on attempting to influence how their local government allocates local Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs) and HOME, the state HTF process will be an important new experience.

- To better ensure that HTF dollars get to a locality in the appropriate amounts and for the appropriate uses, it will be necessary for advocates to learn how to influence their state Allocation Plan and ConPlan.
- Observing 2017 HTF Allocation Plans, NLIHC found states inserting "HTF-Specific" sections or an HTF-specific appendix to their ConPlan Annual Action Plans that provide a stand-alone HTF presentation. However, these are at the very back of long documents, so advocates will need to do a key word search.
- The statute requires states to consider six priority factors. NLIHC asserts that genuine affordability, length of affordability, and merit features of a proposed project warrant greater relative weight or priority than the other three statutory priority factors. Too many states give disproportionate weight to two of the statutory factors: the ability of an applicant to obligate HTF funds and carry out projects in a timely manner, and the extent to which the application makes use of other funding sources. NLIHC thinks these should be threshold factors that ought to be a first-cut consideration before weighing affordability, merit, and length of affordability. If an applicant lacks the capacity to obligate funds and carry out a project in timely fashion, it should not make the initial cut, and given the nature of developing affordable housing, especially housing containing some units affordable to ELI renter households, other sources of funding have always been integral to project financing. See NLIHC's Model Allocation Plan for ideas, <http://bit.ly/1WqjT0J>.

Advocates should learn which agency in their state administers the HTF program and get to know the person responsible. Indicate interest in being informed about and participating in the process for planning where and how HTF money will be used. Although HUD's list of state-designated HTF agencies is available at <http://bit.ly/1ONwHwN>, NLIHC has in many cases identified the person at the state level actually doing the day-to-day work and lists that person on the NLIHC HTF webpage at <https://nlihc.org/>

[explore-issues/projects-campaigns/national-housing-trust-fund/allocations](#) (scroll down to Select a State).

Keep in mind that the amount of HTF your state will receive is based on ELI and VLI households spending more than half of their income on rent and utilities (severely cost-burdened), and on the shortage of rental homes that are affordable and available to ELI and VLI households, with 75% of the formula's weight assigned to ELI factors. See NLIHC's Gap Analysis for information about each state at <http://nlihc.org/research/gap-report>.

Each year it will be important for advocates to work first at the state level, and then perhaps at the local level to:

- Ensure that the agency responsible for drafting the HTF Allocation Plan writes it to meet the genuine, high-priority housing needs of extremely low-income people.
  - Advocate for HTF-assisted projects that are truly affordable to extremely low-income people, such that they do not pay more than 30% of their income for rent and utilities. The statute offers advocates a handle because it requires funding priority to be based on the extent to which rents are affordable for ELI households.
  - Advocate for HTF-assisted projects that will be affordable to extremely low-income households for as long as possible, aiming for at least 50 years. The statute offers advocates a handle because it requires funding priority to be based on the extent of the duration for which rents will remain affordable.
  - Advocate for projects that have features that give them special merit, such as serving households with income less than 15% AMI, or serving people who have disabilities, are homeless, or are re-entering the community from correctional institutions.
  - Advocate for the types of projects (like new construction, rehabilitation, and preservation) that are most needed.

- Advocate for the bedroom size mix that is most needed.
- Advocate for the populations to be served that are the ones who most need affordable homes (large families, people with special needs, people who are homeless, formerly incarcerated people, senior citizens).
- Make sure that the public participation obligations are truly met and that the state does not just “go through the motions.”
- Make sure that HTF-assisted projects affirmatively further fair housing.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

See the section “National Housing Trust Fund: Funding” in this *Advocates' Guide* for more details.

It is important for advocates to continue to educate their senators and representatives about the HTF and the critical role it plays in serving households with the most acute housing needs.

### Final HTF Rule Imminent

HUD published a [notice in the \*Federal Register\*](#) on April 26, 2021 requesting comments regarding the interim HTF rule with the intent to ultimately publish a final HTF rule. As of the drafting of this article, a final rule has not been published but one is likely to be published in 2022. NLIHC will summarize the final rule when published; look for a summary in *Memo to Members* and on [NLIHC's HTF homepage](#).

[NLIHC's formal comment letter](#) in response to the *Federal Register* notice urged HUD to:

- Change the rent HTF-assisted tenants pay to **the lesser** of 30% of AMI or 30% of the poverty guideline in order to minimize tenants paying more than 30% or even 50% of their income for rent. See the comment letter for a detailed explanation.
- Maintain the income targeting rule requiring 100% of HTF funds be used for households whose income is equal to or less than 30% of the area median income or at or less than the federal poverty line (whichever is greater) when there is less than \$1 billion for the HTF.

- Increase the affordability period to 50 years from 30 years.
- Maintain the limitation on the use of HTF funds for operating cost assistance (including reserves) to one-third of a state’s annual grant.
- Modify the definition of operating cost assistance to include other operating costs that match industry standards.
- Modify HTF guidance to indicate that 90% of a state’s annual HTF allocation must be used for rental housing activities.
- Modify the final HTF rule to establish as threshold requirements, rather than factors subject to a point system when states set priorities for awarding HTF to projects: an applicant’s ability to obligate HTF funds and undertake eligible activities in a timely manner, and the extent to which an application makes use of other funding sources.
- Adopt many of the technical changes suggested by the Technical Assistance Collaborative in order to better serve people with disabilities.

### **Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report Imminent**

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) received a [letter](#) from House Financial Services Committee Ranking Member Patrick McHenry (R-NC) and Subcommittee on Housing, Community Development, and Insurance Ranking Member Steve Stivers (R-OH) urging GAO to audit the HTF. The letter made a number of claims that were ill-informed or outright erroneous. [NLIHC sent a detailed response to GAO](#). Highlights of NLIHC’s response include:

**Claim #1:** There have been unreasonable delays in awarding HTF allocations.

**Reality:** While states were delayed in awarding the first round of HTF resources, these delays were reasonable and have largely been resolved.

**Claim #2:** It costs \$1 million on average to develop each HTF unit.

**Reality:** According to HUD, the average cost per unit of completed HTF projects at the time cited by McHenry/Stivers was \$113,522, an amount on par with or less than market rate. In subsequent months the average HTF cost per unit decreased to averages between \$95,000 and \$97,000.

**Claim #3:** States are using too many HTF resources for acquisition or rehabilitation, and not enough for new construction.

**Reality:** HUD requires states to report using its standard Integrated Disbursement and Information System (IDIS) which only offers states three options: new construction, rehabilitation, and acquisition and rehabilitation. However, upon further research NLIHC learned that all but three projects in 2016 and 2017 indicated as “rehabilitation” actually preserved scarce affordable housing or created new units. HTF was used to keep previous federal investments in Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance or USDA Rural Development Section 514 properties from leaving the affordable housing stock. HTF was also used to convert to new affordable housing vacant industrial facilities, commercial office spaces, schools, and hospitals.

As of the date this article was drafted, GAO has not issued a report, but one is likely to be issued in 2022.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

NLIHC’s HTF webpage, [www.nhtf.org](http://www.nhtf.org).

Information from NLIHC about each state such as key personnel and draft and final HTF Allocation Plans, <https://nlihc.org/explore-issues/projects-campaigns/national-housing-trust-fund/allocations>.

NLIHC’s interim report on how states have awarded their 2016 HTF allocations, [https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NHTF\\_Getting-Started\\_2018.pdf](https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NHTF_Getting-Started_2018.pdf).

A five-part series all about the interim rule regarding implementation of the NHTF <https://nlihc.org/issues/nhtf/videos>

PowerPoint slides highlighting the key features



of the NHTF law and regulations, [http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NHTF\\_Getting-to-Know-NHTF\\_0617.pdf](http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NHTF_Getting-to-Know-NHTF_0617.pdf).

Key features of the NHTF law and interim regulations presented in 15 short papers broken down by topics, <https://nlihc.org/explore-issues/projects-campaigns/national-housing-trust-fund/basic-htf-information-nlihc>.

The interim regulation, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2015-01-30/pdf/2015-01642.pdf>.

HUD NHTF webpage, <https://www.hudexchange.info/htf>.

# National Housing Trust Fund: Funding

---

By Sarah Saadian, Vice President of Public Policy, NLIHC

**T**he National Housing Trust Fund (HTF) is the first new federal housing resource in a generation exclusively targeted to help build, preserve, rehabilitate, and operate housing affordable to people with the lowest incomes. Since 2016, more than \$1.9 billion has been invested in the HTF. This is an important first step, but far more resources are necessary to meet the current need for affordable housing. NLIHC is committed to working with Congress and the Administration to expand the HTF to serve more families with the greatest needs.

## ABOUT THE HOUSING TRUST FUND

The HTF was established in July 2008 as part of the “Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008” (HERA). This law requires Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to set aside 4.2 basis points of their volume of business each year for the national HTF and Capital Magnet Fund (CMF). The HTF is to receive 65% and the CMF 35%. The first \$174 million in HTF dollars were allocated to states in 2016.

The HTF is the only federal housing program exclusively focused on providing states with resources targeted to serve households with the clearest, most acute housing needs. The HTF can be used to address both rental housing and homeownership needs. By law, at least 90% of HTF dollars must be used for the production, preservation, rehabilitation, or operation of affordable rental housing. Up to 10% may be used to support homeownership activities for first-time homebuyers, such as producing, rehabilitating, or preserving owner-occupied housing, as well as providing down payment assistance, closing costs, and interest rate buydowns.

The HTF is the most highly targeted federal rental housing capital and homeownership program. By law, at least 75% of HTF dollars used to support

rental housing must serve extremely low-income households earning no more than 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI) or the federal poverty limit. All HTF dollars must benefit households with very low incomes earning no more than 50% of AMI. In comparison, most other federal housing programs can serve families up to 80% of AMI.

The HTF is designed to support local decision making and control. Because the HTF is administered by HUD as a block grant, each state has the flexibility to decide how to best use HTF resources to address its most pressing housing needs. States decide which developments to support.

Moreover, the HTF operates at no cost to the federal government because it is funded outside of the appropriations process. By statute, the initial source of funding for the HTF is a slight fee (0.042%) on Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae activity, 65% of which goes to the HTF.

## OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND THE HTF

**See also:** *Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and Housing Finance Reform*

HERA expressly allows Congress to designate other “appropriations, transfers, or credits” to the HTF and CMF, in addition to the assessment on Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Securing permanent, dedicated sources of revenue for the HTF is one of NLIHC’s top priorities, whether through an infrastructure or economic recovery spending bill, housing finance reform, or other opportunities.

### The “Build Back Better Act”

Thanks to strong and effective advocacy the HoUsed campaign (see *The HoUsed Campaign*) and its congressional champions, the House-passed “Build Back Better Act” included more than \$150 billion in affordable housing investments, including \$15 billion for the

national Housing Trust Fund to build and preserve over 150,000 affordable, accessible homes for households with the lowest incomes.

At the time of publication, however, investments in the HTF and other HoUSed campaign priorities, including rental assistance and public housing preservation, are at risk after centrist Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) announced in December 2021 that he would not vote for the House-approved bill. President Biden and congressional leaders are focused on enacting a scaled-back version of the economic recovery package that includes only those components that can garner the support of – and cost within the total amount approved by – all Senate Democrats.

### **Housing Finance Reform**

Housing finance reform provides an opportunity to increase resources for affordable housing solutions. The bipartisan Johnson-Crapo reform legislation of 2014 included a provision that would increase funding for the national HTF by applying a 10-basis point fee on guaranteed securities in a new mortgage insurance corporation that would replace Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. If enacted, this would generate an estimated \$3.5 billion for the national HTF annually, making a significant contribution to ending homelessness and housing poverty in America without having to allocate additional appropriated dollars. The Johnson-Crapo bill's provision for a 10-basis point fee for affordable housing programs should be included in any housing finance reform legislation considered by Congress, although it is unclear whether there is enough political will to move comprehensive reforms forward.

### **Other Legislative Opportunities**

Several bills have been introduced to greatly expand the HTF.

**“Housing Is Infrastructure Act”:** Introduced by Representative Waters (D-CA), this bill provides \$45 billion in the HTF, alongside \$75 billion to fully address the capital needs to repair public housing, \$200 billion for rental assistance, and many other investments. This bill served as a

starting point for negotiations in the Build Back Better Act, which provides \$15 billion for the HTF, \$65 billion for public housing, and \$25 billion for rental assistance.

**“Ending Homelessness Act”:** Introduced by Representative Waters (D-CA), the bill proposes to make rental assistance universally available for every eligible household and provide \$1 billion annually to the HTF.

**“American Housing and Economic Mobility Act”:** This bill was introduced by Senators Warren (D-MA) Gillibrand (D-NY), Markey (D-MA), Sanders (I-VT), Hirono (D-HI), and Merkley (D-OR), along with Representatives Cleaver (D-MO), Lee (D-CA), Moore (D-WI), Khanna (D-CA), Norton (D-DC), Garcia (D-IL), Cohen (D-TN), Schakowsky (D-IL), Pressley (D-MA), and Bonamici (D-OR). If enacted, this ambitious proposal will help end housing poverty and homelessness in America by directly addressing the underlying cause of the affordable housing crisis – the severe shortage of affordable rental homes for people with the lowest incomes – through a robust investment of nearly \$45 billion annually in the national Housing Trust Fund. The bill also creates new incentives for local governments to reduce barriers that drive up the cost of housing, thereby encouraging the private sector to do more to address the housing needs of the middle class.

## **HOW ADVOCATES CAN TAKE ACTION**

Advocates should be actively engaged in the process of HTF implementation in their states to ensure that the initial rounds of funding are successful and urge their Members of Congress to cosponsor and enact the bills listed above.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

National Housing Trust Fund: [www.NHTF.org](http://www.NHTF.org).

# Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and Housing Finance Reform

---

By Sarah Saadian, Vice President of Public Policy, NLIHC

**See Also:** For related information, refer to the *National Housing Trust Fund: Funding* section of this guide.

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the two federally chartered companies that provide a secondary market for residential mortgages, have been in conservatorship since September 7, 2008 when the foreclosure crisis precipitated a global financial meltdown. Much to the dismay of many, the companies remain under the control of the federal government because Congress cannot agree on a housing finance system.

The “Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008” (HERA) established an independent agency, the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA), to serve both as a regulator and to significantly strengthen federal oversight of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. HERA gave the FHFA the power to take the companies into conservatorship if need be. HERA also created the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF) and the Capital Magnet Fund (CMF).

Because Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac provide the dedicated source of funding for the HTF, their status and viability are of particular interest to low-income housing advocates. NLIHC supports housing finance legislation that would provide significant new funding for the HTF.

## WHAT ARE FANNIE MAE AND FREDDIE MAC?

The Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae) and the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (Freddie Mac) are government sponsored enterprises, known as GSEs. Congress established the GSEs to provide liquidity and create a secondary market for both single-family (one to four units) and multifamily (five or more units) residential mortgages.

Although Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac were created at different times and for different purposes, they have had effectively identical charters and responsibilities since 1992. Before September 7, 2008, when they were placed in conservatorship, they were privately owned and operated corporations.

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac do not provide mortgage loans directly to individual borrowers. Rather, they facilitate the secondary mortgage market by buying loans from banks, savings institutions, and other mortgage originators. Lenders then use the sale proceeds to engage in further mortgage lending. For the most part, the GSEs purchase single-family, 30-year fixed rate conventional mortgages that are not insured by the federal government. They also play a major role in financing the multifamily housing market.

The GSEs either hold the mortgages they purchase in their portfolios or package them into mortgage-backed securities (MBSs), which are sold to investors. When the GSEs securitize a mortgage, they are guaranteeing that those investors receive timely payment of principal and interest. The GSEs charge mortgage lenders a guarantee fee (g-fee), generally in the form of monthly payments, to cover projected credit losses if a borrower defaults over the life of the loan.

The GSEs raise money in the capital markets to fund their activities. Their incomes come from the difference between the interest they receive on the mortgages they hold and the interest they pay on their debt, and from g-fees and income earned on non-mortgage investments.

### Single-Family Mortgages

Single-family mortgages must meet certain criteria set by the GSEs to be packaged and sold as securities. As a result, the two GSEs set the lending standards for the conventional, conforming loan single-family mortgage market. This standardization increases the liquidity of

mortgages meeting the GSE guidelines, thereby decreasing the interest rates on these mortgages and lowering costs for homebuyers.

Generally, the GSEs provide support for 30-year fixed-rate mortgages on single-family homes. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac can only purchase mortgages with principal balances equal to or less than the conforming loan limit established annually by FHFA. The limit may also be adjusted to account for the size of a property.

### **Multifamily Mortgages**

The GSEs also purchase mortgages on multifamily properties. These mortgages are generally held in portfolio, but they can be securitized and sold to investors. In the past, the GSEs have also played a significant role in supporting the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit market.

### **Housing Goals**

As GSEs, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are required to achieve social goals as well assure safety and soundness in the housing finance system. In exchange for a once-implicit, now explicit, federal guarantee, Congress has required that the GSEs meet statutorily-based “housing goals” to help assure affordable homes in the U.S. The GSEs are required to purchase a certain number of mortgages on properties with specific characteristics to ensure that low- and moderate-income, underserved, and special affordable markets are served. FHFA updates these goals periodically.

Substantial partisan disagreement remains over the affordable housing goals and the role of the federal government in the housing market. Progressives believe the goals are necessary to ensure that people with low incomes and people of color have access to mortgage markets. Conservatives believe that the goals caused the GSEs to participate in overly risky business practices that triggered the foreclosure crisis.

It is important to note that the multifamily side of the GSEs’ business did not sustain losses during the crisis; unfortunately, the GSE multifamily goals did not lead to the expansion of rental

housing affordable to families with extremely low incomes.

### **Duty-to-Serve**

HERA also established a “duty-to-serve” for the GSEs, which requires them to lead the industry in developing loan products and flexible underwriting guidelines for manufactured housing, affordable housing preservation, and rural markets. FHFA published its final rule in December 2016, which outlines the GSEs’ duty-to-serve.

The final rule requires the GSEs to submit plans for improving the “distribution and availability of mortgage financing in a safe and sound manner for residential properties that serve very low-, low-, and moderate-income families.” Each GSE is required to submit to FHFA a three-year duty-to-serve plan, detailing the activities and objectives it will use to meet the rule’s requirements. The final rule gives the GSEs duty-to-serve credit for eligible activities that facilitate a secondary market for residential mortgages that originated in underserved markets. The GSEs also receive duty-to-serve credit for qualifying activities that promote residential economic diversity in underserved markets. The rule establishes the manner in which the GSEs would be evaluated for their efforts. FHFA is required to report evaluation findings to Congress annually.

Under ordinary circumstances, each GSE would have submitted a three-year Plan for 2021-2023 in accordance with the Duty to Serve mandate. Because of the uncertainty as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, FHFA directed the GSEs to submit Plans for one year (2021) only, as an extension of their 2018-2020 Plans.

## **FANNIE MAE, FREDDIE MAC, AND THE HOUSING TRUST FUND**

In HERA, Congress established that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac would serve as the initial sources of funding for the HTF and the CMF. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are required to set aside an amount equal to 4.2 basis points for each dollar of total new business purchases. Note that the assessment is on their volume of

business, not their profits. Of these amounts, 65% is to go to the HTF and 35% is to go to the CMF.

Lawmakers reasoned that requiring Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to set aside funds for the HTF was part of the GSEs' mission responsibilities included in their charters. In addition to their affordable housing goals, which could be met through the regular course of business, funding the HTF allowed the GSEs to support housing that extremely low-income renters could afford, an activity that is not possible through any of their business product.

HERA allows FHFA to temporarily suspend the requirement that the GSEs fund the HTF and the CMF under circumstances related to threats to their financial health. In November 2008, at the height of the financial crisis, the FHFA director suspended this obligation before the GSEs even began setting aside funds. In 2014, FHFA Director Mel Watt lifted the suspension and directed both companies to begin setting aside the required amount starting on January 1, 2015. Since 2016, more than \$1.9 billion has been invested in the HTF. This is an important start, but more HTF resources are needed.

## **FANNIE MAE AND FREDDIE MAC IN CONSERVATORSHIP**

Before the financial crisis, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac had never received any federal funds to support their operations. However, both companies incurred huge financial losses because of the foreclosure crisis. This prompted Congress to place the companies in conservatorship under the FHFA. Today, FHFA has all the authority of each company's directors, officers, and shareholders. Until the conservatorship ends, FHFA operates the companies through appointed management in each company. During conservatorship the GSEs remain critically important to the housing finance system by providing liquidity for new mortgages, helping to resolve the mortgage crisis, and supporting the multifamily market.

Under an agreement between the Department of the Treasury and FHFA, the GSEs together were

allowed to draw up to \$200 billion to stay afloat, which bolstered the U.S. housing market. In exchange, the U.S. government became the owner of the companies' preferred stock.

In 2012, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac returned to profitability, and began to make dividend payments to the Treasury. Under the conditions of the conservatorship agreement between Treasury and FHFA, all of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac's profits outside of a \$3 billion buffer were "swept" into the U.S. Treasury. In the final days of the Trump Administration, FHFA agreed to allow the GSEs to retain a combined \$45 billion worth of earnings before making dividend payments to Treasury. The GSEs' dividend payments now far exceed the \$188 billion drawdown.

In the last few years, there have been several federal lawsuits in which investors who have speculated on Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac stock are trying to end the government sweep of the GSEs' profits. Hedge funds have taken a gamble on investing in Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac shares with the hope that the courts would strike down the conservatorship agreement. The investors argue that the agreement violates their rights as shareholders, as they have been barred from receiving company dividends. The Supreme Court dismissed some claims made by hedge funds in 2021 that FHFA had overstepped its authority when requiring the GSEs to sweep profits to Treasury.

Hedge funds and some civil rights and consumer advocacy groups have been pushing to recapitalize and release the GSEs from conservatorship. They have authored several proposals, some that would provide funding for the HTF. Although the hedge funds stand to reap financial gains through "recap and release," the civil rights and consumer advocacy organizations argue that the indefinite conservatorship has created uncertainty in the mortgage market, leading mortgages lenders to tighten their credit standards in a way that disproportionately impacts racial minority homebuyers. They also contend that without recap and release,

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac's financial health will deteriorate, jeopardizing their obligation to contribute to the HTF.

However, recap and release will not necessarily increase affordable lending and does not move Congress any closer to passing housing finance reform legislation, which promises to generate billions of new dollars for rental housing affordable to families with extremely low incomes.

## HOUSING FINANCE REFORM PROPOSALS

More than a decade after the financial crisis, policy makers are still grappling with how to reform the housing finance market. Because of philosophical differences, Members of Congress have reached a stalemate in pushing legislative proposals forward. Although many Members of Congress and numerous analysts and pundits have wanted to end the conservatorships, wind down Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, and establish a new model for the secondary mortgage market, all efforts to do so to date have been unsuccessful.

There was considerable legislative activity on housing finance reform in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress (2013-2014), even though no legislation was considered by either the full House or Senate.

Efforts to reform the housing finance system will continue in 2022.

### Johnson-Crapo

In 2013, Senators Bob Corker (R-TN) and Mark Warner (D-VA) introduced the "Housing Finance Reform and Taxpayer Protection Act" (S. 1217), which laid out a plan to wind down Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and replace them with a Federal Mortgage Insurance Corporation (FMIC), modeled after the Federal Depository Insurance Corporation. The FMIC would have offered an explicit government guarantee, purchased and securitized single and multifamily mortgage portfolios, and provided regulatory oversight of the Federal Home Loan Banks. The bill would have assessed a 5-10 basis point user fee on all guaranteed securities that would be used to fund the HTF, the CMF, and a new Market Access Fund

(MAF). The bill would have abolished affordable housing goals.

The Corker-Warner bill provided the framework for legislation subsequently offered by Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Chair Tim Johnson (D-SD) and Ranking Member Mike Crapo (R-ID) that was introduced in the spring of 2014. The Johnson-Crapo measure would have replaced the GSEs with a new FMIC. To be eligible for reinsurance under the FMIC, any security must have first secured private capital in a 10% minimum first loss position. The bill also established a new securitization platform to create a standardized security to be used for all securities guaranteed by the new system. The securitization platform would have been regulated by the FMIC.

The bill included a 10-basis point user fee to fund the HTF, the CMF, and the new MAF. The fee was projected to generate \$5 billion a year, and 75% of the funds would go to the HTF. Even though the bill also got rid of the affordable housing goals, it included a new flex fee or market incentive to encourage mortgage guarantors and aggregators to do business in underserved areas.

The Johnson-Crapo bill also provided for a secondary market for multifamily housing. It allowed for the Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac multifamily activities to be spun off from the new system established by the bill. The bill would have required that at least 60% of the multifamily units securitized must be affordable for low-income households (80% AMI or less). The bill would have also created a pilot program to promote small (50 or fewer units) multifamily development.

The Johnson-Crapo bill was voted out of the Senate Banking Committee on May 15, 2014 by a bipartisan vote of 13-9. The Obama Administration fully endorsed the bill but the bill was criticized by the right and the left for doing too much or not enough to assure access to mortgages to all creditworthy borrowers, and was never taken up by the full Senate.

## **Delaney-Carney-Himes**

Representatives John Delaney (D-MD), John Carney (D-DE), and Jim Himes (D-CT) introduced the “Partnership to Strengthen Homeownership Act” (H.R. 5055) in 2014, which would have wound down Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac over a five-year period and created a mortgage insurance program run through the Government National Mortgage Association (Ginnie Mae). Ginnie Mae would become a stand-alone agency, no longer part of HUD. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac would eventually be sold off as private institutions without any government support.

The bill would have provided a full government guarantee on qualifying mortgage securities backed by mortgages that meet certain eligibility criteria. As proposed, private capital would have had a minimum 5% first-loss risk position. The remaining risk would have been split between Ginnie Mae and private reinsurers, with private capital covering at least 10% of losses. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac’s multifamily activities would have been spun off and privatized and received a government guarantee through Ginnie Mae.

In return for insuring securities, Ginnie Mae would have charged a fee of 10 basis points on the total principal balance of insured mortgages. The bill would apply 75% of this fee revenue to the HTF, 15% to the CMF, and 10% to the MAF. This is identical to how the Johnson-Crapo and Waters (below) bills treat the HTF. However, unlike other the other bills, this measure would have added Federal Housing Administration (FHA), Department of Agriculture (USDA), and Veterans Affairs (VA) mortgages in the determining the base upon which the 10-basis point fee is assessed, generating an additional \$1 billion.

### **“Housing Opportunities Move the Economy (HOME) Forward Act”**

Congresswoman Maxine Waters (D-CA) released draft housing finance reform legislation, the “Housing Opportunities Move the Economy (HOME) Forward Act,” in 2014. The measure would have wound down Fannie Mae and Freddie

Mac over a five-year period and replaced them with a newly created lender-owned cooperative, the Mortgage Securities Cooperative (MSC). The MSC would have been the only entity that could issue government guaranteed securities and would have been lender-capitalized based on mortgage volume. The bill would have also created a new regulator, the National Mortgage Finance Administration. Under the bill, private capital would have to have been in a first loss position to reduce taxpayer risk.

The “HOME Forward Act” would have preserved Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac’s multifamily business and transferred it to a new multifamily platform at the MSC. The bill also assessed a 10-basis point user fee to fund the HTF, the CMF, and the MAF. The bill was never introduced.

### **“Protecting American Taxpayers and Homeowners (PATH) Act”**

Former Congressman Jeb Hensarling (R-TX) introduced the “Protecting American Taxpayers and Homeowners (PATH) Act” (H.R. 2767) in 2013. The bill called for a five-year phase out of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. As part of this wind-down, the bill would have repealed the authorization of the current affordable housing goals, as well as the HTF and CMF. The bill would have established a new non-government, non-profit National Mortgage Market Utility (Utility) that would have been regulated by FHFA and required to think of and develop common best practice standards for the private origination, servicing, pooling, and securitizing of mortgages. The Utility would have also operated a publicly accessible securitization outlet to match loan originators with investors. The Utility would not have been allowed to originate, service, or guarantee any mortgage or MBS.

The bill would have also made changes to FHA, including making it a separate agency, no longer part of HUD. The bill would have limited FHA’s activities to first-time homebuyers with any income and low and moderate-income borrowers and would have lowered the FHA conforming loan limit for high-cost areas. The bill was voted out of the Financial Services Committee on



July 23, 2013, by a partisan vote of 30-27. Two Republicans and all Democrats opposed the bill. The bill was not taken up by the full House and was blocked by then Speaker of the House John Boehner (R-OH). It was opposed by virtually every segment of the housing industry.

### **“Bipartisan Housing Finance Reform Act of 2018”**

Representatives Hensarling, Delaney, and Himes released draft legislation to reform the nation’s housing finance system in 2018. This proposal provided an affordability fee that could contribute to an overall increase in funding dedicated to affordable housing. While NLIHC appreciated the authors’ stated commitment to “substantial funding in support of existing programs that contribute to the development of the supply of affordable housing options for low-income individuals and communities, such as the Housing Trust Fund and the Capital Magnet Fund,” we were concerned with the lack of details about the size of the fee and the uses for the funds generated. While the draft bill provided few details on how much funding would be provided to the HTF, the authors specifically identified the HTF as a possible recipient of such funds. Moreover, the bill was unclear about the size of the assessment. NLIHC opposes the draft bill’s suggestion that dedicated funds be on budget, and instead NLIHC urges lawmakers to ensure that HTF funding remains separate from the appropriations process.

Funding for the HTF must be part of a broader commitment to ensuring access and affordability throughout the housing market. The draft legislation, however, would repeal the system’s current affordable housing goals without providing anything in its place. This is unacceptable; housing finance reform must include enforceable and measurable mechanisms to ensure that access to credit is enjoyed by all segments of the housing market.

## **HOUSING FINANCE REFORM IN THE 117TH CONGRESS**

NLIHC will continue to advocate for comprehensive reform, since it offers the best chance of substantial new funding for HTF in the coming years. When Congress does finally tackle housing finance reform, it is critical that low-income housing advocates remain vigilant and protect the gains made in the Johnson-Crapo, Waters, and Delaney-Carney-Himes bills to robustly fund the HTF.

### **WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS**

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac play important roles in both the single-family and the affordable multifamily markets. These functions, as well as the contributions to the HTF, need to be part of any future secondary market. The HTF must be retained and funded in any future housing finance system.

With respect to the potential housing finance reform proposals, advocates should urge their legislators to:

- Oppose any legislation that would eliminate or prohibit funding for the HTF.
- Support legislation that provides robust funding for the HTF similar to the Johnson-Crapo and Waters and Delaney-Carney-Himes bills.
- Support housing finance reform legislation that assures access to the market for all creditworthy borrowers, as well as assuring compliance with federal fair housing laws.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Federal Housing Finance Agency, [www.fhfa.gov](http://www.fhfa.gov).

Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation, [www.fanniemae.com](http://www.fanniemae.com).

Federal National Mortgage Association, [www.freddiemac.com](http://www.freddiemac.com).



---

# **Chapter 4:**

RENTAL

HOUSING

PROGRAMS FOR

THE LOWEST-

INCOME

HOUSEHOLDS

---



# Housing Choice Vouchers

---

By Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, NLIHC

**Administering Agency:** HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) as well as approximately 2,200 state and local public housing agencies (PHAs)

**Year Started:** 1974

**Population Targeted:** Seventy-five percent of all new and turnover voucher households must have extremely low income (less than 30% of the area median income, AMI, or the federal poverty line, whichever is higher); the remaining 25% of new voucher households can be distributed to residents with income up to 80% of AMI.

**Funding:** The FY22 spending bill provided \$24 billion for voucher contract renewals. For PHA administration costs, the FY22 bill provided \$2.4 billion. The FY22 bill provided \$200 million to fund an estimated 25,000 new incremental vouchers. For FY21, contract renewals were funded at \$23 billion and PHA administration costs were funded at \$2.2 billion. In FY20, the voucher program received \$21.5 billion for contract renewals plus \$1.98 billion for PHAs to administer the program.

**See Also:** For related information, see the *Project-Based Vouchers*, *Tenant Protection Vouchers*, *Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH)*, *Family Unification Program (FUP)*, and *Mainstream and Non-Elderly Disabled (NED) Vouchers* sections of this guide.

Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) help people with the lowest income afford housing in the private housing market by paying landlords the difference between what a household can afford to pay for rent and the actual rent to the owner, up to a reasonable amount. The HCV program is HUD's largest rental assistance program, assisting approximately 1.8 million households according to PIH's [Resident Characteristics Report](#) for October 31, 2021.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

Federal tenant-based rental assistance was established as part of a major restructuring of federal housing assistance for low-income families in 1974. President Richard Nixon supported the creation of the tenant-based Section 8 program as an alternative to the government's involvement in producing affordable multifamily apartments. In recent decades, the program has had broad bipartisan support. It grew incrementally between 1974 and 1996, the first year when no new, incremental vouchers were appropriated. Since then, Congress has authorized HUD to award more than 700,000 additional vouchers, but about half of these have simply replaced public housing or other federally subsidized housing that has been demolished or is no longer assisted.

Since FY08, Congress has appropriated funding for a small number of incremental vouchers (new vouchers that are not replacements for other assisted housing) each year for special populations, mostly for homeless veterans under the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program. [Between 2008 and 2019](#), 105,000 VASH vouchers were issued, with more still being issued with funds from FY20 and FY21. [From FY15 through FY21](#), Congress appropriated \$40 million each year for new (HUD-VASH) vouchers.

In FY19, Congress appropriated \$20 million for new Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers to serve youth aging out of foster care, for a total of 7,600 new vouchers. The FUP appropriation for FY20 was \$25 million and \$25 million was appropriated for FY21.

The president's proposed FY22 budget did not request new funding for VASH or FUP vouchers because previously appropriated funds that remain available for carryover are sufficient to fund the anticipated need for new voucher allocations. For FY22, the House proposed \$20 million and the Senate proposed \$50 million for

VASH, and the House proposed \$25 million and the Senate proposed \$30 million for FUP. The final FY22 spending bill provided \$50 million for VASH vouchers and \$30 million for FUP vouchers.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

As of October 31, 2021, about 1.8 million households had HUD Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs), also called Section 8 tenant-based rental assistance. HUD's [Picture of Subsidized Housing](#) reports that in 2020, of all voucher households, 78% had extremely low incomes (less than 30% of the area median income, AMI, or the federal poverty level, whichever is greater), 25% had a household member who had a disability, and 31% were elderly. The national average income of a voucher household was \$15,202. Twenty-five percent of the households had *wage* income as their major source of income, while only 3% had welfare income.

Housing vouchers are one of the major federal programs intended to bridge the gap between the cost of housing and the income of low-wage earners, people on limited fixed incomes, and other poor people. The Housing Choice Voucher Program offers assisted households the option to use vouchers to help pay rent at privately owned apartments of their choice. A household can even use a voucher to help buy a home. PHAs may also choose to attach a portion of their vouchers to particular properties (project-based vouchers, PBVs). See *Vouchers: Project-Based Vouchers* in this guide.

The HCV program has deep income targeting requirements. Since 1998, 75% of all new voucher households must have extremely low incomes, at or less than 30% of AMI. The remaining 25% of new and turnover vouchers can be distributed to residents with income up to 80% of AMI.

PIH has annual contracts with about 2,200 PHAs to administer vouchers, about 925 of which only administer the HCV program (these do not have any public housing units). Funding provided by Congress is distributed to these PHAs by PIH based on the number of vouchers in use the

previous year, the cost of vouchers, an increase for inflation, as well as other adjustments. However, when Congress appropriates less than needed, each PHA's funding is reduced on a prorated basis.

To receive a voucher, residents put their names on local PHA wait lists. The HCV program, like all HUD affordable housing programs, is not an entitlement program. Many more people need and qualify for vouchers than actually receive them. Only one in four households eligible for housing vouchers receive any form of federal rental assistance. The success of the existing voucher program and any expansion with new vouchers depends on annual appropriations.

Local PHAs distribute vouchers to qualified families, who have 60 days to conduct their own housing search to identify private apartments with rents within the PHA's rent "payment standard" (explained in the next paragraph). Generally, landlords are not required to rent to a household with a voucher; consequently, many households have difficulty finding a place to rent with their vouchers. Housing assisted with the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, Home Investment Partnerships (HOME), or national Housing Trust Fund programs must rent to an otherwise qualifying household that has a voucher. In addition, some states and local governments have "source of income discrimination" laws that also prohibit landlords from discriminating against households with vouchers.

The amount of the housing voucher subsidy for a household is capped at a "payment standard" set by a PHA, which must be between 90% and 110% of HUD's Fair Market Rent (FMR), the rent in the metropolitan area for a modest apartment. HUD sets FMRs annually. Nationally, the average voucher household in 2021 paid \$364 a month for rent and utilities. In many areas the payment standard is not sufficient to cover the rent in areas that have better schools, lower crime, and greater access to employment opportunities, often called high opportunity areas. In hot real estate markets where all rents are high, households with a voucher often find it difficult

to use their voucher because households with higher incomes can afford to offer landlords higher rent.

A PHA may request HUD Field Office approval of an “exception payment standard” up to 120% of the FMR for a designated part of an FMR area. In addition, an exception payment greater than 120% of the FMR may need to be approved by the PIH Assistant Secretary. For either, a PHA must demonstrate that the exception payment is necessary to help households find homes outside areas of high poverty, or because households have trouble finding homes within the 60-day time limit allowed to search for a landlord who will accept a voucher.

As a result of legislation passed in 2016, the “Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act” (HOTMA, see below), PHAs may establish an exception payment standard of up to 120% of the FMR as a “reasonable accommodation” for a person with a disability, without having to get HUD approval. PHAs may seek HUD approval for an exception payment standard greater than 120% of FMR as a reasonable accommodation.

Also due to HOTMA, PHAs have the option to hold voucher households harmless from rent increases when FMRs decline. PHAs can do this by continuing to use the payment standard based on the FMR prior to the new, higher FMR.

Once a household selects an apartment, a PHA must inspect it to ensure that it meets HUD’s housing quality standards (HQS). Generally, voucher program participants pay 30% of their adjusted income toward rent and utilities. The value of the voucher, the PHA’s payment standard, then makes up the difference between the tenant’s actual rent payment (based on 30% of their adjusted income) and the rent charged by an owner. Tenants renting units that have contract rents greater than the payment standard pay 30% of their income plus the difference between the payment standard and the actual rent (up to 40% of adjusted income for new and relocating voucher holders). After one year in an apartment, a household can choose to pay more than 40% of their income toward rent.

Housing vouchers are “portable,” meaning households can use them to move nearly anywhere in the country where there is a PHA administering the voucher program; use is not limited to the jurisdiction of the PHA that originally issued the voucher. A PHA is allowed to impose some restrictions on “portability” during the first year if a household did not live in the PHA’s jurisdiction when it applied for assistance. However, portability has been restricted or disallowed by some PHAs due to alleged inadequate funding. Recent HUD guidance requires approval of the local HUD office before a PHA may prohibit a family from using a voucher to move to a new unit due to insufficient funding.

## STATUTORY AND REGULATORY CHANGES

### Statutory Changes

On July 29, 2016, President Obama signed into law the “Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act” (HOTMA). This law made some changes to the Housing Choice Voucher and public housing programs. Highlights of the HCV changes include:

- Income Determination and Recertification:
  - For residents already assisted, rents must be based on a household’s income from the prior year.
  - Rent must be based on an applicant’s estimated income for the upcoming year.
  - A household may request an income review any time their income or deductions are estimated to decrease by 10%.
  - A PHA must review a household’s income any time that income with deductions are estimated to increase by 10%, except any increase in earned income cannot be considered until the next annual income recertification.
- Income Deductions and Exclusions:
  - The Earned Income Disregard (EID) was eliminated, no longer disregarding certain increases in earned income for residents

who had been unemployed or receiving welfare.

- The deduction for elderly and disabled households increased from \$400 to \$525 with annual adjustments for inflation.
- The deduction for medical care, attendant care, and auxiliary aid expenses for elderly and disabled households will apply to expenses that exceeded 10% of income (compared to 3% of income before HOTMA).
- The dependent deduction remains at \$480 but will be indexed to inflation.
- The deduction of anticipated expenses for the care of children under age 13 is unchanged.
- Any expenses related to aiding and attending to veterans are excluded from income.
- Any income of a full-time student who is a dependent is excluded from income, as are any scholarship funds used for tuition and books.
- HUD must establish hardship exemptions in regulation for households who would not be able to pay rent due to hardship. These regulations must be made in consultation with tenant organizations and industry participants.
- Physical Inspections:
  - HOTMA provides PHAs with two options for initial inspections:
    - a. HOTMA allows a household to move into a unit and begin making housing assistance payments to an owner if the unit does not meet HQS, as long as the deficiencies are not life-threatening. However, a PHA must withhold payments to the owner if a unit does not meet HQS standards 30 days after a household first occupies a unit. If an initial inspection identifies non-life-threatening (NLT) deficiencies, a PHA must provide a list of the deficiencies to a household and offer the household an opportunity to decline a lease without jeopardizing their voucher. A PHA must also notify a household that if an owner fails to correct NLT deficiencies within a time period specified by a PHA, the PHA will terminate the HAP contract and the household will have to move to another unit. If a household declines a unit, a PHA must inform a household of how much search time they have remaining to find another unit. In addition, a PHA must “suspend” (stop the clock) of an initial or any “extended term” of a voucher (to search for another unit) from the date the household submitted a request for PHA approval of tenancy until the date the PHA notifies the household in writing whether the request has been approved or denied.
    - b. Alternatively, a PHA may allow a household to move into a unit before the PHA conducts its own HQS inspection, as long as the unit passed a comparable, alternative inspection within the previous 24 months. Implementing guidance published in 2017 still requires a PHA to conduct its own inspection within 15 days.
  - Enforcement of Housing Quality Standards:
    - a. HQS deficiencies that are life-threatening must be fixed within 24 hours and HQS conditions that are not life-threatening must be fixed within 30 days. A PHA *may* withhold assistance during this time (HOTMA places into law the 24-hour and 30-day time periods that already existed in regulation).
    - b. If an owner fails to make the non-life-threatening corrections within 30 days, a PHA *must* abate any further Housing Assistance Payments (HAP payments) for another 60 days or until those conditions are addressed and the unit meets HQS. Once a unit is found to be in compliance, a PHA must restart



HAP payments. However, a PHA cannot reimburse and owner for abated payments.

- c. A PHA must notify the household and owner of the abatement and inform the household that they must move if the unit is not brought into HQS compliance within 60 days after the end of the first 30-day period. The owner cannot terminate the household's tenancy during the abatement, but the household may terminate its tenancy if they choose.
  - d. If an owner fails to make the non-life-threatening corrections and meet HQS after the further 60 days (or life-threatening violations within 24 hours), a PHA must terminate the HAP contract.
  - e. The household must have at least 90 days to find another unit to rent (a PHA may extend the search period). If the household cannot find another unit, then the PHA must give the household the option of moving into a public housing unit. The PHA may provide relocation assistance to the household, including reimbursement for reasonable moving expenses and security deposits, using up to two months of any rental assistance amounts withheld or abated.
- Payment Standard for Reasonable Accommodation:
    - PHAs may establish an exception payment standard of up to 120% of the FMR as a reasonable accommodation for a person with a disability, without having to get HUD approval.
    - PHAs may seek HUD approval for an exception payment standard greater than 120% of FMR as a reasonable accommodation.
  - PHAs have the option to hold voucher households harmless from rent increases when FMRs decline. PHAs can do this by
    - continuing to use the payment standard based on the FMR prior to the new, higher FMR.
  - Project Based Vouchers:
    - PHAs may choose to project base up to 20% of their authorized HCVs (removing the previous PBV cap of 20% of a PHA's HCV dollar allocation).
    - PHAs may project base an additional 10% of their authorized HCVs to provide units for people who are homeless, disabled, elderly, or veterans, as well as to provide units in areas where vouchers are difficult to use (census tracts with a poverty rate less than 20%).
    - A project may not have more than 25% of its units or 25 units, whichever is greater, assisted with PBVs. Prior to HOTMA, the PBV cap was 25% of units. The 25%/25 unit cap does not apply to units exclusively for elderly households or households eligible for supportive services. Prior to HOTMA, the exceptions to the 25% cap applied to households comprised of elderly or disabled people and households receiving supportive services. For projects where vouchers are difficult to use (census tracts with poverty rates less than 20%), the cap is raised to 40%.
    - The maximum term of initial PBV contracts and subsequent extensions increased from 15 years to 20 years. A PHA may agree to extend a HAP contract for an additional 20 years, but only for a maximum of 40 years according to implementation guidance. However, informally HUD staff have conveyed to NLIHC that the guidance is confusing; HUD staff agree that an owner could renew a HAP contract after 40 years.
    - If an owner does not renew a PBV contract, a household may choose to remain in the project with voucher assistance; however, the household must pay any amount by which the rent exceeds their PHA's payment standard.

- Vouchers may be used to make monthly payments to purchase a manufactured home, and to pay for property taxes and insurance, tenant-paid utilities, and rent charged for the land upon which the manufactured home sits, including management and maintenance charges.

### Proposed Regulatory Changes

On September 17, 2019, HUD proposed HOTMA implementation regulations echoing HOTMA's income examination, income calculation, elderly or disabled deduction, childcare deduction and hardship provisions, and healthcare deduction and hardship provisions. In addition, HUD proposed HOTMA asset limitation provisions, including: making households ineligible if their net household assets are greater than \$100,000 (adjusted for inflation each year) or if the household owns real property suitable for occupancy; allowing a PHA to determine net assets based on a household's certification that their net family assets are less than \$50,000 (adjusted for inflation each year); revising the definition of "net family assets" by eliminating a number of previously included items such as the value of necessary "personal property" (like a car); and allowing a PHA to choose to not enforce the asset limit. NLIHC [summarized](#) key provisions of the proposed changes. A final rule was not implemented before *Advocate's Guide* went to publication. Still more HOTMA regulations were proposed for vouchers on October 8, 2020. This massive proposal contains many provisions already implemented through notices that must be codified in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), provisions not yet implemented, and numerous non-HOTMA related changes. A final rule is anticipated in 2022.

## ADDITIONAL REGULATORY CHANGES

- A "streamlining rule" was published on March 8, 2016. Key HCV provisions include the following options for PHAs:
  - PHAs have the option of conducting a streamlined income determination for

any household member who has a fixed source of income (such as Supplemental Security Income, SSI). If that person or household with a fixed income also has a non-fixed source of income, the non-fixed source of income is still subject to third-party verification. Upon admission to the voucher program, third-party verification of all income amounts will be required for all household members. A full income reexamination and redetermination must be performed every three years. In between those three years, a streamlined income determination must be conducted by applying a verified cost of living adjustment or current rate of interest to the previously verified or adjusted income amount.

- PHAs have the option of providing utility reimbursements on a quarterly basis to voucher households if amounts due are \$45 or less. PHAs can continue to provide utility reimbursements monthly if they choose to do so. If a PHA opts to make payments on a quarterly basis, the PHA must establish a hardship policy for tenants if less frequent reimbursement will create a financial hardship.
- The rule implements the "FY14 Appropriations Act" provision authorizing PHAs to inspect voucher units every other year, rather than annually, and to use inspections conducted by other programs like the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program.
- Small Area FMRs (also referred to as SAFMRs) must be used by 24 designated metropolitan areas to administer their voucher program. SAFMRs reflect rents for U.S. Postal ZIP Codes, while traditional FMRs reflect a single rent standard for an entire metropolitan region. The intent is to provide voucher payment standards that are more in line with neighborhood-scale rental markets, resulting in lower subsidies in neighborhoods with lower rents and concentrations of voucher holders, and relatively higher subsidies in

neighborhoods with higher rents and greater opportunities. A goal of SAFMRs is to help households use vouchers in areas of higher opportunity and lower poverty, thereby reducing voucher concentrations high poverty areas.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

A final rule is anticipated that would implement remaining HOTMA provisions basically echoing the statute's income examination, income calculation, elderly or disabled deduction, child-care deduction and hardship provisions, healthcare deduction and hardship provisions, and asset limitation provisions. Each PHA's eligibility for renewal funding is based on the cost of vouchers in use in the prior year. The FY22 spending bill provided \$24 billion for voucher contract renewals, \$2.4 billion for PHA administration costs, and \$200 million to fund an estimated 25,000 new incremental vouchers. For FY21, contract renewals were funded at \$23 billion and PHA administration costs were funded at \$2.2 billion.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates should encourage Members of the House and Senate to fully fund the renewal of all vouchers.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

NLIHC, 202-662-1530, [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org).

National Housing Law Project, 415-546-7000, <http://nhlp.org/resourcecenter?tid=121>.

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 202-408-1080, <https://www.cbpp.org/topics/housing>.

Technical Assistance Collaborative, *Section 8 Made Simple*, <http://bit.ly/2hWKzYa>.

NLIHC's Summary of September 17, 2019 proposed HOTMA implementation regulations, <https://bit.ly/2kr70dt>.

HUD's Housing Choice Voucher homepage, <http://bit.ly/2ijlWUs>.

HUD's HCV Guidebook webpage, <https://bit.ly/3EgGd7r>.

HUD's VASH webpage, <http://bit.ly/2h5yHRr>.

HUD's Non-Elderly Disabled webpage, <http://bit.ly/2ifnv9I>.

HUD's Mainstream Voucher webpage, <https://bit.ly/3rxF7kj>

HUD's Family Unification Program (FUP) webpage, <https://bit.ly/38CuBMw>.

HUD's HOTMA Resources webpage, <https://bit.ly/3pn9xms>.

The Administration's FY22 proposal for Tenant-Based Rental Assistance, <https://bit.ly/3djlnC>.

# Project-Based Vouchers

---

By Barbara Sard, former Vice President for Housing Policy, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

**Administering Agency:** HUD’s Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH)

**Year the Current Version Started:** 2001

**Number of Persons/Households Served:** More than 250,000 households (could rise to about 800,000)

**Population Targeted:** Extremely low- and low-income households

**See Also:** For related information, refer to the *Housing Choice Vouchers* and *Public Housing Agency Plan* sections of this guide.

Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) may project-base up to 20% of their authorized Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) and up to 30% if the additional units contain certain types of households or are located in specific areas. The term “project-based” means that the assistance is linked to a particular property, as opposed to tenant-based vouchers, which move with the family. About 800,000 vouchers could be project-based nationwide under this expanded authority, but according to HUD only about 275,000 units had project-based voucher (PBV) assistance as of September 2021, of which about 90,000 are in former public housing or other federally-assisted units converted under Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD). Only one-third (about 780) of the approximately 2,140 PHAs that administer HCVs operate PBV programs.

PBVs are an important tool to provide supportive housing for individuals with disabilities or others who need services to live stably in their own homes. PBVs can also help PHAs in tight housing markets utilize all of their vouchers by making it unnecessary for some families to search for units they can rent with their vouchers. Another benefit of PBVs is that they can encourage the production or preservation of affordable housing, since owners of properties with PBVs receive financial

security from the long-term contracts they sign with PHAs. This is particularly important in higher cost areas, where PBV rules may allow higher subsidies than tenant-based vouchers.

## ADMINISTRATION

PBVs are administered by PHAs that decide to include this option as part of their HCV programs and are overseen by PIH.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

The current PBV program was created by Congress in October 2000 as part of the FY01 appropriations bill for HUD and other agencies [Section 232 of Pub.L. 106-377, revising section 8(o)(13) of the “U.S. Housing Act,” 42 U.S.C. §1437f(o)(13)]. The PBV program replaced the project-based certificate program, which was rarely used because it was cumbersome (e.g., HUD approval was required for each individual transaction), did not allow long-term financial commitments by PHAs, was limited to new development or rehabilitation, and did not provide incentives for owners to commit units to the program.

In addition to addressing weaknesses of the prior program, Congress included a novel feature, the “resident choice” requirement. This guarantees that a family with PBV assistance that wishes to move after one year will receive the next available tenant-based voucher. The project-based subsidy stays with the unit to assist another eligible family. This requirement helps ensure that PBV recipients remain able to choose the areas in which they live. Congress also included statutory requirements to promote mixed-income housing and to deconcentrate poverty.

HUD issued a notice on January 16, 2001 making most of the statutory changes immediately effective but did not issue final rules fully implementing the statute until 2005. Congress made several amendments to the statute in 2008 as part of the “Housing and Economic Recovery

Act” (HERA), notably extending the maximum contract period from 10 to 15 years in order to correspond to the initial affordability period for the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program and making contract extensions more flexible. Effective July 2014, HUD revised the PBV rule to incorporate the HERA amendments and make some additional changes.

In section 106 of the “Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act of 2016” (HOTMA, a/k/a H.R. 3700), which the president signed into law on July 29, 2016 (Pub.L. 114-201), Congress made substantial changes to the PBV program. By *Federal Register* notice published January 18, 2017, HUD made most of these changes effective in 90 days (i.e., April 18, 2017). HUD issued technical corrections to the January notice in July 2017 and consolidated all PBV policy guidance in PIH 2017-21, October 30, 2017. In July 2019, HUD issued revised forms for the PBV program that comply with these HOTMA changes. In October 2020, HUD issued proposed regulations to implement the remaining provisions of HOTMA and make other changes in the PBV program, but these further changes will not take effect until HUD issues final regulations. Properties selected to receive PBVs prior to April 18, 2017 will be subject to the pre-HOTMA requirements, unless the PHA and owner agree to the HOTMA changes. This article reflects the HOTMA changes currently in effect.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

A PHA may initiate a PBV program by including the following in its PHA Plan: the projected number of units to be project-based, their general locations, and how project-basing would be consistent with the needs and goals identified in the Plan. A PHA must include in its HCV Administrative Plan details about how it will select properties in which to project-base vouchers, how it will maintain waiting lists, and what, if any, supportive services will be offered to PBV residents. No HUD approval is required, but HUD requires PHAs to submit certain information to the local HUD office prior to selecting properties to receive PBV contracts.

Vouchers may be project-based in existing housing as well as in newly constructed or rehabilitated units but cannot be used in transitional housing. Use in existing housing permits a more streamlined process. The locations where PBVs are used must be consistent with the goal of deconcentrating poverty and expanding housing and economic opportunity, but agencies have substantial discretion to make this judgment so long as they consider certain HUD-specified factors. PHAs must use a competitive process to select properties, or rely on a competition conducted by another entity such as the process used by the state to allocate LIHTCs, except if project-basing is part of an initiative to improve, develop, or replace a public housing property or site and the PHA has an ownership interest in or control of the property.

HOTMA increased the share of vouchers that agencies could project-base by shifting the measure from 20% of voucher funding to 20% of authorized vouchers, which increases the number of vouchers that may be project-based nationally by about 300,000. In addition, HOTMA allows an agency to project-base an additional 10% of its vouchers, up to a total of 30%, in units that:

1. House individuals and families meeting the McKinney homelessness definition.
2. House veterans.
3. Provide supportive housing to persons with disabilities or elderly people.
4. Are located in areas where the poverty rate is 20% or less, based on census data at the time of the PBV contract.

Former public housing or other federally assisted or rent-restricted housing, including units converted to project-based vouchers (PBVs) as part of RAD, generally do not count toward this cap.

In general, PBVs can be attached to no more than the greater of 25% of the units in a project or 25 units in order to achieve a mix of incomes, although there are several exceptions to this requirement. The limitation does not apply to

projects that were previously federally assisted or rent restricted. In projects located in census tracts where the poverty rate does not exceed 20%, the PBV limit is increased to 40% of the project's units. Units housing seniors, or whose non-elderly residents (including, but not limited to, people with disabilities) are eligible for supportive services that are made available to the assisted tenants in the project, are not subject to the income-mixing limitation (prior to HOTMA, residents had to receive services—not just be eligible for them—in order for the units they occupied to be eligible for the supportive services exception). By requiring owners to attract unsubsidized tenants for a majority of the units, the requirement imposes market discipline in place of direct HUD oversight. The resident choice feature described above also is intended to promote market discipline, as owners' costs will increase if there is a great deal of turnover in their units.

Units receiving PBV assistance, like other HCV units, must meet HUD's housing quality standards before initial occupancy. HOTMA provides some new flexibility to speed initial occupancy where units have been approved under a comparable alternative inspection method or where defects are not life-threatening and are fixed within 30 days. Where tenants remain in place, PHAs may inspect only a sample of PBV units in a property biannually rather than each assisted unit, reducing administrative costs.

With a PBV, a family typically pays 30% of its adjusted income on housing, and the voucher covers the difference between that amount and the unit rent plus the PHA's allowance for tenant-paid utilities. As in the tenant-based voucher program, the unit rent must not exceed the rents for comparable unassisted units in the area. However, there are three important differences in rent policy in PBV units:

1. There is no risk that families will have to pay more than 30% of its income if the rent is above the agency's payment standard.
2. The unit rent is not limited by the PHA's payment standard but may be any reasonable

amount up to 110% of the applicable Fair Market Rent (FMR) or HUD-approved exception payment standard. This flexibility on unit rents applies even in the case of units that receive HOME Program funds, where rents usually are capped at 100% of the HUD FMR. Special and more flexible rent rules apply in LIHTC units.

3. In metro areas where HUD sets FMRs at the ZIP code level (small area FMRs) rather than metro-wide, or at PHAs that choose to adopt Small Area FMRs, the metro-wide FMRs continue to apply to PBV projects unless the PHA and owner agree to set rents based on the Small Area FMRs, which could expand use of PBVs in higher-cost neighborhoods.

PHAs may reduce allowable unit rents below market based on the property's receipt of other government subsidies. This could be an important tool to stretch voucher funding to assist more units that receive additional capital subsidies through the National Housing Trust Fund.

PHAs must maintain the waiting list for PBV units and refer applicants to owners with anticipated vacancies for selection. PHAs can maintain the PBV waitlist as part of their full voucher waitlist, or maintain a separate PBV waitlist, or even maintain separate waitlists for different properties. To minimize the risk to owners of losing income due to a PHA's failure to promptly refer applicants, PHAs can pay the rent on vacant units for up to 60 days.

PHAs may use different preferences for their PBV waiting list, or the lists for individual PBV properties, than those used for the regular tenant-based list. This may include a preference based on eligibility for services offered in conjunction with a property, which may include disability-specific services funded by Medicaid. Applicants for regular tenant-based vouchers must be notified of the right to apply for PBVs and retain their place on the tenant-based list if they decline to apply for PBV units or are rejected by a PBV owner. Such notice need not be provided directly to everyone on the tenant-based

waiting list at the time the project-based list is established; PHAs may use the same procedures used to notify the community that the waiting list will be opened.

HOTMA makes PBVs more flexible in other ways. The maximum term of the initial contract or any extension is increased to 20 years, and PHAs may project-base vouchers provided under the Family Unification or HUD-VASH programs. PHAs and owners can modify HUD's form PBV contracts to adjust to local circumstances and to add units to existing contracts.

Families admitted to PBV units count for purposes of determining a PHA's compliance with the HCV program's targeting requirement that 75% or more of the families admitted annually have extremely low incomes. Targeting compliance is measured for a PHA's entire HCV program, not just at the project level.

HUD's rules now make clear that owners may evict a family from a PBV unit only for good cause (in contrast, families may be evicted from units assisted by tenant-based vouchers when their leases expire, without cause, unless state laws are more stringent). In addition, if a PBV contract is terminated or expires without extension, families have a right to use tenant-based voucher assistance to remain in the unit or move to other housing of their choice.

## FUNDING

PBVs are funded as part of the overall Tenant-based Rental Assistance account. PHAs use a portion of their HCV funding for PBVs if they decide to offer the program. The formula Congress directs HUD to use to allocate annual HCV renewal funding provides additional funding to agencies that had to hold back some vouchers in order to have them available for use as project-based assistance in new or rehabilitated properties.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

HUD may issue final PBV rules based on the proposed regulatory changes published in October 2020. These additional rules could

encourage more PHAs to take advantage of the expanded authority and increased flexibility HOTMA provides. Perceived funding uncertainty for the HCV program, however, may deter PHAs from making long-term PBV commitments.

### Statutory Changes

A provision of the Build Back Better legislation approved by the House in late 2021 would have allowed PHAs to seek HUD approval to project-base new vouchers funded by the bill above the "program cap" established by HOTMA.

### Regulatory Changes

HUD may finalize regulations to implement HOTMA policy changes that are not already effective and to incorporate other HOTMA changes already in effect into HUD rules. These policy changes include defining areas where vouchers are difficult to use differently than the initial guidance (which uses a poverty rate of 20% or less for this concept). Such a new definition could expand the types of households or areas that qualify a PHA to use more PBVs overall. The final HOTMA regulations also will likely allow owner-managed, site-based waiting lists, authorize the use of an operating cost adjustment factor to adjust PBV contract rents, streamline environmental review requirements for existing housing, and allow PHAs to enter into a contract for a property under construction.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 202-408-1080, [www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org).

A "policy basic" on PBVs is at <https://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/policy-basics-project-based-vouchers>.

Information on housing policy and funding is at <http://bit.ly/1d2pkIR>.

# Tenant Protection Vouchers

---

By Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, NLIHC

**Administering Agency:** HUD’s Office of Public and Indian Housing and Office of Multifamily Housing Programs

**Year Program Started:** 1996 for prepayments; 1999 for opt outs

**Population Targeted:** Low-income tenants of HUD’s various project-based housing assistance programs

**Funding:** The FY22 spending bill provided \$100 million for tenant protection vouchers, compared to \$116 million in FY21, \$75 million in FY20, and \$85 million in FY19.

**See Also:** The *Housing Choice Voucher Program* and *Project-Based Rental Assistance* sections of this guide.

Tenant Protection Vouchers (TPVs) may be provided to low-income residents of project-based HUD-assisted housing when there is a change in the status of their assisted housing that will cause residents to lose their home (for example, public housing demolition) or render their home unaffordable (for example, an owner “opting out” of a Section 8 contract). HUD calls such changes “housing conversion actions” or “eligibility events.” TPVs have two types: regular tenant-based Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) and tenant-based Enhanced Vouchers (EVs). Both types are administered by a local public housing agency (PHA). The amount of funding available for TPVs is determined by HUD estimates of need in the upcoming year and congressional appropriations.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

Residents are eligible for either HCVs or EVs, depending upon which housing program assisted the development in which they are living, as well as certain circumstances for some of the programs. The “FY21 Appropriations Act” continued the policy of limiting TPVs to units that have been occupied during the previous two

years. [Notice PIH 2021-10](#) follows the letter of the act, an improvement over previous years, when HUD stated that due to inadequate funding, TPVs would only be awarded for units occupied at the time a PHA or private owner applied for them, or when HUD approved demolition or disposition of public housing. The “FY20 Appropriations Act” also continued a provision first introduced by the “FY15 Appropriations Act,” prohibiting TPVs to be reissued when the initial family with the TPV no longer uses it, except as a “replacement voucher.”

## REPLACEMENT AND RELOCATION TENANT PROTECTION VOUCHERS

Since FY15, Congress has prohibited TPVs to be reissued when a household no longer uses it, unless that TPV was a “replacement TPV.” In short, replacement TPVs are made available as a result of a public housing or HUD-assisted Multifamily action that reduces the number of HUD-assisted units in a community. Replacement TPVs not only assist the household affected by the loss of the HUD-assisted unit, but also make up for the loss of the HUD-assisted housing in the community. After an initial household no longer needs the replacement TPV, a PHA may reissue the TPV to households on its waiting list or project-base that TPV. “Relocation TPVs” are provided when HUD-assisted housing units are not permanently lost, for example when residents are temporarily relocated while waiting to return to redeveloped public housing. Such TPVs cannot be reissued once the household returns to the redeveloped property.

HUD’s Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) created “[Tenant Protection Vouchers \(TPVs\) for Public Housing Actions](#),” a summary of its current policies regarding TBVs relating just to public housing. (The summary does not apply to TPVs for HUD’s Office of Multifamily Housing Programs.)



## Regular Tenant Protection Vouchers

Traditional HCVs are provided to residents to enable them to find alternative affordable homes when:

- Public housing is demolished, sold (a “disposition”), or undergoes a mandatory conversion to HCVs.
- A project-based Section 8 contract has been terminated or not renewed by HUD at a private, multifamily property (for example if the owner continuously fails to maintain the property in suitable condition).
- Private housing with a HUD-subsidized mortgage undergoes foreclosure.
- A Rent Supplement Payments Program (Rent Supp) or a Rental Assistance Payment Program (RAP) contract expires, an underlying mortgage is prepaid, or HUD terminates the contract.
- Certain Section 202 Direct Loans are prepaid.

TPVs issued as regular HCVs follow all of the basic rules and procedures of non-TPV HCVs.

## Enhanced Vouchers

EVs are provided to tenants living in properties with private, project-based assistance when an “eligibility event” takes place, as defined in Section 8(t)(2) of the “Housing Act of 1937.” The most typical eligibility event is when a project-based Section 8 contract expires and the owner decides not to renew the contract – the owner “opts out.” Prepayment of certain unrestricted HUD-insured mortgages (generally Section 236 and Section 221(d)(3) projects) is another type of eligibility event.

Several other situations trigger an eligibility event, depending on the program initially providing assistance. HUD must provide EVs for opt outs and qualifying mortgage prepayments; however, HUD has discretion regarding TPVs for other circumstances such as Rent Supp or RAP contract terminations, or Section 202 Direct Loan prepayments.

## Special Features of Enhanced Vouchers

EVs have two special features that make them “enhanced” for residents:

1. Right to Remain: A household receiving an EV has the right to remain in their previously assisted home, and the owner must accept the EV as long as the home:
  - Continues to be used by the owner as a rental property; that is, unless the owner converts the property to a condominium, a cooperative, or some other private use (legal services advocates assert that this qualification in HUD guidance is contrary to statute).
  - Meets HUD’s “reasonable rent” criteria, with rent comparable to unassisted units in the development or in the private market.
  - Meets HUD’s Housing Quality Standards.

Instead of accepting an EV, a household may move right away with a regular HCV. A household accepting an EV may choose to move later, but then their EV converts to a regular HCV.

PIH issued a Memorandum (May 22, 2014) to PHAs about Right to Remain for Tenants who have an EV.

2. Higher Voucher Payment Standard: An EV will pay the difference between a tenant’s required contribution toward rent and the new market-based rent charged by an owner after the housing conversion action, even if that new rent is greater than a PHA’s basic voucher payment standard. A PHA’s regular voucher payment standard is between 90% and 110% of the Fair Market Rent (FMR). EV rents must still meet the regular voucher program’s “rent reasonableness” requirement; rents must be reasonable in comparison to rents charged for comparable housing in the private, unassisted market (and ought to be compared with any unassisted units in the property undergoing a conversion action). EV payment standards must be adjusted in response to future rent increases.

In most cases a household will continue to pay 30% of their income toward rent and utilities. However, the statute has a minimum rent requirement calling for households to continue to pay toward rent at least the same amount they were paying for rent on the date of the housing conversion action, even if it is more than 30% of their income. If, in the future, a household's income declines by 15%, the minimum rent must be recalculated to be 30% of income or the percentage of income the household was paying on the date of the conversion event, whichever is greater. [Notice PIH 2019-12](#) (May 23, 2019) changed the policy for instances in which a household's income increases to an amount such that the dollar value of the EV minimum rent established by the percentage of income calculation is more than the original (pre-15% income decline) EV minimum rent. In such instances, the household's EV minimum rent reverts to the EV minimum rent at the time of the eligibility event.

### **Mortgage Prepayment Eligibility Events Under Section 8(t) of the "Housing Act"**

When an owner prepays an FHA-insured loan, under certain conditions EVs may be provided to tenants in units not covered by rental assistance contracts. However, EVs may not be provided to unassisted tenants if the mortgage matures.

If a mortgage may be prepaid without prior HUD approval, then EVs must be offered to income-eligible tenants living in units not covered by a rental assistance contract. Section 229(l) of the "Low-Income Housing Preservation and Resident Homeownership Act of 1990" (often referred to as LIHPRHA) spells out the various types of such mortgages.

Some properties that received preservation assistance under the "Emergency Low-Income Housing Preservation Act" (often referred to as ELIHPA) may have mortgages that meet the criteria of Section 229(l). For such properties, HUD may provide EVs to income-eligible tenants not currently assisted by a rental assistance contract when the mortgage is prepaid. However,

HUD may not provide EVs if after mortgage prepayment the property still has an unexpired Use Agreement. A Use Agreement is a contract between HUD and a property owner that binds the owner to specific requirements such as income-eligibility of tenants and maximum rents that are less than market-rate. Some HUD programs use Regulatory Agreements which have similar requirements.

### **Set-Aside for TPVs at Certain Properties**

The FY22 spending bill retained the provision setting aside \$5 million of the total amount appropriated for tenant protection vouchers (\$116 million in FY21 and \$100 million in FY22) for low-income households in low-vacancy areas that may have to pay more than 30% of their income for rent. Each year HUD had issued a Notice providing guidance; the latest is [Notice PIH 2019-01/Notice H 2019-02](#). Beginning with that Notice, HUD no longer issues a Notice each year; instead Notice PIH 2019-01/Notice H 2019-02 will continue to be applicable unless Congress changes the terms of the set-aside. The FY19 Notice applied to the \$5 million appropriated for FY18 and funds remaining from previous years.

To be eligible for this set-aside, one of two triggering events must have taken place:

1. A HUD-insured, HUD-held, or Section 202 loan matures that would otherwise have required HUD permission before the loan could be prepaid. These include Section 236, Section 221(d)(3) Below Market Interest Rate (BMIR), and Section 202 Direct loans.
2. The expiration of affordability restrictions accompanying a mortgage or preservation program administered by HUD. There are two groups of such properties:
  - Properties with matured Section 236 insured or HUD-held mortgages, Section 221(d)(3) BMIR insured or HUD-held mortgages, or Section 202 Direct loans for which permission from HUD is not required prior to mortgage prepayment, but the underlying affordability restrictions expired with the maturity of the mortgages.

- Properties with stand-alone “Affordability Restrictions” that expired in FY18 or in the five years prior to the owner’s submission. To be eligible, the project with the expired affordability restriction must not, at the time of the request for assistance, have an active Section 236 insured or HUD-held mortgages, Section 221(d)(3) BMIR insured or HUD-held mortgages, or Section 202 Direct loans.

Before 2018 there was a third possible trigger: the expiration of a rental assistance contract for which the tenants are not eligible for enhanced voucher or tenant protection assistance under existing law. These included properties with a RAP contract that expired before FY12, or a property with a Rent Supp contract that expired before FY20.

A project must be in a HUD-identified low-vacancy area. HUD will update a list of low-vacancy areas each year. The 2018 joint Notice provided many more counties on HUD’s list of low-vacancy areas than in previous years because HUD decided to select counties with public housing and multifamily-assisted properties that had occupancy rates greater than or equal to 90%. Previous Notices used a county’s overall vacancy rate, which included non-assisted rental housing. Advocates had long urged HUD to revise the way it determined low-vacancy areas because many otherwise eligible properties were not allowed to apply for TPV assistance.

To determine whether a household might become rent-burdened (pay more than 30% of household income for rent and utilities), the 2019 Notice (as was the case for the first time with the 2018 Notice) requires owners to divide the 2018 Small Area FMR in metropolitan areas or FMR in non-metro areas by a household’s adjusted income. In the past, the numerator (a proxy for market rents) was HUD’s most current low-income limit for a metro area.

Other key provisions that have applied to the set-aside in previous years provided in the joint 2019 Notice include:

- As with previous Notices, only owners may

request TPV assistance. Advocates have urged HUD to allow residents to request TPV assistance if an owner is not responsive. Also, like previous Notices, the 2019 version requires owners to notify residents. Starting with the 2018 Notice, owners must also notify any legitimate resident organizations. However, the Notice does not require owners of projects approaching an expiration of restrictions to provide residents a one-year advance notice, as advocates have urged.

- As in the past, applications will be accepted on a rolling basis; however, unlike previous Notices the funds will be not available until any set-aside funds are exhausted. This is an improvement advocates have long sought. In prior years set-aside funds not awarded were no longer available at the end of the relevant fiscal year. Because HUD failed to issue Notices in a timely fashion, significant sums were left unused. For example, for FY16 the Notice was issued on August 18, two months before the end of the fiscal year.
- As in the past, owners must indicate their preference for either enhanced vouchers or project-based vouchers (PBVs). Owners must state whether they are willing to accept the alternative form of assistance if the PIH Field Office is unable to find a PHA willing to administer the owner’s preferred assistance type. For example, if an owner prefers PBVs, the application will have to specify whether the owner consents to enhanced vouchers if the PIH Field Office is unable to find a PHA to administer PBV assistance.

## FUNDING

The amount of funding available for TVPs should be determined by HUD estimates of need in the upcoming year and congressional appropriations. The FY22 spending bill provided \$100 million for tenant protection vouchers, compared to \$116 million in FY21, \$75 million in FY20, and \$85 million in FY19.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates should tell Members of Congress to support funding sufficient to cover all TPVs that might be needed due to housing conversion actions so that low-income households are not displaced from their homes as a result of steep rent increases when a private HUD-assisted property leaves a HUD program, or to ensure that low-income households have tenant-based assistance to be able to afford rent elsewhere when they lose their homes due to public housing demolition, disposition, or mandatory or voluntary conversion to vouchers.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

NLIHC, 202-662-1530, [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org).

HUD's Tenant Protection Voucher webpage is at: [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/hcv/tenant\\_protection\\_vouchers](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/tenant_protection_vouchers), including a June 2020 "[Tenant Protection Vouchers \(TPV\) for Public Housing Actions](#)".

HUD Fact Sheet: PHAs are now required to issue this to residents when owners of private, HUD-assisted housing decide to no longer participate in the HUD program, [https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/ENHANCED\\_VOUCHERS\\_ENG.PDF](https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/ENHANCED_VOUCHERS_ENG.PDF).

Notice PIH 2021-10 is at: <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/pih2021-10.pdf>.

The joint Notice H- 2019-02/PIH 2019-01 is at: <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/PIH-2019-01.pdf>.

[Chapter 11](#) of the Multifamily Office's Section 8 Renewal Policy guidebook [https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/508FIN\\_CONSOL\\_GUIDE6\\_8\\_17.PDF](https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/508FIN_CONSOL_GUIDE6_8_17.PDF).

Memorandum (May 22, 2014) to PHAs about Right to Remain for Tenants who have an EV, <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/ENHANCEDVOUCHERREMINDER.PDF>.

# Vouchers: Family Unification Program

---

By Ruth White, Executive Director,  
National Center for Housing and Child  
Welfare

**Administering Agency:** HUD’s Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH)

**Year Started:** 1990

**Number of Persons/Households Served:**  
Nearly 27,000 households currently hold Housing Choice Vouchers through the Family Unification Program (FUP)

**Population Targeted:** Homeless or precariously housed families in danger of losing children to foster care or that are unable to regain custody primarily due to housing problems and youth aging out of foster care who are at risk of homelessness.

**Funding:** In April 2020, HUD issued \$25 million in funding for FUP to serve youth and families, which included funding appropriated by Congress in FY2019 and a portion of the funding made available FY2020. HUD issued a non-competitive notice for \$10 million to serve youth in October 2020. Congress appropriated \$25 million for FUP in FY2021. HUD has not issued a Notice of Funding Opportunity for FUP for families since April 2019. HUD continues to issue new vouchers for youth through competitive notices and through the more expedient, non-competitive distribution mechanism referred to as the Foster Youth to Independence Initiative (described in detail in a separate chapter). Congress included a \$5 million increase for FUP, bringing the total line item to \$30 million for FY2022 intended to serve both youth and families. Ultimately, the FY2022 spending bill provided \$30 million for FUP vouchers. FUP remains an eligible use of HUD’s Tenant Protection Fund.

**See Also:** For related information, refer to the *Housing Choice Voucher Program, Foster Youth to Independence Vouchers, Tenant Protection Vouchers,* and *HUD-Funded Service Coordination Programs* sections of this guide.

HUD’s FUP is a federal housing program aimed at keeping homeless families together and safe and preventing homelessness among young adults aging out of foster care. HUD provides FUP Housing Choice Vouchers to Public Housing Authorities who must work in partnership with public child welfare agencies (PCWAs) in order to select eligible participants for the program. These vouchers can be used to prevent children from entering foster care, reunite foster children with their parents, and help ease the transition to adulthood for older former foster youth. Because youth vouchers are time-limited to three years, on January 24, 2022, HUD implemented “the Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Act Amendments” to FUP, codifying the FYI distribution mechanism and requiring PHAs to offer youth the opportunity to extend their voucher assistance by two years (for a total of five) by pursuing paths towards self-sufficiency if they are able (otherwise they are granted the extension regardless). Voucher assistance for families is not time-limited.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

FUP was signed into law in 1990 by President George H. W. Bush. The program was created as a part of the Tenant Protection Fund within the “Cranston-Gonzalez Affordable Housing Act of 1990.” FUP is designed to address the housing related needs of children in the foster care system. According to HHS, one in ten children who enter foster care are removed from their homes due to inadequate housing. In 2019, nearly 28,000 children entered foster care because their families lacked access to safe, decent, and affordable housing. FUP is also a valuable housing resource to many of the 22,000 youth who age out of foster care each year, nearly a quarter of whom experience homelessness within a year of leaving the system. Despite the obvious impact of America’s affordable housing crisis on foster children, child welfare workers seldom have access to the housing resources or

supportive services necessary to prevent and end homelessness among vulnerable families and youth. FUP involves effective cross-systems partnerships that communities can draw upon to keep families together and safe and ease the transition to adulthood for young adults.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

FUP is administered at the local level through a partnership between public housing agencies (PHAs) and public child welfare agencies. PHAs interested in administering FUP Vouchers must sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with their partner agency in order to apply to HUD in response to a Notice of Funding Availability. FUP Vouchers are awarded through a competitive process. Depending on the size of the PHA, communities can apply for a maximum of 100, 50, or 25 vouchers. Communities are encouraged to apply only for the number of vouchers that can be leased up quickly, meaning families and youth that have been identified as well as landlords who will rent to them.

PHAs receiving an allocation of FUP vouchers will then administer vouchers to families and youth who have been certified as eligible for FUP by the local public child welfare agency. The 2019 HUD Notice of Funding Availability emphasizes the importance of ensuring that families in the homeless assistance system that are involved with child welfare are aware of available FUP Vouchers. In an effort to ensure that these families are included in FUP, HUD required the local Continuum of Care (CoC) leader to sign the FUP MOU and encourages the participating FUP partners to meet regularly with the local CoC groups.

FUP vouchers are administered in the same manner as Housing Choice Voucher and are subject to the same eligibility rules. The child welfare agency is required to help FUP clients gather the necessary paperwork, find suitable housing, and maintain their housing through aftercare services. If a child welfare agency elects to refer a young person aging out of foster care with a FUP voucher, the child welfare agency must offer or identify an agency that

will offer educational assistance, independent living programs, counseling, and employment assistance. The housing subsidies available to youth under this program are limited to 36 months.

Eligible families include those who are in imminent danger of losing their children to foster care primarily due to housing problems and those who are unable to regain custody of their children primarily due to housing problems. Eligible youth include those who were in foster care aged out of foster care and are currently between the ages of 18 and 24 (have not reached their 25th birthday) and are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

## FUNDING

Each year between 1992 and 2001, HUD awarded an average of 3,560 FUP Vouchers to public housing agencies. Unfortunately, from FY02 to FY07, HUD used its rescission authority to avoid funding FUP. Funding for FUP was re-established by the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development in 2009 and since then, FUP has received widespread support and a consistent investment of roughly \$20 million annually. In fact, Congress increased the funding for FUP in FY 2021 to \$25 million and adopted language that synchronizes vouchers for youth with foster care emancipation in order to eliminate homelessness for youth leaving care. The FY 2022 spending bill provided \$30 million for FUP vouchers.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

There is growing interagency support for FUP at the federal level in Congress and within the Administration. Leadership in authorizing and appropriations committees have expressed a high level of confidence and support for FUP and it is likely that FUP will continue to receive steady funding as well as serve as a blueprint for similar interagency housing collaboration.

An important development in the evolution of FUP is an increasing interest in synchronizing FUP vouchers with emancipation in order to eliminate homelessness among youth leaving foster care. With the passage of the Fostering

Stable Housing Opportunities Act (FSHO), Congress moved to codify the non-competitive distribution of vouchers known as FYI, so that a portion of the FUP vouchers can be issued “on demand” in such a manner that child welfare agencies can properly time the voucher request with a young adult’s emancipation from foster care. Furthermore, FSHO amends FUP to encourage participation in HUD’s Family Self-Sufficiency Program to help move youth towards economic independence and help them build wealth.

HUD requires that the local public child welfare agencies (PCWA) find partners to ensure that young people have access to a range of self-sufficiency services. Further, child welfare agencies should create relationships with local shelters and the Continuum of Care (CoC) so that youth who have been failed by the child welfare system and end up homeless are identified and referred to the PCWA for FUP. The FSHO amendments to FUP provide a real opportunity to end homelessness for older foster youth and homeless emancipated youth this year.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

The most successful FUP partnerships require cross-training, single points of contact (liaisons) within each partner agency, and ongoing communication. HUD requires that FUP sites have regular communication, liaisons, and other elements to support their partnership and provide case management and other supportive services to FUP households. FUP sites must include ongoing, intensive case management provided by the local child welfare agency or through a contract funded by the child welfare system. HUD underscores the importance of child welfare partners taking part in landlord recruitment, housing training for frontline staff, and emphasizes regular communication with the PHA point of contact. Finally, HUD encourages PHAs to enroll FUP households in the FSS program because this adds an extra layer of supportive services and helps ensure that FUP households will successfully maintain permanent housing and reduce the amount of subsidy paid

by the government over time.

HUD offers the tools and training necessary to implement and operate a FUP partnership on their [website](#) free of charge. PHAs administering FUP nationwide demonstrate an extraordinary commitment to at-risk populations and the ability to match existing services to Housing Choice Vouchers in order to successfully serve hard-to-house families and youth leaving foster care.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates can help legislators understand that housing is a vital tool for promoting family unification, easing the transition to adulthood for foster youth, and achieving significant cost savings. Advocates can inform their elected officials that when a FUP Voucher is used to reunify a family and subsidizes a two-bedroom unit, the community saves an average of \$61,388 per family in annual foster care costs. Furthermore, supportive housing for young adults is a tenth of the cost of more restrictive placements like juvenile justice or residential treatment. This cost-benefit information is an excellent way to help legislators understand the importance of new funding for the FUP.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Center for Housing & Child Welfare, 301-699-0151, [www.nchcw.org](http://www.nchcw.org).

# Vouchers: Foster Youth to Independence Initiative

---

By Ruth White, Executive Director,  
National Center for Housing and Child  
Welfare

**Administering Agency:** HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH)

**Year Started:** 2019

**Number of Persons/Households Served:** Since the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Initiative was implemented on July 26, 2019, nearly 1,250 youth have received time-limited Housing Choice Vouchers and supportive services to support their efforts toward self-sufficiency. Vouchers continue to be distributed as needed to youth leaving foster care in increments as small as one.

**Population Targeted:** Current and former foster youth between the ages of 18 to 24 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

**Funding:** On October 6, 2020, HUD issued \$10 million from the FY2020 appropriations through notice PIH 2020-28 (HA), allowing PHAs to request vouchers on a non-competitive basis. This notice replaced the original FYI Notice (PIH 2019-20) which drew FYI vouchers exclusively from HUD's Tenant Protection Vouchers. FYI remains an eligible use of Tenant Protection Vouchers. Congress appropriated an additional \$20 million for FYI in FY2021, half of which continues to be available on a non-competitive, rolling basis and the other half was distributed in September 2020 to 18 PHAs in nine states. The FY2022 Appropriations Act includes \$30 million for vouchers to be distributed through the FYI mechanism.

**See Also:** For related information, refer to the *Housing Choice Voucher Program, Family Unification Program, Tenant Protection Vouchers, and HUD-Funded Service Coordination Programs* sections of this guide.

HUD's FYI Initiative is a new way of administering an existing program, the Family Unification

Program (FUP) for youth. FYI is aimed at synchronizing FUP vouchers with emancipation from foster care in order to prevent youth from experiencing homelessness. Initially, FYI vouchers were drawn exclusively from HUD's Tenant Protection Voucher fund. Appropriators have included the FYI distribution mechanism in appropriations language, allowing most of HUD's FUP youth vouchers to be issued on demand for youth leaving foster care.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

Since 2014, the Fostering Stable Housing (FSHO) Coalition, a group of current and former foster youth led by ACTION Ohio in partnership with the National Center for Housing and Child Welfare (NCHCW), has worked with HUD career staff to devise a plan to close the gaps through which youth leaving foster care fall into homelessness and human trafficking. Each year, 17,000 young people emancipate from foster care and enter adulthood alone, having not been adopted or reunified with their parents. As they struggle to gain economic footing in their communities without the support of extended family, nearly 25% experience homelessness upon emancipation.

In 2018, the FSHO Coalition determined that the best way to prevent homelessness was to synchronize HUD's existing, time-limited FUP vouchers for youth with emancipation and eliminate geographic disparities. To do this, the FSHO Coalition recommended to HUD that they tap the flexible, on-demand nature of the TPVs for which FUP was already an eligible use and which can be distributed all over the country in a flexible, somewhat on-demand manner. The FSHO Coalition delivered this proposal directly to HUD Secretary Ben Carson and his leadership team on March 4, 2019, at which time Sec. Carson directed his staff to vet the proposal's legality and viability. HUD determined within weeks that the



proposal was indeed viable, named the proposal the “Foster Youth to Independence Initiative,” and composed the details of a notice for PHAs. On July 26, 2019, HUD issued an invitation to PHAs with contracts to administer Housing Choice Vouchers (that do not already administer FUP) to apply for FYI, thus making FUP for youth available nationwide. The first vouchers were awarded on October 31, 2019, and HUD continues to accept applications on a rolling, non-competitive basis.

The following year, on October 6, 2020, using authority offered by the FY2020 Appropriations Act, HUD issued a new Notice inviting all PHAs with Annual Contributions Contracts (meaning that they are capable of administering tenant-based Housing Choice Vouchers) to apply for Family Unification Program Vouchers for youth on a non-competitive basis. Nearly 2,000 vouchers were distributed in this manner.

FUP Housing Choice Vouchers available for families involved in child welfare will be distributed through the competitive NOFA process and vouchers for youth will be distributed on demand through the non-competitive process, allowing communities to synchronize vouchers with emancipation from foster care. In the future, youth vouchers, and the associated distribution mechanism, will be referred to as FYI. Family vouchers will be referred to as FUP.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

Like FUP, FYI is administered at the local level through a partnership between public housing authorities (PHAs) and public child welfare agencies (PCWAs). In order to apply, sites must identify at least one eligible youth and sign a memorandum of understanding or a letter of agreement outlining their commitment to the success of FYI, the youth served by FYI, and the roles their organizations will play in this regard. Sites can apply for up to 75 FYI vouchers annually on the non-competitive basis. PHAs wishing to apply for FYI vouchers through the competitive NOFA must execute an MOU (a letter of intent will not suffice) and the maximum number of vouchers PHAs can request is based upon their housing authority size.

The PCWA must agree to provide a host of independent living services either directly or identify service providers in the community that will do so. The PCWA also must agree to identify eligible youth and certify that the young person is at least 18 years old and not more than 24 years old (has not reached his/her 25th birthday), that they will age out of foster care or have already aged out, and that the young person is homeless or has been at risk of homelessness at some point after the age of 16. Communities are also encouraged to involve their local homeless service providers in locating eligible youth who are currently homeless but have lost touch with the child welfare system.

To select youth, PCWA staff should monitor a young person’s housing needs as they go through their transition plan and approach the age of emancipation. If a young person is at risk of homelessness and is interested in the stability of renting their own apartment, then they and their PCWA independent living worker should consider a referral to FYI. The PCWA staff will notify the FYI point of contact at the local PHA about three months prior to emancipation (in most states this is just before age 21) to let them know that the young person is eligible for and interested in a FUP voucher.

PCWAs should also begin to forecast and predict how many young people will need vouchers within their caseload so that they can request vouchers in batches from their local PHA.

HUD offers all the tools and training necessary to implement and operate an FYI partnership on their [website](#) free of charge. HUD’s tools are an excellent formula generally for all community partnerships aimed at preventing youth homelessness beyond FYI. Tools and training can also be found at [www.nchcw.org](http://www.nchcw.org).

## FUNDING

FYI is an eligible use of the \$30 million for FUP youth provided in the FY22 spending bill. FYI remains an eligible use of the Tenant Protection Account.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

The bill from which FYI emerged, “The Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Act” (HR 4300/S. 2803), became law when the “Consolidated Appropriations Act” was signed on December 27, 2020. This legislation permanently authorizes the FYI approach to administering FUP for youth. This legislation also encourages self-sufficiency by extending the time-limit from 36 months to 60 months for youth who voluntarily enroll in self-sufficiency programs. Advocates should reach out to HUD and encourage the Department to implement FSHO. Additionally, HUD should be encouraged to continue to include the foster youth and advocates who wrote FYI in their efforts to swiftly implement this groundbreaking law.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

FYI is intended to prevent homelessness among youth leaving foster care, but it certainly is not intended to replace child welfare resources. Therefore, it is important to point out that child welfare agencies nationwide have access to flexible child welfare resources, including entitlement funding through Title IV-E of the “Social Security Act” to provide housing and independent living services for youth through the age of 21 aimed at preparing youth to avoid homelessness. Funding for independent living services and non-recurring housing expenses is available through the age of 23 under the “John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program.” Community leaders must encourage child welfare agencies to provide a platform for economic success for youth while they are under the care and custody of the state in order to reduce the need for current and former foster youth to tap homeless services.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates should thank legislators for passing the “Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Act” and for supporting robust appropriations for FUP and FYI. Advocates can also help their elected officials understand that affordable housing is an effective and prudent investment in ending youth

homelessness. Providing affordable housing and services is a tenth of the cost of undesirable remedies to homelessness such as residential treatment and juvenile justice involvement. Coupling FYI and FSS has the potential to vastly improve each young person’s individual economic security and will reduce racial wealth disparities as well. Seventy-five percent of young people who emancipate are youth of color and regardless of a young person’s race or ethnicity, foster youth disproportionately reside in neighborhoods that have been stripped of wealth, infrastructure, and opportunity for years due to flawed government policies. Helping each one of these young people build wealth and move towards financial success is something we can all be proud of as advocates.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Center for Housing & Child Welfare, 301-699-0151, [www.nchcw.org](http://www.nchcw.org).

# Mainstream and Non-Elderly Disabled (NED) Vouchers

---

By Lisa Sloane, Director, Technical Assistance Collaborative

**Administering Agency:** HUD's Office of Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) within the Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH)

**Number of Persons/Households Served:** HUD estimates that there are 54,727 Non-Elderly Disabled Housing Choice Vouchers and 66,676 Mainstream Housing Choice Vouchers.

**Year Started:** Since 1997, Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) have been awarded under different special purpose voucher program types to serve eligible people with disabilities under age 62.

**Population Targeted:** A household composed of one or more non-elderly persons with disabilities, which may include additional household members who are not non-elderly persons with disabilities. Non-elderly persons are defined as persons between ages 18 and 61. The qualifying person with a disability does not have to be the head of household. See specific program guidelines for eligibility criteria.

**Funding:** The FY22 spending bill provided \$459 million for mainstream vouchers. "Consolidated Appropriations Acts," 2017-2019, made approximately \$500 million available for new mainstream voucher assistance, the first funding for new mainstream vouchers since 2005. These funds resulted in awards for over 50,000 vouchers. The FY22 spending bill provided \$459 million for mainstream vouchers.

## HISTORY

Before 1992, federal housing statutes defined "elderly" to include younger people with disabilities. As a result, many (but not all) properties built primarily to serve elders, such as the Section 202 program, also had requirements to serve people with disabilities. Depending

on the HUD program and NOFA under which a property was funded, the occupancy policy might have included a requirement to set-aside 10% of their units for people with mobility impairments of any age, a set-aside to serve non-elderly people with disabilities, or the policy might have provided non-elders with equal access to all the units.

The occupancy policies that resulted in elder and non-elders living together became controversial in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In response to this controversy, Congress passed Title VI of the "Housing and Community Development Act of 1992," which allowed public housing agencies and certain types of HUD-assisted properties to change their occupancy policies. The law allowed public housing agencies to designate buildings or parts of buildings as elderly-only or disabled-only; PHAs had to develop and receive HUD approval for a Designated Housing Plan before such a designation could be made. The law also allowed some HUD-assisted housing providers to house only elders and others to reduce the number of non-elderly applicants admitted.

Between 1996 and 2009, Congress appropriated voucher funding to compensate for the housing lost to younger people with disabilities as a result of the 1992 law. These funds were appropriated through a variety of programs; the specific programs are described in the next section of this article. Note that many of these NED vouchers are called Frelinghuysen vouchers because then House Appropriations Chair Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ) advocated for their funding.

One of these programs is the Mainstream Voucher Program. Between 1996 and 2002, Congress allowed HUD to reallocate up to 25% of funding for the development of new supportive housing units for non-elderly people with disabilities toward tenant-based rental assistance. During this period, approximately 15,000 incremental vouchers were given out to

public housing agencies (PHAs) for this targeted population under the 811 Mainstream Program.

“Consolidated Appropriations Acts,” 2017-2019, made approximately \$500 million available for new mainstream voucher assistance, the first funding for new mainstream vouchers since 2005. Only PHAs that administer Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) assistance and non-profits that already administer HCV mainstream assistance were eligible to apply. In awarding some of the voucher funding, HUD provided points for applications that included partnerships between housing and services/disability organizations, especially those that targeted housing assistance to assist people with disabilities who are transitioning out of institutional or other segregated settings, at risk of institutionalization, homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, or were previously homeless and now participate in a permanent supportive housing or rapid rehousing program (“move-on”).

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Mainstream and NED Voucher Programs are a component of the HCV program. Congress appropriated NED vouchers under a variety of different appropriations and HUD allocated funds under differing program NOFAs. Although different programs have differing target sub-populations, all target non-elderly people with disabilities and all operate under the HCV regulations and guidance, with slight modifications as provided in the original NOFA or subsequent Notices. Upon turnover, these vouchers must be issued to non-elderly disabled families from the PHA’s HCV waiting list.

The following describes the specific NED programs administered by PHAs:

- NED Category 1 vouchers enable non-elderly persons or families with disabilities to access affordable housing on the private market.
- NED Category 2 vouchers enable non-elderly persons with disabilities currently residing in nursing homes or other healthcare institutions to transition into the community.
- Designated Housing Vouchers enable non-

elderly disabled families, who would have been eligible for a public housing unit if occupancy of the unit or entire project had not been restricted to elderly families only through an approved Designated Housing Plan, to receive rental assistance. These vouchers may also assist non-elderly disabled families living in a designated unit/project/building to move from that project if they so choose. The family does not have to be listed on the PHA’s voucher waiting list. Instead, they may be admitted to the program as a special admission. Once the impacted families have been served, the PHA may begin issuing these vouchers to non-elderly disabled families from their HCV waiting list.

- Certain Developments Vouchers enable non-elderly families with a person with disabilities who do not currently receive housing assistance in certain developments where owners establish preferences for, or restrict occupancy to, elderly families to obtain affordable housing. These are HUD assisted private properties funded as those under the Section 8 new construction or Section 202 programs. Once the impacted families have been served, the PHA may issue vouchers to non-elderly disabled families from their HCV waiting list.
- Mainstream Housing Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Vouchers enable non-elderly disabled families on the PHA’s waiting list to receive a voucher.
- Project Access Pilot Program (formerly Access Housing 2000) provides vouchers to selected PHAs that partnered with State Medicaid agencies to assist non-elderly disabled persons transition from nursing homes and other institutions into the community.

## FUNDING

“Consolidated Appropriations Acts,” 2017-2019 made approximately \$500 million available for new mainstream voucher assistance, the first funding for new mainstream vouchers since 2005. These funds were awarded to PHAs up through the end of calendar year 2020.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

The FY22 spending bill provided \$459 million for mainstream vouchers.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates are encouraged to contact their Members of Congress with the message that people with disabilities continue to be the poorest people in the nation. TAC's publication *Priced Out* reported that nearly five million non-elderly adults with significant and long-term disabilities have Supplemental Security Income levels equal to only 20% of AMI and cannot afford housing without housing assistance. Because of this housing crisis, many of the most vulnerable people with disabilities live unnecessarily in costly nursing homes, in seriously substandard facilities that may violate the "Americans with Disabilities Act," or are homeless. Mainstream and other NED vouchers can help the government reach its goals of ending homelessness and minimizing the number of persons living in costly institutions. Advocates should encourage their Members of Congress to continue to increase funding for Mainstream and NED vouchers to address these critical public policy issues.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Technical Assistance Collaborative, 617-266-5657, [www.tacinc.org](http://www.tacinc.org). TAC's Mainstream and NED voucher database by state can be found at [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/hcv/dashboard](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/dashboard).

Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Housing Task Force, [http://www.c-c-d.org/rubriques.php?rub=taskforce.php&id\\_task=8](http://www.c-c-d.org/rubriques.php?rub=taskforce.php&id_task=8).

HUD's NED web page, [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/hcv/ned](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/ned).

HUD's Mainstream Voucher Program, [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/hcv/mainstream](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/mainstream).

# Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Vouchers

---

By Spencer Bell, Policy Analyst, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans

**Administering Agency:** HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

**Year Started:** Formally in 1992; most active since 2008

**Number of Persons/Households Served:** More than 175,000 veterans since 2008

**Population Targeted:** Homeless veterans meeting VA health care eligibility, with a focus on chronic homelessness

**Funding:** \$40 million was provided in FY20 and in FY21 in HUD-VASH vouchers with case management through VA. The FY22 spending bill provided \$50 million for HUD-VASH vouchers.

**See Also:** For related information, refer to the *Housing Choice Voucher Program*, *Veterans Housing*, *Homeless Assistance Programs*, and *Interagency Council on Homelessness* sections of this guide.

## INTRODUCTION

The HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program (HUD-VASH) combines Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance for homeless veterans with case management and clinical services provided by VA. It is a key program in the effort to end veteran homelessness. To date, this program has helped more than 175,000 homeless veterans, many of whom were chronically homeless, achieve housing stability.

Since 2008 there have been over 105,000 HUD-VASH Vouchers allocated by HUD to support the ongoing federal effort to end homelessness among veterans. At the end of FY20, 79,133 Veterans and their family members were permanently housed through the HUD-VASH Program. Nationwide, more than 300 Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) participate in the program. In recent years, Congress created a

set-aside pilot program to encourage HUD-VASH Vouchers to be used on tribal lands, thereby filling an important gap in our service delivery system. Additionally, HUD has released a series of project-based competitions to help spur development of new affordable housing units in high-cost markets with limited affordable housing stock.

The HUD-VASH program is jointly administered by VA and HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH). The vouchers are allocated to local Public Housing Agencies (PHAs), although veteran referrals usually come from the nearest VA Medical Center (VAMC). Administration of HUD-VASH is conducted by the PHA and clinical services are provided by the VAMC, or a designated party.

## HISTORY

As of January 2020, HUD estimates that 37,252 veterans were homeless. This number represents a 50% decline in veteran homelessness since 2010. Major declines in veteran homelessness have occurred among the unsheltered population thanks in large part to the HUD-VASH program and national efforts to end homelessness for all people, including veterans. Numbers have remained steady having plateaued for the past 5 years.

Congress began funding these special purpose vouchers in earnest in the "Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008" (Public Law 110-161) with an allocation of \$75 million for approximately 10,000 vouchers. Since FY08, Congress has allocated \$75 million to HUD for approximately 10,000 new vouchers each year, with the exception of a \$50 million award in FY11, a \$60 million award in FY16, and \$40 million awards in FY17, FY18, FY19, FY20, and FY21. In FY22, \$50 million was provided for HUD-VASH vouchers. The rising cost of housing has resulted in the amount allocated toward

vouchers covering a fewer number each year with between 4,500 and 5,000 now being funded per \$40 million for additional vouchers.

In the early 2000s, advocates estimated that 60,000 chronically homeless veterans were in need of the comprehensive services offered through a HUD-VASH Voucher. These advocates encouraged Congress and the Administration to set this as a target for the number of vouchers on the street. This target has since been revised upwards, as additional target populations beyond veterans experiencing chronic homelessness have received assistance through HUD-VASH due to high need and limited alternative options. Of the 15,204 unsheltered homeless veterans, many chronically homeless and otherwise vulnerable veterans still need this vital resource.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

HUD-VASH is a cornerstone in the efforts to end veteran homelessness and provides an effective resource by combining both housing and services into one housing-first oriented resource. PHAs are required to register their interest in vouchers with HUD, in consultation with their local VA medical center, in order to be considered for vouchers. When vouchers become available in a community, VA personnel, in consultation with community partners, determine which veterans are clinically eligible for and in need of the program before making referrals to local PHAs which then must verify eligibility based on HUD regulations.

Veterans who receive HUD-VASH Vouchers rent privately owned housing and generally contribute up to 30% of any income toward rent. VA case managers foster a therapeutic relationship with veterans and act as liaisons with landlords, PHAs, and community-based service providers. In some instances, these case management services are contracted through service providers who have already established relationships with participating veterans. When a veteran no longer needs the program's supports or has exceeded its income limits, these vouchers become available for the next qualifying veteran. By providing a stable environment with wrap-around services,

veterans and their families can regain control of their lives and ultimately reintegrate into society.

As additional target populations have been identified for HUD-VASH, the need for this resource has grown. These target populations include homeless female veterans, homeless veterans with dependent children, and homeless veterans with significant disabling and co-occurring conditions. In 2014, some 71% of veterans admitted to the HUD-VASH program met chronic homeless criteria and 91% of allocated vouchers resulted in permanent housing placement. Targeting of HUD-VASH to chronically homeless veterans has led to dramatically positive results: lease-up rates have improved and the time it takes to lease up vouchers has dropped significantly across the country. Improved staffing of HUD-VASH case management at VAMCs is needed to better voucher execution at the local level. VA has been making strides in recent years toward better levels of case management staffing at many VAMCs.

Historically, the requirement for VA health care eligibility meant that many veterans were not eligible for the program, due to their military discharge status. VA and HUD worked to pilot a program called HUD-VASH continuum, that would pair HUD-VASH vouchers with non-VA case management funded separately in a handful of communities. Recent legislative developments opened program eligibility up to include veterans with other-than-honorable discharge statuses. Recent legislation also waived most eligibility restrictions for HUD-VASH while the nation is in a declared state of emergency due to COVID, which has allowed VA's Homeless Programs Office to more swiftly pair linked program outflows and effectively utilize the vouchers as needed.

Project-Based Vouchers (PBV) are needed for services-enriched multifamily developments in areas with a large concentration of chronically homeless veterans and in high-cost, low-vacancy markets. PHAs may designate a portion of their total HUD-VASH allocation as project-based vouchers based on local need. HUD has established PBV set-asides to competitively

award several thousand project-based HUD-VASH Vouchers, most recently in November 2016, when HUD awarded \$18.5 million to 39 local public housing agencies for approximately 2,100 veterans experiencing homelessness. These recent PBV awards were concentrated in high-need areas, including throughout the state of California. Proposed Reconciliation legislation would provide \$25 billion toward an infusion of HCV vouchers over 10 years with a \$1 billion set-aside for PBV.

## ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS AND VOUCHER ALLOCATION

To be eligible, a veteran must:

- Be VA-health care eligible if not in the HUD-VASH Continuum program;
- Meet the definition of homelessness as defined by the “McKinney Homeless Assistance Act” as amended by S. 896, the “Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act of 2009” (HEARTH Act); and
- Be in need of case management services for serious mental illness, substance use disorder, or physical disability.

Veterans with high vulnerability are prioritized, but veterans must be able to complete activities of daily living and live independently in their community. Although the program follows a Housing First orientation, case management is a requirement of participation in HUD-VASH.

Three major data sources help drive local voucher allocations once the Housing Authority and VAMC register interest, including: HUD’s point-in-time data, performance data from both PHAs and VAMCs, and data from the VAMCs on their contacts with homeless veterans. In some communities, HUD-VASH staff work with the local Continuum of Care through the coordinated intake process to ensure that veterans who have high needs profiles on the By-Name List are connected to HUD-VASH.

## FUNDING

In FY08 through FY10, and FY12 through FY15, HUD was awarded \$75 million for 10,000 vouchers, and VA was awarded case management dollars to match those vouchers. In FY11, \$50 million was provided for approximately 7,500 vouchers. In FY16, HUD was awarded \$60 million for 8,000 new vouchers. In FY17, 18, 19, and 20 HUD was awarded an additional \$40 million for 5,500 new vouchers annually. For FY21, HUD was awarded another \$40 million for 5,000 new HUD-VASH vouchers. For FY22, HUD was awarded \$50 million for HUD-VASH vouchers. HUD-VASH voucher renewals are lumped into the general Section 8 tenant-based rental assistance account, and Congress has provided sufficient funding in recent years to renew all HUD-VASH Vouchers. Congress has gone as far as to provide veterans access in the FY21 Appropriations to the special population set aside for general section 8 vouchers which allowed veterans with discharge status issues, in addition to the other than honorable population’s new eligibility provided in last year’s National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

VA’s funding for case management has not kept pace with funding allocated for new vouchers, due to the timing of standalone appropriations legislation in the last several years. As such, over 5,000 new vouchers are funded each year but VA lacks matching case management funding to operationalize the vouchers until the next fiscal year. Attempts have been made to utilize CARES funding to support time-limited case management contracts to get a portion of these vouchers out to communities with limited success. Efforts in 2022 are best focused on ensuring that VA identifies and eliminates remaining barriers to full voucher utilization above and beyond vouchers set aside for project basing. Congress needs to pursue a few key actions. The first would be to direct VA to provide a new budgetary projection for case management of all its vouchers to end the one-year delay between voucher creation and case management funding provision. In addition, proactive outreach to veterans who have previously applied for



a voucher but had been denied due to OTH discharge statuses and to currently homeless veterans would allow these vouchers to have maximum impact as we still await updated eligibility guidance nearly a year after this eligibility change became law. Second would be to conduct a review of report data requested in the FY21 program appropriations for HUD-VASH to assist in the management contracting expansion in H.R. 7105 (P.L. 116-315), the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. “Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020.” If VA can effectively continue to address case management understaffing issues, there will be more opportunities to improve voucher utilization as the program is modernized.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

HUD-VASH Vouchers are an incredibly important resource in ending veteran homelessness. Congress should continue to provide adequate funding in the tenant-based Section 8 account to renew all existing HUD-VASH Vouchers, as well as continue to provide new HUD-VASH Vouchers to house all chronically homeless veterans.

VA must ensure that case management funding follows the vouchers by maintaining the special purpose designation as it distributes funds to Medical Centers.

Under a non-emergency designation, VA and local service providers have identified additional priority groups for service through HUD-VASH. VA set a target of 65% of HUD-VASH Voucher recipients being chronically homeless, with the remaining 35% of vouchers being available for other vulnerable high-priority groups including veterans with families, women, and Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn (or 9/11 veterans). As we move to end all homelessness, starting with veterans, through the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, Congress and the Administration, along with interested community partners and homeless advocates, will need to reassess what resources are needed to end homelessness for both chronically homeless as well as other homeless veterans with high needs.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

Continue working with VA to increase referrals and coordinate targets for the HUD-VASH program so the most in need veterans are connected to this vital resource. Expand efforts to find additional resources for move-in costs, including but not limited to resources through the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. Encourage your local VAMC to get creative with HUD-VASH staffing and to include peer support services and housing navigators. Work with PHAs to support landlord outreach and engagement to improve lease-up rates and time. Encourage your PHA to apply for Extraordinary Administrative Fees, when available, to help with these types of outreach and engagement efforts. Evaluate the need for contracted case management in your area. Evaluate if, due to exceptionally expensive or tight rental markets, your local PHA should consider project-basing additional HUD-VASH vouchers.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates may find success in discussing the need for resources to end veterans’ homelessness with policymakers who have previously been found to be difficult to approach for support on more broad affordable housing and homelessness issues. The Administration has continued to cite the successes of the HUD-VASH program in its communications around data on veteran homelessness.

Advocates should speak to senators and representatives, particularly if they are on the Appropriations or Veterans Affairs Committees, and urge them to provide HUD \$75 million for additional HUD-VASH Vouchers and \$75 million for VA to better align case management for 13,500 unutilized for additional HUD-VASH Vouchers to help end homelessness among veterans while fully funding all existing vouchers through the regular Section 8 account.

Advocates should highlight the role that case management plays in housing stability for these veterans and should urge Members of Congress to hold VA accountable for ensuring each VAMC

has sufficient funding and staffing to provide appropriate levels of case management for these veterans.

Advocates should also highlight to Congress how well HUD-VASH works with the other veteran homelessness relief programs, including SSVF and the Grant and Per Diem Program. Data regarding the prevalence of homeless veterans is available in HUD's Annual Homeless Assessment Report, through the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, or from the National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, 202-546-1969, [www.nchv.org](http://www.nchv.org).

Corporation for Supportive Housing, 212-986-2966, [www.csh.org](http://www.csh.org).

National Alliance to End Homelessness, 202-638-1526, [www.endhomelessness.org](http://www.endhomelessness.org).

National Low Income Housing Coalition, 202-662-1530, [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org).

# Public Housing

---

By Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, NLIHC

**Administering Agency:** HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH)

**Year Started:** 1937

**Number of Persons/Households Served:** 1,591,468 residents in 777,532 households (HUD's [Resident Characteristics Report](#) as of October 31, 2021). The number of residents and households has decreased from 2020's 1,661,575 residents in 802,805 households.

**Population Targeted:** All households must have income less than 80% of the area median income (AMI); at least 40% of new admissions in any year must have extremely low income (income less than 30% of AMI or the federal poverty level, whichever is greater.)

**Funding:** The FY22 spending bill provided \$3.388 billion for the Capital Fund and \$5.064 billion for the Operating Fund. The president proposed \$4.917, the House proposed \$4.922, and the Senate proposed \$5.044 for the Operating Fund. In FY21, \$2.9 billion was appropriated for the Capital Fund and \$4.9 billion was appropriated for the Operating Fund. FY20 funding was \$2.9 billion for the Capital Fund and \$4.5 billion for the Operating Fund.

**See Also:** For related information, refer to the *Rental Assistance Demonstration*, *Public Housing Repositioning*, and *Public Housing Agency Plan* sections of this guide.

The nation's nearly 1 million units of public housing, serving more than 1.5 million residents (down from nearly 2 million in previous years), are administered by a network of 2,791 local public housing agencies (PHAs), with funding from residents' rents and congressional appropriations to HUD. Additional public housing has not been built in decades. Advocates are focused primarily on preserving the remaining public housing stock.

Public housing encounters many recurring challenges. For instance, PHAs face significant

federal funding shortfalls each year, as they have for decades. In addition, policies such as demolition, disposition, and the former HOPE VI program resulted in the loss of public housing units – approximately 10,000 units each year according to HUD estimates. Congress authorized the expansion of the miss-named Moving to Work (MTW) Demonstration in 2016. MTW is fundamentally a scheme to deregulate public housing that can reduce affordability, deep income targeting, resident participation, and program accountability, all aspects of public housing that make it an essential housing resource for many of the lowest income people (see the *Moving to Work & Expansion* section in Chapter 4 of this *Advocates' Guide*). Also contributing to the reduction of public housing is HUD's Public Housing Repositioning campaign (see the *Repositioning of Public Housing* section of Chapter 4 of this *Advocates' Guide*).

HUD's two tools to address the aging public housing stock are the [Choice Neighborhoods Initiative](#) (CNI) renovation program that addresses both public housing and broader neighborhood improvements, and the [Rental Assistance Demonstration](#) (RAD) designed to leverage private dollars to improve public housing properties while converting them to either Project-Based Vouchers (PBVs) or Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA). See the *Rental Assistance Demonstration* section of Chapter 4 of this *Advocates' Guide*.

## HISTORY

The "Housing Act of 1937" established the public housing program. President Nixon declared a moratorium on public housing in 1974, shifting the nation's housing assistance mechanism to the then-new Section 8 programs (both new construction and certificate programs) intended to engage the private sector. Federal funds for adding to the public housing stock were last appropriated in 1994, but little public housing has been built since the early 1980s.

In 1995, Congress stopped requiring that demolished public housing units be replaced on a unit-by-unit, one-for-one basis. In 1998, the “Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act” changed various other aspects of public housing, including public housing’s two main funding streams, the operating and capital subsidies. Federal law capped the number of public housing units at the number each PHA operated as of October 1, 1999 (the Faircloth cap).

Today, units are being lost by the cumulative impact of decades of underfunding and neglect of once-viable public housing units. HUD officials have repeatedly stated that more than 10,000 units of public housing leave the affordable housing inventory each year due to underfunding. As a response HUD has promoted its “[Public Housing Repositioning](#)” policy, which has three components, all of which reduce the stock of public housing: [Section 18 demolition and disposition](#) (sale) of units, [Section 33 mandatory](#) and [Section 22 and voluntary conversion](#) of public housing to voucher assistance, and the [Rental Assistance Demonstration](#) (see the *Repositioning of Public Housing* section of Chapter 4 of this *Advocates’ Guide*).

According to HUD testimony, between the mid-1990s and 2010, approximately 200,000 public housing units had been demolished, while about only 50,000 units were replaced with new public housing units, and another 57,000 former public housing families were given vouchers instead of a public housing replacement unit. Another nearly 50,000 units of non-public housing were incorporated into these new developments, but they serve households with income higher than those of the displaced households and do not provide deep rental assistance like that provided by the public housing program.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

There were 953,611 public housing units as of October 31, 2021. According to HUD’s [Resident Characteristics Report](#), of the families served by public housing as of October 31 2021, 36% of household heads were elderly, 21% were non-

elderly disabled, and 30% were non-elderly families with children (not counting elderly and disabled households with children). The average annual income of a public housing household was \$15,875. Of all public housing households, 58% were extremely low-income and 22% were very low-income. Fully 76% of public housing households had income less than \$20,000 a year. Fifty-six percent of the households had Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security, or pension income. Thirty percent had wage income, while 29% received some form of welfare assistance.

The demand for public housing far exceeds the supply. In many large cities, households may remain on waiting lists for decades. Like all HUD rental assistance programs, public housing is not an entitlement program; rather, its size is determined by annual appropriations and is not based on the number of households that qualify for assistance.

NLIHC’s report *[Housing Spotlight: The Long Wait for a Home](#)* is about public housing and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) waiting lists. An NLIHC survey of PHAs indicated that public housing waiting lists had a median wait time of nine months and 25% of them had a wait time of at least 1.5 years. Public housing waiting lists had an average size of 834 households.

## Eligibility and Rent

Access to public housing is means tested. All public housing households must be low-income, (have income less than 80% of the area median income, AMI), and at least 40% of new admissions in any year must have extremely low incomes, defined as income less than 30% of AMI or the federal poverty level adjusted for family size, whichever is greater. The FY14 HUD appropriations act expanded the definition of “extremely low-income” for HUD’s rental assistance programs by including families with income less than the poverty level to better serve poor households in rural areas. PHAs can also establish local preferences for certain populations, such as elderly people, people with disabilities, veterans, full-time workers, domestic

violence victims, or people who are homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless.

As in other federal housing assistance programs, residents of public housing pay the highest of: (1) 30% of their monthly adjusted income; (2) 10% of their monthly gross income; (3) their welfare shelter allowance; or (4) a PHA-established minimum rent of up to \$50. The average public housing household paid \$379 per month toward rent and utilities in 2020. Public housing Operating and Capital Fund subsidies provided by Congress and administered by HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) contribute the balance of what PHAs receive to operate and maintain their public housing units.

With tenant rent payments and HUD subsidies, PHAs are responsible for maintaining the housing, collecting rents, managing waiting lists, and other activities related to the operation and management of public housing. Most PHAs also administer the Housing Choice Voucher Program (see the *Housing Choice Vouchers* section of Chapter 4 of this *Advocates' Guide*).

Most PHAs are required to complete five-year PHA Plans, along with annual updates, which detail many aspects of their housing programs including waiting list preferences, grievance procedures, plans for capital improvements, minimum rent requirements, and community service requirements. These PHA Plans represent a key way for public housing residents, voucher households, and community stakeholders to participate in a PHA's planning process (see the *Public Housing Agency Plan* section of Chapter 7 of this *Advocates' Guide*).

### **Public Housing Capital Fund and Operating Fund**

PHAs receive two annual, formula-based grants from congressional appropriations to HUD, the Operating Fund and the Capital Fund. In FY21, \$2.9 billion was appropriated for the Capital Fund and \$4.9 billion was appropriated for the Operating Fund. FY20 funding was \$2.9 billion for the Capital Fund and \$4.5 billion for the Operating Fund.

In 2010, a study sponsored by HUD concluded that PHAs had a \$26 billion capital needs backlog,

which was estimated to grow by \$3.4 billion each year. Public housing associations estimate that there was approximately a \$70 billion capital needs backlog in FY20 that continues to grow.

The public housing Operating Fund is designed to make up the balance between what residents pay in rent and what it actually costs to operate public housing. Major operating costs include routine and preventative maintenance, a portion of utilities, management, PHA employee salaries and benefits, supportive services, resident participation support, insurance, and security. Since 2008, HUD's operating formula system, called "Asset Management," has determined an agency's operating subsidy on a property-by-property basis (called Asset Management Project, AMP), rather than on the previous overall PHA basis.

The Capital Fund can be used for a variety of purposes, including modernization, demolition, and replacement housing. Up to 20% can also be used to make management improvements. The annual capital needs accrual amount (estimated in 2010 to be \$3.4 billion each year) makes clear that annual appropriations for the Capital Fund are woefully insufficient to keep pace with the program's needs. A statutory change in 2016 (HOTMA, see "Statutory and Regulatory Changes Made in 2016" below) now allows a PHA to transfer up to 20% of its Operating Fund appropriation for eligible Capital Fund uses.

### **Demolition and Disposition**

Since 1983, HUD has authorized PHAs to apply for permission to demolish or dispose of (sell) public housing units. This policy was made infinitely more damaging in 1995 when Congress suspended the requirement that housing agencies replace, on a one-for-one basis, any public housing lost through demolition or disposition. In 2016, HUD reported a net loss of more than 139,000 public housing units due to demolition or disposition since 2000. Demolition and disposition policy is authorized by Section 18 of the "Housing Act" with regulations at 24 CFR part 970 and various PIH Notices.

## **Demolition Improvements from 2012 Removed by the Trump Administration**

In 2012, after prodding from advocates, PIH under the Obama Administration clarified and strengthened its guidance ([Notice PIH 2012-7](#)) regarding demolition and disposition in an effort to curb the decades-long needless destruction or sale of the public housing stock. This guidance clarified the demolition and disposition process in a number of ways. For example, the guidance unequivocally stated that a proposed demolition or disposition must be identified in the PHA Plan or in a significant amendment to the PHA Plan, and that PHAs must comply with the existing regulations' strict resident consultation requirements for the PHA Plan process, the demolition or disposition application process, and the redevelopment plan. That guidance also reminded PHAs that HUD's Section 3 requirement to provide employment, training and economic opportunities to residents applied to properties in the demolition and disposition process. The review criteria for demolition applications had to meet clear HUD standards, and no demolition or disposition was permissible prior to HUD's approval, including any phase of the resident relocation process.

In 2018, the Trump Administration eliminated the modest improvements to HUD's demolition/disposition guidance that advocates helped HUD draft in 2012 ([Notice PIH 2012-7](#)) and replaced it with [Notice PIH 2018-04](#) in order to make it far easier to demolish public housing, and to do so without resident input and protections. In addition, the Administration withdrew proposed regulation changes drafted in 2014 that would have reinforced those modest improvements. All of this was a part of the Administration's "repositioning" of public housing through demolition and voluntary conversion of public housing to vouchers. Its goal at the time was to reposition 105,000 public housing units in FY19 alone by streamlining the demolition application and approval process. See the *Public Housing Repositioning* section of Chapter 4 of this Advocates' Guide.

The Biden Administration has, as of December 1, 2021, not taken any action to remove [Notice PIH 2018-04](#) and replace it with more robust guidance containing resident protections similar to [Notice PIH 2012-7](#). Nor has the Biden Administration indicated an intent to issue improved demolition/disposition regulations similar to those proposed by the Obama Administration. PIH continues to promote [Public Housing Repositioning](#).

## **Rental Assistance Demonstration**

As part of its FY12 HUD appropriations act, Congress authorized the [Rental Assistance Demonstration](#) (RAD), which allowed HUD to approve the conversion of up to 60,000 public housing and Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation Program units into either project-based Section 8 rental assistance contracts (PBRA) or project-based vouchers (PBV) by September 2015. Since then, Congress has increased the cap three times, first to 185,000 units, then to 225,000, and now to 455,000 units by September 30, 2024. The Senate FY22 appropriations bill proposed expanding the cap to 500,000 units and extending the time to convert to September 30, 2028, which NLIHC opposes. The authorizing legislation contains several provisions intended to protect public housing residents whose homes are converted to PBRA or PBV through RAD.

The Obama and Trump Administrations, along with many developer-oriented organizations, urged Congress to allow all nearly 1 million public housing units to undergo RAD conversion even though the "demonstration" has yet to adequately demonstrate that the resident protection provisions in the statute are being fully realized. Many residents whose public housing properties have been approved for RAD complain that PHAs, developers, and HUD have not provided adequate information, causing many to doubt that resident protections in the authorizing legislation will be honored by PHAs and developers or monitored by HUD. The National Housing Law Project sent a [letter](#) to HUD Secretary Carson in 2017 listing numerous problems residents had experienced, such as illegal and inadequate resident relocation practices, unlawful resident re-

screening practices, and impediments to resident organizing. See the RAD section of Chapter 4 of this Advocates' Guide for more information.

### **Choice Neighborhoods Initiative**

The Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI), created in FY10, was HUD's successor to the HOPE VI Program. Like HOPE VI, CNI focuses on severely distressed public housing properties, but CNI expands HOPE VI's reach to include HUD-assisted, private housing properties and entire neighborhoods. Although unauthorized, CNI has been funded through annual appropriations bills and administered according to the details of HUD Notices of Fund Opportunity (NOFOs). HUD proposed eliminating CNI in FY19, FY20, and FY21, but Congress has continued to approve funding for CNI, approving \$150 million in FY19, \$175 million in FY20 and \$200 million for FY21. The FY22 spending bill provided \$350 million for CNI.

HUD states that CNI has three goals:

1. **Housing:** Replace distressed public and HUD-assisted private housing with mixed-income housing that is responsive to the needs of the surrounding neighborhood.
2. **People:** Improve employment and income, health, and children's education outcomes; and
3. **Neighborhood:** Create the conditions necessary for public and private reinvestment in distressed neighborhoods to offer the kinds of amenities and assets, including safety, good schools, and commercial activity, that are important to families' choices about their community.

In addition to PHAs, grantees can include HUD-assisted private housing owners, local governments, nonprofits, and for-profit developers. The CNI Program awards both large implementation grants and smaller planning grants. CNI planning grants are to assist communities in developing a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization plan, called a transformation plan, and in building the community-wide support necessary for that plan

to be implemented. Ninety-nine planning grants totaling more than \$48 million were awarded through December 2020.

CNI implementation grants are intended primarily to help transform severely distressed public housing and HUD-assisted private housing developments through rehabilitation, demolition, and new construction. HUD also requires applicants to prepare a more comprehensive plan to address other aspects of neighborhood distress such as violent crime, failing schools, and capital disinvestment. Funds can also be used for supportive services and improvements to the surrounding community, such as developing community facilities and addressing vacant, blighted properties. Forty implementation grants totaling a little nearly \$1.2 million were awarded through May 2021.

Although each NOFO has been different, key constant features include:

- One-for-one replacement of all public and private HUD-assisted units.
- Each resident who wishes to return to the improved development may do so.
- Residents who are relocated during redevelopment must be tracked until the transformed housing is fully occupied.
- Existing residents must have access to the benefits of the improved neighborhood.
- Resident involvement must be continuous, from the beginning of the planning process through implementation and management of the grant.

The FY21 NOFO was issued on November 17, 2021, announcing \$218 million available for awards of up to \$50 million each. The Lead Applicant must be a PHA, a local government, or a tribal entity. If there is also a Co-Applicant, it must be a PHA, a local government, a tribal entity, or the owner of the target HUD-assisted housing (e.g. a nonprofit or for-profit developer).

### **Moving to Work**

A key public housing issue is the so-called Moving to Work (MTW) demonstration that

provides a limited number of housing agencies flexibility from most statutory and regulatory requirements. Because this demonstration program has not been evaluated, and the potential for harm to residents is at stake, NLIHC has long held that the MTW demonstration is not ready for expansion or permanent authorization. Various legislative vehicles have sought to maintain and expand the current MTW program. Today, there are 39 PHAs in the MTW demonstration. The MTW contracts for each of these 39 PHAs were set to expire in 2018, but in 2016 HUD extended all of them to 2028.

The three MTW statutory goals are:

1. Reducing costs and increasing cost-effectiveness
2. Providing incentives for resident self-sufficiency
3. Increasing housing choices for low-income households

PHAs granted MTW status (“MTW agencies”) must meet five statutory requirements:

1. Ensure that 75% of the households they assist have income at or below 50% of area median income
2. Establish a reasonable rent policy
3. Assist substantially the same number of low-income households as a PHA would without MTW funding flexibility
4. Assist a mix of households by size comparable to the mix a PHA would have served if it were not in MTW
5. Ensure that assisted units meet housing quality standards

In practice, HUD’s enforcement of these requirements for the original 39 MTW agencies has been highly permissive.

The FY16 funding bill for HUD expanded the MTW demonstration by a total of 100 PHAs over the course of a seven-year period. Of the 100 new PHA MTW sites, no fewer than 50 PHAs must administer up to 1,000 combined public housing and voucher units, no fewer

than 47 must administer between 1,001 and 6,000 combined units, no more than three can administer between 6,001 and 27,000 combined units, and five must be PHAs with portfolio-wide awards under RAD. PHAs will be added to the MTW demonstration by cohort (groups), each of which will be overseen by a research advisory committee to ensure the demonstrations are evaluated with rigorous research protocols. Each year’s cohort of MTW sites will be directed by HUD to test one specific policy change.

The four cohorts were planned as follows:

- “MTW Flexibilities” will involve smaller PHAs that have a combination of 1,000 or fewer public housing units and vouchers. This cohort allows PHAs to use any of the regulatory waivers in the Final MTW Operations Notice (see below) in order to evaluate the overall effects of MTW flexibility on the PHA and its residents. HUD will compare outcomes related to MTW’s three statutory objectives between the MTW PHAs and PHAs assigned to a control group. Applicant PHAs will be assigned by lottery to be MTW PHAs, waitlist PHAs, or control group PHAs. As of the writing of this article 31 PHAs have been selected and PIH has
- “Rent Reform/Stepped and Tiered Rent” will involve 10 PHAs testing “rent reform” ideas of using “stepped rents” or “tiered rents,” which PIH claims is designed to “increase resident self-sufficiency and reduce PHA administrative burdens.” Stepped rent is a form of time limit; it is a scheme that increases a household’s rent on a fixed schedule in both frequency and amount, starting at 35% of adjusted income and growing each year. “Tiered rents” involve a household paying a fixed amount if their income is in a set range, which could result in rent burden. Only PHAs with a combination of at least 1,000 non-elderly and non-disabled public housing residents and voucher households were eligible. NLIHC and other advocates urged PIH not to implement this cohort because of its serious potential to impose cost burdens on residents.



- “[Landlord Incentives](#)” will explore ways to increase and sustain landlord participation in the Housing Choice Voucher program. PIH anticipates 30 PHAs will be in this cohort.
- “[Work Requirements](#)” was rescinded in June 2021. NLIHC and other advocates vehemently opposed this proposed cohort.

As of the drafting of this article, PIH had expressed its intention to establish another MTW Flexibility cohort and is exploring other options for a fifth cohort.

In January of 2017, HUD issued a draft MTW Operations Notice for public comment. It proposed three categories of statutory and regulatory waivers that MTW agencies could pursue:

1. General waivers available without review by HUD to all MTW expansion agencies.
2. Conditional waivers available if approved by HUD. Conditional waivers were expected to have a greater and more direct impact on households.
3. Cohort-specific waivers available only to MTW agencies implementing a specific cohort policy change.

[NLIHC’s comment letter](#) conveyed strong opposition to the inclusion of work requirements, time limits, and major changes to rent policies among possible conditional waivers. Because such policies have the potential to cause substantial harm to residents in the form of severe cost burden, housing instability, and perhaps homelessness, those policies should only be allowed as cohort-specific waivers subject to the most rigorous evaluation required by the MTW expansion statute.

On October 11, 2018, HUD issued a revised Operations Notice for public comment. It was far worse than the previous draft. The revised proposed Operations Notice would allow a PHA to impose a potentially harmful work requirement, time limit, and burdensome rent “MTW Waiver” without securing HUD approval and without the rigorous evaluation called for by the statute. [NLIHC’s formal comment letter](#) stated that such

waivers should only be allowed as part of a rigorous cohort evaluation.

A [final Operations Notice](#) was published on August 28, 2019. The most important components of the final Operations Notice for advocates to read are the three appendices. Appendix I “MTW Waivers” charts “MTW activities” that MTW agencies may implement without HUD approval, as long as they are implemented with the “safe harbors” tied to the specific allowed MTW activity. Appendix II has instructions for any required written impact analyses and hardship policies. Impact analyses are required for certain activities, such as work requirements, term-limited assistance, and stepped rent. Written financial and other hardship policies must be developed for most MTW activities. Appendix III explains the method for calculating the requirement that MTW agencies house substantially the same number of families as they would have absent MTW.

Four basic categories of waivers are: “MTW Waivers,” “Safe Harbor Waivers,” “Agency-Specific Waivers,” and “Cohort-Specific Waivers.”

**MTW Waivers:** MTW agencies may conduct any activity/policy in Appendix I without PIH review and approval. However, each specific eligible activity/policy has specific “safe harbor” requirements/limitations that an MTW agency must follow, for example requiring a hardship policy or not applying an activity/policy to elderly people.

**Safe Harbor Waivers:** MTW agencies may request PIH approval to expand an MTW Waiver activity/policy in Appendix I in a way inconsistent with the safe harbors for that specific MTW Waiver activity/policy. PIH has not yet provide instructions on how PHAs may justify such requests. However, when submitting a Safe Harbor Waiver, an MTW agency must hold a public meeting to specifically discuss the Safe Harbor Waivers. This meeting is in addition to following the PHA Plan public participation process requirements. The MTW agency must consider, in consultation with the Resident Advisory Board (RAB) and any tenant

associations, all of the comments received at the public hearing. The comments received by the public, RABs, and tenant associations must be submitted by the MTW agency, along with the MTW agency's description of how the comments were considered, as a required attachment to the MTW Supplement (see below).

**Agency-Specific Waivers:** MTW agencies may seek PIH approval for an Agency-Specific Waiver in order to implement additional activities not among those in the Appendix I. The request must have an analysis of the potential impact on residents as well as a hardship policy. A PHA must follow the same public participation process described above for Safe Harbor Waivers.

**Cohort-Specific Waivers:** MTW agencies may be provided Cohort-Specific Waivers if additional waivers not included in Appendix I are necessary to allow implementation of the required cohort study. Cohort-Specific Waivers will be detailed in the applicable Selection Notice for that cohort study.

MTW agencies will submit an "MTW Supplement" to the Annual PHA Plan. The MTW Supplement must go through a public process along with the Annual PHA Plan, following all of the Annual PHA Plan public participation requirements. So-called "Qualified PHAs," those with fewer than 550 public housing units and vouchers combined will be required to submit an MTW Supplement each year.

An MTW agency must implement one or multiple "reasonable rent policies" during the term of its MTW designation. PIH defines a reasonable rent policy as any change in the regulations on how rent is calculated for a household, such as any Tenant Rent Policies in Appendix I.

MTW PHAs will maintain MTW designation for 20 years, with the MTW waivers expiring at the end of the 20-year term. The previous Operations Notice had a 12-year term.

An MTW agency's MTW program applies to all of the MTW agency's public housing units, tenant-based HCV assistance, project-based HCV assistance (PBV), and homeownership units.

An MTW agency may spend up to 10% of its HCV HAP funding on "local, non-traditional activities," as described in Appendix I, without prior HUD approval. Examples include providing: shallow rent subsidies, rent subsidies to supportive housing programs to help homeless households, services to low-income people who are not public housing or voucher tenants, and gap-financing to develop Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) properties. An MTW agency may spend more than 10% by seeking PIH approval through a Safe Harbor Waiver. NLIHC urged PIH to remove this option because it has the effect of reducing the number of HCVs a PHA could use to house residents.

See also, the *Moving to Work and Expansion* article in Chapter 4 of this *Advocate's Guide*.

## STATUTORY AND REGULATORY CHANGES MADE SINCE 2016

### HOTMA Changes

On July 29, 2016, President Obama signed into law the "Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act" (HOTMA). This law made some changes to the public housing and voucher programs. The major public housing changes are:

- For residents already assisted, rents must be based on a household's income from the prior year. For applicants for assistance, rent must be based on estimated income for the upcoming year.
- A household may request an income review any time its income or deductions are estimated to decrease by 10%.
- A PHA must review a household's income any time that income with deductions are estimated to increase by 10%, except that any increase in earned income cannot be considered until the next annual recertification.
- The Earned Income Disregard, which disregarded certain increases in earned income for residents who had been unemployed or receiving welfare, was eliminated.

- When determining income:
  - The deduction for elderly and disabled households increased to \$525 (up from \$400) with annual adjustments for inflation.
  - The deduction for elderly and disabled households for medical care, as well as for attendant care and auxiliary aid expenses for disabled members of the household, used to be for such expenses that exceeded 3% of income. HOTMA limits the deduction for such expenses to those that exceed 10% of income.
  - The dependent deduction remains at \$480 but will be indexed to inflation.
  - The deduction of anticipated expenses for the care of children under age 13 is unchanged.
  - childcare deduction is unchanged.
  - Any expenses related to aiding and attending to veterans is excluded from income.
  - Any income of a full-time student who is a dependent is excluded from income, as are any scholarship funds used for tuition and books.
  - HUD must establish hardship exemptions in regulation for households that would not be able to pay rent due to hardship. These regulations must be made in consultation with tenant organizations and industry participants.
- If a household's income exceeds 120% of AMI for two consecutive years, a PHA must either:
  - Terminate the household's tenancy within six months of the household's second income determination, or
  - Charge a monthly rent equal to the greater of the Fair Market Rent (FMR) or the amount of the monthly operating and capital subsidy provided to the household's unit.
- A PHA may transfer up to 20% of its Operating Fund appropriation for eligible Capital Fund uses.

- PHAs may establish replacement reserves using Capital Funds and other sources, including Operating Funds (up to the 20% cap), as long as the PHA Plan provides for such use of Operating Funds.

HUD issued a final rule on July 26, 2018 implementing the 120% over-income limit. HUD issued Notice PIH 2018-19 implementing HOTMA's minimum heating standards. On September 17, 2019, HUD proposed HOTMA implementation regulations basically echoing HOTMA's income examination, income calculation, elderly or disabled deduction, child-care deduction and hardship provisions, and healthcare deduction and hardship provisions. In addition, HUD proposed HOTMA asset limitation provisions, including: making households ineligible if their net household assets are greater than \$100,000 (adjusted for inflation each year) or if the household owns real property suitable for occupancy; allowing a PHA to determine net assets based on a household's certification that their net family assets are less than \$50,000 (adjusted for inflation each year); revising the definition of "net family assets" by eliminating a number of previously included items such as the value of necessary "personal property" (like a car); and allowing a PHA to choose to not enforce the asset limit. NLIHC summarized key provisions of the proposed changes. A final rule was not implemented before *Advocate's Guide* went to publication, but one is anticipated in 2022.

### **Streamlining Rule**

A final "streamlining rule" was published on March 8, 2016. Key public housing provisions include:

- PHAs have the option of conducting a streamlined income determination for any household member who has a fixed source of income (such as Supplemental Security Income, SSI). If that person or household with a fixed income also has a non-fixed source of income, the non-fixed source of income is still subject to third-party verification. Upon admission to public housing, third-party verification of all income amounts will be

required for all household members. A full income reexamination and redetermination must be performed every three years. In between those three years, a streamlined income determination must be conducted by applying a verified cost of living adjustment or current rate of interest to the previously verified or adjusted income amount.

- PHAs have the option of providing utility reimbursements on a quarterly basis to public housing residents if the amounts due were \$45 or less. PHAs can continue to provide utility reimbursements monthly if they choose. If a PHA opts to make payments on a quarterly basis, the PHA must establish a hardship policy for tenants if less frequent reimbursement will create a financial hardship.
- Public housing households may now self-certify that they are complying with the community service requirement. PHAs are required to review a sample of self-certifications and validate their accuracy with third-party verification procedures currently in place.
- Many of the requirements relating to the process for obtaining a grievance hearing and the procedures governing the hearing were eliminated.

### Smoke Free Public Housing

A final “smoke free” rule was published on December 5, 2016. PHAs must design and implement a policy prohibiting the use of prohibited tobacco products in all public housing living units and interior areas (including but not limited to hallways, rental and administrative offices, community centers, daycare centers, laundry centers, and similar structures), as well as at outdoor areas within 25 feet of public housing and administrative office buildings (collectively referred to as “restricted areas”). PHAs may, but are not required to, further limit smoking to outdoor designated smoking areas on the grounds of the public housing or administrative office buildings in order to accommodate residents who smoke. These areas

must be outside of any restricted areas and may include partially enclosed structures. PHAs had until August 2018 to develop and implement their smoke-free policy. HUD has a public housing smoke-free housing [webpage](#).

### FUNDING

The FY22 spending bill provided \$3.388 billion for the Capital Fund and \$5.064 billion for the Operating Fund. For FY21, \$2.9 billion was appropriated for the Capital Fund and \$4.9 billion was appropriated for the Operating Fund. In FY20 the Capital Fund received \$2.87 billion and the Operating Fund received \$4.55 billion. In FY19, the Capital Fund received \$2.775 billion and the Operating Fund received \$4.653 billion, a slight increase above \$7.34 in FY18 and a helpful increase above \$6.34 billion from FY16 and FY17.

### FORECAST FOR 2022

Subsidy funding for public housing has been woefully insufficient to meet the need of the nation’s nearly 1 million public housing units. Without adequate funds, more units will go into irretrievable disrepair, potentially leading to greater homelessness. In 2022, funding will continue to be a major issue.

### WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates should ask Members of Congress to:

- Maintain and increase funding for the public housing Operating and Capital Funds.
- Support public housing as one way to end all types of homelessness.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

NLIHC, 202-662-1530, [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org).

NLIHC’s Public Housing webpage, <https://bit.ly/36UfpLU>.

NLIHC’s *Housing Spotlight: The Long Wait for a Home*.

NLIHC’s Summary of September 17, 2019 proposed HOTMA implementation regulations, <https://bit.ly/2kr70dt>.

National Housing Law Project, 415-546-7000,  
<http://nhlp.org/resourcecenter?tid=34>.

Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, 202-408-  
1080, <http://www.cbpp.org/topics/housing>.

HUD's Public Housing homepage, <http://bit.ly/2hULSJy>.

HUD's HOTMA homepage, <https://bit.ly/2AVgHoX>.

HUD's Public Housing Occupancy Guidebook,  
<https://bit.ly/3d8eiup>.

HUD's Rental Assistance Demonstration  
homepage, <http://bit.ly/2ht2w2C>.

HUD's Moving to Work demonstration homepage,  
<http://bit.ly/2iOtmwC>.

HUD's Moving to Work expansion page, <https://bit.ly/2E7AYJN>.

HUD's Choice Neighborhoods homepage, <http://bit.ly/2hURgwh>.

HUD's Smoke Free homepage, <https://bit.ly/2LMyOg9>.

The Administration's FY22 proposal for Public  
Housing, <https://bit.ly/3prtRmC>.

# Rental Assistance Demonstration

---

By Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, NLIHC

**Administering Agency:** HUD's Office of Multifamily Housing Programs, Office of Recapitalization (Recap)

**Year Started:** 2012

**Number of Persons/Households Served:**

Initially, 60,000 public housing units were allowed to convert, and this was expanded to 185,000 units in FY15, 225,000 units in FY17, and 455,000 units in FY18. The first component of the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) involves public housing. As of November 22, 2021, 153,488 public housing units were converted, 57,970 units had preliminary approvals (CHAPs), and 128,849 units were in reserve (as part of a large "portfolio" of units to be converted over time). The second RAD component involves private, HUD-assisted housing. As of November 22, 2021, 38,400 units were converted, 11,470 were expecting conversion, and 1,800 were undergoing conversion.

**Funding:** To date, RAD has received no appropriated funds.

**See Also:** For related information, refer to the *Public Housing*, *Project-Based Rental Assistance*, *Project-Based Vouchers*, and *Public Housing Agency Plan* sections of this guide.

As part of the "FY12 HUD Appropriations Act," Congress authorized the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) to help preserve and improve low-income housing. RAD allows public housing agencies (PHAs) and owners of private, HUD-assisted housing to leverage Section 8 rental assistance contracts in order to raise private debt and equity for capital improvements. RAD has two components: the first pertains to public housing and the Moderate Rehabilitation (Mod Rehab) Program, the second pertains to the Rent Supplement (Rent Supp), Rental Assistance Program (RAP), McKinney-Vento Single Room Occupancy (SRO), and Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly Project - Rental

Assistance Contract (PRAC) programs, as well as the Mod Rehab Program.

## HISTORY

Throughout 2010 and 2011, HUD consulted with public housing resident leaders through the Resident Engagement Group (REG). HUD sought to create a demonstration program that would bring in non-federal resources to address insufficient Congressional funding for the public housing Capital Fund. HUD also wanted to avoid the many harmful effects the HOPE VI program had on residents. Over time, HUD presented three proposals to the REG, and each time the REG would point out a resident-oriented problem. In response, HUD went back to the drawing board to present a modified proposal. The final proposal, the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD), addressed all of the REG's concerns.

Congress authorized RAD through the "FY12 HUD Appropriations Act" to help preserve and improve low-income housing. HUD published PIH Notice 2012-32 implementing RAD on July 26, 2012. A set of revisions were made on July 2, 2013, with technical corrections on February 4, 2014, and significant revisions on June 15, 2015 and again on January 12, 2017 (Notice PIH-2012-32/H-2017-03 REV3). Still more significant revisions were published on September 5, 2019 ([Notice H-2019-09/PIH-2019-23 REV4](#)). HUD issued [Notice H 2016-17/PIH 2016-17](#) on November 10, 2016, providing guidance regarding fair housing and civil rights as well as resident relocation statutory and regulatory requirements under RAD.

The "FY14 Appropriations Act" extended the time for second component conversions to December 31, 2014, from September 30, 2013, and the "FY15 Appropriations Act" removed the second component deadline altogether. The "FY15 Appropriations Act" raised the number of public housing units that could convert under the first component from 60,000 to 185,000 and extended the first component deadline to September 30,

2018. The “FY15 Appropriations Act” made several other changes that are explained in the rest of this article. The “FY17 Appropriations Act” further raised the cap to 225,000 units by September 30, 2020. The “FY18 Appropriations Act” continued to raise the demonstration’s cap to 455,000 unit with a deadline of September 30, 2024.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

The intent of RAD is to help preserve and improve HUD-assisted low-income housing by enabling PHAs and owners of private, HUD-assisted housing to leverage Section 8 rental assistance contracts to raise private debt and equity for capital improvements. RAD has two components. RAD does not provide any new federal funds for public housing. There are no RAD regulations, but RAD conversions must comply with a formal RAD Notice, PIH Notice 2012-32. The current Notice is [H-2019-09/PIH 2019-23 \(REV4\)](#).

### Key Features of the First Component

Since the “FY18 Appropriations Act,” up to 455,000 units of public housing and Mod Rehab Program units are allowed to compete for permission to convert their existing federal assistance to project-based Housing Choice Vouchers (PBVs) or to Section 8 project-based rental assistance (PBRA) by September 30, 2024. Because the “FY18 Appropriations Act” expanded the number of units that could be converted far beyond the FY17 cap of 225,000 units, HUD eliminated the RAD wait list.

This article will focus on the public housing first component. However, a brief presentation of the key features of the second component precedes a deeper discussion of the first component.

### Key Features of the Second Component

The second RAD component allows owners of properties previously assisted through the Rent Supplement (Rent Supp), Rental Assistance Program (RAP), Moderate Rehabilitation (Mod Rehab), McKinney-Vento Single Room Occupancy (SRO), and Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly PRAC programs to convert to long-term Section 8 contracts—either project-

based vouchers (PBVs) or project-based rental assistance (PBRA). There was no limit to the number of units that could be converted under the second component and there was no competitive selection process for it. The “FY15 Appropriations Act” permanently extended the ability to convert under the second component. The “FY15 Appropriations Act” also allowed projects assisted under the McKinney-Vento Single Room Occupancy (SRO) program to apply for RAD conversion. The “FY18 Appropriations Act” added the Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly PRAC program. All 249 Rent Supp properties (with 13,670 units) closed at the end of 2018 and all 106 RAP properties (with 14,462 units) closed at the end of January 2020. As of November 18, 2021, 201 Section 8 Mod Rehabs or Mod Rehab SROs were expecting conversion, and 41 were undergoing conversion.

Owners of properties with program contracts that have not expired or terminated can enter into a 20-year PBV housing assistance payment (HAP) contract with a public housing agency (PHA) or enter into a 20-year PBRA HAP contract administered by HUD’s Office of Multifamily Housing Programs. Owners with contracts that have already expired or terminated and whose residents started receiving tenant protection vouchers (TPVs) on or after October 1, 2006 can only enter into a 20-year PBV HAP contract with a PHA (before April, 2017, PBV contracts had a maximum term of 15 years).

Owners had to notify residents of an intent to convert, follow resident participation, and adhere to the resident protection provisions as described below pertaining to the first component.

### Summary of the First Component

This section focuses on the first component’s public housing provisions. RAD is a voluntary demonstration program. There is no new funding for RAD. Once converted under RAD, the amount of the public housing Capital Fund and Operating Fund a specific development has been receiving is used instead as PBV or PBRA.

PHAs considering RAD can choose to convert public housing units to one of two types of long-

term, project-based Section 8 rental assistance contracts:

1. Project-based vouchers (PBV). These are Housing Choice Vouchers that are tied to specific buildings; they do not move with tenants as regular “tenant-based” vouchers do. If public housing units are converted to PBV, the initial contract must be for 20 years (prior to April 2017 the minimum was 15 years and the maximum was 20 years) and must always be renewed. HUD’s Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) would continue to oversee the units. Most of the current PBV rules (24 CFR part 983) would apply.
2. Project-based rental assistance (PBRA). If units are converted to PBRA, the initial contract must be for 20 years and must always be renewed. HUD’s Office of Multifamily Programs would take over monitoring. Most of the current PBRA rules (24 CFR parts 880 to 886) would apply.

As of November 23, 2021, 1,259 projects with 122,014 units will be converting to or have converted to PBV and 731 projects with 89,294 units will be converting to or have converted to PBRA.

Voluntarily converting some public housing to Section 8 might be good because Congress continues to underfund public housing. That underfunding leads to deteriorating buildings and the loss of units through demolition. HUD has estimated that 10,000 public housing units are lost each year. If a long-term rental assistance contract is tied to a property, private institutions might be more willing to lend money for critical building repairs. Congress is more likely to provide adequate funding for existing Section 8 contracts (whether PBV or PBRA) than for public housing. Therefore, some units that were public housing before conversion are more likely to remain available and affordable to people with extremely low and very low incomes because of the long-term Section 8 contract.

## Resident Protections and Rights

Both the language in the statute and the Notice implementing the statute include all the protections sought by the Resident Engagement Group. However, it is up to residents to try to get HUD, PHAs, developers, and owners to comply. Some of the protections and rights for residents include (others are described later):

- Displacement: Permanent involuntary displacement of current residents may not occur as a result of a project’s conversion. If a household does not want to transition to PBV or PBRA, they may move to other public housing if an appropriate unit is available.
- Tenant Rent: Existing PBV and PBRA rules limit resident rent payment to 30% of income, or minimum rent, whichever is higher. Any rent increase of 10% or \$25, whichever is greater, solely due to conversion is phased in over three to five years.
- Rescreening: Current residents cannot be rescreened when they return if they were temporarily relocated while their development was rehabilitated or if their development was demolished and new units were built.
- Right to Return: Residents temporarily relocated while their development was rehabilitated or if their development was demolished and new units were built have a right to return.
- Renewing the Lease: PHAs must renew a resident’s lease, unless there is “good cause” not to.
- Grievance Process: The RAD statute requires tenants of converted properties to have the same grievance and lease termination rights they had under Section 6 of the “Housing Act of 1937.” For instance, PHAs must notify a resident of the PHA’s reason for a proposed adverse action and of their right to an informal hearing assisted by a resident representative.

Advocates think that HUD has not adequately implemented this statutory requirement.



The public housing regulations have long-established processes that residents could use to question a PHA's actions or failure to take action regarding a lease or any PHA regulation that adversely affects a resident's rights, welfare, or status. HUD's RAD provisions restrict residents' grievance rights because instead of using the well-developed public housing grievance process, residents will only have the limited grievance rights under either the PBV regulations or the PBRA regulations.

## RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

### Resident Notices and Meetings

Before submitting a RAD application to HUD, a PHA must notify residents and resident organizations of a project proposed for conversion. The PHA is not required to notify the Resident Advisory Board (RAB) or residents of other developments. Since January 2017, as outlined in [Notice H 2016-17/PIH 2016-17](#), the form of notice must be a written RAD Information Notice (RIN) that indicates, among other things:

- The PHA's intention to convert the units through RAD;
- A general description of the conversion (rehab, new construction, etc.);
- Resident relocation protections if relocation is involved; and
- Residents' rights under RAD (including the right to remain in the project after conversion, the right to return to the project if there is temporary relocation, the right to relocation benefits, and the right to not be re-screened upon returning).

In addition, a General Information Notice (GIN) must be provided informing each resident about "Uniform Relocation Act" (URA) protections if URA is triggered.

After a RIN is issued, the PHA must conduct at least two meetings with residents of projects proposed for conversion. Since January 2017, at these meetings the PHA must:

- Discuss conversion plans;

- Give residents a chance to comment;
- Describe all RAD resident rights (including the right to remain in the project after conversion, the right to return to the project if there is temporary relocation, the right to relocation benefits, and the right to not be re-screened upon returning); and
- Explain:
  - Any change in the number of units or unit sizes or any other change that might make it difficult for a household to re-occupy the property;
  - Any units that have been vacant for more than 24 months will be demolished (see "One-for-One Replacement" below);
  - Any plans to partner with an entity other than an affiliate or instrumentality of the PHA, and if so, whether such a partner will have a general partner or managing member ownership interest in the proposed project owner; and
  - Any transfer of assistance to another property, meaning residents would have to permanently move to another location.

After these meetings the PHA must write responses to residents' comments.

After a RAD application has received preliminary HUD approval, called a "CHAP" (Commitment to enter into a Housing Assistance Payment contract) but before the PHA requests a "Concept Call" with HUD, the PHA must have at least one meeting with residents to discuss updated conversion plans and ask for feedback regarding the proposed improvements. The PHA must prepare comprehensive written responses to comments made by residents at this meeting.

The Concept Call is relatively new, first required after September 5, 2019. It requires a PHA to request a call with HUD before submitting a "Financing Plan," to show that the plan is far enough along for HUD to review it. A Financing Plan is a document demonstrating that the project can be physically and financially sustained for the term of the Section 8 Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract.

After the Concept Call and before submitting a Financing Plan, a PHA must have at least one more meeting with residents to discuss updated conversion plans and the anticipated Financing Plan. The PHA must prepare comprehensive written responses to comments made by residents at this meeting.

After HUD has issued a RAD Conversion Commitment (RCC), the PHA must notify residents that the RAD has been approved. The notice must include: the anticipated timing of the conversion; the anticipated duration of the rehab or new construction; the revised terms of the lease and house rules (allowable and prohibited activities in housing units and common areas listed in an attachment to a lease); any anticipated relocation; and opportunities to and procedures for residents to exercise the RAD “choice mobility” option (discussed below).

More meetings with residents are required to discuss any substantial change to the conversion plans, including:

- A substantial change in the scope of work;
- A substantial change in utility allowances;
- A change in the number of units or unit sizes of assisted units or any other change that might make it difficult for a household to re-occupy the property;
- Any units that have been vacant for more than 24 months that will be demolished (see “One-for-One Replacement” below);
- Plans to partner with an entity other than an affiliate or instrumentality of the PHA, and if so, whether such a partner will have a general partner or managing member ownership interest in the proposed project owner; and
- The introduction or abandonment of a transfer of assistance to another property or a major change in the location to which assistance would be transferred.

A PHA must carry out the PHA Plan Significant Amendment process if the change involves a transfer of assistance, change in the number of assisted units, or change in eligibility or

preferences for new applicants (see Significant Amendment below).

All meetings “should” be conducted in a place and at a time that fosters resident participation.

All communications and meetings must be accessible. At a minimum, a PHA must use:

- Effective means of communication for people with hearing, visual, and other communication-related disabilities.
- Hold meetings in places physically accessible for people with disabilities.
- Provide meaningful access to its programs and activities for people who have a limited ability to read, speak, or understand English.

These meetings are separate from the Significant Amendment process (see below), which does not have to take place until about five months after preliminary approval.

### **Significant Amendment to the PHA Plan**

RAD conversion is a Significant Amendment to a PHA Plan (see the “PHA Plan” article in Chapter 7 of this *Advocates’ Guide*). A RAD conversion Significant Amendment must describe the units to be converted, including the number of units, the number of units by bedroom size, and type of units (e.g., family, elderly, etc.). It must also indicate any waiting list preferences and indicate any change in the number of units or units with different numbers of bedrooms, as well as any change in policies regarding eligibility, admission, selection, and occupancy of units.

However, HUD does not require a Significant Amendment process to begin until late in the conversion process, which could be as late as five months after HUD has issued a preliminary approval (CHAP) for RAD conversion of a specific development. The Significant Amendment process starts too late because when submitting the required RAD Financing Plan HUD requires a PHA to have a letter from HUD approving a Significant Amendment. A Financing Plan is a document submitted to HUD demonstrating that a PHA has secured all necessary private financing needed to sustain the project for the term of

the HAP contract. Financing Plans are due six months after HUD has issued a CHAP.

Consequently, RAB involvement and the PHA-wide notice, broad public outreach, and public hearing required by the Significant Amendment regulations will not take place until the conversion application process is too far along. Rather than engage all PHA residents before an application for RAD conversion is submitted, the public engagement process is only required to take place close to the time when a PHA has all of its financing and construction plans approved and is ready to proceed. At this point, comments from the RAB, other residents, or nearby community members are not likely to have any effect.

### **\$25 Per Unit for Resident Participation**

Whether a property is converted to PBV or PBRA, each year a PHA must provide \$25 per occupied unit at the property for resident participation; of this amount, at least \$15 per unit must be provided to the legitimate resident organization for resident education, organizing around tenancy issues, or training. If there is no legitimate resident organization, residents and PHAs are encouraged to form one. A PHA may use the remaining \$10 per unit for resident participation activities; however, some PHAs distribute the entire \$25 per unit to the resident organization.

### **Resident Organizing**

Residents have the right to establish and operate a resident organization. If a property is converted to PBRA, then the current multifamily program's resident participation provisions apply, the so-called "Section 245" provisions. If a property is converted to PBV, instead of using public housing's so-called "Section 964" provisions, the Notice requires resident participation provisions similar to those of Section 245. For example, PHAs/owners must recognize legitimate resident organizations and allow resident organizers to help residents establish and operate resident organizations. Resident organizers must be allowed to distribute leaflets and post information on bulletin boards, contact residents, help

residents participate in the organization's activities, hold regular meetings on site, and respond to a PHA's request to increase rent, reduce utility allowances, or make major capital additions.

Properties converted to PBRA are no longer required to meet PHA Plan requirements. In addition, PBRA residents can no longer be on the RAB, be a PHA commissioner, or be on a jurisdiction-wide resident council unless the PHA voluntarily agrees.

### **One-for-One Replacement**

Although the Notice does not use the term "one-for-one replacement," HUD's informal material says there will be one-for-one replacement. However, there are exceptions. PHAs can reduce the number of assisted units by up to 5% or five units, whichever is greater, without seeking HUD approval. HUD calls this the *de minimus* exception. Furthermore, RAD does not count against the 5% or five unit *de minimus*: any unit that has been vacant for two or more years; any reconfigured units, such as efficiency units made into one-bedroom units; or, any units converted to use for social services. Consequently, the loss of units can be greater than 5%.

A PHA must demonstrate that any reduction of units better serves residents; will not result in involuntary permanent displacement; and will not discriminate. If a PHA proposes changes that will result in, for example, fewer three-bedroom units, the PHA must demonstrate that it will not result in involuntary displacement or discrimination.

### **Choice Mobility**

HUD states that one of the major objectives of RAD is to test the extent to which residents have greater housing choice after conversion. PHAs must provide all residents of converted units with the option to move with a regular Housing Choice Voucher (HCV). For PBV conversions, after one year of residency, a tenant can request a HCV and one must be provided if available; if a voucher is not available, the resident gets priority on the waiting list. If because of RAD, a PHA's total number of PBV units (regular PBVs and RAD

PBVs) is greater than 20% of the PHA's authorized number of HCVs, the PHA would not be required to provide more than 75% of its turnover HCVs in any single year to residents of RAD projects.

For PBRA, a resident has the right to move with a HCV after two years if one is available. A PHA could limit Choice-Mobility moves in a PBRA property to one-third of the PHA's turnover vouchers, or to 15% of the assisted units in a property.

### **Relocations and Civil Rights Review Guidance**

HUD issued [Notice H 2016-17/PIH 2016-17](#) on November 10, 2016, providing guidance regarding fair housing and civil rights as well as resident relocation statutory and regulatory requirements under RAD.

### **Relocation Provisions**

Regarding relocation provisions, there were a number of new features, several in response to advocates. The Notice requires PHAs or project owners to prepare a written relocation plan for all transactions that involve permanent relocation or that involve temporary relocation expected to be more than 12 months.

### **NOTICES**

For any temporary or permanent relocation, residents must receive a RAD Information Notice (RIN) before the first required resident meetings to tell residents that the PHA intends to convert through RAD, and to describe project plans (such as new construction or rehabilitation) and residents' rights under RAD (see discussion earlier in this article). In addition, residents must receive a General Information Notice (GIN) within 30 days after a CHAP is issued. The GIN must inform residents that they might be displaced, and if so that they will receive relocation assistance and 90 days' advance notice before having to move. Owners must provide a Notification of Return to the Covered Project indicating: a date or estimated date of return, whether the PHA or some other entity will be responsible for managing the return, that out-of-pocket expenses will be covered, that the PHA or another entity will give residents 90 days' advance notice of return, and options available to

residents who decide not to return.

### **TEMPORARY RELOCATION**

For moves within the same building or complex, or for moves elsewhere for **one year or less**, a PHA must give residents 30 days' notice and reimburse residents for out-of-pocket expenses.

If temporary relocation is expected to be for **more than one year**, a PHA must give residents 90 days' notice and offer residents the choice of temporary housing and reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses related to the temporary relocation, or permanent relocation assistance and payments at "Uniform Relocation Act" levels. Residents must have at least 30 days to decide between permanent and temporary relocation assistance. A PHA cannot use any tactics to pressure residents to give up their right to return or to accept permanent relocation assistance and payments.

PHAs must maintain a "Resident Log" that tracks resident status through to completion of rehabilitation or new construction, including re-occupancy after relocation. The Resident Log must have detailed data regarding each household that will be relocated, including the address of temporary housing and key dates of notices and moves. Unfortunately, HUD will not make a redacted or aggregate summary of the Resident Log available to advocates wishing to monitor the relocation process.

### **PERMANENT RELOCATION**

If proposed plans for a project would prevent a resident from returning to the RAD project, the resident must be given an opportunity to comment and/or object to such plans. If the resident objects to such plans, the PHA must alter the project plans to accommodate the resident in the converted project.

If a resident voluntarily agrees to permanent relocation, a PHA must obtain informed written consent from the resident that also confirms that the resident agrees to end the right to return and that confirms that the resident understands permanent relocation assistance and payments will be provided consistent with the "Uniform Relocation Act." Replacement housing options for

residents who voluntarily relocate permanently include providing other public housing, a project-based voucher, a regular tenant-based voucher, and homeownership housing.

### **Fair Housing and Civil Rights Provisions**

Notice H 2016-17/PIH 2016-17 provides:

- An outline of conditions under which HUD will conduct a front-end review to determine whether a site is in an area of minority concentration relative to the site's housing market area,
- Guidance on the concepts of "area of minority concentration" and "housing market area" that are reviewed when determining whether a site is in an area of minority concentration, and
- Information about what HUD will consider and what PHAs should provide evidence of in order for a proposed site to meet exceptions that permit new construction in an area of minority concentration. This includes:
  - An explanation of the presumptions necessary for meeting the "sufficient comparable opportunities" exception, and
  - A description of the factors that HUD may consider in evaluating the "overriding housing needs" exception.

### **Who Will Own the Converted Properties?**

Many residents worry about their developments becoming "privatized." Theoretically, this potential problem is covered by the RAD statute requiring ownership or control by a public or nonprofit entity. However, legal services attorneys worry that there could be loopholes. Legal services attorneys recommend that if a PHA does not directly keep ownership that it at least has a long-term ground lease ensuring direct control.

The June 15, 2015, revision of the RAD Notice (PIH-2012-32 REV-2) refined the meaning of "ownership and control" of post-conversion projects.

For conversions that do not involve the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), a public or nonprofit entity must meet one of the following:

- Hold fee simple interest in the real property (holding title to the land and any improvements, such as buildings).
- Have direct or indirect legal authority to direct the financial and legal interests of the project owner (through a contract, partnership share or agreement of an equity partnership, voting rights, or other means).
- Own 51% or more of the general partner interests in a limited partnership, or own 51% or more of the managing member interests in an LLC.

As of January 19, 2017, due to the REV 3 Notice the following options were added:

- Lease the ground to a project owner.
- Own a lesser percentage of the general partner or managing member interests and hold certain control rights approved by HUD.
- Own 51% or more of all ownership interests in a limited partnership or LLC and hold certain control rights approved by HUD.

HUD may allow ownership of a project to be transferred to a LIHTC entity controlled by a for-profit entity to enable the use of LIHTC assistance, but only if HUD determines that the PHA preserves sufficient interest in the property. Preservation of a PHA's sufficient interest in a project using LIHTCs could include:

- The PHA, or an affiliate under its sole control, is the sole general partner or managing member.
- The PHA retains fee ownership, leasing the real estate to the LIHTC entity as part of a long-term ground lease.
- The PHA retains control over project leasing, such as exclusively maintaining and administering the wait list for the project, including performing eligibility determinations that comply with the PHA Plan.
- The PHA enters into a Control Agreement by which the PHA retains consent rights over certain acts of the owner (for example, disposition of the project, leasing, selecting

the management agent, setting the operating budget, and making withdrawals from the reserves), and retaining certain rights over the project, such as administering the waiting list.

Whether or not the property is owned by a LIHTC entity, the National Housing Law Project asserts that only two options will preserve the long-term affordability of a property:

- The PHA or an affiliate under its sole control is the general partner or managing member.
- The PHA retains fee ownership and leases the real estate through a long-term ground lease.

If there is a foreclosure, then ownership or control of the property will go first to a public entity, and if there is not a public entity willing to own the property, then to a private entity that could be a for-profit.

### Limits on PBVs per Development

For projects that closed after January 19, 2017, there is no limit on the number of PBVs that can be attached to a property.

For projects that closed before changes were made on January 19, 2017, RAD limits to 50% the number of units in a public housing development that can be converted to PBVs. However, the 50% cap can be exceeded if the other units are “exception units,” those occupied by an elderly head of household or spouse, a disabled head of household or spouse, or a household with at least one member participating in a supportive service program.

For those pre-2017 RAD projects, a public housing household whose development was converted cannot be involuntarily displaced as a result of this 50% cap. In other words, any household living in development at the time of RAD conversion (pre-2017) that does not meet one of the exception criteria (e.g., elderly, disabled, supportive service) and does not want to move, cannot be terminated from PBV and cannot be required to move, even if they cause the development to exceed the 50% PBV + exception unit cap. However, once one of those original households (non-elderly, non-disabled, non-supportive services) leaves, causing the property

to exceed the 50% PBV + exception unit cap, that unit can only be assisted with PBV if it is rented to a household that meets one of the three exception categories (elderly, disabled, or supportive services). What this means is that some PHAs might urge half of the households to move to other developments, if available, but a resident’s decision to relocate must be voluntary. It could also mean that for a development to be able to continue to use PBVs after current residents leave exception units, some developments might change in character. For example, a development mostly occupied by families might become 50% to 100% elderly.

### Mixing RAD and “Section 18” Disposition

A new provision was added on July 3, 2018 through [Notice PIH 2018-04](#) and added to the RAD Notice REV-4 (September 5, 2019). Up to 25% of the public housing units at a RAD project may be “disposed” (sold or transferred) under Option (c) of the “Section 18” Disposition regulations options: the disposition is in the “best interest of residents and the PHA.” This is termed the “RAD/Section 18 Blend.” (For more about Section 18 disposition, see the “Repositioning of Public Housing” entry in this chapter of the *Advocates’ Guide*.)

Yet another provision was added through [Notice PIH 2021-07 on January 19, 2021](#) without public input. The percentage of units eligible for disposition within a RAD project as a result of [Notice PIH 2021-07](#) can now be based on the “hard construction costs” of a proposed rehabilitation or new construction. Hard construction costs include overhead and profit, payment and performance bonds, and “general requirements.”

- For high-cost areas, defined as those where Hard Construction Costs exceed 120% of the national average, a PHA may convert up to **80%** of the units in a RAD project to PBVs under Section 18.
- If hard construction costs are equal to or greater than 90% of Housing Construction Costs published by HUD for the given market area, a PHA may convert up to **60%** of the units in a RAD project to PBVs under Section 18.

- If hard construction costs are equal to or greater than 60% but less than 90% of Housing Construction Costs published by HUD for the given market area, a PHA may convert up to **40%** of the units in a RAD project to PBVs under Section 18.
- If hard construction costs are equal to or greater than 30% but less than 60% of Housing Construction Costs published by HUD for the given market area, a PHA may convert up to **20%** of the units in a RAD project to PBVs under Section 18.

*Notice PIH 2021-07* also provides that Small PHAs, those with 250 or fewer public housing units, may convert up to **80%** of the units in a RAD project to PBVs under Section 18. However, to be eligible for the Small PHA blend, a PHA must submit a feasible repositioning plan that removes all of a PHA’s public housing Annual Contributions Contract (ACC) units, reflecting that the PHA will not develop additional public housing units under otherwise available Faircloth authority, and will not transfer that Faircloth authority to another PHA.

The Faircloth Amendment to the “Housing Act of 1937” states that HUD cannot fund the construction or operation of new public housing units with Capital or Operating Funds if the construction of those units would result in a net increase in the number of units a PHA owned, assisted, or operated as of October 1, 1999.

Units in a RAD/Section 18 property must be substantially rehabbed or be newly constructed. The PHA must show that disposition is necessary to so that all the units in a development can use PBVs. HUD will provide Tenant Protection Vouchers that will convert to PBVs for these units.

A PHA may not provide different relocation rights and benefits to residents of a project on the basis of whether they live in a RAD unit or a Section 18 unit. All RAD resident protection provisions must apply to residents of Section 18 units, including: resident notice and meeting requirements, right to return, no rescreening, no denial based on income eligibility or income targeting, relocation assistance, grievance and lease provisions, right

to establish and operate a resident organization, and \$25 per unit to be used for resident participation activities. These protections are most clearly laid out in “[RAD-Section 18 \(75/25\) Blend FAQs](#),” see FAQs #7, #8, and #9 on page 9.

HUD will not approve a RAD conversion that would include disposition under Section 18 regulations option (b) or (c) if the Section 18 units would not be replaced one-for-one. Option (b) is disposition that will allow a PHA to buy, rehab, or build other properties that will be “more efficient or effective”.

The PBV HAP contract may be renewed as many times as necessary in order to keep the PBV units in the RAD project affordable.

### **Section 3 Applies**

Section 3 preferences for resident training, employment, and contracting opportunities have always been required until a public housing development had completed RAD conversion.

The September 2019 Notice (REV-4) elaborated on the earlier notices by stating that pre-development conversion costs remain subject to regular Section 3 public housing provisions. After RAD Closing (which takes place before final conversion), any housing rehabilitation or new construction that is not funded by a HUD program (such as HUD’s HOME or CDBG programs) is subject to the Section 3 provisions for housing and community development activities (meaning priority to low-income residents in the project’s neighborhood) except that first priority for employment and other economic opportunities must be given to residents of public housing or Section 8-assisted housing.

RAD continues to avoid extending RAD employment opportunities after conversion for PHA staff who had performed various tasks at the public housing development, such a central office employee, painters, grounds crews, etc.

## **OTHER KEY FEATURES IN REV 4**

### **Projects Needing Significant Renovations No Longer Prioritized**

Notice REV4 deleted the priority categories for

approving RAD applications. Instead, HUD will accept applications on a first-come, first-served basis. This formalizes actual HUD practice in which HUD approved RAD applications that entailed little or no rehabilitation for 27% of completed RAD conversions and 36% of projects undergoing rehabilitation, according to the [Government Accountability Office](#). The original intent of RAD was to address Congress' underfunding of public housing capital needs that resulted in accelerated deterioration of properties. The appropriations act establishing RAD stated that the purpose is to "preserve and improve" public housing. The initial RAD Notice and each subsequent revision reiterated this intent and added that the goal is to "address immediate and long-term capital needs."

### **RAD Projects in Opportunity Zones**

HUD will provide extra rent revenue of up to \$100 per unit per month to a public housing project located in an Opportunity Zone that converts to Section 8 project-based rental assistance (PBRA) – not Project-Based Vouchers (PBV) – provided the project needs extra revenue to be financially viable. The RAD conversion must entail either new construction or substantial rehabilitation. HUD will approve requests on a first-come-first-served basis. A HUD [FAQ](#) defines "substantial rehabilitation" and describes how HUD will determine whether an infusion of additional rent revenue is necessary.

## **TWO NEW ITEMS ADDED IN 2021**

### **RAD Complaint Process for Residents**

Recap posted a one-page [RAD Complaint Process](#) for residents of public housing properties undergoing conversion or that have converted under RAD to either the PBV or PBRA programs. The RAD Complain Process document lists suggested contents of a complaint, such as a description of the resident's issues and their desired remedy.

The document also lists steps that Recap staff will take when they receive a complaint, including:

- Communicating with residents to obtain additional information.

- Gathering information from the PHA, property manager, and RAD Transition Manager (the process does not explicitly include talking with legal services or other resident-oriented third parties).
- Determining whether Recap or another HUD office could facilitate communication between residents and the other party.
- Providing residents with a written response that includes actions taken and recommended next steps.

The document states that residents should direct follow-up questions to the [Recap office](#). The complaint process does not include an appeal process if residents are unhappy with Recap's written response, nor does it indicate that Recap will undertake ongoing monitoring to ensure that suggested actions are carried out.

### **Faircloth-to-RAD**

Recap formally announced in April, 2021, a new "Faircloth-to-RAD" option for PHAs to create deeply affordable homes. Faircloth refers to a limit on the number of public housing units a PHA can own, assist, or operate. Recap indicated that many PHAs operate fewer public housing units than their Faircloth limit, meaning that in early 2021, 220,000 units of public housing could be developed. The new Faircloth-to RAD option is designed to establish a long-term, reliable rental subsidy contract to help PHAs and their development partners more readily finance the construction of new deeply affordable units. The latest list of PHAs with available Faircloth units (as of September 30, 2021) is [here](#).

Congress established in 1998 a limit on the number of public housing units the federal government would support. The Faircloth Amendment to the "Housing Act of 1937" prohibits HUD from funding the construction or operation of new public housing units with Capital or Operating funds if construction would result in a net increase in the number of public housing units a PHA owned, assisted, or operated as of October 1, 1999. This is referred to as the "Faircloth Limit," named after Lauch Faircloth, a North Carolina senator who championed the limit.



One reason PHAs with available Faircloth units have been unable to construct new public housing units is because there is no new federal funding for their initial construction. The new option is intended to enable PHAs with Faircloth unit availability to develop public housing units on a temporary basis using HUD's public housing mixed-finance program with pre-approval to convert the property under RAD to a long-term Section 8 contract once construction is complete. By providing early-stage RAD conversion approvals, specifically the revenue certainty and the market-familiarity of a Section 8 contract that these RAD approvals represent, HUD gives lenders and investors the information they need to underwrite the construction of new public housing.

Recap produced a [Faircloth-to-RAD Fact Sheet](#) that listed available Faircloth units by state, and more importantly, PHAs that have more than 1,000 available Faircloth units. Recap also has June 2020 [Faircloth FAQs](#) and a detailed [Faircloth-to-RAD guide](#).

## FUNDING

To date, RAD has not had any appropriated funds.

### Forecast for 2022

As in the past, the Biden Administration's FY22 budget request sought \$100 million for targeted expansion of RAD to public housing properties that cannot feasibly convert because their combined public housing capital and operating funds are not enough. HUD estimates that this would enable the conversion of approximately 30,000 units. Neither the House nor the Senate Appropriations Committees proposed such targeted appropriations in FY22 for public housing properties that cannot feasibly convert. The Senate appropriations bill, however, proposed expanding the cap to 500,000 units and extending the time to convert to September 30, 2028, which NLIHC opposes. For RAD/Section 18 Blends, it would allow the Tenant Protection Vouchers issued for Section 18 disposition to be converted to Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA). NLIHC has no objection to that provision.

(Currently, Section 18 TPVs can only be converted to PBVs under RAD/Section 18 Blends.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

For residents of developments given preliminary or final RAD approval, make sure that the PHA or private, HUD-assisted housing owner is complying with all resident participation and protection provisions. Once HUD issues a formal RAD Conversion Commitment (RCC), a PHA must notify each household that the conversion has been approved, inform households of the specific rehabilitation or construction plan, and describe any impact conversion will have on them.

Be on the lookout for any substantial change in a conversion plan. A substantial change includes: a change in the number of assisted units, a major change in the scope of work, a transfer of assistance to a different property or owner, or a change in the eligibility or preferences for people applying to live at the property. If there is a substantial change in the conversion plan, the PHA must have additional meetings with the residents of the converting property and carry out the PHA Plan Significant Amendment process with the RAB, all PHA residents, and hold a public hearing.

For public housing residents at PHAs with RAD projects that are still in process or for those with projects on the Applications Under Review list, seek commitments from the PHA and any developers working with the PHA to keep residents fully informed throughout the process. Reports from residents at PHAs indicate that their PHAs, developers, and local HUD offices do not provide residents with sufficient information. Make sure to fully understand the differences between PBVs and PBRAs so that you can influence the best option for residents.

Contact HUD's Office of Recapitalization with problems; see [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/housing/mfh/hsgmfbus/aboutahp](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/housing/mfh/hsgmfbus/aboutahp).

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Tell Members of Congress not to lift the cap on the number of public housing units that may convert until this “demonstration” has convincingly shown that HUD will rigorously monitor PHA and owner compliance with all tenant protections written into the RAD statute. Ask Members of Congress to ensure that HUD, as required by statute, prepares, conducts, and publishes a detailed assessment of the impact of conversion on public housing residents to ensure that further conversions do not adversely impact residents. Such an assessment should ask whether residents had a genuine role during and after conversion, were evicted just prior to conversion, were able to remain after conversion if that is what they wanted, or were inappropriately re-screened. An assessment should also determine whether Section 6 resident protections, such as grievance procedures, were fully honored and whether residents of converted properties were able to participate on resident councils and RABs. Was there compliance with the one-for-one replacement requirement? Are PHAs truly owning or controlling converted properties? Are conversions to PBRA consuming too many scarce tenant protection vouchers at the expense of other tenant protection voucher needs?

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Low Income Housing Coalition, 202-662-1530, [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org).

National Housing Law Project’s RAD resource webpage, <http://nhlp.org/RAD>.

NLIHC’s RAD: *Key Features for Public Housing Residents*, <https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/RAD-Outline-Updated-November-2021.pdf>, is on NLIHC’s Public Housing webpage, <https://nlihc.org/explore-issues/housing-programs/public-housing>.

RAD Notice H-2019-09 PIH-2019-23 (REV4), [https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/Housing/documents/H-2019-09-PIH-2019-23\\_RAD\\_Notice%20Rev4\\_20190905.pdf](https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/Housing/documents/H-2019-09-PIH-2019-23_RAD_Notice%20Rev4_20190905.pdf).

RAD Fair Housing, Civil Rights, and Relocation Notice H 2016-17/PIH 2016-17 [https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/16-17hsgn\\_16-17pihn.pdf](https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/16-17hsgn_16-17pihn.pdf).

HUD’s RAD website, <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/RAD>.

New RAD Complaint Process, [https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/Housing/documents/RAD\\_External\\_Complaint\\_Process\\_2021-09-21.pdf](https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/Housing/documents/RAD_External_Complaint_Process_2021-09-21.pdf).

“RAD-Section 18 (75/25) Blend FAQs,” [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/repositioning/rad\\_section18](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/repositioning/rad_section18).

Notice PIH 2018-04 about RAD/Section 18 Blended Projects, <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/PIH-2018-04-Demo-Dispo-Notice-12-14-18.pdf>.

Notice PIH 2021-07 on Demolition and Disposition of Public Housing under Section 18, <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/PIH2021-07.pdf>.

The latest list of available Faircloth units is on the PIH “Office of Capital Improvements” webpage, [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/ph/capfund](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/capfund).

The Faircloth-to-RAD Fact Sheet is at: [https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/Housing/documents/Faircloth-to-RAD\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/Housing/documents/Faircloth-to-RAD_Fact_Sheet.pdf).

Faircloth FAQs (June 2020) are at: <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/Faircloth%20FAQ%20.pdf>.

A detailed Faircloth-to-RAD guidance document for PHAs is at: [https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/Housing/documents/Faircloth\\_Resource\\_Package.pdf](https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/Housing/documents/Faircloth_Resource_Package.pdf).

# Repositioning of Public Housing

---

Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, NLIHC

**Administering Agency:** HUD’s Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH)

**Year Started:** The term “repositioning” was introduced November 13, 2018, although components have been available for many years.

**See Also:** For related information, refer to the Public Housing, Rental Assistance Demonstration, and PHA Plan sections of this guide

HUD’s Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) sent a [letter](#) to public housing agency (PHA) executive directors dated November 13, 2018. The term “repositioning” was used to describe HUD’s intent to remove itself from public housing program administration. HUD’s immediate goal was to “reposition” 105,000 public housing units before September 30, 2019.

Because Congress has failed to provide adequate appropriations for the public housing Capital Fund for many years, there is about a \$70 billion backlog in capital needs. HUD points to that backlog as the reason to provide PHAs with “additional flexibilities” so that PHAs can “reposition” public housing. Unfortunately, the Trump Administration proposed zeroing out money for the public housing Capital Fund in FY20 and FY21. Nevertheless, Congress approved \$2.9 billion for the Capital Fund for FY20 and FY21. The Biden Administration proposed \$3.2 billion for the Capital Fund. It remains to be seen how aggressively the Biden Administration will address public housing repositioning, but PIH’s [Repositioning website](#) contains a number of papers supporting repositioning, including “[Repositioning for Residents](#)”

Public housing can be “repositioned” via:

1. The Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD).
2. Demolishing or disposing of (selling) public housing (Section 18).
3. Voluntary conversion of public housing to vouchers (Section 22).

While these are already available to PHAs, repositioning is meant to make things easier. Each strategy is discussed below.

## RENTAL ASSISTANCE DEMONSTRATION (RAD)

### Beginnings

Throughout 2010 and 2011, HUD consulted with public housing resident leaders through the Resident Engagement Group (REG) to bring in non-federal resources to compensate for insufficient congressional funding of the public housing Capital Fund. HUD also wanted to avoid the many harmful effects of the HOPE VI program. Over time, HUD presented three proposals to the REG, and each time the REG would point out a resident-oriented problem. In response, HUD went back to the drawing board to present a modified proposal. The final proposal, the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD), addressed all of the REG’s concerns.

Congress authorized the creation of RAD as part of the fiscal year 2012 HUD appropriations act to help preserve and improve low-income housing. RAD does not provide any new federal funds for public housing and there are no RAD regulations, but RAD conversions must comply with formal RAD Notices, PIH Notice 2012-32 – updated currently by [H-2019-09/PIH 2019-23 \(REV4\)](#) and the relocation Notice, [Notice H 2016-17/PIH-2016-17](#).

### What is RAD?

RAD allows PHAs to convert public housing units to either Project-Based Vouchers (PBVs) or to Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA). Both are forms of project-based Section 8 rental contracts. At first only 60,000 units would be converted under the “demonstration,” but without demonstrating that RAD was realizing the resident protections won by the Resident Engagement Group, Congress approved increases to the cap three times. Currently, 455,000 public housing units are being converted to

PBVs or PBRA. Both the Obama and Trump Administrations have sought to remove the cap and allow all public housing units to convert to RAD. The Biden Administration's FY22 budget proposal also sought to remove the cap. So far, the cap remains at 455,000 units. Once converted under RAD, the amount of public housing Capital Fund and Operating Fund formerly received by a specific development is used instead as PBV or PBRA.

PBVs are Housing Choice Vouchers tied to specific buildings; they do not move with tenants like regular "tenant-based" vouchers. If public housing units are converted to PBV, the initial contract must be for 15 years (20 years for projects pre-approved in 2017 and thereafter) and must always be renewed. PIH continues to oversee the units and most of the current PBV rules (24 CFR 983) apply. If units are converted to PBRA, the initial contract must be for 20 years, must always be renewed, and HUD's Office of Multifamily Programs takes over monitoring. Most of the current PBRA rules (24 CFR 880 to 886) apply.

More details are in the Rental Assistance Demonstration section of this guide.

## MIGHT CONVERTING SOME PUBLIC HOUSING TO SECTION 8 BE DESIRABLE?

Converting some public housing to Section 8 might be helpful since Congress continues to underfund public housing, resulting in deteriorating buildings and the loss of units through demolition. Congress is more likely to provide adequate funding for existing Section 8 contracts than for public housing, and if a long-term rental assistance contract is tied to a property, private institutions may be more willing to lend money for critical building repairs. Therefore, some units that were public housing before conversion are more likely to remain available and affordable to people with extremely low- and very low-incomes because of the long-term Section 8 contract.

## WHAT ARE THE RESIDENT PROTECTIONS THAT THE REG SECURED IN RAD?

Both the language in the appropriations act and HUD's formal rules for RAD include all the protections sought by the REG. However, it is up to residents to try to get HUD, PHAs, developers, and owners to comply.

**Displacement.** Permanent involuntary displacement of current residents cannot take place. If a household does not want to transition to PBV or PBRA, they may move to other public housing if an appropriate unit is available.

**Right to Return.** Residents temporarily relocated while rehabilitation is conducted have a right to return.

**Rescreening.** Current residents cannot be rescreened.

**Tenant Rent.** Existing PBV and PBRA rules limit resident rent payment to 30% of income, or minimum rent, whichever is higher. Any rent increase of 10% or \$25 (whichever is greater) due to conversion is phased in over three to five years.

**Good Cause Eviction.** An owner must renew a resident's lease unless there is "good cause" not to.

**Grievance Process.** The RAD statute requires tenants to have the grievance and lease termination rights described under Section 6 of the "Housing Act of 1937." For instance, PHAs must notify a resident of the reason for a proposed adverse action and of their right to an informal hearing assisted by a resident representative. Advocates think that HUD has not adequately implemented this statutory requirement.

## OTHER RESIDENT-ORIENTED PROVISIONS THE REG SECURED IN RAD

The \$25 per Unit for Tenant Participation Remains. Whether a property is converted to

PBV or PBRA, the owner must provide \$25 per unit annually for resident participation. Of this amount, at least \$15 per unit must be provided to any “legitimate resident organization” to be used for resident education, organizing around tenancy issues, or training activities. The PHA may use the remaining \$10 per unit for resident participation activities.

**Resident Participation Rights.** Residents have the right to establish and operate a resident organization. If a property is converted to PBRA, then the current Section 8 Multifamily program’s “Section 245” resident participation provisions apply.

If a property is converted to PBV, instead of using public housing’s “Section 964” provisions, the RAD Notice requires resident participation provisions similar to those of Section 245 used by the Section 8 Multifamily program. For example, PHAs must recognize legitimate resident organizations and allow residents to establish and operate resident organizations. Resident organizers must be allowed to distribute leaflets and post information on bulletin boards, contact residents, help residents participate in the organization’s activities, hold regular meetings, and respond to an owner’s request to increase rent, reduce utility allowances, or make major capital additions.

**One-for-One Replacement.** Although the RAD Notice does not use the term “one-for-one replacement,” HUD’s informal material describes one-for-one replacement. However, there are exceptions. PHAs can reduce the number of assisted units by up to 5% or by five units, whichever is greater, without seeking HUD approval. HUD calls this the “de minimus” exception. However, RAD does not count against the 5%/five unit de minimus: units that have been vacant for two or more years; any reconfigured units, such as combining two efficiency units into a one-bedroom unit; or any units converted for use by social services. Consequently, the loss of units can be greater than 5%.

## Two Additional Key Features of RAD

**Resident Participation Features.** The RAD Notice requires PHAs to provide residents with various information notices and at least four meetings with residents at different stages of the RAD process. Details are presented in the Rental Assistance Demonstration section of this guide.

**Temporary or Permanent Relocation.** Relocation requirements are described in separate HUD guidance, [Notice H 2016-17/PIH-2016-17](#). Details are presented in the Rental Assistance Demonstration section of this guide.

More RAD information is also on NLIHC’s public housing webpage, <https://nlihc.org/explore-issues/housing-programs/public-housing>, particularly [RAD: Key Features for Public Housing Residents \(Modified March 2021\) \(.PDF\)](#).

HUD’s RAD website is at: <https://www.hud.gov/RAD>.

## DEMOLITION/DISPOSITION

### Background

Since 1983, HUD has authorized PHAs to apply for permission to demolish or dispose of (sell) public housing units under Section 18 of the “Housing Act.” In 1995, Congress ended the requirement that PHAs replace, on a one-for-one basis, public housing lost through demolition or disposition. In 2016, HUD reported a net loss of more than 139,000 public housing units due to demolition or disposition since 2000, not including all of the public housing units lost as a result of HOPE VI.

A PHA must apply to HUD’s [Special Applications Center \(SAC\)](#) to demolish or dispose of public housing. The application must certify that the PHA has described the demolition or disposition in its Annual PHA Plan and that the description in the application is identical. Advocates should challenge an application that is significantly different. PHAs should not re-rent units when they turn over while HUD is considering an application. The information in this article is

primarily from the regulations [24 CFR 970](#).

In 2018, the Trump Administration eliminated a 2012 [Notice PIH 2012-07](#) that included modest improvements suggested by advocates. The 2012 Notice served as a reminder to residents, the public, and PHAs of PHAs' obligations to resident involvement and the role of the PHA Plan regarding demolition/disposition. The replacement, [Notice PIH 2018-04](#), downplays the role of resident consultation to make it easier to demolish public housing.

On the last day of the Trump Administration, PIH posted [Notice PIH 2021-07](#), updating [Notice PIH 2018-04](#). The primary change is to the so-called "RAD/Section 18 Construction Blend," allowing a PHA to apply to HUD for approval to dispose of public housing "because it is not in the best interests of the residents and the PHA." In short, the drastically changed provision would allow a PHA to convert anywhere from 40% to 80% of the units in a RAD project to PBVs under Section 18. PIH began allowing 25% of the units in a RAD project to convert PBVs under Section 18 in [PIH Notice 2018-11](#) on July 2, 2018. The new Notice seems to further accelerate PIH's public housing "repositioning" policy.

In addition, the Trump Administration withdrew proposed regulation changes drafted in 2014 that would have reinforced the modest improvements in the 2012 Notice and required PHAs to submit more detailed justifications for demolition or disposition. All of this was a part of the Trump Administration's goal of "repositioning" 105,000 public housing units before September 2019.

### **Resident Participation**

A PHA must prepare a demo/dispo application "in consultation" with tenants and any tenant organization at a project, as well as with any PHA-wide tenant organization and the Resident Advisory Board (RAB). The application ([form HUD-52860](#)) must include any written comments made by residents, resident organizations, or the RAB and indicate in writing how the PHA responded to comments. HUD can deny an application if tenants, resident councils, or RABs were not consulted, so residents should challenge

an application if they were not consulted or if the "consultation" was grossly inadequate.

### **Demolition Applications**

Is the Public Housing Obsolete? PHAs must certify that a development is "obsolete," either physically or in terms of location, and therefore no longer suitable as housing.

Physically obsolete means that there are structural deficiencies that cannot be corrected at a reasonable cost. Structural deficiencies include settlement of floors, severe erosion, and deficiencies in major systems such as the plumbing, electrical, heating and cooling, roofs, doors, and windows. "Reasonable" cost is defined as less than 62.5% of total development costs for buildings with elevators and 57.14% for other buildings. To show that a development is physically obsolete, a PHA must submit a detailed scope of work that should describe the major systems needing repair or replacement, the need to remove lead-based paint or asbestos hazards, or the need to make accessibility improvements (the last sentence is based on [Notice PIH 2018-04](#)).

An obsolete location means that the surrounding neighborhood is too deteriorated or has shifted from residential to commercial or industrial use. It can also mean environmental conditions make it unsuitable for residents.

"Other factors" can also be considered, such as things that "seriously affect the marketability or usefulness" of a development.

"De Minimus" Demolition. PHAs do not have to apply to HUD to demolish fewer than five units or 5% of all units over a five-year period. The units being demolished must either be beyond repair or make room for services such as a childcare facility, laundry, or community center.

### **Disposition Applications**

A PHA must certify that keeping the development is not in the best interest of residents or the PHA for one of three reasons:

1. Conditions in the surrounding area, such as commercial or industrial activity, have a

negative impact on the health and safety of residents or have a negative impact on a PHA's operation of the project. A negative impact on the PHA's operation of a project could mean a lack of demand for the units. If so, the PHA would have to show high long-term vacancy rates due to factors such as declining population in the area or due to the property being located in an isolated area cut off from transportation and access to community amenities such as stores and schools. This example of a negative impact is from [Notice PIH 2018-04](#).

2. Sale or transfer of the property will allow the PHA to buy, develop, or rehab other properties that can be more efficiently operated as low-income housing. For example, the replacement units should be energy efficient; in better locations for transportation, jobs, or schools; or reduce racial or ethnic concentrations of poverty.
3. Sale of the property is "appropriate" for reasons consistent with the PHA's goals, the PHA Plan, and the purpose of the "Public Housing Act" (a vague option). [Notice PIH 2018-04](#) provides five examples: units are obsolete (echoing the Demolition rule); the PHA has 50 or fewer public housing units; the public housing is scattered across multiple locations; the replacement units are on site and have improved efficiency because they are newly constructed or modernized; and a RAD conversion has 75% of the units converted under RAD and up to 25% of the units converted to vouchers via Section 18 (see the Rental Assistance Demonstration section of this guide).

### **Resident Relocation Provisions**

The demolition or disposition application must have a relocation plan that states:

- Demolition or disposition cannot start until all residents are relocated.
- Residents will receive 90 days' advance notice before being relocated.
- Each household must be offered comparable

housing that meets housing quality standards (HQS) and that is in an area that is not less desirable.

- Residents' actual relocation expenses will be reimbursed (but the "Uniform Relocation Act", URA, does not apply).

More demo/dispo information is also on NLIHC's public housing webpage, <https://nlihc.org/explore-issues/housing-programs/public-housing>, particularly "Demolition and Disposition," <https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/REV4%20Demolition-Disposition%20Handout.pdf>.

HUD's demo/disp webpage is at: [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/centers/sac/demo\\_dispo](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/centers/sac/demo_dispo).

## **VOLUNTARY CONVERSION TO VOUCHERS**

A PHA may convert any public housing development to vouchers under Section 22 of the "Housing Act of 1937." Voluntary conversion is a two-step process. First a PHA must send HUD a "conversion assessment" and then it must send a "conversion plan." A special HUD office is in charge, the [Special Applications Center, SAC](#). The regulations for voluntary conversions are [24 CFR 972](#).

(Section 33 is about "required" conversions of public housing that has high vacancy rates and would be too expensive to repair over the long run. Advocates' Guide does not discuss Section 33 required conversions because it is not a part of repositioning.)

### **Conversion Assessment**

The first step a PHA must take to voluntarily convert public housing to vouchers is to conduct an assessment that is sent to HUD as part of a PHA's next Annual PHA Plan, except for two categories of PHAs:

- So-called "[Qualified PHAs](#)" do not have to submit a conversion assessment with their PHA Plan but they do eventually have to submit one to HUD. These are PHAs with 550 or fewer public housing units and/or vouchers

combined. PIH now lists Qualified PHAs based on the calendar quarter their program begins, with a total of 2,679 Qualified PHAs at the time this Advocates Guide was drafted.

- As of April 1, 2019, so-called “small PHAs” – those with fewer than 250 public units that want to convert all their units – do not have to conduct an assessment. See Notice PIH 2019-05.

For the remaining PHAs, their conversion assessment must address five factors:

1. Cost. What is the cost of providing vouchers compared to the cost of keeping units as public housing for the remainder of a property’s useful life?
2. Market Value. What is the market value before rehabilitation if kept as public housing compared to conversion to vouchers, and what is the market value after rehabilitation if kept as public housing compared to conversion to vouchers?
3. Rental Market Conditions. Will residents be able to use a voucher? A PHA must consider:
  - a. The availability of decent, safe, and sanitary homes renting at or less than the PHA’s voucher payment standard.
  - b. The recent rate of households’ ability to rent a home with a voucher. Many landlords will not accept a voucher.
  - c. Residents’ characteristics that might affect their ability to find a home and use a voucher; for example, homes accessible to people with a disability, or availability of homes large enough for families.
4. Neighborhood Impact. How would conversion impact the availability of affordable housing in the neighborhood and what effect would conversion have on the concentration of poverty in the neighborhood?
5. Future Use of the Property. How will the property be used after conversion?

### **Three Conditions for HUD Approval of Conversion Assessment**

The assessment must show that converting to vouchers:

1. Will not cost more than continuing to use the development as public housing.
2. Will principally benefit the residents, the PHA, and the community. The PHA must consider the availability of landlords willing to accept vouchers, as well as access to schools, jobs, and transportation. The PHA must hold at least one public meeting with residents and the resident council, at which the PHA explains the regulations and provides draft copies of the conversion assessment. Residents must be given time to submit comments. The assessment sent to HUD must summarize residents’ comments and the PHA’s responses.
3. Will not have a harmful impact on the availability of affordable housing.

### **Conversion Plan**

The second step is for the PHA to prepare a conversion plan that has six parts:

1. Description of the conversion and future use of the property.
2. Analysis of the impact on the community.
3. Explanation showing how the conversion plan is consistent with the assessment.
4. Summary of resident comments during plan development and the PHA’s response.
5. Explanation of how the conversion assessment met the three conditions needed for HUD approval (as listed above).
6. Relocation plan that:
  - Indicates the number of households to be relocated by bedroom size and by the number of accessible units.
  - Lists relocation resources needed, including:
    - a. The number of vouchers the PHA will request from HUD. HUD will give the



PHA priority for “tenant protection vouchers” (see the Tenant Protection Vouchers section of this Advocates’ Guide).

- b. Public housing units available elsewhere.
- c. The amount of money needed to pay residents’ relocation costs.
  - Includes a relocation schedule.
  - Provides for a written notice to residents at least 90 days before displacement. The notice must inform residents that:
    - a. The development will no longer be used as public housing and that they might be displaced.
    - b. They will be offered comparable housing that could have tenant-based or project-based assistance, or other housing assisted by the PHA.
    - c. The replacement housing offered will be affordable, decent, safe, and sanitary, and chosen by the household to the extent possible.
    - d. If residents will be assisted with vouchers, the vouchers will be available at least 90 days before displacement.
    - e. Relocation and/or mobility counselling might be provided.
    - f. Residents may choose to remain at the property with a voucher if the property is used for housing after the conversion.

### **Resident Participation**

The conversion plan must be sent to HUD as part of a PHA’s next Annual PHA Plan within one year after sending the conversion assessment. The conversion plan can be sent as a Significant Amendment to an Annual PHA Plan. A PHA can send the plan and assessment with the same Annual PHA Plan.

In addition to the public participation requirements for the Annual PHA Plan, a PHA must hold at least one meeting about the conversion plan with residents and resident council of the affected development. At the

meeting the PHA must explain the regulations and provide draft copies of the conversion plan. In addition, residents must have time to submit comments, and the PHA must summarize resident comments and the PHA’s responses.

### **Conditions Needed for HUD Approval of Conversion Plan**

A PHA cannot start converting until HUD approves a conversion plan. Conversion plan approval is separate from HUD approval of an Annual PHA Plan. HUD will provide a PHA with a preliminary response within 90 days. HUD will not approve a conversion plan if the plan is “plainly inconsistent” with the conversion assessment, there is information or data that contradicts the conversion assessment, or the conversion plan is incomplete or fails to meet the requirements of the regulation. Residents should let HUD know if they think that the plan is “plainly inconsistent” with the conversion assessment or if there is information that contradicts the assessment.

More voluntary conversion information is also on NLIHC’s public housing webpage, <https://nlihc.org/explore-issues/housing-programs/public-housing>, particularly “Voluntary Conversion of Public Housing to Vouchers,” <https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/REV2%20Voluntary%20Conversion%20Handout.pdf>

HUD’s voluntary conversion webpage is at: [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/centers/sac/vc](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/centers/sac/vc)

### **FUNDING**

RAD demolition or disposition and voluntary conversion to vouchers do not have specific funding. However, HUD must estimate how much it should request from Congress for Tenant Protection Vouchers for demolition or disposition.

### **FORECAST FOR 2022**

It remains to be seen how aggressively the Biden Administration will address public housing repositioning, but PIH’s [Repositioning website](#) contains a number of papers supporting repositioning.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Do not eliminate or raise the number of public housing units that can convert under RAD beyond the current cap of 455,000 units because RAD has yet to demonstrate HUD's ability to monitor and enforce resident protections. Work to reverse the features of Notice PIH 2018-04 and Notice PIH 2021-07 that made it far too easy to gain demolition/disposition approval from SAC, especially without more resident involvement. Monitor HUD's repositioning activity to ensure that demolition, disposition, and voluntary conversion of public housing to vouchers is only conducted in ways that truly benefit residents.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

NLIHC, 202-662-1530, <https://nlihc.org>.

NLIHC's public housing webpage, <https://bit.ly/2S0Z3Kn>.

The November 13, 2018 HUD Repositioning Letter, <https://bit.ly/2OMTrOY>.

HUD's Repositioning webpage, <https://bit.ly/2S4Ur5V>, including a number of handouts and FAQs such as:

- [Repositioning for Residents](#)
- [Repositioning Options: Summary of Key Characteristics](#)

HUD's Special Applications Center (SAC) website is at: <https://bit.ly/36JBkCl>.

HUD's RAD website is at: <https://www.hud.gov/rad>.

HUD's Demolition/Disposition webpage is at: <https://bit.ly/2LashVW>.

HUD's Voluntary Conversion webpage is at: <https://bit.ly/3lJSQOm>.

RAD Notice H 2019-09/PIH 2019-23 (REV 4), <https://bit.ly/2EumOCS>.

The RAD Relocation Notice H 2016-17/PIH-2016-17, <https://bit.ly/2YZVYvS>.

# Moving to Work Demonstration & Expansion

---

By Will Fischer, Senior Director for Housing Policy and Research, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

**T**he Moving to Work Demonstration (MTW) is a deregulation initiative that gives participating housing agencies very broad flexibility in how they administer the Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs. Some agencies have used MTW to implement promising alternative policies, but the demonstration has also allowed agencies to put in place policies that pose serious risks to low-income families (including time limits, work requirements, and large rent increases) and to shift funds out of the voucher program in a manner that results in many fewer families receiving housing assistance.

## BACKGROUND

In 1996, Congress established MTW with three statutory goals: reducing costs and increasing cost-effectiveness, providing incentives for self-sufficiency, and increasing housing choices for low-income families. HUD was initially authorized to admit up to 30 agencies, and Congress increased that limit to 39 by 2011. Those 39 MTW agencies operate under agreements that allow them to continue to participate in the demonstration through 2028 (and could be extended beyond that date, as HUD has usually done when MTW agreements approached expiration). In 2015, Congress directed HUD to increase the number of agencies in MTW from 39 to 139 and HUD began admitting new agencies under that expansion in 2021.

Under MTW, HUD can waive nearly all provisions of the “United States Housing Act of 1937” (as it has been amended over the years) and the accompanying regulations. This includes most of the main rules and standards governing vouchers and public housing, but there are some exceptions. For example, the MTW statute prohibits waivers of 1937 act provisions

governing public housing demolition and disposition and requirements to pay workers fair wages. In addition, protections under the “Fair Housing Act” and other laws outside the 1937 act cannot be waived. MTW agencies are also permitted to shift voucher and public housing funds to purposes other than those for which they were originally appropriated, and HUD has established special formulas to set voucher and (in some cases) public housing operating subsidy funding levels at MTW agencies.

The law establishing MTW set certain requirements that agencies must meet in carrying out MTW, including serving “substantially the same” number of low-income families as they would without MTW funding flexibility, serving a mix of families by size comparable to the mix they would have served if they weren’t in MTW, ensuring that 75% of the families they assist have incomes at or below 50% of area median income, ensuring that assisted units meet housing quality standards, and establishing a reasonable rent policy. In practice, HUD’s enforcement of these requirements has been highly permissive. For example, agencies have been allowed to implement policies that serve many thousands fewer families than they could if they used funds for their original purpose. Agencies have also been permitted to charge poor families rent well above what they could reasonably be expected to afford.

## WAIVERS OF KEY TENANT PROTECTIONS

One set of concerns about MTW is that it has allowed waivers of policies that protect low-income families and make rental assistance effective. For example, MTW agencies are permitted to raise rents above those permitted under the Brooke Rule (which generally caps rent and utility payments at 30% of a household’s adjusted income). All MTW agencies admitted prior to 2021 have modified rent rules in some manner and the majority have raised “minimum

rents” or instituted other policy changes that charge families with little or no income more—sometimes hundreds of dollars a month more—than they would pay under the regular rules.

MTW agencies have also implemented numerous other policies that risk exposing families to hardship or limiting their access to opportunity. A 2018 analysis found that nine agencies had instituted work requirements and a 2014 study found that eight had placed time limits on assistance. A significant number of agencies have also imposed restrictions on the right of voucher holders to move to a community of their choice.

These risky policies are particularly problematic because (with very limited exceptions) HUD has not required that they be rigorously evaluated, or even that the impact on affected families be monitored. For example, a [report](#) by the Urban Institute concluded that “although some MTW agencies have been implementing work requirement policies for more than a decade, no systematic evaluation or attempt has been made to analyze what the impact has been on residents’ work engagement, incomes, or housing instability or on agency administrative costs.” A report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) similarly found that due to limitations in HUD’s monitoring and evaluation process, it cannot assess how MTW’s rent and work-requirement policies affect low-income tenants.

## **DIVERSION OF VOUCHER FUNDS AND REDUCTION IN NUMBER OF FAMILIES ASSISTED**

Another major adverse effect of MTW is that it has caused many fewer families to receive rental assistance than could be assisted with available funds. MTW allows agencies to divert money out of their voucher programs and provides voucher funds through block grant formulas that, unlike the regular formula used at non-MTW agencies, provides no incentive for agencies to put funds to use assisting needy families. From 2014 to 2018, MTW agencies shifted about \$530 million a year in voucher funds (19% of their total) to other purposes or left the funds unspent and provided vouchers to 55,000 fewer families annually as

a result. MTW agencies use diverted funds to provide housing assistance to about 10,000 families through local programs, but that still leaves a large net cut in the number of families assisted.

Agencies have used funds shifted out of the voucher program for a variety of purposes, including supplementing their administrative budgets, maintaining or renovating public housing, and developing affordable housing. Federal policymakers should provide more adequate funding for these purposes directly but allowing agencies to divert voucher funds is the wrong way to address them, for several reasons.

Leaving families without vouchers exposes them to serious hardship. Vouchers sharply reduce overcrowding and housing instability and are by far the most effective way to cut homelessness among families with children. Vouchers can also allow families to move to neighborhoods with lower poverty rates, which raises children’s earnings and educational achievement later in life.

Agencies have generally sought to allocate transferred funds to potentially beneficial purposes, but the funds often do less to help low-income people than they would if they were used for vouchers. A 2017 report commissioned by housing agencies was able to show only modest evidence of benefits in areas where diverted funds have been used and none that came close to offsetting the sharp reduction in the number of families with rental assistance. Moreover, some MTW agencies have used funds in ways that have little or no benefit for low-income people, such as paying unusually high staff salaries, accumulating large amounts of unspent voucher funds, and otherwise wasting or misusing funds.

In addition, diverting voucher funds risks laying the groundwork for deep cuts to voucher funding that would leave fewer total resources for low-income housing, particularly if MTW is expanded further. If the number of agencies diverting voucher funds were to grow substantially, policymakers could reduce voucher funding and claim that agencies could implement the

cuts by postponing redevelopment projects or scaling back administrative budgets, rather than by cutting rental assistance for vulnerable families. The experience of other low-income programs that, like MTW, allocate federal funds as block grants that recipients can use for a wide variety of purposes demonstrates the risk that this approach could lead to deep funding cuts. From 2000 to 2017, combined inflation-adjusted funding for the 13 major housing, health, and social services block grants fell by 27%, and housing block grants were among the hardest hit. If MTW block granting led to similar reductions in voucher and public housing funding, rental assistance for hundreds of thousands of families would be lost.

## MTW EXPANSION

Under the MTW expansion that Congress enacted in 2015, HUD must admit 100 agencies within seven years. Of those agencies, at least 50 must have no more than 1,000 combined public housing and voucher units, at least 47 must have 1,001-6000 units, and the remaining three can have no more than 27,000 units each.

Congress directed HUD to carry out the expansion in a manner that places a greater emphasis on research than MTW has in the past. HUD must direct each cohort of agencies admitted to the demonstration to test one specific policy change chosen in consultation with a research advisory committee and must ensure that the policies are rigorously evaluated. HUD has announced plans to select at least four cohorts. HUD admitted 31 agencies (all with 1,000 or fewer units) in January 2021 to participate in a cohort testing the overall effects of MTW flexibility and 10 additional agencies in May 2021 to participate in a cohort testing rent policy changes (such as tiered and stepped rents). HUD plans to add other agencies under a cohort testing incentives for landlords to participate in the voucher program and at least one additional cohort whose topic has not yet been determined. HUD had planned to conduct a cohort testing work requirements, but rescinded that proposal in June 2021.

The Obama Administration proposed an operations notice establishing the rules governing expansion agencies in January 2016. That notice would have made significant reforms to limit the expansion's adverse consequences. For example, the proposal would have required agencies admitted under the expansion to use 90% of their voucher subsidy funds for vouchers, which would have tightly limited the loss of rental assistance from diversion of funds, and required agencies seeking to implement work requirements, time limits, and major rent increases to seek special approval from HUD. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), NLIHC, and other advocates urged HUD to strengthen these reforms further and to more tightly limit policies that pose risks to vulnerable families.

The Trump Administration, however, moved in the opposite direction in the final version of the operations notice published in August 2020, dropping or weakening many of the reforms. The Biden Administration has authority to modify the notice but has taken no action so far to do so and has instead continued to add agencies to the demonstration under the Trump Administration's notice. For example, under the operations notice now in place, all new MTW agencies will eventually be permitted to impose work requirements, time limits, and sharp rent increases on voucher holders and public housing residents even if their cohort is not testing those measures (although some new agencies will have to wait several years before imposing those policies).

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Will Fischer, *New Report Reinforces Concerns About HUD's Moving to Work Demonstration*, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, October 30, 2017, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/new-report-reinforces-concerns-about-huds-moving-to-work-demonstration>.

HUD Moving to Work webpage, <https://www.hud.gov/mtw>.

Diane K. Levy, Leiha Edmonds, and Jasmine Simington, *Work Requirements in Housing*

*Authorities: Experiences to Date and Knowledge Gaps*, Urban Institute, <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/work-requirements-housing-authorities>.

David Reich, Isaac Shapiro, Chloe Cho, and Richard Kogan, *Block-Granting Low-Income Programs Leads to Large Funding Declines Over Time, History Shows*, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, February 22, 2017, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-budget/block-granting-low-income-programs-leads-to-large-funding-declines-over-time>.

U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Improvements Needed to Better Monitor the Moving to Work Demonstration, Including Effects on Tenants*, January 2018, <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-18-150>.

# Project-Based Rental Assistance

---

By Priya Jayachandran, National Housing Trust

**Administering Agency:** HUD's Office of Multifamily Housing Programs and Office of Recapitalization

**Years Started:** 1961 – Section 221(d)(3) Below Market Interest Rate (BMIR); 1963 – USDA Section 515; 1965 – Section 101 Rent Supplement; 1968 – Section 236; 1974 – Project-Based Section 8, and Rental Assistance Payments Program; 1978 – Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation Program.

**Number of Persons/Households Served:** Over 1.2 million households

**Population Targeted:** Extremely low- to moderate-income households

**Funding:** \$13.94 billion in FY22

**See Also:** For related information, refer to the *USDA Rural Rental Housing Programs*, *Tenant Protection Vouchers*, and *Project-Based Vouchers* sections of this guide.

Project-based housing is a category of federally assisted housing produced through a public-private partnership to build and maintain affordable rental housing for low-income households. HUD has provided private owners of multifamily housing either a long-term project-based rental assistance contract, a subsidized mortgage, or in some cases both, in order to make units affordable. Project-based assistance is fixed to a property.

This stock of affordable housing is in danger of being permanently lost as a result of owners opting out, physical deterioration of properties, and maturing mortgages ending use restrictions. When owners opt out of the HUD project-based assistance program, they may convert their properties to market-rate rental buildings or condominiums.

## HISTORY AND PROGRAM SUMMARY

From 1965 to the mid-1980s, HUD played an essential role in creating affordable rental homes by providing financial incentives such as below-market interest rate loans, interest rate subsidies, and project-based Section 8 contracts. Currently, no additional units are being produced through these programs.

Initially, project-based assistance was provided through the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) in the form of a mortgage subsidy. Mortgage subsidies reduced the cost of developing rental housing, and in return, owners agreed to restrictions that limit contract rents, and occupancy to households meeting program income limits. These programs did not provide direct rental assistance to serve extremely low- or very low-income households.

The Section 221(d)(3) Below Market Interest Rate (BMIR) mortgage insurance program, created by the “National Housing Act of 1961,” enabled HUD to purchase below-market loans made by private lenders. In 1968, the Section 221(d)(3) BMIR program was replaced by the Section 236 program which combined FHA mortgage insurance on private loans with an interest rate subsidy to effectively lower the mortgage interest rate to 1%. Owners of Section 221(d)(3) BMIR and Section 236 properties were required to rent units to low- and moderate-income families at HUD-approved rents for the term of their 40-year mortgages. More than 600,000 units of affordable housing were built under those two programs. Some, but not all, subsidized mortgage properties also have project-based rental assistance from the Section 8 program.

In 1974, Section 236 was replaced by the Section 8 New Construction and Substantial Rehabilitation program, now known as the project-based Section 8 program. HUD entered into 20- to 40-year contracts with private owners to serve low-income tenants. More than 800,000

units were developed from 1974 to 1983, when authorization for new construction was repealed.

There are three smaller existing programs that are sometimes referred to as “orphan” programs. In addition to mortgage subsidies, HUD provided rental assistance payments to owners for some tenants of Section 221(d)(3) BMIR, and Section 236 insured properties through several programs.

The Section 101 Rent Supplement Program (Rent Supp) was authorized by the “Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965.” Many of those properties received Loan Management Set-Aside (LMSA) Section 8 contracts due to rapidly rising operating costs in the mid-1970s. The last two Rent Supp contracts covering 140 units both converted to long-term project-based rental assistance contracts under the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) in 2018.

Some Section 236 properties were provided additional rental assistance through the Rental Assistance Payments (RAP) program, authorized by the “Housing and Community Development Act of 1974.” RAP payments were made to owners on behalf of very low-income tenants unable to afford basic rent with 30% of their income. RAP reduces tenant payment for rent to 10% of gross income, 30% of adjusted income, or the designated portion of welfare assistance, whichever is greater. Most RAP contracts converted to Section 8 LMSA contracts, while the rest converted under RAD. The last remaining RAP contracts converted in late 2019.

Another form of rental assistance is the Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation (Mod Rehab) program, designed in 1978 to stimulate moderate levels of rehabilitation to preserve affordable housing. Mod Rehab provides project-based rental assistance for low- and very low-income residents; unlike other project-based Section 8 programs, the agreement is between the owner and a local public housing agency (PHA). Like project-based Section 8, residents pay 30% of adjusted income for rent, while rental assistance pays the balance. The program was repealed in 1991 and no new projects are authorized for

development. There are approximately 14,436 Mod Rehab units and 10,402 Mod Rehab SRO units remaining.

The Office of Rural Development at the U.S. Department of Agriculture administers two rental housing programs, Section 515 (the Rural Rental Housing Program) and Section 521 (the Rural Rental Assistance Program). The Section 515 program provided subsidized mortgage loans that developed more than 550,000 rental units for very low- to moderate-income households. Started in 1963, Section 515 production dropped dramatically after 1979 due to budget cuts. The stock of Section 515 units has dwindled due to mortgage prepayment and physical obsolescence. The Section 521 program is a project-based subsidy available for Section 515 projects (as well as Section 514/516 farm worker projects) that subsidizes the difference between a contract rent and a tenant rent payment of 30% of income.

## ISSUE SUMMARY

Project-Based Rental Assistance program (PBRA) provides rental assistance for about 2 million people in 1.2 million low-income, very low-income, and extremely low-income households to afford modest housing. Two-thirds of PBRA heads of households are seniors and disabled adults and the average household income is \$13,222. Another 136,000 households live in homes with one of the other forms of project-based assistance, but without rental assistance.

For project-based Section 8 rental assistance, HUD executes Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contracts with owners. These contracts can be renewed in one-, five-, or 20-year increments with Congressional funding for the contracts provided 12 months at a time. Tenants pay 30% of their monthly adjusted income for rent and utilities, and HUD pays the owner the difference between the contract rent and the tenant’s portion. The average monthly subsidy per household in 2021 was \$875. New residents in project-based Section 8 units can have incomes of no more than 80% of the area median income (AMI), with 40% of new admissions required to have incomes below 30% of AMI.



New residents of Section 221(d)(3) BMIR properties can have incomes up to 95% of AMI, although those in Section 236 properties can have incomes up to 80% of AMI, though the median annual household income for residents of these properties is between \$11,000 and \$12,000. Since no new units are being constructed, the challenge today is ensuring that federally assisted affordable housing is not permanently lost, either through physical deterioration, or as a result of properties being converted to non-affordable uses, such as high-rent units or condominiums, when a HUD-subsidized mortgage is either prepaid or matures or when an owner decides not to renew an expiring project-based Section 8 contract.

There are several specific conversion risks for rental housing with project-based assistance:

### **Mortgage Prepayment**

Although Section 236 and Section 221(d)(3) BMIR mortgages originally had 40-year terms, program regulations allowed most for-profit owners to prepay their mortgages after 20 years. By prepaying, in most cases owners may terminate income and rent restrictions and any Section 8 rent subsidy. Owners must give tenants at least 150 days' advance notice of an intention to prepay. Upon prepayment, tenants are eligible for Tenant Protection Vouchers (TPVs), or in some cases an enhanced voucher, that allows a tenant to either remain in the property or find new affordable rental housing with the voucher assistance.

### **Maturing Mortgages**

Tens of thousands of low-income families face escalating rents if affordability protections are not extended for properties with maturing Section 236 and Section 221(d)(3) BMIR mortgages. Residents living in apartments with affordability protections but without project-based Section 8 contracts do not currently qualify for enhanced vouchers or other rental assistance when the HUD-subsidized mortgage expires. The National Housing Preservation Database identifies more than 6,892 unassisted units in 34 properties in 13 states at risk of mortgage maturity or

the expiration of use restrictions or assistance between FY22 and FY27 (tenants remain eligible despite the expiration of restrictions prior to FY15, subject to owner application).

### **Expiring Project-Based Section 8 Assistance Contracts**

When project-based Section 8 contracts expire, owners may choose to opt out of their contracts, enabling them to increase rents to market levels or to convert units to market-rate condominiums, thereby rendering apartments unaffordable to lower-income tenants. Owners must give tenants one-year advance notice of intent to opt out. Most tenants will receive enhanced vouchers to enable them to remain in their homes. According to the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University, of the approximately 1.2 million active Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA) units, more than 266,000 units (22%) are at risk of losing their affordability status according to calculations from the National Housing Preservation Database.

### **Enhanced Vouchers**

Special voucher assistance is provided to tenants who would otherwise be displaced due to rising rents or condo conversion if an owner prepays a Section 221(d)(3) BMIR or Section 236 mortgage, or if an owner opts out of a project-based Section 8 contract. HUD is required by statute to provide enhanced tenant-based vouchers to tenants in such properties to enable them to afford to remain in their homes. Enhanced vouchers pay the difference between 30% of the tenant's income and the new rent, even if that rent is higher than the PHA's payment standard. Tenants have a right to remain in their apartments after conversion to market rents and owners must accept enhanced vouchers. If a tenant with an enhanced voucher moves to another property, the enhanced voucher converts to a regular voucher and the unit they occupied is unfortunately no longer affordable to any lower-income household.

### **Mark-to-Market and Mark-Up-to-Market**

Some FHA-insured properties with expiring project-based Section 8 contracts have rents that exceed market rents. Upon contract renewal,

HUD is required to reduce rents to market level, creating a cash crunch for those properties and potentially putting their FHA-insured mortgages at risk of default. To address this problem, Congress enacted the Mark-to-Market Program in 1997. Owners of eligible properties must either go through the Mark-to-Market Program or opt out. In the Mark-to-Market Program, an owner has two options:

- Choose to have the mortgage restructured to be able to afford to operate and maintain the property with lower market rents. In exchange for this mortgage restructuring, an owner agrees to accept Section 8 rent subsidies for an additional 30 years.
- Choose to renew the Section 8 contract for one year with Section 8 rents reduced to market without undergoing a mortgage restructuring.

HUD is also able to raise contract rents to market levels upon contract renewal for properties in high-cost areas through the Mark-Up-to-Market Program. Contract renewals of at least five years are required in Mark-Up-to-Market, which provides a needed incentive for owners to renew their participation in the Section 8 program when private-sector rents are high. These contract renewals also provide a source of revenue for capital improvements.

### **Troubled Properties**

HUD multifamily properties may be at risk when a property is in poor financial or physical condition. An owner in default on a HUD-assisted mortgage could result in termination of the Section 8 subsidy through HUD's foreclosure and property disposition process. Since 2005, however, Congress has used appropriations acts to renew the so-called Schumer Amendment. The provision requires HUD to maintain a project-based Section 8 contract at foreclosure or disposition sale as long as the property is in viable condition. If not viable, HUD can, after consulting tenants, transfer the Section 8 subsidy to another property.

Another risk is that HUD may terminate a Section 8 contract mid-term or refuse to renew the

Section 8 contract if there is a serious violation of the terms of the Section 8 Housing Assistance Payment contract. Appropriations act provisions since FY06 have allowed HUD to transfer project-based assistance, debt, and use restrictions from properties that are physically obsolete or not financially viable to another project. Residents must be notified and consulted.

### **Provisions of the "Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021"**

The "FY21 Consolidated Appropriations Act" had five key provisions affecting project-based programs:

1. **Section 8 Savings:** The savings provided to State housing finance agencies from refunding bonds can be used for social services, professional services essential to carrying out McKinney-funded activities, project facilities or mechanical systems, and office systems
2. **Transfers of Assistance, Debt, and Use Restrictions:** Authorizes the HUD Secretary to transfer some or all project-based assistance, debt held or insured by HUD, and statutorily required to serve low-income and very low-income use from one or more obsolete multifamily housing project(s) to a viable multifamily housing project.
3. **Management and Disposition of Certain Multifamily Housing Projects:** Authorizes HUD to provide direction on HUD's management and disposition of certain multifamily housing projects owned by HUD
4. **Physical Conditions Requirements:** Enhance HUD's ability to exercise oversight within the PBRA program, allowing HUD to mandate corrective action, contract transfers, or change in management due to failure to meet physical condition standards.
5. **Rent Adjustments:** Suspends requirement to provide annual rent adjustments for fiscal year 2021 to multifamily property owners

## HUD PRESERVATION ACTION

In 2022, HUD encouraged the preservation of the existing multifamily housing stock through several regulatory actions.

- Eliminate the sunset date RAD conversions.
- Ensure continued availability of services for residents of Section 202 PRAC, Section 811 PRAC, and SPRAC properties following a RAD conversion to PBRA or PBV by excluding existing service coordinator and service costs from the 120 percent of Fair Market Rent (FMR) rent cap for new Section 8 contracts. The rent caps were designed to ensure that HUD subsidies align with market rent costs. Service coordinators and associated services are typically not provided in market rate housing. Therefore, the costs associated with these services should be excluded from the rent cap calculation, allowing continued services and service coordination at the properties
- Ensure continued availability of services for residents following a RAD conversion to PBRA or PBV by permitting full implementation of the Jobs Plus Initiative program post conversion
- Authorize conversion and integration into the RAD PBRA or RAD PBV contracts of the budget authority associated with the Tenant Protection Vouchers (TPV) issued following a Section 18 approval. This authority would allow HUD to add the budget authority associated with TPV assistance directly into the RAD PBRA or RAD PBV contract, in lieu of the PHA receiving a separate voucher contract.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

Subsidized multifamily rental housing can be at risk of leaving the affordable housing stock for any number of reasons, such as an owner's intent to prepay a subsidized mortgage or not renew a project-based rental subsidy contract, or uninhabitable living conditions prompting a HUD foreclosure. Preservation is when action is taken to ensure the federal housing subsidy

and affordability restrictions remain in place, preserving long-term housing affordability. Preservation is usually combined with repairs to the property. Often the property is purchased by a new owner who is committed to the long-term affordability of the property and is then renovated and managed along with those values.

Preservation of affordable rental housing is usually undertaken by mission-driven developers, often regional or national nonprofits. The most successful local efforts include early identification of properties at risk of conversion, as well as active partnerships with tenants, local HUD officials, state and local housing officials, and lenders and investors with a shared commitment to preserving affordable rental housing.

Preservation inventories are lists of specific affordable multifamily rental properties in a jurisdiction that can be used to identify and prevent the loss of at-risk properties. These inventories typically focus on dedicated subsidized properties, including those with project-based rental assistance, although affordable unsubsidized units may be covered as well. Preservation inventories may include information on each property's location, age, number of units (affordable and market rate), physical condition, and the year when rent restrictions expire, among other data points. Through proactive monitoring of this information, local jurisdictions can act in a timely manner to try to preserve at-risk properties as part of the affordable stock, allowing time to assemble financing or an incentive package to facilitate the transfer of the property to a mission-oriented owner or encourage the current owner to maintain affordability. Local Housing Solutions provides [resources and examples](https://www.local housingsolutions.org/act/housing-policy-library/preservation-inventories-overview/preservation-inventories/) for local governments which wish to create a preservation inventory here: <https://www.local housingsolutions.org/act/housing-policy-library/preservation-inventories-overview/preservation-inventories/>.

NLIHC and the Public and Affordable Housing Research Corporation created the National Housing Preservation Database, a tool for

preserving the nation's affordable rental housing. It provides integrated information on all housing subsidies for each federally subsidized project. It also enables advocates and researchers to easily quantify the supply of federally assisted affordable housing in any geographic area, while at the same time establishing a baseline of subsidized affordable units against which future levels can be measured. The database is available at: <http://www.preservationdatabase.org>.

National Housing Trust, 202-333-8931, [www.nhtinc.org](http://www.nhtinc.org).

National Housing Law Project, 415-546-7000, [www.nhlp.org](http://www.nhlp.org).

National Alliance of HUD Tenants, 617-267-9564, [www.saveourhomes.org](http://www.saveourhomes.org).

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates should urge legislators to provide sufficient funding to renew all project-based rental assistance contracts.

Members of Congress also should be asked to support preservation features of the RAD program and improvements to the project-based voucher program to allow housing authorities, developers, and owners to preserve the existing housing stock. In addition, advocates should urge reintroduction of broad legislation to preserve assisted housing that would:

- Provide grants and loans to for-profit and nonprofit housing sponsors to help ensure that properties can be recapitalized and kept affordable.
- Allow owners to request project-based assistance in lieu of enhanced vouchers.
- Protect the rights of states to enact preservation and tenant protection laws that will not be preempted by federal law.
- Ensure that data needed to preserve housing are publicly available and regularly updated and allow for the creation of a single database for all federally assisted properties based on a unique identifier for each property.
- Authorize rural housing preservation programs for Rural Development Section 515 properties.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Low Income Housing Coalition, 202-662-1530, [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org).

# Section 202: Supportive Housing for the Elderly

---

By Linda Couch, Vice President, Housing Policy, LeadingAge

**Administering Agency:** HUD’s Office of Housing’s Office of Housing Assistance and Grant Administration

**Year Started:** 1959

**Number of Persons/Households Served:** 400,000 households

**Population Targeted:** People over the age of 62 with very low incomes (below 50% of area median income). Some pre-1990 Section 202 properties are eligible for occupancy by non-elderly, very low-income persons with disabilities.

**Funding:** The FY22 spending bill provided \$1.033 billion for Section 202. The FY21 bill provided \$855 million, including:

- \$52 million for new Section 202 homes.
- \$125 million for Service Coordinators, including the first new appropriation for grant-funded Service Coordinators in several years.
- \$5 million for intergenerational housing as authorized by the “Living Equitably—Grandparents Aiding Children and Youth (LEGACY) Act of 2003.”
- \$14 million for a two-year extension of HUD’s Integrated Wellness in Supportive Housing demonstration.
- Full renewal funding for Section 202 communities’ Project Rental Assistance Contracts.

**See Also:** For related information, refer to the *Services for Residents of Low-Income Housing* section of this guide.

The Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly Program provides funding to nonprofit organizations that develop and operate housing for older adults with very low incomes. In its

FY21 HUD appropriations bill, Congress included \$52 million in the Section 202 account for the construction and operation of new Section 202 homes. Between FY12 and FY16, Congress did not provide any funding for new Section 202 homes. Funds provided by Congress for the Section 202 account are used primarily to renew underlying rental assistance contracts and existing contracts for on-site service coordinators. In the FY18 HUD funding bill, Congress provided authority for Section 202 communities with Project Rental Assistance Contracts (“202/PRACs”) to participate in HUD’s Rental Assistance Demonstration to facilitate the preservation of these homes. HUD issued guidelines for this “RAD for PRAC” authority in September 2019.

## Key Issues:

- Addressing COVID. Section 202 housing providers continue to assess what a “new normal” of COVID-era affordable senior housing means for residents and funding needs. Resident services, including the critical need for Service Coordinators in every community, for building-wide internet (in common areas and in resident apartments), and for services and programs to address mental health challenges, are of paramount concern. Increased costs, for health and safety protections, rising insurance premiums, and to retain and recruit needed staff, continue and need appropriate federal response. Consistent COVID vaccine and testing access continue to thwart Section 202 communities’ ability to meet their needs.
- Expanding the supply of affordable housing. Nationally, more than 2.24 million very low income older adult renter households have worst case housing needs, spending more than half of their incomes for rent, according to HUD’s [Worst Case Housing Needs: 2021 Report to Congress](#).

- Service Coordinators. Today, only 45% of HUD Section 202 and Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance senior housing communities have a service Coordinator. Every affordable senior housing community needs a Service Coordinator. Research has shown that Service Coordinators lower hospital use, increase higher value health care use (e.g. primary care), have success reaching high-risk populations, and result fewer nursing home transfers.
- Housing + Services. Identifying stable financing for the provision of health and wellness services within federally assisted senior housing is key to residents' ability to age in community.
- Preservation Funding. Annual funding must ensure full funding to meet annual renewal needs of Section 202 rental assistance provided by Project-Rental Assistance Contract (PRAC) and Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA).
- Preservation Tools. HUD's Rental Assistance Demonstration program should be improved to ensure Section 202 communities with Project Rental Assistance Contracts can successfully convert their operating subsidies without losing resident services or financial soundness.
- Homelessness. Homelessness among older adults is increasing. Better data are needed, as is a coordinated federal effort to prevent and end homelessness among older adults.
- Internet. The majority of HUD Section 202 housing does not have internet throughout the community (in common areas and in apartments). Communities need access to resources for the installation and service fees for internet for older adults living in HUD-assisted senior housing.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

The Section 202 program was established under the "Housing Act of 1959." Enacted to allow seniors to age in their community by providing assistance with housing and supportive

services, the program has gone through various programmatic iterations during its lifetime. Before 1974, Section 202 funds were 3% loans that may or may not have had either Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance or rent supplement assistance for all or some of the units. Between 1974 and 1990, Section 202 funds were provided as loans and subsidized by project-based Section 8 contracts. Until the creation of the Section 811 program in 1990, the Section 202 program funded housing for both seniors and people with disabilities. In 1991, the Section 202 program was converted to a capital advance grant with a Project Rental Assistance Contract for operational expenses, known as Section 202 PRAC. There are more than 400,000 Section 202 units built since the "Housing Act of 1959."

The 202 program allows seniors to age in place and avoid unnecessary, unwanted, and costly institutionalization. With 38% of existing Section 202 tenants being frail or near-frail, requiring assistance with basic activities of daily living, and thus being at high risk of institutionalization, Section 202 residents have access to community-based services and support to keep living independently and age in place in their community.

According to HUD's *Worst Case Housing Needs: 2021 Report to Congress*, the number of worst case needs among older adults increased by more than 16% between 2017 and 2019. Between 2009 and 2019, worst case housing needs among older adults increased 82%. Meanwhile, across all household types, including older adult households, worst case needs increased between 2009 and 2019 by 9%.

A 2021 report from the Urban Institute, The Future of Headship and Homeownership, looks at the rise in older adult renter households with low incomes. Over the next 20 years, almost all future net household growth will be among older adult households. There will be a 16.1 million net increase in households formed between 2020 and 2040, and 13.8 million of these households will be headed by someone older than 65, reflecting the nation's aging population. Of the 13.8 million new older adult households, 40%

(5.5 million) will be renter households. Of these, the Urban Institute projects, 1.3 million will be new Black older adult renter households. This will double the number of the nation's Black older adult renter households, from 1.3 million in 2020 to 2.6 million in 2040.

The need for affordable housing is also demonstrated by the rise in homelessness among older adults. According to HUD's *2017 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR): Part 2*, the share of people experiencing homelessness who are older adults almost doubled, from 4.1% to 8%, between 2007 and 2017. The Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University's *Housing America's Older Adults 2019* reports that 5 million older adult households aged 65 and over are severely cost burdened, spending more than half of their incomes on housing.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly program provides funds to nonprofit organizations, known as sponsors, to develop and operate senior housing. Many Section 202 project sponsors are faith-based or fraternal organizations.

Section 202 tenants generally must be at least 62 years old and have incomes less than 50% of the area median income (AMI) qualifying them as very low-income. Some facilities have a percentage of units designed to be accessible to non-elderly persons with mobility impairments or may serve other targeted disabilities. In 2021, the average annual household income of a Section 202 household was \$14,272.

Today, 17% of Section 202 residents are 80+ and, 49% of Section 202 households are non-white, two characteristics that make Section 202 residents at greater risk from COVID-19. Further, HUD said several years ago that 38% of Section 202 residents are frail or near-frail, a figure that has likely only increased as people age in their homes longer.

In the Section 202 program, the capital advance covers expenses related to housing construction and Project Rental Assistance Contract provides

the ongoing operating assistance to bridge the gap between what residents can afford to pay for rent (about 30% of their adjusted household incomes) and what it costs to operate high quality housing. Both the capital and operating funding streams are allocated to nonprofits on a competitive basis, through a HUD Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA).

As noted in the programs name, HUD's Section 202 program is also "supportive" housing in that it aims to help people age in community. Service Coordinators play a key role in this. The Centers for Disease Control included HUD's Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly program in its Pharmacy Partnership for Long Term Care COVID-19 vaccination clinics roll-out in December 2020. Along with nursing homes and assisted living, the CDC understood that Section 202 residents must also be included in the Pharmacy Partnership for Long Term Care's first line of COVID-19 vaccination clinics. In doing so, they understood that most HUD Section 202 residents would be in assisted living if they could afford it and, because of the lack of affordable assisted living, some Section 202 residents would be in a nursing home but for the Section 202 program. In short, the Section 202 program meets national and state goals of allowing people to live in the least restrictive setting possible.

### Capital Funding

The first component of the Section 202 program provides capital advance funds to nonprofits for the construction, rehabilitation, or acquisition of supportive housing for seniors. These funds are often augmented by the HOME program and by Low-Income Housing Tax Credit debt and equity to either build additional units or supplement the capital advance as gap financing in so-called mixed-finance transactions.

After several years of no new NOFA, HUD issued a \$51 million NOFA for new Section 202 homes in 2019, which resulted in 18 awards to nonprofits in 2020 for the construction of 575 Section 202/PRAC homes. A NOFA was issued in January 2021 for an additional \$151 million for new Section 202 homes; by January 2022, HUD had

awarded \$158 million in this round of funding for new Section 202 homes developed in 34 communities.

Given the current and growing need for affordable senior housing, Congress must greatly expand its commitment to senior housing.

### **Operating Funding**

The second program component provides rental assistance in the form of PRACs or PBRA to subsidize the operating expenses of these developments. Residents pay rent equal to 30% of their adjusted income, and the PBRA or PRAC makes up the difference between this tenant rental income and operating expenses. Of the country's 6,957 Section 202 communities, 4,074 receive their operating subsidy from PBRA and 2,993 receive their operating subsidy from PRAC.

In addition to the core components of the Section 202 program, HUD administers complementary programs that have been established by Congress to help meet the needs of seniors aging in place:

1. A Service Coordinators grant program to fund staff in Section 202 buildings to help residents to age in place. According to the Government Accountability Office, about half of Section 202 properties have a Service Coordinator funded as part of their Section 202 annual operating budgets ("budget-based Service Coordinators") or through HUD grants ("grant-funded Service Coordinators"). Service Coordinators assess residents' needs, identify and link residents to services, and monitor the delivery of services.
2. The Supportive Services Demonstration/ Integrated Wellness in Supportive Housing demonstration in HUD-assisted multifamily housing, a \$15 million demonstration at 40 Section 202 communities to help their low-income senior tenants to age in their own homes and delay or avoid the need for nursing home care. In 2020, Congress extended this demonstration for two years until September 2022.

## **FUNDING**

The FY22 spending bill provided \$1.033 billion for Section 202. In FY21, Congress appropriated \$855 million for Section 202, providing \$52 million for new construction. This amount also funds the renewal of grant-funded Service Coordinators and provided \$5 million for a revived intergenerational housing program. This intergenerational housing program, authorized in 2003, resulted in awards for two properties in 2008.

The House-passed "Build Back Better Act" included \$500 million for about 7,000 new Section 202 homes.

## **FORECAST FOR 2022**

The Biden Administration has made clear its intention to support expansion of affordable housing, including affordable senior housing. Any future reconciliation act must include significant resources to expand the supply of affordable senior housing.

With the 2021 launch of the HUD/HHS [Housing and Services Resource Center](#), the Administration will work to break down silos to connect HUD-assisted residents with the services they need to age in community, and HUD and HHS will coordinate to improve access to affordable, accessible housing and the critical services that make community living possible.

HUD will continue its work to distribute COVID Supplemental Payments from the March 2020 "CAREs Act" to reimburse multifamily communities for COVID-related expenses.

Connecting historic broadband resources from the "Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021" to affordable senior housing communities will also be a key issue for 2022 and will ensure residents take advantage of that act's new Affordable Connectivity Program.

### **New Section 202 Units**

Advocates asked Congress for at least \$600 million in new Section 202 capital advance and operating funds. This amount is in line with historic funding of this critical program prior to



the program being zeroed out after FY11.

## **RAD for PRAC**

After Congress's authorization in 2018 to expand HUD's Rental Assistance Demonstration for Section 202 communities with Project Rental Assistance Contracts (dubbed "RAD for PRAC"), HUD officially issued implementing guidance in September 2019 and the first RAD for PRAC deal closed in August 2020. There are 125,000 apartment homes within HUD's 202/PRAC portfolio. Section 202/PRAC owners continue to assess their capital needs and whether RAD for PRAC makes sense for them as a preservation tool. Unlike Section 8-funded communities, PRAC communities cannot take on debt. This left many aging 202/PRACs financially unprepared to preserve themselves for future households and paved the way for RAD for PRAC authorization. Getting the right rent levels upon conversion, ensuring service coordination is robust, and retaining nonprofit ownership over the long haul are critical components of RAD for PRAC.

## **WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS**

Advocates concerned with senior housing issues should ask their Members of Congress for the following:

- At least \$600M for approximately 6,200 new Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly homes.
- Funding for new three-year Service Coordinator grants and to increase funding budget-based Service Coordinators.
- Full renewal funding for rental assistance contract renewals (Project-Based Rental Assistance and Project Rental Assistance Contracts) and Service Coordinator grant renewals.
- Improvements to support successful RAD for PRAC conversions.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Linda Couch, Vice President, Housing Policy, LeadingAge, [lcouch@leadingage.org](mailto:lcouch@leadingage.org), [www.leadingage.org](http://www.leadingage.org).

# Section 811: Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities Program

---

By Gina Schaak, Senior Consultant, and Lisa Sloane, Director, Technical Assistance Collaborative

**Administering Agency:** HUD's Office of Asset Management and Portfolio Oversight

**Year Started:** 1992 (prior to this, Section 811 was part of the Section 202 program)

**Numbers of Persons/Households Served:** The 811 Capital Advance Program serves an estimated 28,000 households over 2,390 properties. Funding to date for the 811 Project Rental Assistance (PRA) program is expected to produce over 9,000 units.

**Population Targeted:** Persons ages 18–61 who are extremely- or very low-income and have significant and long-term disabilities.

**Funding:** The FY22 spending bill provided \$325 million for Section 811.

**See Also:** For related information, reference the *Olmstead Implementation* section of this guide.

The Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities is a federal program that assists the lowest-income people with significant and long-term disabilities in living independently in the community by providing affordable housing linked with voluntary services and supports. Congress passed significant reforms to the Section 811 program in 2010 including the creation of the PRA Program. The PRA Program is intended to identify, stimulate, and support innovative state-level partnerships and strategies to substantially increase integrated permanent supportive housing opportunities.

## HISTORY

Historically, the Section 811 program created new supportive housing units primarily through the development of group homes and independent living projects under regulations and guidelines developed in the early 1990s.

Since that time, judicial decisions have affirmed important community integration mandates in the “Americans with Disabilities Act” (ADA), and national disability housing and services policies have evolved significantly to emphasize consumer choice, Medicaid-financed community-based services, and integrated housing opportunities. For many years, the Section 811 program did not keep pace with these improvements in disability policy. Demand for the program steadily declined, while the cost per unit from Section 811's capital-intensive model increased. In 2007, with less than 1,000 new units of Section 811 housing produced annually, national disability advocates began a successful three-year legislative campaign to reform and reinvigorate this important program. The “Frank Melville Supportive Housing Investment Act of 2010,” the Section 811 reform legislation signed into law by President Barack Obama in early 2011, honors the memory of Frank Melville, who was the first chair of the Melville Charitable Trust and a national leader in the supportive housing movement.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Section 811 program includes several components, two of which currently receive HUD funding: Capital Advance/Project Rental Assistance Contract (PRAC), which includes a new multi-family integrated housing option, and the Project Rental Assistance (PRA) Program.

**Section 811 Capital Advance/PRAC:** Only 501(c)(3) nonprofits are eligible to apply for the S. 811 Capital Advance/PRAC program. HUD provides funding for capital costs as well as PRAC to cover annual operating costs. An estimated 28,000 units were funded from 1992 to 2010. In November 2019, HUD issued a NOFA for the Section 811 Capital Advance/ PRAC projects with funds from HUD FY18 and FY19 Appropriations. This was the first Capital Advance/PRAC NOFA since 2010. On November 30, 2020, HUD announced \$54.7 million in awards to 15 nonprofit organizations

Highlights of this NOFA include:

- **Leveraging:** Applicants were highly encouraged to leverage other sources of funds to support the development of the Section 811 units.
- **Partnership:** Heightened focus on sustained partnerships between the applicant and key stakeholders that provide a foundation for implementing housing-related services and supports.
- **Site Control:** All proposals must provide evidence of site control.
- **Types of housing:** Eligible housing types are limited to integrated housing (units within a multifamily property), group homes, and condominiums. The number of units set aside for persons with disabilities within a condominium or multifamily property including supportive housing for persons with disabilities or to which any occupancy preference for persons with disabilities applies may not exceed 25% of the total number of dwelling units.
- **Delegated processing.** Delegated processing will be made available for multifamily projects that consist of a combination of capital advance and other sources. This option is not available for any project that is a group home.

**Section 811 Project Rental Assistance (PRA):**

Only state housing agencies are eligible to apply for the PRA program. The PRA program provides funds for project-based rental assistance where the capital is provided through other local, state or federal programs; PRA funds cannot be used for capital.

Since May 2012, HUD has published three Section 811 PRA NOFAs. These NOFAs resulted in Cooperative Agreements for \$364 million with 30 states. Over 9,500 units are expected to be produced through these programs. States have demonstrated a high degree of interest in the PRA Program; 43 of the states plus the District of Columbia submitted applications in response to the NOFAs.

In addition to new integrated, affordable housing, projected outcomes of the most recent NOFA include:

- Facilitating and sustaining effective and successful partnerships between state housing and state health and human service/ Medicaid agencies to provide permanent housing with the availability of supportive services for extremely low-income persons with disabilities;
- Discovering replicable approaches to providing housing with access to appropriate services for persons with disabilities;
- Identifying innovative ways of using and leveraging Section 811 PRA funds;
- Substantially increasing integrated affordable rental housing units for persons with disabilities within existing, new, or rehabilitated multifamily properties with a mix of incomes and disability status; and
- Creating more efficient and effective uses of housing and health care resources.

Additional information about the program is available at <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/811-pra/>.

## FUNDING

In November 2019, HUD published NOFAs for both the PRA Program and the Capital Advance Program. In 2020, awards were made under both programs.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

The FY22 spending bill provided \$325 million for Section 811. The FY22 House budget recommendation included \$160 million for new capital advances and project rental assistance contracts to increase the availability of affordable housing for persons with disabilities and provide for approximately 1,800 new affordable housing units for persons with disabilities. From fiscal years 2018–2021, the Committee provided a total of \$206 million for capital advances and project rental assistance contracts. At the time of writing, the Department had issued Notices of Funding

Availability (NOFA) or Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for \$112 million. The House language directs the Department to expeditiously make all remaining funding provided in fiscal years 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021 available within 60 days of enactment of this act and to award that funding within 180 days of enactment of this act. The Senate budget proposal of \$227 million did not include funding for any new units.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

Advocates in states that have not yet received Section 811 PRA funds should work with state officials to support the implementation of this innovative model. Advocates in states that did not apply for or receive funds through the recent NOFAs should educate state leaders, local agencies, and organizations on the new PRA option to encourage a successful application for funds in future rounds. At the state level, activities should focus on state housing agencies, state Medicaid, and state health and human service agencies. Nonprofit and for-profit developers that frequently use federal LIHTC and HOME funds should also be made aware of this new opportunity to provide affordable and supportive housing for people with disabilities. The program website is available at <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/811-pra/success-stories/> and provides several videos and stories from tenants in Louisiana, Maryland, Washington State, and Massachusetts that can be used to educate stakeholders, including developers and property managers, about the program.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates are encouraged to contact their Members of Congress with the message that people with disabilities continue to be the poorest people in the nation. The Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC)'s publication *Priced Out* describes how nearly five million non-elderly adults with significant and long-term disabilities have Supplemental Security Income levels equal to only 20% of AMI and cannot afford housing in the community without federal housing assistance. Because of this housing crisis, many of the most vulnerable people with disabilities

live unnecessarily in costly nursing homes, in seriously substandard facilities that may violate the ADA, or are homeless. The Section 811 PRA Program can help the government reach its goals of ending homelessness and minimizing the number of persons living in costly institutions.

Affordable housing advocates are encouraged to support this request. These funds will provide states with the flexibility to create new and more cost-effective permanent supportive housing options to help highly vulnerable people with disabilities live successfully in the community with supports, while also reducing reliance on expensive and unnecessarily restrictive settings.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Technical Assistance Collaborative, 617-266-5657, [www.tacinc.org](http://www.tacinc.org).

# USDA Rural Rental Housing Programs

---

By Leslie R. Strauss, Senior Housing Analyst, Housing Assistance Council

**Administering Agency:** U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

**Year Started:** Section 515 – 1963; Section 514 – 1962; Section 516 – 1966; Section 521 – 1978; Multifamily Housing Preservation and Revitalization (MPR) – 2006; Section 542 – 2006; Section 538 – 1996

**Number of Households Served:** Section 515 – 533,000; Section 514/516 – 30,000; Section 521 – currently 283,000; Section 542 – currently 7,260; Section 538 – 45,000

**Population Targeted:** Section 515 – very low-, low-, and moderate-income households; Section 514/516 – farm workers; Section 538 – households with incomes below 115% of area median

**Funding:** Section 515 – \$50 million; Section 514 – \$28 million; Section 516 – \$10 million; Section 521 – \$1.450 billion; MPR – \$79 million, including \$34 million for Preservation Demonstration and \$45 million for Section 542;

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA’s) Rural Development (RD) arm runs several rental housing programs (and homeownership programs) through its Rural Housing Service. USDA makes loans to developers of rental housing for elderly persons and families through the Section 515 program and for farm workers through the Section 514 program (usually used in combination with Section 516 grants). USDA RD provides project-based rental assistance to some of the properties it finances through the Section 521 Rental Assistance (RA) program. The Section 538 program guarantees loans made by banks to develop rental housing for tenants with incomes up to 115% of area median income; almost all Section 538 properties also use Low-Income Housing Tax Credit financing. USDA RD also offers several tools to preserve the affordability of USDA-financed rentals.

The programs face serious problems, however. Production of new units for the lowest income tenants has greatly decreased, and many existing units are deteriorating physically or are in danger of leaving the affordable housing stock.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

In operation since the 1960s, the Section 515 Rural Rental Housing Program and the Section 514/516 Farm Labor Housing Program have provided essential, decent housing for the lowest income rural residents. Section 521 Rental Assistance is available for some units in Section 515 and 514/516 housing, to keep rents at or under 30% of tenant incomes.

Although dramatic improvements have been made in rural housing quality over the last few decades, problems persist. Many of rural America’s 65 million residents experience acute housing problems that are often overlooked while public attention is focused on big-city housing issues. Farm workers, especially those who move from place to place to find work, suffer some of the worst, yet least visible, housing conditions in the country.

Nearly 30% of rural households experience at least one major housing problem, such as high cost, physical deficiencies, or overcrowding. These problems are found throughout rural America but are particularly pervasive among several geographic areas and populations, such as the Lower Mississippi Delta, the southern Black Belt, the colonias along the U.S.-Mexico border, Central Appalachia, and among Native Americans and farm workers.

Forty-seven percent of rural renters are cost burdened, paying more than 30% of their income for their housing and nearly half of them pay more than 50% of their income for housing. More than half of the rural households living with multiple problems, such as affordability, physical inadequacies, or overcrowding, are renters.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

Under the Section 515 program, USDA RD makes direct loans to developers to finance affordable multifamily rental housing for very low-income, low-income, and moderate-income families, for elderly people, and for persons with disabilities. Section 515 loans have an interest rate of 1%, amortized over 50 years, to finance modest rental or cooperatively owned housing.

The Section 514 farm worker housing program also makes direct loans; they have a 1% interest rate for 33-year terms. Some Section 514 borrowers, such as nonprofits, are also eligible for Section 516 grants.

Sections 515 and 514/516 funds and Section 538 loan guarantees can be used for new construction as well as for the rehabilitation of existing properties. Funds may also be used to buy and improve land, and to provide necessary facilities such as water and waste disposal systems. However, no new rental properties have been developed under Section 515 since 2011; every year for the past decade, the program's entire appropriation has been used to preserve existing units.

Very low-, low-, and moderate-income households are eligible to live in Section 515-financed housing. Section 514/516 tenants must receive a substantial portion of their incomes from farm labor. Section 515 resident incomes average about \$13,640 per year. The vast majority (92%) of Section 515 tenants have incomes less than 50% of area median income. More than half of the Section 515 assisted households are headed by elderly people or people with disabilities. Section 538 units are available for tenants with incomes up to 115% of area median. USDA does not compile data on the incomes of Section 538 residents.

Section 514/516 loans and grants are made available on a competitive basis each year, using a national Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA). After FY11 USDA has not issued NOFAs for Section 515 loans; instead, it has used all of its Section 515 funds for preservation purposes. Applications for Section 538 guarantees are accepted year-round.

## Preservation

To avoid losing affordable housing, preservation of existing affordable units is essential. Three factors pose challenges for preserving units in developments with owners who are still making payments on Section 515 or 514 mortgages.

First, many Section 515 and 514 mortgages are nearing the end of their terms and the pace of mortgage maturities will increase starting in 2028. Since USDA Section 521 Rental Assistance (RA) is available only while USDA financing is in place, when a USDA mortgage is fully paid off the property also loses its RA. The USDA can offer Section 542 vouchers for tenants when a mortgage is prepaid, but not when a mortgage matures. Advocates are exploring ways to protect tenants when USDA mortgages mature. Possibilities include offering new or amortized USDA mortgages so that RA can continue; providing vouchers; or “decoupling” RA from USDA mortgages so RA can continue even when a mortgage has been paid in full.

Second, many Section 515 properties are aging and must be preserved against physical deterioration. In 2016, USDA released a Comprehensive Property Assessment (CPA) reviewing Section 515 rental properties, off-farm Section 514/516 farmworker housing properties, properties with loans guaranteed under the Section 538 program, and properties that have used the MPR preservation program. The study concluded that over the course of the next 20 years, \$5.6 billion will be needed in addition to existing capital reserves simply to cover capital costs.

Third, every year some property owners request permission to prepay their mortgages by paying them off before their terms end and thus remove government affordability requirements. Owners seek to prepay for varying reasons, including: the expiration of tax benefits; the burden of increased servicing requirements; the desire of some small project owners to retire; and, in some rural areas, an increase in vacancies due to out-migration. As is the case for owners of HUD multifamily projects, Section 515 owners' ability to prepay is restricted

by federal law. The details vary depending on when a loan was approved but, in all cases, USDA is either permitted or required to offer owners incentives not to prepay and in exchange the property continues to be restricted to low-income occupancy for 20 years. Incentives offered to owners include equity loans, increases in the rate of return on investment, reduced interest rates, and additional Section 521 Rental Assistance. In some cases, an owner who rejects the offered incentives must offer the project for sale to a nonprofit or public agency. If an owner does prepay, tenants become eligible for Section 542 vouchers.

Most of USDA RD's preservation efforts use its Multifamily Housing Preservation and Revitalization (MPR) demonstration program. MPR offers several possible types of assistance to owners or purchasers of Section 515 and Section 514/516 properties. The most common assistance is debt deferral, although other possibilities include grants, loans, and soft-second loans.

Other preservation tools include Section 542 tenant vouchers, which can be provided to tenants who face higher rents when their buildings leave the Section 515 program because of mortgage prepayments. For several years, ending in FY11, Congress also funded a Preservation Revolving Loan Fund program, which used intermediaries to make loans to owners or purchasers who sought to preserve rural rental properties.

## FUNDING

The Section 515 program, which received about \$115 million in annual appropriations in the early 2000s and has been cut repeatedly, was funded at \$40 million in both FY20 and FY21. The FY22 spending bill provided \$50 million for Section 515.

Section 514 received \$28 million in both FY20 and FY21, and Section 516 was funded at \$10 million in each of those years. The FY22 spending bill provided \$28 million for Section 514 and \$10 million for Section 516.

The MPR preservation program received \$24.5 million in FY19, and \$28 million in FY20 and FY21. Demand far exceeds the available funds: at the end of calendar year 2021, MPR had a backlog of 171 preservation projects awaiting funding. Recognizing this problem, the House's FY22 appropriations bill would increase the program to \$60 million. The president's budget and the Senate bill would provide a smaller jump to \$32 million. In the end, the FY22 spending bill provided \$34 million for the MPR preservation program.

The Preservation Revolving Loan Fund has not been funded since FY11.

The Section 521 RA program was funded at \$1.375 billion in FY20 and \$1.410 billion in FY21. The FY22 spending bill provided \$1.450 billion for Section 521.

The cost of the Section 542 voucher program has generally risen every year as increasing numbers of tenants are eligible for vouchers. Several times the program has used slightly more than its appropriation, with additional dollars being drawn from the already inadequate MPR funding pool. The program's appropriation for FY21. In FY22, Section 542 received \$45 million.

Changes to reduce RA costs and to improve USDA's rental housing preservation process can be made by USDA without legislative changes by Congress. Making vouchers available for tenants in properties with expiring mortgages, or decoupling RA from USDA mortgages, requires congressional action. Over the next five years and beyond, RA costs may fall as USDA mortgages expire, but there will be corresponding increases in costs for alternatives such as USDA vouchers, HUD vouchers, or assistance to people who become homeless.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

The "Build Back Better Act" would have provided a substantial boost to efforts to preserve affordable rental housing for the lowest-income rural renters. The version that passed the House in November 2021 provided \$2 billion for USDA rural rental housing (\$1.8 billion for preservation

of USDA Section 515 and 514 rental housing, \$100 million to continue the Section 521 Rental Assistance that was added by the “American Rescue Plan Act,” and \$100 million for USDA administrative costs).

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

Activity related to USDA’s Section 515 program now focuses on the preservation of existing units. Preservation means either renovating a property or keeping it affordable for low-income tenants, or both. Local rural housing organizations can help with preservation in both senses by helping owners who want to leave the program (including those whose mortgages are expiring) find ways to do so without changing the nature of their properties. Often, this means purchasing the property and refinancing to obtain sufficient proceeds to update and rehabilitate it. As more Section 515 mortgages mature every year, nonprofit purchases of these properties are increasingly recognized as the best way to save them.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates should speak with their Members of Congress and urge them to:

- Support reintroduction and passage of H.R. 3620, the “Strategy and Investment in Rural Housing Preservation Act”, which passed the House on September 10, 2019 and S. 2567, the “Rural Housing Preservation Act”, which was introduced by Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) in September 2019.
- Maintain funding for all USDA rural housing programs (do not reduce funding for other programs, especially MPR, in order to shift funds to Section 542 vouchers).
- Continue to provide enough funding to renew all Section 521 RA contracts and all Section 542 vouchers.
- Work with USDA RD to find positive ways to reduce Section 521 costs through energy efficiency measures, refinancing USDA mortgages, and reducing administrative costs.

- Expand eligibility for USDA Section 542 vouchers so tenants can use them when USDA mortgages expire, and Section 521 RA becomes unavailable.
- Reject any proposals to move the rural housing programs from USDA to HUD.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Housing Assistance Council, 202-842-8600, [www.ruralhome.org](http://www.ruralhome.org).

National Housing Law Project, 510-251-9400, <https://www.nhlp.org/resources/saving-rural-rental-homes/>.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/multi-family-housing-programs>.



# Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)

---

By Russell L. Bennett, LMSW, Ph.D., and Bianca Hannon, MSW, Collaborative Solutions, Inc.

**Administering Agency:** Office of HIV/AIDS Housing (OHH) in HUD’s Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD)

**Year Started:** 1990

**Number of Persons/Households Served:** Over 100,000 households receive HOPWA housing assistance and/or supportive services annually.

**Population Targeted:** Low-income people with HIV/AIDS and their families

**Funding:** \$430 million in FY21; \$450 million in FY22

The Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) program provides funding to eligible jurisdictions to address the housing needs of persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

HOPWA was created by the “AIDS Housing Opportunities Act,” a part of the “Cranston-Gonzales National Affordable Housing Act of 1990,” to provide housing assistance and related supportive services for low-income people living with HIV/AIDS and their families.

There is a perception in America that the HIV/AIDS epidemic is under control, but HIV/AIDS remains an active crisis. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are an estimated 38,000 new HIV infections each year. At the same time, there are more than 1.2 million people living with HIV/AIDS in the United States, and 13 percent are unaware of their HIV status (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2022).

For people living with HIV/AIDS, housing is healthcare. For low-income people struggling to manage their HIV/AIDS care, housing is an essential cornerstone of health and stability. The

CDC reports through the Medical Monitoring Project, 4 in 10 households with HIV live at or below the poverty level and 1 in 10 households experienced homelessness (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Behavioral and Clinical Characteristics of Persons Living with Diagnosed HIV Infection—Medical Monitoring Project, United States, 2019 Cycle: Fact Sheet, 2020). It is estimated as many as half of all people living with HIV/AIDS will need housing assistance at some point during their illness. Stable housing, like the housing provided by HOPWA, leads to better health outcomes, including viral suppression, for those living with HIV/AIDS. An individual who is virally suppressed cannot transmit the HIV virus to another person, thereby ensuring the health of their entire community. For many low-income individuals and families, short-term assistance with rent, mortgage, or utility costs will provide the support necessary to remain in stable housing and thus support health improvement. While other households may need more intensive housing supportive services to support health improvement.

The HOPWA program is designed to provide housing assistance and related supportive services for low-income people living with HIV/AIDS and their families. The program also facilitates community efforts to develop comprehensive strategies to address HIV/AIDS housing needs and assists communities with creating housing strategies to prevent individuals from becoming homeless or unstably housed.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

As a supportive housing program, HOPWA helps ensure that people living with HIV/AIDS can access and maintain adherence to necessary medical care and other services by assisting them with obtaining and maintaining stable housing and related support services.

Eligibility for HOPWA assistance is limited to low-income individuals with HIV/AIDS and their families. As reported in the 2019-2020 National HOPWA Performance Profile (U.S. Department of HUD, 2020) most individuals receiving HOPWA housing assistance (77%) are extremely low-income, earning 30% of the area median income (AMI) or less. Of the 4,676 homeless individuals newly receiving HOPWA during FY20, 10% were veterans and 41% were chronically homeless. Ninety-three percent of HOPWA households have a housing plan, and 93% have had contact with a primary care provider during the past year. Of the households served by HOPWA supportive housing programs, 98% maintained housing stability during the year.

HOPWA consists of two grant-making programs a formula and competitive grant program. Under the formula program, 90 percent of HOPWA funds are distributed to states and localities to serve the metropolitan area in which they are located. The formula for this distribution is based on population size and the number of people living with HIV/AIDS in the metropolitan area as confirmed by the CDC, as well as poverty rates and housing costs.

During the 2021 program year, HOPWA formula grants totaling \$387 million were awarded to grantees within 141 eligible areas. These grantees represent 42 states, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico. These formula funds can be used for a wide range of housing, social services, program planning, and development costs including but not limited to the acquisition, rehabilitation, or new construction of housing units, costs for facility operations, rental assistance, and short-term payments to prevent homelessness.

The other 10% of HOPWA funds are eligible for distribution through a competitive process to states and localities that do not qualify for a formula allocation or to states, localities, or nonprofit organizations that propose projects of national significance. During FY21, HUD renewed over \$27 million for 31 local programs in 11 states to fund permanent housing strategies. Due to a lack of substantial increases in program

funding, competitive renewals limited the ability for the award of new Special Projects of National Significance (SPNS) under the program. Recent funding increases allowed HUD to issue a new competitive SPNS program under the Housing as an Intervention to Fight AIDS initiative. HUD announced in, December 2021, the award of \$41 million to 20 local governments and non-profit organizations to support this initiative. These awards represent the first competitive SPNS program in over 10 years.

## FUNDING

HOPWA remains sorely underfunded relative to the immense need for safe housing for persons with HIV/AIDS. HOPWA would need an estimated \$1.12 billion to serve all people living with HIV/AIDS in need of housing assistance. The passage of the “Housing Opportunities Through Modernization Act” (HOTMA) in July 2016 provided a step toward updating the formula for today’s epidemic. The act updated the HOPWA formula from cumulative AIDS cases to living HIV/AIDS cases and accounts for both housing costs and poverty factors. The new formula was phased in over a five-year period to mitigate substantial losses to existing grantees to ensure the housing stability of assisted households (P.L. 114-201; 7.29.16). Since 2016, through the advocacy efforts of NLIHC and National AIDS Housing Coalition (NAHC), the HOPWA program appropriation has been increased to aid communities during the phase-in process by ensuring the stability of housing programs throughout the country. Since FY17, HOPWA has seen consistent funding increases with \$356 million in FY17 to \$430 million in FY21.

The White House’s FY22 budget request included a \$20 million increase to the program (\$450 million), which is estimated to support 56 thousand low-income households living with HIV (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), 2022). In July 2021, the House Appropriations Committee approved \$84.1 billion FY22 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) spending bill. In this bill, the HOPWA appropriation was \$600 million, a

\$150 million increase over the White House’s budget request (Lawrence, 2021). The final FY22 spending bill provided \$450 million for HOPWA.

As a note, in response to COVID-19, HOPWA received \$65 million in supplemental formula and competitive funding through the “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.”

## FORECAST FOR 2022 AND BEYOND

Without sustained increases in HOPWA funding, with the full implementation of the formula changes in FY22 and beyond, many HOPWA jurisdictions will lose funding and potentially housing units as they adjust to the new formula without increases to the HOPWA program. The potential for housing displacement or even homelessness among persons living with HIV/AIDS is real. Even with the success of the last six years in increasing funding for the program, each year poses new and significant challenges. National advocates, including NAHC, will continue to advocate for increased funding for the HOPWA program to ensure that new dollars are available to preserve existing housing units and to expand housing efforts to improve access to care and improvements in health outcomes among persons living with HIV/AIDS.

As upcoming fiscal years are critically important to stabilizing local housing programs, HIV housing providers should join advocacy efforts to continue to ensure the availability of housing resources and continued increases in HOPWA funding. Additionally, local advocates and providers should work with their local jurisdictions to plan comprehensive housing strategies and maximize the use of the HOPWA resources to end the epidemic. Decreases in program funding can result in shifts to the local allocations determined by the formula, and thus on-going advocacy is critically important to ensuring housing continuums remain stable and connected to necessary health and support services to support households in achieving optimal health. Housing is a critical intervention to end the HIV epidemic, and the HOPWA

program continues to be the foundation for a system of care that links healthcare and an array of other affordable housing and services.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

National HIV & AIDS Housing Technical Assistance and Capacity Building, Collaborative Solutions 205-939-0411, [www.collaborative-solutions.net](http://www.collaborative-solutions.net).

National HIV & AIDS Housing Advocacy, National AIDS Housing Coalition (NAHC), 202-377-0333, [www.nationalaidshousing.org](http://www.nationalaidshousing.org).

Information: Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA), HUD Exchange, <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hopwa/>.

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

**(CDC). (2020).** *Behavioral and Clinical Characteristics of Persons Living with Diagnosed HIV Infection—Medical Monitoring Project, United States, 2019 Cycle: Fact Sheet.* CDC, Medical Monitoring Project: <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/library/reports/hiv-surveillance-special-reports/no-28/content/factsheet.html>.

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

**(CDC). (2022).** *HIV Basics: Overview Data and Trends U.S. Statistics.* HIV.gov: <https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/data-and-trends/statistics>.

**Lawrence, P. (2021, July).** *HUD Resource Center. Retrieved from House Appropriations Committee Approves \$68.4 Billion FY2022 HUD Spending Bill :* <https://www.novoco.com/notes-from-novogradac/house-appropriations-committee-approves-684-billion-fy-2022-hud-spending-bill>.

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). (2022).** *HUD’s Budget. Retrieved from Fiscal Year 2022 HUD Budget:* <https://www.hud.gov/budget>.

**U.S. Department of HUD. (2020, September).** *HOPWA Performance Profiles. Retrieved from HUD Exchange :* <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hopwa/hopwa-performance-profiles/>.

# McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Programs

---

By Steve Berg, Vice President for Programs and Policy, National Alliance to End Homelessness

**Administering Agency:** HUD’s Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs within the Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD).

**Year Started:** 1987

**Number of Persons/Households Served:**

Total year-round capacity to provide beds for approximately 400,000 people experiencing homelessness, plus over 500,000 formerly homeless people now in permanent housing.

**Population Targeted:** People experiencing or at risk of homelessness

**Funding:** \$3.213 billion in FY22

**See Also:** For additional information, refer to the *Continuum of Care Planning* and *Federal Surplus Property to Address Homelessness* sections of this guide.

The McKinney-Vento homeless assistance programs are a set of federal programs created by the “McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.” This article refers to two programs administered by HUD: Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) and the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program. In 2009, Congress passed the “Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act,” which significantly improves HUD’s McKinney-Vento homeless assistance programs.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

Congress enacted the “Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act in 1987” in response to the homelessness crisis that had emerged in the 1980s. In 2000, the act was renamed as the “McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.” For many years the programs did not undergo any comprehensive overhaul despite improved

understanding of homelessness, its causes, and its solutions. In May 2009, Congress passed the “HEARTH Act,” which was intended to consolidate separate homelessness programs at HUD and to make the system of homeless assistance more performance based. Since then, HUD has issued a series of regulations.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

HUD’s McKinney-Vento programs provide outreach, shelter, transitional housing, supportive services, short- and medium-term rent subsidies, and permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness and in some cases for people at risk of homelessness. Funding is distributed by formula to jurisdictions for the ESG Program and competitively for the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program.

### ESG Program

The Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program is a formula grant to states and to larger cities and counties to fund rapid re-housing, homelessness prevention programs, and emergency shelters for people experiencing homelessness. People are eligible for prevention or re-housing assistance if they are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Being at risk of homelessness means an individual or family has a total income below 30% of area median income and are losing their housing, doubled up, living in motels, or living in other precarious housing situations. In recent years, the total amount for ESG is specified by Congress in the appropriations act.

### CoC Program

Prior to the “HEARTH Act,” there were three competitive CoC programs, and grants under these legacy programs still exist:

- The Supportive Housing Program, which funded transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, and supportive services.

- The Shelter Plus Care Program, which funded rental assistance in permanent supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness with disabilities.
- The Moderate Rehabilitation/Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Program, which funded operating assistance in SRO buildings.

A unique feature of HUD’s CoC program is the application process. Applicants in a community, including local governments, nonprofit providers, advocates, people experiencing homelessness, and other stakeholders organize into a CoC and submit a joint application to HUD for their project requests. The entire application is scored, and specific projects are funded in the order that they are prioritized by the community in the application. The “HEARTH Act” combines the three legacy programs into a single CoC program that includes the same eligible activities as the previous programs.

The entity that submits the application for funding is known as a Collaborative Applicant.

Changes made by the “HEARTH Act” and implementing regulations to the competitive CoC program include the following:

- The selection criteria include performance measures for reducing the duration of homelessness, reducing the number of people who become homeless, and reducing the number of people who re-experience homelessness after they exit the program.
- Incentives include creating new rapid re-housing projects for families and individuals experiencing homelessness and new permanent supportive housing for those experiencing chronic homelessness.
- The match is simplified to 25% for all activities. Leasing projects will continue to have no match requirement.
- A new rural program is created that would provide rural areas with more flexibility and increase funding to rural areas (this program has not yet been funded by appropriations).
- More funding is available for administrative

costs. For CoC projects, up to 10% is allowed and 3% is allowed for the Collaborative Applicant.

In addition to HUD’s homeless assistance grants, several other programs are authorized by the “McKinney-Vento Act”:

- The Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program, administered by the U.S. Department of Education, provides grants to schools to aid in the identification of children experiencing homelessness and provide services to help them succeed in school. EHCY also requires schools to make accommodations to improve the stability of homeless children’s education.
- Title V Surplus Properties, which requires that federal surplus property be offered to nonprofit organizations for the purpose of assisting people experiencing homelessness.
- The Interagency Council on Homelessness, an independent agency within the federal executive branch, coordinates the federal response to homelessness and is charged with creating a federal plan to end homelessness.

## FUNDING

The McKinney-Vento homeless assistance programs received \$1.901 billion for both FY11 and FY12, \$1.933 billion (after sequestration) for FY13, \$2.105 billion for FY14, \$2.135 billion for FY15, \$2.25 billion for FY16, \$2.383 billion for FY17, \$2.513 billion for FY18, \$2.636 billion for FY19, \$2.777 billion for FY20, and \$3.0 billion for FY21. For the FY22 spending bill, the House has proposed \$3.42 billion for the Homeless Assistance Grants program and the Senate proposed \$3.26 billion, compared to the President’s budget request of \$3.5 billion. The final FY22 spending bill provided \$3.213 billion for homeless assistance grants.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

Since 2007, HUD’s homeless assistance programs have helped communities reduce homelessness. However, given skyrocketing rents across the country and a recent rise in unsheltered

homelessness in some communities, strong funding for the HUD homelessness programs is necessary to avoid increases in homelessness and to get more people off the streets and into permanent housing.

HUD's implementation of the "HEARTH Act" will continue to increasingly reward communities that do the best job of using their funding efficiently to re-house as many people experiencing homelessness as possible and to effectively support them in avoiding a return to homelessness. This will in turn help build even further support in Congress.

The COVID-19 pandemic, along with rising rents in much of the country, has made homelessness worse. The Alliance has recommended that Congress increase appropriations for Homeless Assistance, as well as for other housing and health care programs, to help communities address this.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

The best way to maximize the impact of McKinney-Vento funding in a community is to participate in the local CoC process and to work to use resources for the most effective programs.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates should ask their Members of Congress to support increases in HUD's homeless assistance programs to allow more progress toward reducing the number of people experiencing homelessness. Specifically, advocates should communicate the following points:

- HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants are successful and have helped drive reductions in homelessness across the country. These grants support critical housing and service supports to thousands of the most vulnerable, hard-working Americans. Without these grants and the support of Congress to date, much of our country's progress on homelessness would not have been possible.
- Continued federal funding is critical to community efforts to end homelessness,

and the current funding amount is simply not enough to keep up with the rising need around the country driven by increasing rents and the COVID-19 pandemic.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Alliance to End Homelessness, 202-638-1526, [www.endhomelessness.org](http://www.endhomelessness.org).

Corporation for Supportive Housing, 212-986-2966, [www.csh.org](http://www.csh.org).

# Homeless Assistance: Federal Surplus Property to Address Homelessness

---

By Tristia Bauman, Senior Attorney, National Homelessness Law Center (formerly National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty)

**Administering Agencies:** HUD, Health and Human Services (HHS), General Services Administration (GSA)

**Year Program Started:** 1987

**Number of Persons/Households Served:** More than 2 million each year

**Populations Targeted:** Homeless people

**Funding:** The Title V program does not receive an appropriation.

**See Also:** For further information, reference the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Programs* and *Continuum of Care Planning* sections of this guide.

Title V of the “McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987” (Title V) makes HUD responsible for leading a cross-agency effort to identify unneeded federal properties suitable for use by non-profit agencies and local governments to house and serve homeless people. Once suitable and available properties are identified, homeless service providers have a right of first refusal to acquire the federal property through an application process administered by HHS. Approved applicants are able to obtain title to the property—or long-term lease of the property at the applicant’s option – for free.

Title V has enabled service providers and local government agencies to acquire highly valuable real property to provide housing, emergency shelter, food, job training, medical care, and other critical services to over 2 million homeless Americans throughout the country each year. Moreover, Title V saves taxpayer dollars by reducing operations and maintenance costs associated with unused and unneeded federal properties.

To date, over 500 buildings in at least 30 states and the District of Columbia have been transferred to nonprofit organizations and local governments under Title V. Despite this impressive number, Title V is a significantly underutilized program.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

The “McKinney-Vento Act” was first passed in 1987. Title V was included in the law in recognition of the fact that homeless service providers working to end homelessness often cannot afford real property to provide needed homeless programming, while the federal government has property that it no longer needs. Title V originally included properties on newly closed military bases. In 1994, the law was amended to provide a separate process for ensuring that a portion of Base Realignment and Closure properties are used to provide affordable housing and prevent homelessness. In 2016, Title V was amended by the “Federal Assets Sale and Transfer Act of 2016” (H.R. 4465), which made several improvements to the law, including making explicit that the provision of permanent housing is an eligible use for properties transferred under the Title V program.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

### Screening

Landholding agencies report the status of their real estate holdings to HUD on a quarterly basis. HUD screens unutilized, underutilized, excess, and surplus properties to determine whether they are suitable for homeless services organizations. All such suitable properties are published online at <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/title-v/suitability-listing> on a weekly basis. Properties that are listed as suitable and available may be conveyed via deed or lease at no charge to nonprofit groups, state agencies, and local governments following successful application

to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

### **Expression of Interest**

When a homeless service provider identifies a property of interest, it has 30 days to submit a written expression of interest to HHS. This is simply a brief letter identifying the group, the property of interest, and a brief description of the proposed use. Once HHS receives this letter, it provides the nonprofit or public agency with a full application.

### **Application**

Groups have 75 days to complete an initial application. Unlike the short expression of interest letter, the application is detailed and requires information about the services that will be offered, the need for such services, and the ability of the applicant to offer such services. Once HHS receives the completed initial application, the agency has 10 days to make an approval or disapproval determination. If an initial application is approved by HHS, the applicant has an additional 45 days to submit a reasonable plan to finance the conditionally approved program. HHS has 15 days after receipt of the full application to make a final determination.

## **FUNDING**

The Title V program does not receive an appropriation.

## **FORECAST FOR 2022**

There is no pending legislation that would affect the Title V program.

## **TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS**

To successfully apply for Title V property, an applicant must be financially stable and have a firm and workable plan to use the property that is to be acquired. The application timeline is short, so applicants must be prepared to act quickly when a suitable property becomes available.

The National Homelessness Law Center published a toolkit to assist homeless service

providers with: 1) finding available properties, 2) submitting expressions of interest, and 3) completing successful applications for property under Title V. The toolkit, *Public Property/Public Need: A Toolkit for Using Vacant Federal Property to End Homelessness*, is available at <https://homelesslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Public-Property-Public-Need-1.pdf>.

## **WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS**

Advocates should meet with their Members of Congress with the message that Title V saves tax dollars and is an immediately available resource to advance the national goal of ending homelessness. Advocates should ask their Members of Congress to urge HUD, HHS, and GSA to improve outreach efforts to make local governments and nonprofit agencies aware of the program. Also, advocates should meet with their Members of Congress to urge that HUD, HHS, and GSA improve compliance with the Title V program by ensuring that all suitable and unneeded federal properties are made available for application under Title V and that applications for suitable properties are not unduly denied.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

For information about how to search and successfully apply for surplus federal properties, contact the National Homelessness Law Center, 202-638-2535, [www.homelesslaw.org](http://www.homelesslaw.org).



# Rental Housing Programs for the Lowest-Income Households: Renters' Tax Credit

---

By Will Fischer, Senior Director for Housing Policy and Research, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

**T**he federal government provided about \$80 billion in housing tax benefits in fiscal year 2021, according to the Joint Committee on Taxation (JCT). However, more than three-fourths of that amount went toward tax subsidies for homeowners (and these JCT figures do not count substantial added federal tax benefits for homeowners from the deduction of state and local property taxes). Moreover, these subsidies mainly benefit higher-income homeowners, even though low-income renters are much more likely to struggle to afford housing. Policymakers could help rebalance housing tax policy and address pressing needs for affordable housing by establishing a tax credit to help low-income renters afford housing.

Federal rental assistance programs like Housing Choice Vouchers and public housing are highly effective at making rent affordable to the lowest-income families, but only reach about one in four eligible households due to inadequate funding. The renters' credit offers an important opportunity to help more of the nation's most vulnerable families and individuals keep a roof over their heads.

A renters' credit would also complement the existing Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), which effectively supports affordable housing development but rarely reduces rents to levels that extremely low-income families can afford unless they also have a voucher or other rental assistance.

## RENTERS' CREDIT DESIGN OPTIONS

A renters' credit could be designed in several different ways. A credit could be claimed directly by an eligible tenant on his or her tax return or by the owner of a rental unit in exchange for

reducing the tenant's rent. A tenant-claimed credit would be simpler in some respects, but it would also pose significant challenges. For example, a renters' credit would be far more effective if it reduced a family's rent as soon as it occupied a unit, but a tenant-claimed credit would likely require the tenant to pay rent for a period of time and then file a tax return before claiming the credit. By contrast, under an owner-claimed credit the owner could be required to reduce the family's rent immediately and the credit could be delivered by lowering the owner's required quarterly estimated tax payments.

In addition, a renters' credit could be an entitlement for all eligible renters or a capped credit that would be allocated by states (just as states allocate LIHTC to selected developments). An uncapped entitlement renters' credit would have the advantage of reducing housing costs for all or nearly all low-income renters. However, it could be difficult to obtain the tens of billions of dollars needed to fund an entitlement credit with per-household benefits large enough to make housing affordable to even the lowest-income families. On the other hand, if an entitlement credit were kept small because of budget constraints, it would not be sufficient to enable extremely low-income households to afford decent housing and consequently would be much less effective in reducing homelessness, evictions, and other housing-related hardship. A state-administered credit allocated to a limited number of extremely low-income families could provide sufficient help to enable those families to afford housing at a more modest overall cost.

A state-administered capped credit would have other advantages as well. It would give states rental assistance resources that they could coordinate with other state-administered low-income programs in a way that would be difficult under existing rental assistance programs (which are mainly locally administered). For example, states could use the renters' credit to make LIHTC

developments affordable to poor households, help families participating in state Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programs for whom lack of stable housing is a barrier to work, provide supportive housing to families at risk of having their children placed in foster care, and enable Medicaid-eligible elderly people or people with disabilities to live in service-enriched developments rather than nursing homes or other institutions. States would also be well positioned to use renters' credits to help poor families access low-poverty neighborhoods with good schools or help them remain in neighborhoods where higher-income households are moving in and low-income residents are at risk of displacement.

## RENTERS' CREDIT PROPOSALS

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) has proposed the establishment of a capped state-administered renters' credit. Under the CBPP proposal, states would receive an amount of credits each year set by a federal formula. States would allocate the credits to developments to make housing affordable to extremely low-income families. Families in units assisted by the renters' credit would pay 30% of their income for rent and utilities and the owner would receive a federal tax credit based on the rent reductions it provides. A credit with a cost of \$8 billion a year could enable close to 800,000 extremely low-income families to live in decent, stable, affordable homes once it is fully phased in.

In 2016, the University of California at Berkeley's Turner Center for Housing Innovation issued a report presenting three renters' tax credit options. One of these would provide a tenant-claimed entitlement credit sufficient to reduce all renters' housing costs by up to 30% of their incomes, at an estimated cost of \$76 billion per year. The second would provide a shallower tenant-claimed entitlement credit at an annual cost of \$41 billion. The third is a "composite option" that would include a \$5 billion capped, owner-claimed credit for extremely low-income families similar to that proposed by CBPP, and a smaller tenant-claimed credit for other renters costing \$38 billion.

The idea of a federal renters' credit has received growing attention in recent years. The Bipartisan Policy Center, Center for American Progress, Urban Institute, Enterprise Community Partners, Center for Global Policy Solutions, Prosperity Now, Mortgage Bankers Association, and others have highlighted a renters' credit as a promising strategy to address poverty, homelessness, and high rent burdens. Legislation to establish a renters' credit has been introduced in the last five sessions of Congress. For example, in 2021 Senate Banking Committee Chair Sherrod Brown (D-OH) introduced the "Renter's Tax Credit Act," proposing a capped, state-administered renters' credit, and a similar credit was included in the "Decent, Affordable, Safe Housing for All (DASH) Act" introduced by Finance Committee Chair Ron Wyden (D-OR). During 2019, Senators Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Kamala Harris (D-CA) and Representatives Danny Davis (D-IL) and James Clyburn (D-SC) introduced bills to establish a tenant-claimed credit for all income-eligible renters with high cost burdens.

## STATE RENTERS' CREDITS

Renters' tax credits can be instituted at the state as well as the federal levels. More than 20 states provide tax credits to help renters afford housing. Most of these credits are provided as part of a "circuit breaker" tax credit designed to provide relief from property tax burdens (circuit breakers often include benefits for renters in addition to homeowners, since renters pay for property taxes indirectly through higher rent). State renters' and circuit breaker credits are usually shallow, rarely providing more than a few hundred dollars per year.

Advocates should work at the state level to establish credits to help renters afford housing. In states where credits already exist, advocates should seek to improve them by increasing the amount, making credits refundable (if they are not already), and providing credits through periodic payments rather than in a single lump sum.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

In 2022, a federal renters' credit could be incorporated into tax legislation to better match federal housing tax benefits to the most pressing housing needs.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities renters' credit webpage, <http://www.cbpp.org/topics/renters-credit>.

Carol Galante, Carolina Reid, and Nathaniel Decker, *The FAIR Tax Credit: A Proposal for a Federal Assistance in Rental Credit to Support Low-Income Renters*, Turner Center for Housing Innovation, University of California, Berkeley, October 7, 2016, <http://turnercenter.berkeley.edu/fair-tax-credit>.

Aidan Davis, *State Tax Codes as Poverty Fighting Tools: 2019 Update on Four Key Policies in All 50 States*, Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, September 2019, <https://itip.org/state-tax-codes-as-poverty-fighting-tools/>.



---

# **Chapter 5:** ADDITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAMS

---



# HOME Investment Partnerships Program

---

By Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, NLIHC

**Administering Agency:** HUD's Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD)

**Year Started:** 1990

**Population Targeted:** Households with income less than 80% of area median income (AMI); when used to assist renters, 90% of a jurisdiction's HOME-assisted rental units must be occupied by households with income less than 60% AMI.

**Funding:** FY21 funding is \$1.5 billion. FY21 funding was \$1.35 billion.

The HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program is a federal block grant intended to expand the supply of decent, affordable housing for lower-income people.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

The HOME Program was authorized in 1990 as part of the "Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act." HOME is a federal block grant to about 640 participating jurisdictions (PJs), which are states and certain localities that use the funds to provide affordable housing to low- and moderate-income households. States and localities use the funds for a variety of homeownership and rental activities. In general, all HOME money must benefit people with low or moderate incomes, tenant rents must generally be capped at a fixed percentage of the area median income (AMI), and units must be occupied by income-eligible households for a set period. The HOME Program regulations are at [24 CFR Part 92](#). Numerous changes to the HOME regulations were finalized on July 24, 2013. NLIHC has a [summary of key changes](#).

### Eligible Activities

HOME dollars can be used as a grant or a loan to meet a variety of development costs such as: buying existing housing or vacant land for affordable housing; building new housing;

rehabilitating existing housing; demolishing structures to make way for affordable housing; relocation; making site improvements; and paying soft costs, such as engineering plans, attorneys' fees, title search, and fair housing services. HOME can also be used to help people purchase or rehabilitate a home by offering loans, loan guarantees, or down payment assistance. Tenants can be given grants for security deposits and rental assistance so that they pay no more than 30% of their income for rent and utilities. Although tenant-based rental assistance (TBRA) agreements are limited to two-year terms, they can be renewed without limit.

PJs may spend no more than 10% of their HOME allocation for overall program planning and administration, but there is no limit on the use of HOME funds for project-specific administrative costs. Among other limitations, PJs cannot spend HOME dollars on public housing modernization, operation, or preservation, because public housing has its own separate funding accounts.

### Community Housing Development Organizations

At least 15% of a participating jurisdiction's HOME funds are set aside exclusively to be spent on housing that is developed, sponsored, or owned by Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs). Up to 10% of this CHDO set-aside can be used to provide loans for project-specific technical assistance and site control, such as feasibility studies and consultants, as well as for seed money to cover pre-construction costs, such as architectural plans and zoning approval. Until recently, if a PJ failed to commit any portion of the minimum 15% CHDO set-aside within two years, the PJ and its low-income residents would lose that amount of money. However, the FY19, FY20, and FY21 appropriations acts suspended the two-year deadline to commit CHDO set-aside funds. Consequently, a PJ can choose to not use some or all of the 15% CHDO set-aside and after two years use those untapped CHDO funds for other HOME-eligible uses. This temporary suspension

of the two-year commitment rule could make it easier for other nonprofits to access more HOME dollars; or, it could simply enable a PJ to avoid funding of such community-based nonprofits for other developers. Both the House and Senate FY21 proposed appropriations bills retain this suspension.

The FY19, FY20, and FY21 appropriations acts also suspended the two-year commitment rule for non-CHDO funds.

Up to 5% of a PJ's HOME funds can be given to CHDOs for operating expenses; this amount is separate and apart from the minimum 15% CHDO set-aside and does not count against a PJ's 10% cap on administrative uses.

Any nonprofit can receive a HOME grant or loan to carry out any eligible activity, but not every nonprofit is a CHDO. As of the 2013 regulation changes, in order to be considered a CHDO, a nonprofit that is a developer or sponsor must have paid employees on staff who have housing development experience. However, nonprofits seeking to keep or obtain CHDO status can do so while allowing those that own rental housing to operate it even if the nonprofit does not have development expertise. The 2013 HOME regulation amendments introduced other changes that might make it more difficult for existing small and rural CHDOs to continue.

The HOME statute requires a CHDO to be accountable to low-income community residents through significant representation on the organization's governing board. However, the regulations merely require that one-third of a CHDO's board members be elected representatives of low-income neighborhood organizations, residents of low-income neighborhoods, or other low-income community residents. Since a low-income neighborhood can be one where only 51% of the residents have income less than 80% of AMI, it is possible that more affluent people with very different priorities could be on a CHDO board. Also, because the regulations allow community to be defined as broadly as an entire city, county, or metropolitan area, it is possible to construct a CHDO that is not

accountable to low-income residents in a HOME project's neighborhood.

### **Formula Allocation**

A formula based on six factors reflecting measures of poverty and the condition and supply of the rental housing stock determines which local jurisdictions are PJs. Jurisdictions that do not meet the formula's threshold can get together with neighboring jurisdictions to form a consortium in order to get HOME funding.

Each year, the formula distributes 60% of the HOME dollars appropriated by Congress to local governments and consortia; the remaining 40% is allocated to states. The state share is intended for small cities, towns, and rural areas not receiving HOME money directly from HUD. Local PJs are eligible for an allocation of at least \$500,000. (In years when Congress appropriates less than \$1.5 billion, PJs are to receive a minimum of \$335,000 in. However, the FY20 and FY 21 appropriations bills suspend this provision). Each state receives the greater of its formula allocation or \$3 million. Every HOME dollar must be matched by 25 cents of state, local, or private contributions, which can be cash (but not Community Development Block Grant funding), bond financing proceeds, donated materials, labor, property, or other noncash contributions.

### **Beneficiaries**

When HOME is used to assist renters, at least 90% of a PJ's HOME-assisted rental units must be occupied by households with income less than 60% of AMI; the remaining 10% of the rental units can benefit those with income up to 80% of AMI, known as low-income households. If a rental project has five or more HOME-assisted units, at least 20% of the HOME-assisted units must be occupied by households with income less than 50% of AMI, known as very low-income households. When HOME is used to assist people who are homeowners or who will become homeowners, all of that money must be used for housing occupied by households with income less than 80% of AMI. These are minimum standards required by law. Advocates should work to convince their PJ or state to improve



HOME's targeting to people with extremely low incomes, those with incomes less than 30% of AMI.

### **Affordability**

Maximum rents that may be charged to assisted households are not based on a household's actual income. Instead, maximum rents are, with one exception, based on a fixed amount. To qualify as affordable rental housing, rent may be no greater than the lower of the fair market rent (FMR) or 30% of the adjusted income of a hypothetical household with an annual income of 65% of AMI. In projects with five or more HOME-assisted units in which at least 20% of the HOME-assisted units must be occupied by households with very low incomes, rent is considered affordable if it is less than 30% of the income of a hypothetical household with an annual income at 50% of AMI, or less than 30% of their adjusted income. Actual rent limit figures are posted on the HUD Exchange HOME program webpage.

Newly constructed rental projects must remain affordable for 20 years. Existing rental housing that is either purchased or rehabilitated must remain affordable for 15 years if more than \$40,000 is spent per unit, 10 years if between \$15,000 and \$40,000 is spent per unit, and five years if less than \$15,000 is spent per unit.

Homeowner-assisted units are considered affordable if, in general, the value of the home after assistance is less than 95% of the median area purchase price. Homeowner units must remain affordable for the same periods mentioned above. PJs must have resale or recapture provisions. A resale provision is intended to ensure continued benefit to low-income households during the affordability period by requiring purchase by an income-eligible household if an original homeowner sells before the end of the affordability period. A recapture provision must ensure that all or a portion of HOME assistance is recouped if an owner sells or is foreclosed upon during the affordability period.

As of the close of FY20 on September 30, 2021, HOME has delivered 1,342,140 completed

physical units and provided another 353,843 tenant-based rental assistance contracts since 1992. Out of the 1,342,140 physical units, 40% (534,810) were rental units, 19% (257,370) were homeowner rehabilitation and/or new construction units, and 41% (550,069) were homebuyer units.

At the time of initial occupancy, households with incomes less than 30% of AMI occupied 44% of the physical rental units. Households with incomes less than 30% of the AMI occupied 30% of the homeowner units, and 6% of the homebuyer units. Twenty-seven percent of the rental units had households assisted with Housing Choice Vouchers. In addition, 79% of the tenant-based rental assistance units were occupied by extremely low-income people.

### **FORECAST FOR 2022**

FY22 funding is at \$1.5 billion, up from \$1.35 billion in FY21.

### **TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS**

At the local level advocates will want to continue to be actively involved in the Consolidated Plan's Annual Action Plan public participation process in order to influence the type of housing, location, and beneficiaries of HOME dollars.

Advocates can best influence how HOME dollars are allocated if they know how a jurisdiction has spent its previous allocations. To monitor their local PJ's accomplishments, advocates can access several useful reports on the [HOME page of HUD's Exchange website](#).

The monthly [Open Activities Report](#) lists each HOME project in a PJ that is still "open," indicating tenure type (renter or homeowner), type of activity (such as rehabilitation, acquisition, or new construction), ZIP code, number of units, commitment date, and amount budgeted and spent.

- The [Vacant Unit Report](#) identifies units marked vacant in HUD's reporting system, showing whether the project is completed and its street address.

- SNAPSHOT is a quarterly cumulative report that shows, in the aggregate, percentages by income category, race, household size, and household type of beneficiaries each by activity type (rental, homeowner, homebuyer, tenant-based rental assistance), as well as the number of units completed for each type of housing.
- Dashboard Reports are quarterly reports intended to provide a quick overview of a jurisdiction's use of HOME dollars. Using charts and graphs, Dashboard Reports show:
  - Cumulative HOME dollars received, and percentages disbursed, committed, and uncommitted.
  - Cumulative number of units completed since 1992, and percentages of rental, homeowner rehab, and homebuyer units.
  - Net number of units completed in the most recent quarter, with percentages of rental, homeowner rehab, and homebuyer units.
  - Cumulative number and the last quarter's net new number of tenant-based rental assistance units.
  - Race and ethnicity percentages among rental, homeowner rehab, and homebuyer projects.
  - Average total development cost per unit for rental, homeowner rehab, and homebuyer projects.
  - Income range, family size, and household type breakouts for rental, homeowner, and homebuyer activities.
- The National Production Report offers cumulative information since 1992.

New in 2018, HUD posted three frequently requested ad hoc reports about HOME investments and units by state and by congressional district:

- HOME Units Completed within LIHTC Projects by State provides the number of HOME units completed within Low-Income Housing Tax Credit projects by state since 2010. The report also provides a breakdown of overall HOME

funds disbursed for LIHTC projects and the average amount of HOME funds disbursed per LIHTC project.

- HOME Units Completed by State provides the number of HOME units completed since 1992 by state. The report also provides a breakdown of completed HOME units by tenure type and the amount of HOME funds committed and disbursed.
- HOME Units Completed by Congressional District provides the number of HOME units completed since 1992 by congressional district. The report also provides a breakdown of completed HOME units by tenure type and the amount of HOME funds committed and disbursed.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

The major responsibility of advocates is to continue pushing for increased federal appropriations. Advocates should ask Members of Congress to fully fund the HOME program at \$1.9 billion.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Low Income Housing Coalition, 202-662-1530, [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org).

HOME program on HUD Exchange, <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/home>.

HOME regulations, 24 CFR part 92 are at: <https://bit.ly/3DmMb64>.

# Low-Income Housing Tax Credits

---

By Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, NLIHC

**Administering Agency:** Internal Revenue Service (IRS) of the Department of the Treasury

**Year Started:** 1986

**Number of Households Served:** HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research [reports](#) that 1,400 projects and 106,400 units were placed in service annually between 1995 to 2018, and that 49,449 projects and 3.24 million housing units were [placed in service between 1987 and 2019](#).

[Characteristics of LIHTC Projects Placed in Service Through 2019](#)

**Population Targeted:** Households with income either less than 60% of area median income (AMI) or 50% AMI.

**Funding:** In 2020 the Joint Committee on Taxation estimated \$10.9 billion in foregone tax revenues ("tax expenditures") for 2022, growing to \$11.6 billion for 2024. For the period 2020 through 2024 the total foregone tax revenue was estimated to be \$54.6 billion (2021 updated estimates were not available as of December 3, 2021).

The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program (LIHTC) finances the construction, rehabilitation, and preservation of housing affordable to lower-income households. The LIHTC program encourages private investment by providing a tax credit: a dollar-for-dollar reduction in federal taxes owed on other income. Although the LIHTC program is federal, each state (and some localities) has an independent agency, generally called a housing finance agency (HFA) that decides how to allocate the state's share of federal housing tax credits within a framework formed by the Internal Revenue Code.

## HISTORY

The LIHTC program was created by the "Tax Reform Act of 1986" and is codified at Section 42 of the Internal Revenue Code, 26 U.S.C. 42, so tax credit projects are sometimes referred to as "Section 42" projects. The IRS provides additional guidance through regulations (Title 26 - Chapter I - Subchapter A - Part 1 - Subgroup §1.42, revenue rulings, revenue procedures, notices, technical advice memorandums, private letter rulings, and other means.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

The LIHTC program finances the construction, rehabilitation, and preservation of housing affordable to lower-income households. LIHTC can be used to support a variety of projects: multifamily or single-family housing, new construction or rehabilitation, special needs housing for elderly people or people with disabilities, and permanent supportive housing for homeless families and individuals. Although the LIHTC program is federal, each state (and some localities) has an independent housing finance agency (HFA) that decides how to allocate the state's share of LIHTC, which is based on each state's population.

LIHTC is designed to encourage corporations and private individuals to invest cash in housing affordable to lower-income people; those with income less than 60% of the area median income (AMI) or 50% AMI. LIHTC provides this encouragement by providing a tax credit to the investor over the course of a 10-year "credit period," a dollar-for-dollar reduction in federal taxes owed on other income. The cash that investors put up, called equity, is used along with other resources such as the HOME Investment Partnerships program (HOME) or the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF) to build new affordable housing or to make substantial repairs to existing affordable housing. LIHTC is not meant to provide 100% financing. The infusion of equity reduces

the amount of money a developer must borrow and pay interest on, thereby reducing the rent level that needs to be charged.

## PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

### LIHTC Units

Until 2018, when applying to an HFA for tax credits, a developer had two lower-income unit set-aside options and had to stick with the chosen option during a required lower-income occupancy period. Income averaging was introduced in 2018 by the “Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018.”

The traditional two lower-income unit set-aside choices are:

- Ensuring that at least 20% of the units are rent-restricted and occupied by households with income less than 50% of AMI.
- Ensuring that at least 40% of the units are rent-restricted and occupied by households with income less than 60% of AMI.

For projects using one of the two traditional set-aside choices, tax credits are available only for rental units that meet one of the above rent-restricted minimums (20/50 or 40/60). With these minimums it is possible for LIHTC projects to have a mix of units occupied by people of lower, moderate, and middle incomes. These are minimums; projects can have higher percentages of rent-restricted units occupied by lower-income people. In fact, the more rent-restricted lower-income units in a project, the greater the amount of tax credits provided. New developments should balance considerations of the need for more units with the value of mixed-income developments and with concerns about undue concentrations of lower-income households in certain neighborhoods.

The FY18 appropriations act added a third option: income averaging. This allows developers who choose the income averaging option to commit at least 40% of the units in a property to have an average designated income limit of no more than 60% AMI, with rents set at a fixed amount of 30% of a unit’s designated income limit. The developer

decides the mix of designated income limits. The designated income limits may be in 10% increments from 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%, 60%, 70%, up to 80% of AMI. A unit can only be occupied by a household with income equal to or less than the unit’s designated income with the rent for that unit fixed at 30% of the designated income limit (except any units designated 10% AMI units will be counted as 20% AMI units for income averaging). For example, if a unit is designated at 20% AMI, the household’s income must be equal to or less than 20% AMI and the maximum rent is capped at 30% of 20% AMI. If a unit is designated at 80% AMI, the household’s income must be equal to or less than 80% AMI and the maximum rent is capped at 30% of 80% AMI.

The purpose of the new income averaging option is to enable developers to offset lower rents for extremely low-income households by charging higher rents to households with income greater than the more traditional 60% AMI level. Advocates have some initial concerns about this new option, as discussed in the “Issues and Concerns” section of this article. IRS published a [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) about income averaging on October 30, 2020 with comments due December 29, 2020. As of the drafting of this *Advocates’ Guide* article, a final rule has not been published.

A report by researchers from the Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy at New York University was published in *Housing Policy Debate* in May 2013. The researchers used tenant-level data from 18 states representing 40% of all LIHTC units. The report found that LIHTC recipients tend to have higher incomes than households assisted by other federal rental assistance programs. Although 45% of the households had income less than 30% AMI and were “extremely low income” (ELI), approximately 70% of those ELI households also had other forms of rental assistance, such as vouchers. For the 30% of ELI LIHTC households who did not have rental assistance, 86% paid more than 30% of their income for rent and utilities and therefore suffered a “cost burden;”

58% endured “severe cost burden,” paying more than 50% of their income for rent and utilities.

HUD’s latest [LIHTC tenant report](#) (December 31, 2019) indicates that 52.6% of LIHTC tenants have income at or less than 30% AMI and 40.2% receive some amount of rental assistance. Rent cost burden (spending more than 30% of income for rent and utilities) is experienced by 37.6% of LIHTC tenants and severe cost burden (spending more than 50% of income for rent and utilities) is experienced by 9.4% of LIHTC tenants.

## LIHTC RENTS

Rent-restricted units have fixed maximum gross rents, including allowance for utilities, that are equal to or less than the rent charged to a hypothetical tenant paying 30% of 50% of AMI or 60% of AMI, or one of the designated increments in an income averaging project – whichever option a developer has chosen. Tenants may have to pay rent up to that fixed maximum tax credit rent even if it is greater than 30% of their income. In other words, the maximum rent a tenant pays is not based on 30% of the tenant’s income; rather it is based on 30% of the fixed AMI level (for example, 50% or 60% for the two traditional options).

Consequently, lower-income residents of tax credit projects might be rent-burdened, meaning they pay more than 30% of their income for rent and utilities. Or, LIHTC projects might simply not be financially available to extremely low-income households (those with income less than 30% of AMI) or very low-income households (those with income less than 50% of AMI) because rents charged are not affordable to them. HUD’s tenant-based or project-based vouchers or U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Section 521 Rental Assistance is often needed to fill the gap between 30% of a resident’s actual income and the tax credit rent.

## LOWER-INCOME OCCUPANCY PERIOD

The law requires units to be “rent-restricted” and occupied by income-eligible households for at least 15 years, called the “compliance period,” with an “extended use period” of at least another 15 years for a total of 30 years. Some states require low-income housing commitments greater than 30 years or provide incentives for projects that voluntarily agree to longer commitments. An NLIHC report, [\*Balancing Priorities: Preservation and Neighborhood Opportunity in the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program Beyond Year 30\*](#), found that 8,420 LIHTC properties accounting for 486,799 LIHTC units will reach Year 30 between 2020 and 2029. This is nearly 25% of all current LIHTC units.

Where states do not mandate longer “restricted-use periods,” an owner may submit a request to the HFA to sell a project or convert it to market rate during year 14 of the 15-year compliance period. The HFA then has one year to find a buyer willing to maintain the rent restrictions for the balance of the 30-year period. If the property cannot be sold to such a “preservation purchaser,” then the owner’s obligation to maintain rent-restricted units is removed and lower-income tenants receive enhanced vouchers enabling them to remain in their units for three years. This Year 15 option is called the Qualified Contract (QC) and is discussed in the “Issues and Concerns section of this article.”

HFAs must monitor projects for compliance with the income and rent restriction requirements. The IRS can recapture tax credits if a project fails to comply, or if there are housing code or fair housing violations. However, the extent to which HFAs monitor compliance after the 10-year credit period and following 5-year “recapture period” is not clear (see the “Issues and Concerns” section of this article).

## PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Although LIHTC is a federal program, each state has an HFA that decides how to award tax credits to projects. Tax credits have two levels: 9% and 4% (discussed further below). The 9% tax credits are allocated to states by the U.S. Treasury Department based on a state's per-capita population along with an inflation factor. In 2022, each state will receive \$2.60 per capita (down from \$2.81 per capita the previous two years), with small states receiving a minimum of \$2.975 million (down from \$3.25 million in 2021, which was a slight increase from 2020). Developers apply to an HFA and compete for 9% LIHTC allocations. Because there is a fixed amount of 9% tax credits, they are very competitive.

However, there is no direct limit on the amount of 4% tax credits an HFA can award. Instead, the 4% tax credit amount a state can award is indirectly limited by the amount of a state's Private Activity Bond (PAB) volume cap, which seldom is a problem. The 4% tax credit can only be used in conjunction with a tax-exempt private activity bond.

Each HFA must have a qualified allocation plan (QAP) that sets out the state's priorities and eligibility criteria for awarding LIHTC, as well as tax-exempt bonds and any state-level tax credits. More about QAPs is presented later in this article. The law requires that a minimum of 10% of an HFA's total LIHTC be set aside for nonprofits.

## LIMITED PARTNERSHIPS

Once awarded tax credits, a developer then sells them to investors, usually to a group of investors (mostly corporations) pulled together by someone called a syndicator. Syndicators sometimes pool several tax credit projects together and sell investors shares in the pool. The equity that the investors provide, along with other resources such as conventional mortgages, state loans, and funds from the HOME and HTF programs, is used by the developer to construct or substantially rehabilitate affordable housing.

The developer and investors form a "limited partnership" in which the developer is the

"general partner" and the investors are "limited partners." The general partner owns very little of the project (maybe as little as 1%) yet has a very active role in construction or rehabilitation and day-to-day operation of the completed project. The limited partners own most of the project (maybe up to 99%) but play a passive role; they are involved only to take advantage of the reduction in their annual federal tax obligations.

## 9% AND 4% TAX CREDITS

Two levels of tax credit are available, 9% and 4%, formally known as the "applicable percentages." Projects can combine 9% and 4% tax credits. For example, buildings can be bought with 4% tax credits and then substantially rehabilitated with 9% tax credits. Instead of "9%" and "4%," tax credits are sometimes referred to by the net present value they are intended to yield, either 70% or 30%. That is, in the case of a 9% tax credit, the stream of tax credits over the 10-year credit period has a value today equal to 70% of the eligible development costs.

The 9% tax credit is available for new construction and substantial rehabilitation projects that do not have other federal funds. Federal funds include loans and bonds with below market-rate interest. Rehabilitation is "substantial" if a minimum amount is spent on each rent-restricted lower-income unit or 10% is spent on the "eligible basis" (described below) during a 24-month period, whichever is greater. Each year the IRS issues a revised minimum substantial rehab amount; for 2022 the amount remains at \$7,400.

The 4% tax credit is available for three types of activities:

- Acquisition of existing buildings for substantial rehabilitation.
- New construction or substantial rehabilitation subsidized with other federal funds.
- Projects financed with tax-exempt Private Activity Bonds (PABs). Every year, states are allowed to issue a set amount, known as the "volume cap," of tax-exempt bonds for a variety of economic development purposes. In

2022 the PAB volume cap is \$110 per capita, with a small state minimum of \$3.35 million.

The “Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes Act of 2015” permanently fixed the applicable percentage at 9% for new or substantially rehabbed buildings placed in service after July 30, 2008. For many years before, 9% was only an approximate rate that varied monthly, the “appropriate percentage” (which if still floating would be 7.36% in December 2021).

However, the statute did not establish a fixed 4% applicable percentage rate. The 4% tax credit continued to float, until it was fixed at 4% by the FY21 appropriations act (if it had continued to float, the 4% tax credit would have had an applicable percentage rate of 3.15% for December 2021).

For any given project, the real tax credit rate is set the month a binding commitment is made between an HFA and developer, or the month a finished project was first occupied (referred to as “placed in service.”) This applicable percentage is applied to the “qualified basis” (described below) to determine the investors’ tax credit each year for 10 years (the “credit period”).

## **DETERMINING THE AMOUNT OF TAX CREDITS FOR A PROJECT**

The amount of tax credit a project can receive, and therefore how much equity it can attract, depends on several factors. First, the “eligible basis” must be determined by considering costs such as building acquisition, construction, soil tests, engineering costs, and utility hookups. Land acquisition and permanent financing costs are not counted toward the eligible basis. The eligible basis is usually reduced by the amount of any federal funds helping to finance a project.

The eligible basis of a project can get a 30% increase, a “basis boost,” if the project is located in a census tract designated by HUD as a low-income tract (a Qualified Census Tract, or QCT) or a high-cost area (a Difficult to Develop Area, or DDA). QCTs are census tracts with a poverty rate of 25% or in which 50% of the households have income less than 60% of AMI. LIHTC projects in

QCTs must contribute to a “concerted community revitalization” plan (discussed below in the Qualified Allocation Plan section). The aggregate population in census tracts designated as QCTs in a metropolitan area cannot exceed 20% of the metropolitan area’s population. DDAs are areas in which construction, land, and utility costs are high relative to incomes. All DDAs in metropolitan areas taken together may not contain more than 20% of the aggregate population of all metropolitan areas. The “Housing and Economic Recovery Act” (HERA) expanded the use of the 30% basis boost to projects not located in QCTs or DDAs if an HFA determines that an increase in the credit amount is necessary for a project to be financially feasible. Each year, HUD updates a list of QCTs and DDAs.

Next, the “applicable fraction” must be determined. This is a measure of rent-restricted lower-income units in a project. Two percentages are possible: the ratio of lower-income units to all units (the “unit fraction”), or the ratio of square feet in the lower-income units to the project’s total square feet (the “floor space fraction”). The lowest percentage is the applicable fraction. The applicable fraction agreed to by the developer and IRS at the time a building is first occupied (“placed in service”) is the minimum that must be maintained during the entire affordability period (“compliance period”).

The “qualified basis” is the eligible basis multiplied by the applicable fraction. The amount of annual tax credits a project can get is the qualified basis multiplied by the tax credit rate (9% or 4%). The amount of tax credits available to a project is divided among the limited partners based on each limited partner’s share of the equity investment. Investors receive their share of the tax credit each year over the 10-year “credit period.”

<b>TABLE 1</b>		
Total development costs	\$5,000,000	
	Land acquisition	\$1,000,000
	Construction	\$3,400,000
	Site Improvements	\$ 535,000
	Engineering	\$ 40,000
	Eligible Soft Costs	\$ 25,000
Eligible Basis: Total Development Cost - Land Acquisition = \$4,000,000		
Qualified Basis: Eligible Basis x Applicable Fraction (\$4,000,000 x .40) = \$1,600,000		
Annual Tax Credit: Qualified Basis x Tax Credit Rate (\$1,600,000 x .09) = \$144,000		
Total Amount of Tax Credits: \$144,000 x 10 years = \$1,440,000		

### A Simple Example (Table 1)

HUD's HOME Program website gave a simple example (no longer available on HOME website):

Project will construct 70 units, 40% of them are income and rent restricted.

There are no other federal funds.

The example continues, noting that a limited partnership will buy the tax credits at \$0.75 for every dollar of future tax benefit (the tax credit "price"). Thus, the limited partnership will invest \$1,080,000 (\$1,440,000 x .75) in the project today for a 10-year stream of future tax benefits amounting to \$1,440,000.

## QUALIFIED ALLOCATION PLAN

The statute authorizing the LIHTC program requires each agency that allocates federal LIHTCs, (usually HFAs), to have a Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP). Each state has an HFA and there are also a few local HFAs. The QAP sets out a state's eligibility criteria and priorities for awarding federal LIHTCs to housing properties. In some states, the QAP also sets out threshold criteria for non-competitive 4% tax credits, any state LIHTC, and other state-funded housing programs. HFAs are listed by the [National Council of State Housing Agencies \(NCSHA\)](#) and the [Novogradac Corporation](#).

The QAP is a tool advocates can use to influence how their state's share of annual federal LIHTCs

is allocated to affordable housing properties. Advocates can use the public hearing and comment requirements to convince their housing finance agency to better target tax credits to properties with extremely low-income households, locate projects in priority areas (particularly to affirmatively further fair housing), and preserve the existing stock of affordable housing.

Each QAP must specify an HFA's minimal criteria and priorities that it will use to select projects competing for tax credits. The priorities must be appropriate to local conditions. The statute requires a QAP to give preference to projects:

- Serving residents with the lowest incomes.
- Serving income-eligible residents for the longest period.
- Located in HUD-designated QCTs, as long as the project contributes to a "concerted community revitalization plan" (QCTs are census tracts with a poverty rate of 25% or in which 50% of the households have income less than 60% of AMI).

In December 2016, IRS issued [Notice 2016-77](#) stating that QAPs may only give preference to projects in QCTs if there is a "concerted community revitalization plan" and only if that plan contains more components than just the LIHTC project. That Notice observed that in some cases HFAs have given preference to



projects located QCTs without regard to whether the projects would contribute to a concerted community revitalization plan. In other cases, because development of new multifamily housing benefits a neighborhood, a LIHTC project without other types of community improvements has been treated as if it alone constituted a concerted community revitalization plan. IRS declared that simply placing a LIHTC project in a QCT risks increasing concentrations of poverty. Therefore, a QCT preference should only occur when there is an added benefit to the neighborhood in the form of the project's contribution to a concerted community revitalization plan. The Notice requested public input to define "concerted community revitalization plan" because the IRS Code does not have a definition. To date, the IRS has not proposed definitions of "concerted community revitalization plan."

The QAP selection criteria must address 10 items: (1) location, (2) housing needs, (3) public housing waiting lists, (4) individuals with children, (5) special needs populations, (6) whether a project includes the use of existing housing as part of a community revitalization plan, (7) project sponsor characteristics, (8) projects intended for eventual tenant ownership, (9) energy efficiency, and (10) historic nature. These requirements are minimums; states may adopt more rigorous criteria that target advocates' priority populations and locations. Most states establish detailed QAP selection criteria and set-asides based on the characteristics of their state's needs.

HFAs may target tax credits in several ways:

- The QAP selection process may give preferences, in the form of extra points, to encourage developers to submit projects more likely to serve particular populations or locations; for example, by awarding 10 points to projects that set aside 10% of the units for special needs populations.
- The QAP may establish a set-aside, reserving a specific percentage or dollar amount of any given year's tax credit allocation for projects more likely to serve particular populations or locations. For example, there may be a \$20

million set-aside for rural projects.

- The QAP may establish thresholds or minimum requirements that projects must meet simply to get in the game, thus improving targeting to particular populations or locations. For example, they may require a 50-year income-eligible compliance period.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

Because each state receives a new allocation of LIHTCs each year, QAPs are usually drafted annually. This gives advocates regularly scheduled opportunities to influence QAP priorities. LIHTCs are often in high demand among developers; therefore, developers propose projects that address the priorities set forth in the QAP to give themselves an advantage in the selection process.

Advocates should assess the QAP. If it only has a general statement of goals, advocates can work to get very specific set-asides or preference points for their priorities. If the QAP has too many priorities, this will render individual priorities less meaningful. Advocates should work to narrow the number of priorities or work to establish relative priorities so their priorities can compete more effectively.

If there are types of assisted housing that should be at the top of the priority list, advocates should work to ensure that they are positioned to better compete. For example, if there is a great need for units with more than two bedrooms, advocates might promote a QAP policy offering bonus points for projects providing units with two or more bedrooms for at least 10% of all low-income units. To facilitate rural projects, advocates might try to secure QAP policies that give points to projects with fewer than 50 units in rural areas.

Advocates can also argue for features that protect tenants, for example a QAP policy precluding tax credit assistance for projects that do not provide one-for-one replacement of units lost through redevelopment. Advocates should review the QAP to find out how long targeted units must serve lower-income people. If the QAP only requires the basic 15 years, plus the extended use period

of another 15 years, advocates should try to get the compliance period lengthened as a threshold issue or try to get point preferences or set-asides for projects that voluntarily agree to a longer compliance period.

All states are required to have a public hearing about their proposed QAP before it is approved by the unit of government overseeing the HFA, but there are no specific requirements for the public hearing. Although not required, most states also provide for a public review and comment period for a proposed QAP.

Advocates should contact the HFA early to learn about its annual QAP process and build this into their work plan for the year. In addition, advocates should be sure to get on any notification list the HFA might have about the QAP and public hearings. Advocates should also develop relationships with the HFA's governing board and communicate the advocate's priorities throughout the year. Not all communication has to take place in the context of the formal QAP process. Informal contacts can be used effectively to advance an advocate's priorities. In fact, the most effective means of advocating for any particular priority is to be in contact with the HFA long before a draft QAP is publicly released.

Once an HFA decides to award tax credits to a building, it must notify the chief executive officer of the local jurisdiction (such as the mayor or county executive) where the building is located. That official must have a reasonable opportunity to comment on the project. Advocates should ask the executive's office and any relevant housing department at the locality to notify them as soon as the HFA contacts the executive about a proposed project. Even better, advocates should seek a local policy requiring public notice and comment, along with public hearings, about a proposed project.

In December 2016, the IRS issued [Revenue Ruling 2016-29](#) holding that the IRS Code does not require or encourage state agencies allocating LIHTCs to reject proposals that do not obtain the approval of the locality where a project is proposed to be developed. IRS added that QAP

policies requiring local officials to approve a proposed project could have a discriminatory effect based on race and therefore be contrary to the "Fair Housing Act of 1968."

Before tax credits are allocated, there must be a comprehensive market study of the housing needs of low-income people in the area a project is to serve. The project developer must hire a third party approved by the HFA to conduct the market study.

If a building that does not fit the QAP's priorities is to receive tax credits, the HFA must provide a written explanation and make it available to the public.

Most states post a list of properties that have won tax credits after each round of competition. These lists can often be found on an HFA's website.

## ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Advocates have growing concerns about four practices that can affect LIHTC properties keeping income and rent restrictions: Properties reaching Year 30 and the potential loss of rent-restricted units, Qualified Contracts (QCs), "planned foreclosures," and the extent that HFAs monitor projects for compliance with income and rent restrictions for the full 30-year (or longer) extended use period. In addition, there are potential issues with the new "income averaging" option.

### Income Averaging

The "FY18 Appropriations Act" introduced a third option for meeting a LIHTC lower-income unit set-aside: income averaging. This allows a developer to commit at least 40% of the units in a property to having an average designated income limit of no more than 60% AMI, with rents set at a fixed amount of 30% of a unit's designated income limit. IRS finally published a [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) about income averaging on October 30, 2020 with comments due December 29, 2020. As of the drafting of this *Advocates' Guide* article, a final rule has not been published.

The primary concern is that there is potential for fewer LIHTC units being available to extremely

low-income households with Housing Choice Vouchers. As previously noted, researchers have found that 45% of all LIHTC households have extremely low income and that 70% of these ELI households have rental assistance in order to be able to afford their LIHTC unit. HUD data from the end of 2019 also shows that nearly 53% of LIHTC households have extremely low income. The researchers could not discern whether the rental assistance was from a Housing Choice Voucher or project-based Section 8. A public housing agency's (PHA's) voucher "payment standard" might not be enough to meet the contract rent, the actual rent charged by the owner of the LIHTC unit (the payment standard is the amount of the voucher that makes up the difference between the contract rent charged by the owner and the tenant's share of the rent at 30% of the tenant's adjusted income). The payment standard is very likely to be inadequate for units designated at 70% AMI or 80% AMI in areas that have high overall AMIs.

The National Housing Law Project (NHLP) provides an example of a 50-unit building with five units at 80% AMI, 15 units at 70% AMI, five units at 60% AMI, 15 units at 50% AMI, and 10 units at 40% AMI. The average AMI in this example is 58%, but 20 out of the 50 units may be out of reach for voucher households. NHLP suggests that advocates convince their state to draft a QAP that has incentives or requirements that the highest LIHTC rents be set at or below the local voucher payment standard.

Another potential problem is that income averaging might lead to fewer larger units for ELI households even though the community might need more larger units for ELI households. The income averaging calculation does not take unit size into consideration. A property could designate most of the smaller units at the lowest AMI and most of the larger units at the highest AMI and still come in at an average AMI less than 60% of AMI.

## BEYOND YEAR 30

An NLIHC report, *Balancing Priorities: Preservation and Neighborhood Opportunity in the Low-Income*

*Housing Tax Credit Program Beyond Year 30*, found that 8,420 LIHTC properties accounting for 486,799 LIHTC units will reach Year 30 between 2020 and 2029. This is nearly 25% of all current LIHTC units. For-profit owners have 336,089 (69%) of these units, placing the units at risk after Year 30. At least 81,513 (17%) of these units have nonprofit owners so they will likely continue to operate as "affordable" housing if there is adequate support to make needed repairs for aging units.

Between 2020 and 2029, 42% of the LIHTC units losing their affordability restrictions are in neighborhoods with very low desirability and 26% are in low desirability neighborhoods. It is these units that likely face the most significant challenges meeting capital needs for rehabilitation because they can only rely on lower rental income.

On the other hand, 10% of the LIHTC units with expiring affordability restrictions are in high desirability neighborhoods and another 5% are in very high desirability neighborhoods. For-profit developers own 36,282 units in high desirability neighborhoods and another 16,641 units in very-high desirability neighborhoods. These units owned by for-profit entities are likely at the greatest risk for being repositioned as market-rate housing.

## QUALIFIED CONTRACTS

As explained earlier, an owner may submit a request to an HFA to sell a project or convert it to market rate during year 14 of the 15-year compliance period. This is called a Qualified Contract (QC). The HFA then has one year to find a buyer willing to maintain the income and rent restrictions for the balance of the 30-year period. If the property cannot be sold to such a "preservation purchaser," then the owner's obligation to maintain income- and rent-restricted units is removed, and the lower-income tenants receive enhanced vouchers enabling them to remain in their units for three years (for more about enhanced vouchers, see "Vouchers: Tenant Protection Vouchers" in Chapter 4 of this *Advocates' Guide*.) The IRS code specifies the

price that a preservation purchaser must pay in a QC situation, and in most cases the price is far greater than market price. Consequently, preservation purchasers are unable to acquire a LIHTC property at year 15, the property converts to market-rate, and income and rent restrictions are removed.

In a recent report, *2021 Picture of Preservation*, NLIHC estimates that approximately 143,456 homes awarded a LIHTC subsidy since 1990 lost their affordability restrictions early. Eighty percent of these homes lost their affordability restrictions after 15 years of affordability, suggesting they may have exited through the QC process

To prevent the loss of affordable housing, some HFA's QAPs require LIHTC applicants to waive their right to a QC or give extra competitive points to proposals agreeing to waive the right to a QC. Some HFAs inform LIHTC applicants that if they eventually seek a QC, they will not be allowed to apply for LIHTCs in the future.

The National Council of State Housing Agencies updated its "[Recommended Practices in Housing Credit Administration](#)" in December 2017. It recommended that all states should require LIHTC applicants to waive their right to a QC for both 9% and 4% LIHTCs. In addition, it recommended that QAPs include disincentives for owners of existing LIHTC properties to seek a QC by awarding negative points in the event an owner applies for future LIHTCs.

### **Aggregators**

Another feature related to year 15 is becoming a serious problem. The LIHTC law has afforded mission-driven nonprofits a special privilege to secure at the outset of preparing a LIHTC application with investors, a right to obtain eventual ownership of the project at a minimum purchase price after 15 years (called a transfer right). In recent years, some private firms have begun to systematically challenge nonprofits' project transfer rights with the intent to eventually sell the property at market value. So-called "aggregators" acquire the initial investors' interest in the property after the investors have obtained their 10-year tax savings benefits but

before the rent restrictions expire at year 15. Aggregators are very large financial entities that take advantage of a legal ambiguity regarding the nonprofit's "right of first refusal" to purchase the property by employing batteries of attorneys and other expensive maneuvers to overwhelm the mission-driven nonprofit. The Washington State Housing Finance Commission and others have been resisting the growing threat of aggregators in court (see *An Emerging Threat to Affordable Housing: Nonprofit Transfer Disputes in the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program*).

### **Planned Foreclosures**

Another concern is with entities that appear to engage in strategic acquisition of LIHTC-funded properties after the LIHTC is allocated (and, in many instances, already claimed) with the hope of avoiding the LIHTC use restrictions. Advocates have identified "planned foreclosures," actions by partners in LIHTC developments designed to result in a foreclosure and thus wipe out the affordable use restrictions. In such cases, the entity planning the foreclosure was not involved in the LIHTC application process and is not an entity that applies for LIHTCs. Instead, the entity buys into the development, loans itself money through distinct but related companies, and then essentially forecloses on itself after claiming that properties are unsuccessful. Unlike HFA-trusted partners that are sensitive to their standing with the HFA because they hope to secure LIHTCs in the future, planned foreclosure entities do not seek future LIHTC allocations. Because such firms operate outside of the QAP process, eligibility for future LIHTCs does not work as a disincentive to avoiding use restrictions.

Congress specifically gave the Treasury Secretary the authority to determine that such intentional transactions do not qualify as foreclosures that terminate the LIHTC affordable use requirements. Although the LIHTC program has been in existence for more than 30 years, the IRS has provided no guidance to HFAs regarding how to deal with these situations. If ever passed, the "Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act," (AHCIA) would address planned foreclosures (see "Forecast for 2022" below).

## COMPLYING WITH USE RESTRICTIONS AFTER YEAR 15

Although HFAs are tasked with monitoring compliance, additional guidance is needed to ensure that properties comply with regulations through the extended use period, the period after year 15 to at least year 30 (and for some states longer). During the initial 10-year credit period and the five-year recapture period, developments are less likely to have compliance issues because they are subject to losing tax credits. However, during the following extended use period, it is difficult to encourage compliance because there are few penalties for failing to do so. HFAs focus compliance monitoring and enforcement during the initial 15-year term. This is problematic given that a property is more likely to have compliance issues as it ages. IRS needs to develop guidance or new regulations to require an HFA to plan for how they will ensure compliance throughout the entire restricted use period.

## FUNDING

The LIHTC is a tax expenditure that does not require an appropriation. In 2020 the Joint Committee on Taxation estimated \$10.9 billion in foregone tax revenues (“tax expenditures”) for 2022, growing to \$11.6 billion for 2024. For the period 2020 through 2024 the total foregone tax revenue was estimated to be \$54.6 billion. (The 2021 updated estimates were not available as of December 3, 2021.)

## FORECAST FOR 2022

Given the need for affordable rental homes for people with the lowest incomes, Congress should pair any expansion of the LIHTC with reforms to ensure that this resource can better serve families with the greatest needs. For that reason, NLIHC urges Congress to enact the “Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act,” (AHCIA) introduced by Senators Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Todd Young (R-IN), Ron Wyden (D-OR), and Rob Portman (R-OH), and Representatives Suzan DelBene (D-WA), Jackie Walorski (R-IN), Don Beyer (D-VA), and Brad Wenstrup (R-OH). The bill would expand LIHTC by 50% over two years

and allow income averaging for 4% projects and Multifamily Bonds. The bill would improve the program by making reforms such as:

- Providing a 50% basis boost for developments that set aside at least 20% of the units for extremely low-income households (those with income less than 30% of AMI or income less than the federal poverty level), thereby increasing investment in a project. With this much-needed financial incentive, the bill would help housing developments remain financially sustainable while serving families with limited means.
- Encouraging development in Native American communities by designating them as Difficult to Develop Areas (DDAs), thus making developments automatically eligible for a 30% basis boost. The bill also requires states to consider the needs of Native Americans when allocating housing tax credits.
- Encouraging development in rural areas by designating rural areas as DDAs, thus making developments automatically eligible for a 30% basis boost. The bill also would base the income limits in rural projects to the greater of area median income or the national nonmetropolitan median income, in recognition of the much lower incomes in rural areas.
- Prohibiting measures that local officials have used to resist locating projects in areas of opportunity. The bill would remove the provision requiring HFAs to notify the chief executive officer of the local jurisdiction in which a proposed building would be located. The bill would also specify that QAP selection criteria cannot include consideration of any support for or opposition to a project from local elected officials, or of local government contributions to a development.
- Better aligning the LIHTC program with the “Violence Against Women Act” (VAWA) by requiring all long-term use agreements to include VAWA protections. The bill would also clarify that an owner should treat a tenant who has their lease bifurcated due to violence

covered by VAWA as an existing tenant who should not have to recertify their income eligibility as if they were a new tenant.

- Ensuring that affordability restrictions endure in the case of illegitimate foreclosures (“planned foreclosures”) by providing HFAs, rather than the Treasury Department, the authority to determine whether the foreclosure was an arrangement simply to revoke the affordability restrictions. The bill would also require owners to provide HFAs with at least 60 days’ written notice of intent to terminate the affordability period, giving the HFA more time to assess the legitimacy of the foreclosure.
- Allowing existing tenants to be considered low income if their income increases, up to 120% AMI.
- Replacing the current LIHTC student rule to better align with HUD’s student rule, by ensuring that households composed entirely of adult students under the age of 24 who are enrolled full-time at institutions of higher learning are ineligible to live in a LIHTC apartment. Exceptions exist for single parents, formerly homeless youth, those aging out of foster care, victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, and veterans.
- Clarifying that LIHTC can be used to develop properties specifically for veterans and other special populations.
- Allowing tenant relocation costs incurred in connection with rehabilitation to be capitalized as part of the cost of rehab.
- Allowing HFAs to determine what constitutes a “concerted community revitalization plan.”
- Removing the QCT population cap.
- Increasing the DDA population cap to 30% to enable properties in more areas to benefit from the 30% basis boost.
- Allowing HFAs to provide a basis boost of 30% for Housing Bond-financed properties.
- Requiring HFAs to consider cost reasonableness in the QAP selection criteria.

- Limiting the rent charged to the maximum LIHTC rent instead of the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for units leased to households with a voucher if the unit is also benefiting from income averaging or the extremely low-income basis boost. The voucher payment standard based on the FMR can be much higher than the LIHTC maximum rent. Using the FMR in such instances subsidizes the property, providing excess rental assistance that could otherwise be used by public housing agencies (PHAs) to provide vouchers to other families.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

NLIHC, 202-662-1530, [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org).

A NLIHC’s report has two reports:

- *Picture of Preservation 2021*, [https://preservationdatabase.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/NHPD\\_2021Report.pdf](https://preservationdatabase.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/NHPD_2021Report.pdf)
- *Balancing Priorities: Preservation and Neighborhood Opportunity in the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program Beyond Year 30*, <https://nlihc.org/research/balancing-priorities>.

National Housing Law Project, <https://www.nhlp.org/resource-center/low-income-housing-tax-credits>, including a new publication, *An Advocate’s Guide to Tenants’ Rights in the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program*, <https://www.nhlp.org/wp-content/uploads/LIHTC-2021.pdf>

Affordable Rental Housing A.C.T.I.O.N. Campaign, <http://rentalhousingaction.org>.

HUD PD&R’s database of LIHTC projects, updated through 2019, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/lihtc.html>.

HUD PD&R’S list of QCTs and DDAs, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/qct.html>.

HUD PD&R’s Tenant Data, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/lihtc/tenant.html>.

HUD’s lists of HFAs, [https://lihtc.huduser.gov/agency\\_list.htm](https://lihtc.huduser.gov/agency_list.htm).

Novogradac, a consulting firm has on its [Affordable Housing Resource Center](#), a wealth of

LIHTC information, including:

- A list of HFAs in all states, <http://bit.ly/XoOL2b>.
- A list of state income averaging policies, <https://bit.ly/2PBf3jH>.
- Links to state QAPs, <https://bit.ly/2ry4xS8>.
- The IRS Code, regulations, IRS Revenue Rulings, IRS Revenue Procedures, and IRS Notices, <https://www.novoco.com/lihtc-irs-guidance>.

The National Council of State Housing Agencies (NCSHA) has:

- Recommended practices for administering the LIHTC program, <https://www.ncsha.org/resource-center/housing-credit-recommended-practices>.
- A list of state HFAs, <https://www.ncsha.org/membership/hfa-members>.
- A list of state income averaging policies, <https://www.ncsha.org/resource/state-income-averaging-policies>.
- LIHTC Reference Guide webpage <https://www.ncsha.org/resource/housing-credit-reference-guide> has a wealth of information, including the IRS Code, regulations, IRS Revenue Rulings, IRS Revenue Procedures, and IRS Notices.

Washington State Housing Finance Commission, *An Emerging Threat to Affordable Housing: Nonprofit Transfer Disputes in the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program*, <https://bit.ly/34eRWAM>.

# Housing Bonds

---

Provided by the National Council of State Housing Agencies

**Administering Agency:** U.S. Department of the Treasury

**Year Started:** 1954

**Number of Households Served:** In 2020, state HFAs financed 45,556 mortgages for low- and moderate-income borrowers through Mortgage Revenue Bonds (MRBs), provided tax relief to 22,298 homebuyers through Mortgage Credit Certificates (MCCs), and built or rehabilitated 60,051 affordable rental units through multifamily bonds.

**Population Targeted:** Low- and moderate-income homebuyers and low-income renters

**See Also:** For related information, refer to the *Low-Income Housing Tax Credits* and *HOME Investment Partnerships Program sections* of this guide.

Housing bonds are used to finance lower interest mortgages for low- and moderate-income homebuyers, as well as for the acquisition, construction, and rehabilitation of multifamily housing for low-income renters. Investors are willing to purchase tax-exempt housing bonds and receive a lower interest rate than they would for other investments because the income from these bonds is tax free. The interest savings made possible by the tax exemption is passed on to homebuyers and renters in reduced housing costs.

Thanks in part to advocacy by state and local housing finance agencies (HFAs), other private activity bond issuers, and their partners, Congress preserved the exemption for housing and other private activity bonds in tax reform (through the “Tax Cuts and Jobs Act,” H.R. 1). The National Council of State Housing Agencies and others are now working with lawmakers to strengthen Housing Bonds and help HFAs better stretch their Housing Bond resources to finance more affordable housing for working families.

## HISTORY

Congress initially defined Private Activity Bonds (PABs) in the “Revenue and Expenditure Control Act of 1968.” While the list of qualified private activities has expanded over the years, both Exempt Facilities Bonds—a category that includes multifamily housing bonds—and single-family MRBs were original qualified private activities under the 1968 act.

Though issuance of some PABs is unlimited, both multifamily housing bonds and MRBs are limited by the PAB volume cap, which was first instituted under the “Deficit Reduction Act of 1984” and modified in 1986 (along with the list of qualified activities) with the “Tax Reform Act of 1986.”

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

PABs are distinct from other tax-exempt bonds because they are issued for activities that involve private entities, as opposed to governmental bonds, which support wholly governmental activities. The private activities financed with PABs must fulfill public purposes, and each PAB issuer must hold public hearings to solicit feedback from public stakeholders in the proposed uses of PAB authority. In addition to housing, PABs are issued for student loans, infrastructure, and redevelopment activities.

State and local HFAs have authority under the Internal Revenue Code to issue housing bonds to support affordable housing activities in their states. Issuing bonds is a way for HFAs to access private capital markets to help support affordable housing activities. HFAs sell the tax-exempt bonds to individual and corporate investors who are willing to purchase bonds paying lower than market interest rates because of the bonds’ tax-exempt status. This interest savings is passed on through private lenders to support affordable housing purchase and rental development.

There are two main types of housing bonds: MRBs, which finance single-family home purchases for qualified low- and moderate-



income homebuyers, and multifamily housing bonds, which finance the acquisition, construction, and rehabilitation of multifamily developments for low-income renters.

In recent years, due to the critical need for more affordable housing options for working families, Housing Bonds have comprised a substantially large share of PAB issuance each year. According to a report from the Council for Development Finance Agencies (CDFA), housing bonds accounted for 84 percent of total PAB issuance in 2019 and 88 percent of total issuance in 2020. Housing Bonds have made up at least 80 percent of all PABs issued for seven consecutive years.

### **Mortgage Revenue Bonds**

Proceeds from MRBs finance below-market rate mortgages to support the purchase of single-family homes. By lowering mortgage interest rates, MRBs make homeownership affordable for families who would not be able to qualify for market rate mortgage loans. HFAs often combine MRBs with down payment assistance that allows home purchases by families and individuals for whom a down payment would otherwise be a barrier to homeownership. In 2020, 84% of homebuyers who purchased a home financed by a stated HFA-issued MRB received down payment assistance.

Congress limits MRB mortgage loans to first-time homebuyers who earn no more than the greater of area or statewide median income in most areas and up to 140% of the applicable median income in targeted areas. Families of three or more in non-targeted areas can earn up to 115% of the greater of area or statewide median income. Congress also limits the price of homes purchased with MRB-financed mortgage loans to 90% of the average area purchase price in most areas and up to 110% of the average area purchase price in targeted areas.

HFAs also use their MRB authority to issue MCCs, which provide a non-refundable federal income tax credit of up to \$2,000 for part of the mortgage interest qualified homebuyers pay each year. The MCC program is a flexible subsidy source that can be adjusted depending on the incomes

of different homebuyers. It provides a relatively constant level of benefit to first-time homebuyers regardless of the difference between market and MRB rates.

Interested borrowers should contact their state or local HFA for information on obtaining an MRB mortgage loan or an MCC.

### **Multifamily Bonds**

Multifamily housing bonds provide financing for the acquisition, construction, or rehabilitation of rental housing that is affordable to low-income households by providing developers with low-cost capital as an alternative to higher interest market-rate loans. Multifamily housing developments with bond financing must set aside at least 40% of their apartments for families with incomes of 60% of area median income (AMI) or less, or 20% for families with incomes of 50% of AMI or less. The income-restricted apartments financed by those bonds must remain affordable for at least 15 years.

Rental developments that use tax-exempt bond financing to pay more than 50% of their total development costs are eligible to receive 4% Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) equity from outside the state-allocated LIHTC cap. In 2020, Congress set a 4% minimum rate for properties financed with multifamily housing bonds, whereas previously the credit rate floated based on federal borrowing rates. The minimum 4% rate will allow for the production of approximately 130,000 more affordable rental homes over the next decade.

In addition, many multifamily bonds finance special needs housing, such as housing for people formerly experiencing homelessness, veterans housing, transitional housing, senior housing, assisted living housing, housing for persons with disabilities, workforce housing, housing for persons with AIDS, migrant worker housing, and rural housing.

## **ISSUE SUMMARY**

In 2020, the most recent year for which data is available, state HFAs issued more than \$9.1 billion in MRBs and supported the purchase

of more than 45,500 homes nationwide. Some bond issuance was used to raise proceeds that were saved for use in future years and to refund prior-year bonds. States issued just over \$9.6 billion in multifamily housing bonds in 2020 to finance more than 50,000 affordable rental homes. Local HFAs also issued bonds to finance affordable mortgage loans and the construction or rehabilitation of multifamily rental housing, which helped even more lower income homeowners and renters.

Housing bonds have been an unqualified success in providing lower-income Americans an opportunity they might not otherwise have to own a decent, affordable home and to access quality rental opportunities. Using MRBs, HFAs have made homeownership possible for more than 3.3 million low- and moderate-income families. In 2020, 72% of MRB borrowers earned less than AMI. In that year, the median MRB borrower income was \$52,493, two-thirds of the national median income.

HFAs have also provided nearly 370,000 lower- and moderate-income homeowners critical tax relief through the MCC program. Eighty-three percent of all MCC borrowers in 2020 earned less than AMI.

An additional key point is that over 50% of all annual LIHTC rental home production utilizes housing bond financing. HFAs have used the LIHTC to produce nearly 3.5 million rental homes generally for families earning 60% of AMI or less. They add another 120,000 LIHTC apartments every year.

## FUNDING

By law, the annual state issuance of PABs, including MRBs and multifamily housing bonds, is capped by each state's population and indexed to inflation. The 2021 state cap is \$110 per capita with a per-state minimum of \$335,115,000.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

The House-passed "Build Back Better Act" (now stalled) included a provision that for five years would reduce the "bond financing threshold"

for projects to qualify for 4% housing tax credits from 50% to 25%. This will increase the amount of PAB authority available to support affordable housing development at a time when many states are oversubscribed. A study conducted by NCSHA and Novogradac has found that this change, if made permanent, could lead to the development of nearly 1.5 million more affordable homes over ten years. Congress will have an opportunity to make this change permanent, expand states' PAB bond authority, and make other legislative changes that could strengthen both MRBs and multifamily housing bonds.

As lawmakers continue to examine solutions to our nation's affordable housing crisis, advocates should remind them of the important role that Housing Bonds play in financing affordable housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income households and other underserved populations.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates should continue to educate legislators about the importance of housing bonds and ask them to preserve the tax exemption for private activity housing bonds and other municipal bonds. Advocates should ask legislators to express their support for the tax exemption for all municipal tax-exempt bonds and PABs, including housing bonds, directly to the leaders of the Senate Finance Committee or House Ways and Means Committee. Remind legislators that housing bonds and other PABs are necessary to promote much needed infrastructure improvements and address unmet housing needs.

Advocates should also ask legislators to strengthen the housing bond program with targeted improvements. These enhancements include:

- Considering mechanisms for increasing housing production through bond financing.
- Expanding multifamily housing bond recycling.
- Permanently lowering the LIHTC "50% Test."

- Repealing the housing bonds purchase price limit.
- Allowing housing bonds to be used to support loan refinancing.
- Increasing the MRB home improvement loan limit to reflect the increased costs of construction since the limit was first established in 1980.
- Strengthening the MCC program.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

National Council of State Housing Agencies, 202-624-7710, [www.ncsha.org](http://www.ncsha.org).

# The Affordable Housing Program and Community Investment Program of the Federal Home Loan Banks

---

By Sheila Owens, Council of Federal Home Loan Banks

The Federal Home Loan Banks (FHLBanks) are one of the nation's largest sources of private sector grants for housing and community development. They are behind-the-scenes players that perform a vital role in the nation's financial system. These 11 regional cooperatives provide reliable liquidity for their member institutions to turn into lendable funds. Local lending institutions borrow from the FHLBanks to finance housing, community development, infrastructure, and small businesses in their communities. The FHLBanks were created by Congress in 1932 and are regulated by the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA). FHFA was created by the "Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008" and regulates Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

## PROGRAM SUMMARIES

FHLBanks administer two housing and economic development programs.

**Affordable Housing Program (AHP).** The AHP is designed to help member financial institutions and their community partners develop affordable owner-occupied and rental housing for very low-to moderate-income families and individuals. Projects serve a wide range of needs. Many are designed for seniors, persons with disabilities, homeless families and individuals, first-time homeowners, and others with limited resources.

FHLBanks must contribute 10% of their net income from the previous year to affordable housing through the AHP. The minimum annual combined contribution by the 11 FHLBanks must total \$100 million. Member banks partner with developers and community organizations seeking to build and renovate housing for low-to moderate-income households. To ensure

that AHP-funded projects reflect local housing needs, each FHLBank is advised by an Affordable Housing Advisory Council for guidance on regional housing and community development issues.

On November 28, 2018, FHFA issued a final rule amending the AHP regulation. Among other changes, the final rule provides the FHLBanks additional authority to allocate their AHP funds, authorizes the FHLBanks to establish separate competitive funds that target specific affordable housing needs in their districts, and provides the FHLBanks additional flexibility in designing their project selection scoring systems to address affordable housing needs in their districts. The FHLBanks were required to comply with the provisions of the final rule by January 1, 2021.

AHP consists of two programs: a competitive application program and a homeowner set-aside program. Under the competitive application program, now known as the AHP General Fund, an FHLBank member submits an application on behalf of a project sponsor. Each FHLBank establishes a point system to score applications based on criteria established by regulation. AHP General Fund awards are made during scheduled funding rounds each year, starting with the highest scoring application until the available money is distributed.

Project sponsors partner with financial institutions to seek the competitive grants or low-cost loans. Applicants are encouraged to leverage their awards with other funding sources, including conventional loans, government subsidized financing, Low-Income Housing Tax Credit equity, bond financing, national Housing Trust Fund loans or grants, Community Development Block Grants, and foundation grants. Each FHLBank provides training and application assistance. See individual FHLBank websites for details.

If rental housing is developed with AHP funds, at least 20% of the units must be reserved for and affordable to households with very low income, less than 50% of the area median income (AMI). Owner-occupied housing must be occupied by a household with income less than 80% of AMI. AHP is a shallow-subsidy program; for the competitive program the average urban area subsidy per unit in 2020 was \$11,125 per unit, while the average rural subsidy per unit was \$13,782.

Under the homeowner set-aside program, an FHLBank member applies for grant funds and disburses the funds directly to the homeowner. An FHLBank may set aside up to \$4.5 million, or 35% of its annual AHP contribution, to assist low- or moderate-income households purchase or rehabilitate homes. At least one-third of an FHLBank's aggregate annual set-aside contribution must be allocated to first-time homebuyers. The maximum grant amount per household is \$22,000.

In 2020, the FHLBanks awarded nearly \$393 million in AHP funds to assist over 40,000 households. Of those AHP awards, \$291 million was through the competitive program. In 2020, 90% of the competitive program units were rental units, down slightly from 91% in 2019. In 2020, 74% of the AHP subsidized rental units helped very low-income households with incomes at or below 50% of AMI. Forty-seven percent of owner-occupied units served very low-income households.

Between 1990 and 2020, the FHLBanks distributed approximately \$5.6 billion in competitive AHP funds. This supported more than 756,000 units, 90% of which were rental units.

The homeowner set-aside program was authorized in 1995. Between 1995 and 2020, the homeowner set-aside program provided approximately \$1.4 billion, supporting more than 237,000 households. In 2020, the set-aside program distributed \$101 million to assist nearly 14,200 owner-occupied households. The average set-aside subsidy per household was \$6,705.

**The Community Investment Program and the Community Investment Cash Advance Program.** The FHLBanks' support of low-income housing and community development activities also includes the CIP and CICA programs. FHLBank members can finance eligible targeted housing through the CIP, and eligible targeted mixed-use projects and economic development projects through both the CIP and CICA programs. Unlike the AHP, however, CIP and CICA funding is not subject to specific statutory funding allocation requirements.

**Community Investment Program (CIP).** Each FHLBank operates a CIP that offers below-market rate loans to members for long-term financing of housing and economic development that benefits low- and moderate-income families and neighborhoods. CIP finances housing for households with incomes less than 115% of AMI, including rental projects, owner-occupied housing, and manufactured housing communities. Economic development projects must be in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods or benefit low- and moderate-income households. In 2020, total CIP advances amounted to \$3 billion; \$2.9 billion for housing projects resulting in about 22,200 housing units, 40% of which were rental units. Economic development projects, typically committed under CICA, were awarded \$3.6 billion in 2020, up from \$3.1 billion in 2019.

**How the FHLBanks Work.** The FHLBanks are member-owned cooperatives that provide funding for housing through all market cycles. Approximately 7,000 lenders are members of the FHLBanks, representing more than 80% of the insured lending institutions in the country. Community banks, thrifts, commercial banks, credit unions, community development financial institutions, insurance companies, and state housing finance agencies are all eligible for membership in the system. The 11 FHLBanks are in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Dallas, Des Moines, Indianapolis, New York, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, and Topeka.

Each FHLBank has its own board of directors, comprised of members of that FHLBank and

independent (non-member) directors. The boards of directors represent many areas of expertise, including banking, accounting, housing, and community development.

The primary purpose of the FHLBanks is to provide members with liquidity. In fact, the FHLBanks are the only source of credit market access for most their members. Most community institutions do not have the ability to access the credit markets on their own.

FHLBank loans to members, called “advances,” are a nearly instantaneous way for members to secure liquidity. The FHLBanks go to the debt markets several times a day to provide their members with funding. The size of the entire system allows for these advances to be structured in any number of ways, allowing each member to find a funding strategy that is tailored to its needs.

In order to qualify for advances, a member must pledge high-quality collateral, in the form of mortgages, government securities, or loans on small business, agriculture, or community development. The member must also purchase additional stock in proportion to its borrowing. Once the member’s FHLBank approves the loan request, it advances those funds to the member institution, which then lends the funds out in the community for housing and economic development.

Each of the 11 regional FHLBanks is self-capitalizing. One of the benefits of the FHLBanks’ regional, self-capitalizing, cooperative business model is the ability to safely expand and contract to meet member lending needs throughout various business cycles. During times of high advance activity, capital automatically increases. As advances roll off the books of the FHLBanks, capital is reduced accordingly.

During the financial crisis, the FHLBanks continued to provide liquidity nationwide to members for housing and community credit needs through an extremely challenging period of economic stress. As other sources of liquidity disappeared, and before the coordinated response of the federal government, the

FHLBanks increased lending to members in every part of the country by 58% between the second quarter of 2007 and the third quarter of 2008. Advances exceeded \$1 trillion in the third quarter of 2008.

FHLBanks are jointly and severally liable for their combined obligations. That means that if any individual FHLBank would not be able to pay a creditor, the other 11 FHLBanks would be required to step in and cover that debt. This provides another level of safety and leads to prudent borrowing.

## FUNDING

No taxpayer funds are involved in the operation of the privately owned FHLBanks. The FHLBanks’ Office of Finance, the clearinghouse for FHLBank debt transactions, accesses the global capital markets daily. FHLBank debt is sold through a broad, international network of about 100 underwriters.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

The FHLBanks are an indispensable resource in the work done by housing organizations to address the housing needs of low-income households. They have several programs and products that help create strong communities. Their community lending programs can be utilized to help drive job growth at the local level. The AHP grants have remained a reliable and stable source of much-needed affordable housing funding, even as other sources of affordable housing funding have dried up.

The role the FHLBanks play in the financial system is vitally important. In any restructured housing finance system, the FHLBanks must continue to function as steady and reliable sources of funds for housing and community development through local institutions.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Council of FHLBanks, [www.FHLBanks.com](http://www.FHLBanks.com).

Federal Housing Finance Agency, <https://www.fhfa.gov/>.

# Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Housing Programs

---

By Anthony Walters, Executive Director,  
National American Indian Housing  
Council

**T**he “Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996” (NAHASDA) is the primary federal statute designed to address Native American housing issues in tribal communities. NAHASDA has two major components: the Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) Program and the Title VI Tribal Housing Activities Loan Guarantee Program. Amendments made to NAHASDA in 2000 added Title VIII - Housing Assistance for Native Hawaiians, which includes the Native Hawaiian Housing Block Grant (NHHBG) Program and the Section 184A Native Hawaiian Housing Loan Guarantee Program. All tribes and Native Americans are also eligible for the Native American Housing Loan Guarantee Program, better known as the Section 184 Program, which began in 1992, which is intended to provide greater access to mortgage lending in tribal communities. The program was created before NAHASDA but is often now associated with NAHASDA programs and legislation. Additionally, Congress has annually funded the competitive Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG) program for tribes and tribal housing programs.

Enacted in 1996, NAHASDA provides annual formula funding to Indian tribes so they can provide affordable housing-related opportunities for low-income families residing on reservations and in other tribal areas. The act, which became effective in October 1997, provides tribes with a consistent, dedicated annual funding stream without requiring them to navigate the myriad of general housing programs administered by HUD. The act recognizes tribal sovereignty and self-determination by providing block grant funds directly to tribes, which are operated pursuant to tribally created Indian Housing Plans.

NAHASDA's most recent reauthorization expired in 2013, though Congress has continued to fund its programs every year.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

The United States has a unique legal and political relationship with Indian tribes that stems from treaties, federal statutes, court decisions, and executive agreements dating back to the ratification of the U.S. Constitution. With respect to tribal lands, the federal government often serves as a trustee, holding certain lands in trust for tribes and individual Native Americans acting as beneficiaries. Today, federal Indian law and policy largely extends the trust responsibility to include the provision of health care, education, natural resources protection and development, and housing.

In 1961, indigenous tribes became eligible for assistance under programs operated by HUD. Regional HUD offices administered programs to tribes in their areas. By the mid-1970s, HUD had created Offices of Indian Programs in Denver and in San Francisco to exclusively administer Indian housing programs. Finally, in 1992, legislation created the current administering entity at HUD headquarters, the Office of Native American Programs.

The enactment of NAHASDA in 1996 provided permanent dedicated funding to tribal housing programs, but it also restricted tribes from accessing many other HUD programs. Tribes were restricted from most other public housing grants and voucher programs. Examples include restricting access to the tenant-based voucher programs, homeless assistance grants, and homebuyer counseling grants, among others. Originally, tribes were also excluded from the HUD-VA Supportive Housing Program (HUD-VASH), but Congress created a Tribal HUD-VASH demonstration program in October 2015 providing rental vouchers and supportive

services to Native American veterans in a limited number of tribal communities. There have since been bills introduced in Congress to make Tribal HUD-VASH permanent and available to all tribes. The bills have enjoyed bipartisan support and the bills actually passed the Senate in both the 116<sup>th</sup> and 117<sup>th</sup> Congresses but failed to get through the House of Representatives before the end of each Congress.

The housing needs faced by Native American communities are as diverse as the communities served, which are located in approximately 35 states. Overcrowding, poverty, unemployment, low household incomes, a rapidly increasing population, and lack of infrastructure are just some of the challenges that vex Native American, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiian communities. According to an extensive [study](#) of American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) housing conditions released by HUD in early 2017, 6% of AIAN homes located in tribal areas had inadequate plumbing, 12% had heating deficiencies, and 16% were overcrowded, while nationwide only 1-2% of homes suffered each of these conditions. At the same time, 38% of AIAN households were cost burdened (paying more than 30% of income for housing), compared to 36% nationally. The study also confirmed that homelessness in tribal areas generally manifests as overcrowding: researchers estimated that 42,000-85,000 people in Native American communities were staying with friends or relatives because they had no place of their own. To address the issues of overcrowded and substandard homes, the HUD study estimated that 68,000 new units were needed, yet annual funding levels have limited tribes to building only between 1,000–1,500 new units a year.

HUD's study also found that NAHASDA's block grant program works well, and tribes are able to use the funds effectively. It noted, however, that funding levels have not been adjusted for inflation over time, so while funding has remained steady from year to year, tribes' purchasing power with IHBG funding has actually been reduced by about a third since the enactment of NAHASDA.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

NAHASDA enhances tribal capacity to address the substandard housing and infrastructure conditions in tribal communities by encouraging greater self-management of housing programs and by encouraging private sector financing to complement limited IHBG dollars. The amounts of annual IHBGs are based on a formula that considers need and the amount of existing housing stock. The grants are awarded to eligible tribes or their Tribally Designated Housing Entities for a range of affordable housing activities on reservations or in other areas.

Activities eligible to be funded with NAHASDA assistance include new construction, rehabilitation, acquisition, infrastructure, and various support services. Housing assisted with these funds may be either rental or homeowner units. NAHASDA funds can also be used for certain types of community facilities if the facilities serve eligible low-income indigenous families who reside in affordable housing. Generally, only families whose income does not exceed 80% of the area median income are eligible for assistance.

NAHASDA's Title VI loan guarantees can provide tribes and Tribally Designated Housing Entities (TDHEs) better access to capital to develop larger housing projects. The Title VI program provides lenders a guarantee for amounts up to five-years' worth of a tribe's annual funding levels. For individual home construction, Section 184 loan guarantees can help secure mortgages for individual homebuyers or tribes, TDHEs, and Indian Housing Authorities.

## NATIVE HAWAIIANS

In 2000, NAHASDA was amended to create a separate title addressing the housing and related community development needs of native Hawaiians. Title VIII Housing Assistance for Native Hawaiians includes the NHHBG program and the Section 184A Native Hawaiian Housing Loan Guarantee Program. The NHHBG program provides eligible affordable housing assistance to low-income Native Hawaiians eligible to reside



on Hawaiian homelands. Since 2005, Title VIII has not been reauthorized, but the NHHBG has nevertheless been funded each year.

The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL), the sole recipient of NHHBG funding, uses the funds for new construction, rehabilitation, acquisition, infrastructure, and various support services. Housing can be either rental or homeownership. The NHHBG can also be used for certain types of community facilities if the facilities serve eligible residents of affordable housing. DHHL also uses the funds to provide housing services, including homeownership counseling and technical assistance, to prepare families for home purchase and ownership.

The “Hawaiian Homelands Homeownership Act of 2000” created a new Section 184A Native Hawaiian Housing Loan Guarantee Program, equivalent to the Section 184 program for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

## FUNDING

The IHBG program was funded at approximately \$650 million each year from FY12 through FY21. While not technically a cut to the program, level funding of NAHASDA programs for nearly 20 years has kept tribal programs from keeping pace with need. Congress provided \$772 million in FY22. Congress in recent years also appropriated an additional \$100 million for a competitive IHBG (\$150M in 2022) which has focused on new construction in tribal communities. In addition to the gains through the new competitive grants, tribes have received additional funds through the Indian Country Development Block Grant, which grew to \$70 million in FY 2020.

The Tribal HUD-VASH demonstration program for Native American veterans received funding in the FY15 appropriations bill and the program began operations in FY16. The tribes participating in the demonstration program have had varied levels of success, with some struggling to find available housing stock in their communities, while other tribes were unable to receive consistent supportive services from the VA. Those issues have caused Congress to

reduce appropriations to only \$1 million for the program in FY20, a cut from \$7 million in earlier years. The Program can rely on carryover funds from prior years to maintain existing services, however tribes have advocated for the Program to be expanded to add other tribal communities with tribal veteran populations, rather than lose funding. Congress passed \$5 million for FY 2022.

In addition to these regularly funded tribal housing programs, Congress has provided supplemental funds to tribal housing programs throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Congress included \$300 million for tribal housing programs through the “CARES Act” in 2020, which tribes received as supplemental formula grants and through the Indian Community Development Block Grant. Congress provided \$750 million in additional funding to tribal housing programs through the American Rescue Plan, with \$450 million being added through the existing formula grants, and another \$280 million being processed through ICDBG applications.

Finally, as part of COVID relief packages, Congress included tribal set-asides under the Emergency Rental Assistance (ERAP) (\$898 million) and Homeowner Assistance Fund (HAF) (\$498 million) programs operated through the Treasury Department. These funds were allocated to tribes by the NAHASDA formulas, and provided more funds for just rental, mortgage and utility assistance than tribes receive annually for their entire housing programs. Tribes are distributing these funds in a similar manner as the state and local ERAP and HAF grantees, but unfortunately these funds are not able to help tribes address the overall housing shortage found in tribal communities.

## FORECAST FOR 2022 AND WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

### NAHASDA Reauthorization

NAHASDA programs are currently being administered without being authorized. Reauthorization bills have been introduced in both chambers of Congress and are largely in line with prior reauthorization efforts. The bills would make small changes to improve overall

implementation of NAHASDA programs. The bills would also make tribes eligible for the homebuyer counseling grant program at HUD, make the Tribal HUD-VASH program permanent and available to all tribes, create set-asides for tribes in USDA Rural Housing programs, and many other smaller improvements. Both versions of the NAHASDA reauthorization would bring about improvements to NAHASDA and tribal housing programs. Currently NAIHC is focusing efforts on the Senate version, as the House version has some provisions that would negatively impact tribal sovereignty and contains funding authorization caps which would hinder increased funding needed in tribal communities.

### **Resources for Tribal Housing Programs**

Funding for tribal housing is the lifeblood of community development in Native American communities. For many years, funding has leveled off, failing to keep pace with inflation and the ever-increasing costs of energy, materials, and construction. Advocates should ask Congress to fully fund tribal housing and tribal housing-related programs, including the IHBG program; the ICDBG program; the NHHBG program; and the Section 184, 184A, and Title VI Loan Guarantee Programs. If the IHBG program included funding growth with inflation since NAHASDA's enactment, the IHBG would be funded at nearly \$1 billion. Mindful that such an increase is not likely, tribes were pleased to see an increase of \$100 million in funding in FY18, which continued through FY2021, with a further increase for FY22 to \$772 million. Other federal housing programs, such as the USDA Rural Housing programs, the Department of the Interior Housing Improvement Program, the Department of Treasury Native American CDFI Assistance (NACA) program, and others could all be enhanced to deliver greater housing opportunities to tribal communities as well.

### **HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing**

The nation's largest supported permanent housing initiative combines HUD Housing Choice Vouchers with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs case management services that promote

and maintain recovery and housing stability. The FY15 HUD appropriations bill directed the HUD secretary to set aside a portion of HUD-VASH funds for a rental assistance and supportive housing demonstration for Native American veterans who are at risk of homelessness living on or near reservations or in other Native American communities. In late 2015 and 2016, the pilot program provided \$5.9 million to 26 tribes. Congress has been close to passing a permanent authorization of the tribal HUD-VASH program in both the 116<sup>th</sup> and 117<sup>th</sup> Congresses and advocates should encourage Congress to pass the "Tribal HUD-VASH Act" as part of a full NAHASDA reauthorization.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Housing Assistance Council, [www.ruralhome.org](http://www.ruralhome.org).

National American Indian Housing Council, [www.naihc.net](http://www.naihc.net).

HUD Office of Native American Programs, [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/ih](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/ih).

DHHL, <http://hawaii.gov/dhhl>.

# Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program

---

By Leslie R. Strauss, Senior Housing Analyst, Housing Assistance Council

**Administering Agency:** HUD's Office of Rural Housing and Economic Development

**Year Started:** 1996

**Number of Persons/Households Served:** More than 30,000

**Population Targeted:** Households with incomes below 80% of the area median income

**Funding:** \$12.5 million in FY22, up from \$10 million in FY21.

The Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program (SHOP) is a competitive grant program that provides funds to national and regional nonprofits that assist low-income families in building their own homes using a “sweat-equity” or self-help model. The homes are sold to the homebuyers at below-market rates.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

Congress first authorized SHOP in 1996. SHOP was created for the purpose of alleviating one of the largest obstacles faced by self-help housing developers in the production of affordable housing, which is the high cost of acquiring land and developing infrastructure before home construction begins.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

SHOP is a competitive grant program run by HUD that provides funds to national and regional nonprofits that assist low-income families in building their own homes using a sweat equity or self-help model. Funds are restricted to paying for land and infrastructure costs associated with building homes, including sewer connections, streets, utilities, and environmental remediation. These funds must result in one home for each \$15,000 awarded. Each low-income family receiving assistance through SHOP is required

to invest at least 100 hours of work in building a home and homes for others, although many families work far more than the required hours; the requirement for each one-person household is 50 hours. The homes are sold to the homebuyers at below-market rates.

National or regional nonprofit organizations or consortia can apply to HUD annually for SHOP funds. There are currently two SHOP recipients that operate nationwide: Habitat for Humanity and the Housing Assistance Council. HUD awards grants competitively based upon an organization's experience in managing a sweat-equity program, community needs, its capacity to generate other sources of funding, and the soundness of its program design. The HUD-funded organizations may develop self-help housing themselves or act as intermediaries; that is, make SHOP loans to local organizations that work with self-help home buyers.

All families receiving SHOP funds must earn less than 80% of the area median income, although many of the organizations that facilitate the distribution of those funds work with families who have income well below that threshold. SHOP funds have been used to support the work of self-help housing organizations in every state, resulting in the development of thousands of affordable homes for ownership.

## FUNDING

SHOP was appropriated \$27 million in FY11, \$13.5 million in FY12, \$13.5 million in FY13, and \$10 million each year from FY14 to FY21.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

SHOP has enjoyed bipartisan support since its creation in 1996 and that seems likely to continue. The Biden Administration's budget for FY22 all proposed to continue the program's \$10 million funding level, but Congress passed \$12.5 million for FY22. SHOP is one of the few federal

housing programs to receive an effective rating, the highest rating possible, on the Program Assessment Rating Tool developed by the Office of Management and Budget.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

Local organizations can access SHOP funding by partnering with one of the national or regional funding recipients. The strongest applicants have self-help experience.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Members of the House and Senate should be asked to support continued SHOP funding at a minimum of \$12.5 million per year. The program has many positive aspects:

- Self-help housing provides families a hand up. The families that ultimately use the program's funds will put at least 100 hours, and often more, into building their own homes. For example, through the Housing Assistance Council's first 10 years of SHOP funding, participating homebuyers averaged more than 1,000 hours of labor.
- Because owners' sweat equity reduces mortgage amounts, the self-help process makes homeownership affordable to people with low and very low incomes.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Habitat for Humanity International, 404-962-3433, [www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org).

Housing Assistance Council, 202-842-8600, [www.ruralhome.org](http://www.ruralhome.org).

HUD, 877-787-2526 or 202-708-2290, <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/shop/>.

# The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

---

By Olivia Wein, Staff Attorney, National Consumer Law Center

**Administering Agency:** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of Community Services within the Administration for Children and Families

**Year Program Started:** 1981

**Number of Persons/Households Served:** An estimated 5.9 million families receive Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) assistance in FY 2021 through the regular LIHEAP program, which includes heating grants, cooling grants, and crisis assistance. However, the total number of households served is substantially greater due to the COVID-19 pandemic relief funds for LIHEAP added in the “CARES Act” (\$900 million for LIHEAP) and the “American Rescue Plan Act” (\$4.5 billion for LIHEAP).

**Population Targeted:** Low-income households (below 150% of the poverty threshold or 60% of the state median income) who cannot afford to keep their homes at safe temperatures; particularly households with frail elderly, members with disabilities, or very young children.

LIHEAP is a targeted block grant program aimed at helping struggling families pay their heating and cooling bills. States have flexibility in setting eligibility criteria, benefit amounts, how much to direct to energy crisis situations where the health of the household is in jeopardy, as well as other program components. The typical main challenge for LIHEAP is securing adequate annual appropriations. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the need for home energy assistance due to an increase in utility arrearages and home energy prices are projected to be substantially higher this winter. In 2020 and 2021, Congress provided two rounds of additional LIHEAP appropriations (\$900 million and \$4.5 billion,

respectively). While states have until the end of FY 2022 to obligate the additional \$4.5 billion for LIHEAP, the final regular FY 2022 LIHEAP funding is \$3.8 billion.

## HISTORY

LIHEAP was created in response to rising energy prices in the 1970s and the decreasing purchasing power of low-income households. In 1980, low-income energy assistance was part of the “Crude Oil Windfall Profit Act,” Public Law 96-223, and LIHEAP was authorized in the “Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981,” Public Law 97-35. Since then, LIHEAP has been reauthorized several times, targeting the assistance within the pool of eligible households, adding new program components, and expanding authorization levels for funding.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

The regular LIHEAP program is a federal block grant program to the states that helps low-income families meet the costs of heating and cooling their homes. LIHEAP is intended to “assist low-income households, particularly those with the lowest incomes, that pay a high proportion of household income for home energy, primarily in meeting their home energy needs” (42 U.S.C. § 8621(a)). States are to target assistance to households with the lowest incomes and highest energy needs (i.e., those who pay a large percentage of their income on home energy), and to households with populations vulnerable to extreme heat or cold. These are households with very young children, individuals with disabilities, and frail elderly. The LIHEAP program focuses on home energy, which is defined as a source of heating or cooling in residential dwellings.

In order to receive LIHEAP funds, states must submit an annual application (state plan) to the Secretary of HHS. All 50 states, the District of Columbia, numerous tribes, and territories participate in the LIHEAP program. In the

majority of states, LIHEAP is administered by the state social services agency. In many states, the state agency contracts with local providers, such as community action agencies, to handle intake.

Although states have a great deal of flexibility in designing their programs each year, the vast majority of states' LIHEAP grants are used to provide bill payment assistance to eligible low-income households to help with heating and cooling costs. LIHEAP benefits cover all forms of residential heating or cooling fuels. This includes a range of fuels from natural gas and electricity for heating or cooling to home heating oil, propane, kerosene, and wood. Assistance is often in the form of a vendor payment or two-party check (the customer and the utility).

States also have the flexibility to set their program's eligibility criteria in the annual state LIHEAP plan based on income eligibility. The maximum eligibility for LIHEAP is 150% of poverty or 60% of state median income. States are prohibited from setting income eligibility below 110% of the poverty level. States can also rely on participation in another means-tested program to determine eligibility. Low-income households are eligible for LIHEAP through participation in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Supplemental Security Income, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (also known as food stamps) and certain needs-tested veterans' benefits.

There are several additional components to LIHEAP:

- **Crisis grants:** Each fiscal year, states must reserve a reasonable amount of their regular LIHEAP block grant until March 15 for individual crisis intervention grants. States have the discretion to define what constitutes a crisis for this component. Common definitions include an imminent shut-off, empty heating fuel tank, or broken furnace. The state crisis intervention funds must be made available to a household within 18 hours if the household is in a life-threatening situation, and within 48 hours under other circumstances. The state crisis intervention

component is different from the LIHEAP emergency contingency funds that are at the discretion of the president to release.

- **Low-cost weatherization or other home energy-related repairs:** States may use up to 15% of their annual LIHEAP block grant (or 25% with a waiver) for low-cost residential weatherization or other home energy-related repair. In about 30 states, the same agency administers LIHEAP and the Department of Energy's low-income weatherization program.
- **Self-sufficiency:** States can use up to 5% of their block grant to provide services to encourage and enable households to reduce their home energy needs through activities such as needs assessments, counseling, and assistance with energy vendors.
- **LIHEAP emergency contingency fund:** The LIHEAP emergency contingency fund is subsidized separately from the regular LIHEAP block grant. The president can release LIHEAP emergency contingency funds to help meet low-income home energy needs arising from a natural disaster, a significant increase in the cost of home energy, or other emergency. Unfortunately, Congress has not appropriated funds for the LIHEAP emergency contingency fund since FY11.

According to HHS data for FY17, LIHEAP provided essential energy assistance to 5.4 million households, including heating and cooling bill payment assistance and crisis assistance. According to the National Energy Assistance Directors' Association, in 2021, the regular LIHEAP program helped about 5.9 million households (17 million if the emergency LIHEAP funding is counted).

## FUNDING

The "Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act," 2022 (P.L. 117-43) that was signed into law on September 30, 2021 includes funding for FY22 LIHEAP. On November 1, 2021, \$3.37 billion was released to the states. Thus, there remains approximately 10% of the states' funds to be released.

The authorized funding level for LIHEAP is \$5.1 billion for the regular block grant program and \$600 million in LIHEAP emergency contingency funds.

Emergency supplemental funding for LIHEAP as part of the COVID-19 response: On March 27, 2020, the “*Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act*” (P.L. 116-136) included \$900 million for LIHEAP. States had until September 30, 2021 to obligate those funds. On March 11, 2021, the “American Rescue Plan Act of 2021” (P.L. 117-2) included \$4.5 billion for LIHEAP. States have until September 30, 2022 to obligate those funds.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

The U.S. Energy Information Administration’s Winter Fuels Outlook (October 2021) predicts retail price of home energy fuels to be at multiyear highs this winter due to colder weather and rising commodity prices. EIA predicts that the average household heating with natural gas will spend \$746 this winter (30% more than last winter), households heating with electricity will spend \$1,268 (6% more than last winter) and households heating with deliverable fuels will see dramatic increases. Average expenditures this winter for households heating with propane are estimated to be \$1,643 (54% more than last winter) and \$1,734 for heating oil (43% more than last winter). We expect strong demand for LIHEAP assistance. As we near the next budget cycle, the immediate concern for LIHEAP advocates is to secure full funding for LIHEAP at \$5.1 billion in the final FY 2023 appropriations.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

February 1, 2022 will be the first LIHEAP Energy Assistance Day and the National Energy Assistance Directors have prepared a [toolkit](#) to help promote the event. This campaign is to increase awareness about LIHEAP and to encourage households to apply for assistance. The LIHEAP Clearinghouse has an energy assistance [referral service](#) (phone line and website). The LIHEAP Clearinghouse should soon have a tool to connect households to the nearest LIHEAP intake site by applicant zip code.

Advocates should become involved in the development of their state’s annual LIHEAP program. LIHEAP state plans are required to be made available to the public in a manner that facilitates meaningful review and comment, and states are required to hold public hearings on the LIHEAP plan. The plans will set out eligibility criteria and benefit amounts, as well as other aspects of the program, such as the percentage of the state’s LIHEAP grant requested in each quarter.

Please note that some tribes receive LIHEAP grants directly through the federal agency (as opposed to the state). Each state’s LIHEAP office is listed at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/map/liheap-map-state-and-territory-contact-listing>.

Advocates should also become familiar with the other energy assistance programs and utility consumer protections. In addition to LIHEAP, some states and some utilities have separate low-income energy assistance programs. For a list of some of the additional assistance programs, see <https://liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/dereg.htm> or contact the consumer protection division of a state’s utility commission.

Advocates should also become familiar with certain utility rules. For utilities regulated by the state utility commission (generally private investor-owned utilities), the commission website should have a link to rules regarding: customer shut-offs (for example, a winter shut-off rule, an extreme temperature rule, or a severe illness shut-off protection rule); payment plans; special protections for low-income or LIHEAP customers; and deposits and reconnection fees. Staff in the consumer protection division of the utility commission may be able to help find the relevant rules. For municipal utilities or cooperatives, the rules will reside with the municipality or the co-op. For links to the state utility commissions, visit: <https://www.naruc.org/about-naruc/regulatory-commissions/>.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates should meet with their members of Congress to share the following messages:

- LIHEAP is a critical safety net program aimed at helping vulnerable households afford residential energy.
- There is significant need in the member's district (provide, for example, the number of clients seeking help with their utility bills, newspaper clips, or data regarding the number of households being disconnected).
- The current funding level will not be sufficient to meet the record high levels of applications.
- Supporters of LIHEAP should visit the LIHEAP Action Day website of the National Energy and Utility Affordability Coalition ([www.NEUAC.org](http://www.NEUAC.org)) and sign on to letters to Congress regarding LIHEAP funding. The NEUAC website also contains state-by-state, one-page fact sheets with helpful statistics tailored to each state.
- One-page snapshots of state LIHEAP programs are available on the HHS LIHEAP Data Warehouse website: <https://liheappm.acf.hhs.gov/datawarehouse/>.

The National Energy and Utility Affordability Coalition is an organization of utility, nonprofit, and anti-poverty organizations focused on the energy needs of low-income consumers. View at: <http://www.neuac.org/>

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For advocates seeking more information about LIHEAP program design, the LIHEAP Clearinghouse is a wealth of information regarding the various ways states have designed their LIHEAP programs. View at: <https://liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/>.

The LIHEAP Clearinghouse tracks states' supplemental energy assistance activities (listed as "State Leveraging under State Programs in the menu on the homepage). View at: <https://liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/state-leveraging>.

For information about advocacy regarding LIHEAP funding:

The National Energy Assistance Directors' Association's website provides information on LIHEAP funding needs and current funding levels. View at: [www.neada.org](http://www.neada.org).



# Federal Housing Administration

---

By Mike Calhoun, President, and Ricard Pochkhanawala, Senior Policy Counsel, Center for Responsible Lending. The Center for Responsible Lending (CRL) is a nonprofit, non-partisan research and policy organization dedicated to protecting homeownership and family wealth by working to eliminate abusive financial practices.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) insures mortgages made by lenders and, in doing so, helps provide single-family housing and multifamily housing for low- and moderate-income families. The FHA was established in 1934 under the “National Housing Act” to expand homeownership for working-class Americans (however, as described below, only white Americans benefited in the first decades of the program), broaden the availability of mortgages, protect lending institutions, and stimulate home construction. In 1965, the FHA was consolidated into HUD’s Office of Housing. FHA is now the largest part of HUD. The FHA Commissioner reports directly to the HUD Secretary.

The FHA provides mortgage insurance to lenders on both single-family dwellings (one to four units) and multifamily dwellings (five units or more). HUD’s single-family programs include mortgage insurance on loans to purchase new or existing homes, condominiums, manufactured housing, houses needing rehabilitation, and for reverse equity mortgages to elderly homeowners. HUD’s multifamily programs provide mortgage insurance to HUD-approved lenders to facilitate the construction, substantial rehabilitation, purchase, and refinancing of multifamily housing projects.

FHA programs do not lend money directly, but instead insure private loans made by FHA-approved lenders. When a loan defaults, lenders make a claim to the FHA, triggering an FHA

payment to the lender for the claim amount. The FHA consists of two insurance funds supported by premium, fee, and interest income, congressional appropriations if necessary, and other miscellaneous sources.

## HISTORY

The FHA was created as an essential component of New Deal legislation in order to rescue the home building and finance industries that had crashed during the Great Depression. Upon its founding, FHA played a critical role in alleviating the homeownership crisis in the United States. However, it also played a major role in institutionalizing and perpetuating segregation in the housing market through its practice of denying mortgages based on race and ethnicity.

From its inception in 1934, FHA explicitly practiced a policy of redlining by refusing to insure mortgages in or near African American neighborhoods. FHA relied upon color-coded metropolitan maps to indicate where it was considered safe to insure mortgages. These maps denoted risky areas in red; areas that included African Americans or where African Americans lived nearby. In FHA’s 1936 Underwriting Manual, numerous provisions indicated that “inharmonious” racial groups should not live in the same communities. Moreover, FHA subsidized the mass-production of subdivisions where builders included a requirement that no homes be sold to African Americans. In the first 35 years of the FHA program, only 2% of FHA-insured mortgage loans went to borrowers of color. Housing discrimination became unlawful in 1968 with passage of the “Fair Housing Act,” but much of the damage had been done. The FHA subsidized the cost of homeownership for whites and enabled whites to build wealth through home equity, while denying African Americans the same opportunity. FHA’s investment in homeownership opportunity for white families is the foundation of today’s racial wealth gap where white families have ten times the wealth of

African Americans and eight times the wealth of Latinos.

### **Role of FHA**

The FHA plays a key countercyclical role in the mortgage market and FHA's market share varies with economic conditions and other factors. For instance, in the aftermath of the financial crisis and the contraction in available mortgage credit, FHA insured a much higher share of single-family mortgages by loan count, increasing from approximately 3% in 2005 to a peak of 21% in 2009. FHA's market share has decreased since that time, but it remains higher than it was in the early 2000s, at approximately 10% of single-family mortgages by loan count, when averaging 2021's first two quarters' results. FHA also has 16% market share of single-family purchase mortgages by loan count, when averaging 2021's first two quarters' results.

FHA insurance allows borrowers to purchase a home with a lower down payment than is often available in the conventional market. FHA borrowers are required to make a minimum down payment of 3.5%.

FHA-insured mortgages also play an important role in providing access to homeownership for first-time homebuyers, low- to moderate-income homebuyers, and homebuyers of modest wealth. Furthermore, FHA is a key source of affordable home loans for families of color, providing nearly half of all home purchase loans for these borrowers, including upper income families of color. Borrowers of color, including upper income families, are disproportionately served by government-insured housing programs, including FHA and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and recent HMDA data indicates low levels of conventional loans to borrowers of color. This is a key policy issue. It is critical to support FHA, while also advocating for the conventional mortgage market, particularly the government sponsored enterprises (GSEs), to do more to serve communities of color and lower-wealth borrowers.

### **Mutual Mortgage Insurance Fund**

The Mutual Mortgage Insurance (MMI) Fund is a federal insurance fund that pays claims on losses from FHA-insured home mortgages. This includes forward as well as reverse mortgages, also known as Home Equity Conversion Mortgages (HECM). The MMI Fund has a statutory capital ratio requirement of 2%. The fund receives upfront and annual premiums collected from borrowers, as well as net proceeds from the sale of foreclosed homes. Each year, the MMI Fund pays out claims to lenders and covers administrative costs without federal subsidies. Under FHA's authorizing statute, all of FHA's revenue must go to the MMI Fund and cannot be used to support operations.

Borrowers pay a premium for FHA insurance. For single-family loans, this premium consists of an upfront amount collected at the time the mortgage is closed and an annual premium that varies with the loan-to-value ratio and length of the mortgage. The annual premium is collected with the monthly mortgage payments. Currently, a borrower must pay the annual premium for the life of the loan. The premium does not end once the outstanding principal balance reaches 78% of the original principal balance. This contrasts with private mortgage insurance coverage in the conventional market.

Furthermore, FHA insures loans in amounts under set loan limits. The "National Housing Act," as amended by the "Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008," sets single-family forward loan limits at 115% of median house prices, subject to a floor and a ceiling on the limits. FHA calculates the limits by metropolitan statistical area (MSA) and county. These limits are updated each year and are influenced by the conventional loan limits set by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. FHA loan limits in 2022 range from \$420,680 to \$970,800, depending on geographic location. The mortgage amount also cannot exceed 100% of the property's appraised value.

Additionally, a unique characteristic of FHA loans is that they are assumable. In other words, the outstanding mortgage and its terms can be

transferred to a new buyer. This feature may become more important if interest rates rise in the future. For FHA loans after December 14, 1989, the original lender must review and approve the creditworthiness of the buyer.

### **Special Risk Insurance and General Insurance Funds**

In addition to the MMI Fund, FHA operates a Special Risk Insurance and General Insurance Fund, which insure loans used for the development, construction, rehabilitation, purchase, and refinancing of multifamily rental housing, nursing home facilities, and hospitals. Unlike the MMI Fund, this insurance requires subsidies from the federal budget.

### **Mortgagee Review Board**

The Mortgagee Review Board is authorized to take administrative action against FHA-approved lenders that are not in compliance with FHA lending requirements. The Board can impose civil money penalties, probation, suspension, and issue letters of reprimand. For serious violations, the Board can withdraw a lender's FHA approval so the lender cannot participate in FHA programs. The Board can also enter into settlement agreements with lenders to bring them into compliance.

### **Manufactured Housing**

FHA provides insurance for the purchase or refinancing of a manufactured home, a loan on a developed lot on which a manufactured home will be placed, or a manufactured home and lot in combination. The home must be used as the principal residence of the borrower.

### **Ginnie Mae**

The Government National Mortgage Association (Ginnie Mae), is a self-financing, wholly owned government corporation within HUD. Ginnie Mae guarantees the timely payment of principal and interest on privately issued securities backed by FHA, the HUD Office of Public and Indian Housing, VA, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Housing Service mortgages, thereby enabling a constant flow of capital for mortgage loans. Ginnie Mae securities carry the

full faith and credit guaranty of the United States government. Ginnie Mae does not insure lenders against borrower credit risk; it also does not buy or sell loans or issue mortgage-backed securities (MBS). Rather, lending institutions originate eligible loans, pool them into securities, and issue Ginnie Mae MBS.

### **COVID-19 and Loss Mitigation**

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis, Congress passed the "Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act)." Among other things, the CARES Act provided mortgage forbearance for federally backed, residential single-family loans, including loans insured by FHA.

An FHA borrower experiencing a financial hardship due, directly or indirectly, to the COVID-19 emergency may request forbearance regardless of delinquency status. The borrower must submit a request to the borrower's servicer and affirm that the borrower is experiencing a financial hardship during the emergency. No documentation is required.

The forbearance must be granted for up to 180 days and must be extended for an additional 180 days upon the borrower's request. During forbearance no fees, penalties or additional interest is permitted to accrue on the borrower's account.

FHA's extended moratorium on foreclosures expired September 30, 2021. Currently, FHA is providing up to six months of COVID-19 Forbearance for borrowers requesting an initial COVID-19 Forbearance from their mortgage servicer between October 1, 2021, and the end of the COVID-19 National Emergency, and an additional six months if the COVID-19 Forbearance is exhausted and expires before the end of the COVID-19 National Emergency.

FHA has several loss mitigation options for owner-occupant borrowers, including:

- COVID-19 Standalone Partial Claim.
- COVID-19 Owner-Occupant Loan Modification.

- Combination Partial Claim and Loan Modification.
- COVID-19 FHA Home Affordable Modification Program Combination Loan Modification and Partial Claim with Reduced Documentation.

A Partial Claim is a no interest junior loan secured by the property which is used to pay the balance owed on the suspended mortgage payments. No payments are due on the COVID-19 Standalone Partial Claim until the payoff, maturity, or acceleration of the FHA-insured mortgage, including the sale of the property, a refinance, or the termination of FHA insurance on the mortgage.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

According to HUD's FY 2021 annual report to Congress on the financial status of the MMI Fund, the capital ratio for FY 2021 was 8.03%, increasing by 1.93 percentage points over FY 2020. The forward mortgage portfolio achieved a 7.99% capital ratio, while the Home Equity Conversion Mortgage portfolio is positive, at 6.08%, for the first time since FY 2015.

### Impact of COVID-19 Crisis on FHA Borrowers

The economic crisis has hit FHA borrowers particularly hard, as low- to moderate-income borrowers and borrowers of color are more likely to have a government-insured loan. These groups generally have less wealth and disproportionately work in sectors that have borne the brunt of job losses. Furthermore, many of these borrowers were hardest hit by the Great Recession and never fully recovered, including Black and Latino communities that lost over \$1 trillion in wealth, despite many in those communities qualifying for safer and less expensive credit.

Additionally, forbearance rates have been considerably higher for FHA borrowers than GSE borrowers. Toward the end of 2020, forbearance rates for Ginnie Mae loans were 7.83% although that has since reduced. However, FHA has not released as much detailed forbearance data as the GSEs, so it has been difficult to determine the extent of the impact on communities of color and other demographic groups. Data transparency

is key to better understanding who is being impacted, what loss mitigation options various borrowers utilize, and how policymakers, industry, and advocates can help create beneficial solutions for borrowers.

Advocates continue to be deeply concerned about the millions of borrowers who have suffered job loss, reduced wages, and other economic impacts that will persist beyond the period of eligible forbearance per the "CARES Act." Many are calling for extended forbearance options.

Moreover, several lenders reduced or eliminated their FHA lending even before the current health and economic crisis hit, and more lenders followed the trend with the onset of COVID-19. Access to credit has tightened at a time that interest rates are at historic lows, with earlier research from the Urban Institute showing that the mortgage market could have seen one million more loans annually if credit was not unnecessarily constricted.

### Important Issues to Monitor

While FHA's loss mitigation policies and efforts to stave off a foreclosure crisis will continue into 2022, advocates should also monitor other critical issues, including:

- The lack of rate refinance options for low-wealth borrowers despite robust refinancing opportunities for wealthier families with conventional mortgages that is being driven by ongoing support to the mortgage market from the Federal Reserve's bond purchase program;
- Maintaining level pricing for single family borrowers;
- Changes to underwriting standards and the FHA TOTAL Scorecard, including recent efforts to restrict higher debt-to-income loans;
- Continuing efforts to commit federal appropriations to help FHA upgrade its antiquated technology (FHA is in year four of five of a massive overhaul of its systems);
- Changes to upfront or annual premiums to ensure greater affordability for FHA borrowers;
- Ensuring down payment assistance programs

remain available and fairly priced for potential homebuyers. A large percentage of FHA loans utilize down payment assistance programs, some of which operate as grants and others require or offer an increase in the interest rate. It is key for borrowers to shop around to ensure they do not overpay for down payment assistance;

- Efforts to allow Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) loans, which permit a homeowner to finance the upfront cost of energy efficiency improvements on the property and pay back the costs through property tax assessments (such arrangements raise numerous consumer protection concerns);
- Changes to the Distressed Asset Stabilization Program (DASP), which sells severely delinquent FHA loans to investors;
- Monitoring Second Chance Claims Without Conveyance of Title (CWCOT) sales, where servicers can sell their FHA-insured foreclosed properties to third parties, without conveying them to HUD, and still have their claim paid by FHA. The concern with this program, and more broadly with FHA loans, is that taxpayer funds may benefit large investors flipping or renting out properties for profit, instead of providing affordable housing to owner-occupants directly or via non-profits; and
- Upgrading FHA servicing and loss mitigation to mirror the GSEs as appropriate.

### **“False Claims Act” Reform**

In 2019, FHA reformed its lender and loan-level certifications and created a Defect Taxonomy, which categorizes loan defects of various severities with remedies. These changes were intended to clarify lender liability for loan defects in the origination process and assuage lender concerns about “False Claims Act” liability for minor errors. In addition, on October 28, 2019, HUD and the Department of Justice entered into a memorandum of understanding regarding the use of the “False Claims Act” against participants in FHA single-family mortgage insurance

programs. Advocates should monitor potential changes to FHA’s quality control processes (including to the Defect Taxonomy), Mortgagee Review Board administrative actions, and any potential “False Claims Act” cases. Moreover, advocates should monitor if banks that previously exited the FHA program begin to offer FHA loans again.

In October 2021, FHA posted a proposed new section to the Defect Taxonomy on servicing loan reviews. The amendments aim to provide loan servicers more certainty about penalties related to servicing missteps and help servicers understand how FHA intends to hold them accountable for loan-level compliance.

# State and Local Housing Trust Funds

---

By Michael Anderson, Director,  
Housing Trust Fund Project, Center for  
Community Change

State and local housing trust funds advance the way the US supports affordable housing by guaranteeing that revenues are available each year to provide housing to the most economically vulnerable community members. Established by legislation, ordinance, or popular vote, housing trust funds direct public revenue to meet specifically identified local housing needs. Cities, counties, and states have developed proven models that support innovative approaches to all aspects of addressing affordable housing and homelessness. The impact of housing trust funds demonstrate that state and local government can provide decent affordable homes for everyone if communities are willing to commit the resources to do so. Establishing a state or local housing trust fund is a proactive step that housing organizers and advocates can take to make systemic change in their community.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

Since the 1980s, state and local housing trust funds have employed the model of committing public funds to address communities' most critical affordable housing needs. With more than 820 housing trust funds in cities, counties, and states, those funds have become core elements in housing policy throughout the US. In 2021, state and local housing trust funds generated nearly \$3 billion for affordable homes. The popularity and proliferation of housing trust funds is due to their flexibility, sustainability, and success in addressing critical housing needs. Housing trust funds are distinct funds that ideally receive ongoing, dedicated sources of public funding to support the preservation and production of affordable housing and increase access decent affordable homes. Housing trust funds systemically shift affordable housing funding from annual budget allocations to the commitment of dedicated public revenue. While

housing trust funds can also be a repository for private donations, they are not public/private partnerships, nor are they endowed funds operating from interest and other earnings.

Forty-seven states, the District of Columbia, and the territories of Guam and Puerto Rico and have created sixty housing trust funds. Eight states, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, Oregon, and Washington, have created more than one state housing trust fund, reflecting a recognized value in committing public revenues to accomplish precise objectives, such as addressing homelessness or providing rental assistance. City housing trust funds number 605 and include 122 city housing trust funds in 36 states, bolstered by another 186 jurisdictions participating in Massachusetts' "Community Preservation Act," and 296 communities certified in New Jersey by the Council on Affordable Housing. County housing trust funds number 157 and include 69 county housing trust funds in 17 states, with one county creating two housing trust funds. Additionally, the state of Pennsylvania has 49 county housing trust funds and the state of Washington has 39 county housing trust funds created under state enabling legislation.

## ISSUE SUMMARY

There are three key elements to any state or local housing trust fund:

1. Administration and oversight: Most housing trust funds are administered by a public or quasi-public agency. Housing advocates are not always comfortable with the performance of local agencies or departments and may not find this an easy condition to accept. Although there are alternatives, such as a nonprofit or Community Development Financial Institution administering the fund, there are very few examples of such models. In the long-run, it is desirable for elected officials to accept ownership and responsibility for addressing critical housing needs and

designate the housing trust fund as one way in which they intend to do this. A best practice administrative characteristic of housing trust funds is the creation of an appointed oversight or advisory board. Most housing trust funds have such boards. They are typically broadly representative of the housing community, including banks, realtors, developers, nonprofit development organizations, housing advocates, labor, service providers, and low-income residents. These boards can be advisory, but it is preferable to delegate some authority to them, including at least advising, if not determining, which projects receive funding from the trust fund; overseeing policies; and evaluating and reporting on the performance of the fund. An oversight board provides considerable expertise to the operation of the trust fund, and maintains a connection and avenue for accountability to the community.

2. **Programs:** The basic programmatic issues for housing trust funds should be defined in the ordinance or legislation that establishes the fund. Definition ensures that the key operating components of the trust fund are not subject to the whims of changing Administrations. Staff and board members will need to develop an application cycle, program requirements, and administrative rules.
3. **Funding:** What defines a housing trust fund is securing a dedicated revenue source. This means that the source of funding is committed by law to generate funds for the housing trust fund. Thus, by resolution, ordinance or legislation, a certain percentage or amount of public funds are automatically deposited in the housing trust fund each year. Securing a dedicated revenue source for a housing trust fund is a significant advance over the way low-income housing has historically been funded. With a dedicated revenue source, advocates no longer have to argue for scarce resources with city council members, county commissioners, or state legislators during the annual budget process.

They will no longer have to compete with other worthy causes in a budget process that is generally neither fair nor generous towards low-income housing. The dedicated revenue source guarantees a regular, but possibly fluctuating, source of funds.

### **Key Decisions to Make**

To ensure that a trust fund succeeds, several decisions must be made about its implementation, including identifying eligible applicants, eligible activities, and requirements that must be met to receive funding. Eligible applicants typically include nonprofit developers, for-profit developers, government entities, Native American tribes, and public housing agencies. Eligible activities are usually broadly defined, including new construction, rehabilitation, acquisition, emergency repairs, accessibility, first time homeownership, operating and maintenance costs, and many others. Most housing trust funds provide loans and grants through a competitive application process, although some establish distinct programs and make awards through these initiatives. Grants are important to ensure that housing can be provided to meet the needs of those with the lowest incomes. Some housing trust funds provide rental assistance. There are a few state and local housing trust funds that specifically serve the needs of people experiencing homelessness and define their activities accordingly.

Among the most important decisions to be made regarding implementation of the trust fund are defining the specific requirements proposals must meet to be eligible for funding. Chief among these is the income level of those who benefit from the housing provided. Most housing trust funds serve populations earning no more than 80% of the area median income (AMI), but many serve lower-income households either entirely or in part by setting aside a portion of the funds to serve those populations in particular. Without setting aside funds to serve very low-income (50% of AMI) and extremely low-income households (30% of AMI), these most critical needs are unlikely to be met, given that it is easier and less expensive to create a development

proposal serving higher incomes. It is important to give serious consideration to set-asides and other programmatic issues that enable funding for those with the most critical housing needs.

Another key decision are requirements for long-term affordability. Many state and local housing trust funds require that the homes and apartments supported through the trust fund remain affordable to the targeted population for a defined amount of time, or in perpetuity. Housing advocates may identify other requirements to incorporate, including accessibility for people with disabilities, mixed income, green housing and energy-efficiency principles, transit-oriented housing, rural housing, and housing-related services requirements.

### **Revenue Sources**

Identifying public revenue sources for a housing trust fund is always a significant challenge. Different revenue sources are available to different types of jurisdictions, because each jurisdiction controls specific taxes and fees. Research must be done to identify appropriate funding sources.

The most common revenue source for a city housing trust fund is a developer impact fee, sometimes implemented in conjunction with a zoning ordinance. These impact fees are most often placed on non-residential developers to offset the impact that the development's employees may have on the housing supply. Along with linkage fees, many jurisdictions also use inclusionary zoning *in-lieu* fees. The second most common revenue source for city housing trust funds is a voter approved property tax. Other cities have committed various fees, such as condominium conversion fees or demolition fees, along with taxes, including property taxes, real estate excise taxes, and hotel and motel taxes (including AirBnB). Revenues from tax increment districts are an increasingly popular revenue source for housing trust funds.

The most common revenue source for a county housing trust fund is a document recording fee, a fee paid upon filing various types of official documents with a state or local government.

Other sources used by counties include sales taxes, developer fees, real estate transfer taxes, and real estate excise taxes.

State housing trust funds are most commonly funded by real estate transfer taxes, followed by document recording fees. However, states have committed nearly two dozen different revenue sources to housing trust funds. Other options include revenue from state-held funds (such as unclaimed property funds), interest from real estate escrow or mortgage escrow accounts, and general obligation bonds.

Often, housing advocates study alternative revenue sources themselves and propose the best options. These are not difficult studies, but do take time and some diligence to obtain the necessary information. Relying on elected officials to identify a potential revenue source is not typically a productive strategy. Suggesting alternatives for their consideration is a strategy with a much greater track-record of success. Some housing trust funds were created through specially designated task forces with responsibility for doing the background research and making recommendations on how best to fund and implement the proposed housing trust fund.

Each state is unique in its treatment of taxes and fees. Research into what the state constitution and statutes permit regarding dedicating public revenues to a specific purpose must be conducted. Research should determine what, if any, limitations are placed on specific revenue options, including any caps imposed on tax or fee rates, any limitations on the uses to which the revenue may be applied, and any commitments already imposed on the revenues collected, among other questions. It pays to be creative in searching for potential public revenue sources. Although an increase in a tax or fee is the most common way to create a housing trust fund, it is also possible to dedicate the growth in revenue from a tax or fee or dedicate a portion of the existing revenue without imposing an increase.

It is extremely important to identify a dollar goal for revenue sought each year for the housing



trust fund. This can be based on actual need, a realistic assessment of what can be secured, or an evaluation of the capacity to use new funds. This goal will be the measure by which each potential revenue source will be judged as sufficient. A combination of revenue sources may be necessary to reach the goal.

It is critical to keep the focus on dedicated sources of public funding that will provide an ongoing stream of revenue for the housing trust fund. Other alternatives will be proposed, such as a one-time appropriation, bond revenues, or private sources, but advocates must keep their sights on establishing an ordinance or legislation that will dedicate public funds over time. Several trust funds have been created with one-time initial funding, which can be used to demonstrate the impact of the trust fund to build support for on-going dedicated public revenues.

### **Reporting**

Once a housing trust fund is established and becomes operational, it is critically important and beneficial for the administering agency, the oversight board, and/or housing and homeless advocates to report annually on the accomplishments of the fund. This helps ensure sustained, if not increased, funding, and improves the understanding and support for effective affordable housing programs. These reports typically not only show how the trust fund made advances in specific affordable housing or homeless objectives, but also highlight the impact these expenditures have in creating jobs, adding to the tax base, and extending economic benefits. Many such reports have included stories sharing the impact of a safe affordable home on individual families.

### **Relationship Between State and Local Housing Trust Funds**

One of the most innovative advances in the housing trust fund field is state legislation that enables local jurisdictions to create housing trust funds. Several models allow states to enact legislation that opens a door for local housing trust funds by providing matching funds to encourage and support local housing trust fund

efforts, enabling cities or counties to utilize a specific revenue source for local housing trust funds, sharing a new public revenue source with local jurisdictions, or establishing a process whereby local jurisdictions can decide to commit specific funds to a local housing trust fund. Close to 75% of the funds that exist in the US are in states where enabling legislation has encouraged cities and/or counties to advance local housing trust funds. These include communities in Massachusetts responding to the “Community Preservation Act” and localities in New Jersey complying with the “Fair Housing Act.” Washington and Pennsylvania have legislation enabling counties to use document recording fee revenues for local funds. Iowa’s state housing trust fund providing matching funds locally has generated funds in 27 locations throughout the state. Fourteen states have passed legislation to encourage local housing trust funds.

## **FORECAST FOR 2022**

2022 will provide two significant opportunities for organizers and advocates to advance local and state housing trust funds: The allocation of Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (“Fiscal Recovery Funds”) included in the “American Rescue Plan Act” (ARPA) and the historic allocation of \$15 billion to the national Housing Trust Fund included in the pending Build Back Better legislation. The opportunity with the ARPA Fiscal Recovery Funds is clear: there is a lot of unanticipated money on the table for state and local governments and resources at their disposal to make substantial investments in affordable housing, including through housing trust funds. ARPA included \$350 billion for states, counties, cities, and tribal governments to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency, to address its economic fall out, and to make communities more resilient for future health emergencies. In 2021, state governments committed at least \$3.12 billion ARPA Fiscal Recovery Funds to affordable housing, and city and county governments committed at least \$511 million. Of the \$511 million, local governments allocated more than \$70 million to city and county housing trust funds. The opportunity

in 2022 is with state and local governments that have yet to commit the full Fiscal Recovery Funds. Local governments receive funds in two tranches, with 50% provided in May 2021 and the remaining delivered approximately one year later. While some local governments have already committed both tranches, many have not yet decided on the funding that they will receive this spring.

If the Build Back Better legislation passes with the current \$15 billion allocation to the national Housing Trust Fund, the opportunity for advocates, organizers, developers, and government staff to demonstrate what is possible when we commit resources to make housing affordable to the most economically vulnerable. Established in 2008, the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF) is the first new housing resource since 1974 targeted to the building, rehabilitating, preserving, and operating rental housing for extremely low-income people. In 2016 the first \$174 million in HTF dollars were allocated to states, and more has been allocated in each subsequent year. For 2021, the allocation was \$689.7 million. With an investment of \$15 billion over the next decade, the allocations to states will more than double. This unprecedented infusion of resources will position states to deliver housing for the people who need it most: families and individuals with the least income and economic means. Coupled with state and local housing trust fund dollars, the HTF could have a transformational impact on how we innovate and advance housing solutions. Additionally, this sustained investment provides an opportunity to debunk the false myth that developing housing for people with the lowest incomes is not economically feasible. In the richest nation in the world, anything is possible if we commit the resources to make it happen.

## WINS IN 2021

The following are among the state and local housing trust fund victories celebrated by housing and homeless advocates in 2021 (in alphabetical order by state):

- Winter Haven, Florida established a new

affordable housing trust fund, allocating \$1.5 million from ARPA Fiscal Recovery Funds and then committing \$250,000 annually in general fund revenue beginning in 2022.

- Savannah, Georgia allocated \$7 million in ARPA Fiscal Recovery Funds to the Affordable Housing Fund.
- Kansas City, Missouri allocated \$12.5 million in ARPA Fiscal Recovery Funds to a new housing trust fund that is under development.
- St. Louis, Missouri allocated \$20 million in ARPA Fiscal Recovery Funds to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.
- Cincinnati, Ohio allocated \$6.4 million in ARPA Fiscal Recovery Funds to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.
- Manchester, New Hampshire allocated \$3 million in ARPA Fiscal Recovery Funds to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.
- Nashua, New Hampshire established the new Housing Expendable Trust Fund, with an initial commitment of \$30,000 in general fund and at least \$10,000 annually moving forward.
- Knoxville, Tennessee established the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, committing \$5 million annually from the general fund for ten years.
- Albemarle County, Virginia established a new housing trust fund.
- Richmond, Virginia dedicated \$10 million annually to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, which included an allocation of \$10 million in ARPA Fiscal Recovery Funds in 2021 and in 2022. The long term dedicated funding source is from revenue recaptured when tax abatement periods end, which is estimated to generate \$10 million annually by 2025.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

Although it is relatively easy for the public at large, and elected officials in particular, to nod toward the need to provide more affordable

homes, committing precious resources to make it happen requires an active campaign. Advocates face the challenge of making affordable housing enough of a priority that elected officials can make the right decision. Housing trust fund campaigns have made important contributions in reframing affordable housing as a policy priority that is integral to the success of every community. Not only is there an obvious connection between jobs and housing, but building housing also fuels the economy in several direct and indirect ways. Housing has a direct relationship to education, health, the environment, and neighborhood quality. Personal stories and connections to real family experiences have given the issue a face that is far more powerful than statistics reflect. Campaigns have created effective communication strategies based on the value frame that everyone deserves a place to call home.

Housing trust fund campaigns have found numerous ways to boast about what housing programs can accomplish, pointing to thousands of remarkable and outstanding examples of good, well-managed, integrated affordable housing. There is no reason to be bashful about this. Housing advocates have an obligation to educate the public and elected officials about the new face of affordable housing. Rarely have housing trust funds been created without public pressure applied by a campaign. Housing advocates have succeeded in making the point that providing decent, safe, affordable homes is no longer an arbitrary decision to which we can simply choose to devote resources or not. Rather, it is an ongoing, essential part of every community that is no less important than streets, sewers, health centers, police and fire protection, schools, and other basic components of a viable community.

Although housing trust funds are numerous, securing adequate resources to build and maintain affordable homes can be a challenge. Fortunately, there are many creative and successful examples of effective campaign strategies, ranging from coalition building to cultivating allies in sectors related to housing such as education, health, and economic

development; to organizing people impacted by the lack of affordable homes.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Housing Trust Fund Project of Community Change, <https://housingtrustfundproject.org/>.



---

# **Chapter 6:** SPECIAL HOUSING ISSUES

---



# Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes

---

By Sarah Goodwin, Policy Analyst,  
National Center for Healthy Housing and  
David Jacobs, PhD, CIH, Chief Scientist,  
National Center for Healthy Housing

**Administering Agency:** HUD's Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes (OLHCHH)

**Year Started:** Lead Hazard Control, 1992;  
Healthy Homes Initiative, 1999

**Population Targeted:** Low-income and very low-income families who reside in worst-quality private housing where children under six years of age reside or are likely to reside

**FY21 Funding:** \$360 million, including \$60 million for the Healthy Homes Initiative

**FY22 Funding:** \$415 million, \$55 million more than the FY 2021 enacted level.

Children spend as much as 90% of their time indoors, and toxic substances can reach more concentrated levels indoors than they do outside. Older, dilapidated housing with lead-based paint, and the settled interior dust and exterior bare soil it generates, are the biggest sources of lead exposure for children (lead in drinking water and other sources can also be a problem). Often these units have a combination of health dangers that include dust mites, mold (fungi), and pests that can trigger asthma; carcinogens, such as asbestos, radon, and pesticides; and other deadly toxins such as carbon monoxide.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill as signed into law included \$15 billion for removal of lead drinking water service lines. The November 2021 House Build Back Better Bill included \$5 billion for addressing lead paint hazards and other healthy homes issues to be funded through OLHCHH, as well as an additional \$9 billion for lead in water (through EPA) and \$970 million for lead service line removal in rural areas through USDA.

On October 28, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated its blood lead reference value (BLRV) from 5 µg/dL to 3.5 µg/dL, which will increase the number of children deemed to have an elevated blood lead level. BLRV is used by public health agencies and healthcare providers to help guide interventions for children following blood lead tests and prioritize primary prevention efforts in communities. Read more here: [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7043a4.htm?cid=mm7043a4\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7043a4.htm?cid=mm7043a4_w).

On January 15, 2021, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) promulgated a final version of their updated drinking water lead and copper rule. The effective date of the rule has been extended to December 16, 2021, and water utilities will have until October 16, 2024 to achieve compliance. Read more here: <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/proposed-revisions-lead-and-copper-rule>.

The Biden Administration is considering an executive order: "Ensuring Healthy Homes: Eliminating Lead and Other Housing Hazards." The urgent need for homes that support good health has never been clearer: the COVID-19 pandemic has meant more time in our residences, bringing healthy housing to the fore as a national priority. This Executive Order establishes a cabinet-level Presidential Task Force on Lead Poisoning Prevention and Healthy Housing to coordinate the nation's response to lead paint and other housing-related diseases and injuries under the Biden Administration. Led by the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, this Task Force will recommend new strategies, regulations, incentives, and other actions that promise to conquer these avoidable problems. With strategic leadership and concerted action, the Task Force can eliminate childhood lead poisoning as a major public health problem and ensure that all American families have healthy homes.

The draft executive order was written by the National Center for Healthy Housing and is available here: <https://twitter.com/Day1Project/status/1338593971069734913?s=20>.

The National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition tracks appropriations for these two programs and regularly circulates sign-on letters. See: [www.nchh.org](http://www.nchh.org) and: <http://www.nchh.org/Policy/National-Policy/Federal-Appropriations.aspx>. In addition, healthy housing fact sheets are now available for all 50 states and five major territories (<https://nchh.org/who-we-are/nchh-publications/fact-sheets/state-hh-fact-sheets/>) and agency fact sheets summarizing the activities, funding, and impact of key federal programs related to healthy housing (<https://nchh.org/who-we-are/nchh-publications/fact-sheets/agency-fact-sheets/>).

The World Health Organization released new International Housing and Health Guidelines in December 2018. See: <http://www.who.int/sustainable-development/publications/housing-health-guidelines/en/>.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

### Lead Hazard Control

The “Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act,” or Title X of the “Housing and Community Development Act of 1992,” was enacted to focus the nation on making housing safe for children by preventing exposure to lead-based paint hazards (the statute defines this as deteriorated lead-based paint, lead contaminated settled house dust, and lead contaminated bare soil). The law authorized the HUD Lead Hazard Control Grant Program and related programs at the EPA and CDC to provide grants to local jurisdictions to identify and control lead-based paint hazards in privately owned, low-income, owner-occupied, and rental housing and conduct training and public health surveillance and other duties.

### Healthy Homes Initiative

The Healthy Homes Initiative was established by Congress in 1999 to protect children and their families from residential health and

safety hazards. The goal of this program is a comprehensive, integrated approach to housing hazards through grants that create and demonstrate effective, low-cost methods of addressing mold, lead, allergens, asthma, carbon monoxide, home safety, pesticides, radon and other housing-related health and safety hazards. These grant programs are housed in HUD’s OLHCHH.

The beneficiaries of both the lead and healthy homes programs are low-income households and the broader public through education campaigns. Assisted rental units served must be affirmatively marketed for at least three years for families with children under age six. Ninety percent of owner-occupied units served must house or be regularly visited by a child under age six. Because the funds do not cover all housing eligible under federal policy, each grantee develops its local plan and is permitted to target investment of grant funds based on factors such as the presence of a lead-poisoned child and location in a high-risk neighborhood. The programs’ funds are awarded via competitive Notices of Fund Availability.

## ISSUE SUMMARY

Recent research confirms that housing policy has a profound impact on public health, and for any public health agenda to be effective, it must include a housing component. The statistics and key findings regarding the long-term effects of housing-related health hazards are alarming. At least 500,000 children aged one to five in the US have elevated blood lead levels above the current CDC reference value of 3.5 micrograms per deciliter. Childhood exposure to lead can have lifelong consequences including decreased cognitive function, developmental delays, behavior problems, and, at very high levels can cause seizures, coma, and even death. Asthma is one of the most common chronic conditions among children in the U.S.; over 25 million people in the U.S. have asthma, including 7% of children under 18.

The burden of housing-related health hazards falls disproportionately on the most vulnerable



children and communities, contributing greatly to U.S. health disparities. African American children are twice as likely to have asthma and are six times more likely to die from it than white children. Households with annual incomes less than \$30,000 and children of low-income families are much more likely to be lead-poisoned than those of higher-income families. Children poisoned by lead are seven times more likely to drop out of school, and six times more likely to end up in the juvenile justice system.

There are even bigger consequences when dealing with the cumulative effects of multiple hazards. Inadequate ventilation increases the concentration of indoor air pollutants, such as radon and carbon monoxide, and exacerbates moisture and humidity problems. Moisture causes paint deterioration, which puts children at risk of exposure to leaded dust and paint chips. Moisture also encourages the growth of mold, mildew, dust mites, and microbes that contribute to asthma and other respiratory diseases and structural rot, which is related to injuries. Asthma is exacerbated by allergic reaction to certain triggers such as dust, mold, pests (such as cockroaches, rats, and mice), cold air, and dry heat. Use of common pesticides to control infestations can contaminate homes. Thus, a ‘whole-house’ approach is critical, including thorough inspections, air tests, and remediation activities.

Additionally, solutions and opportunities may arise through existing weatherization, rehabilitation, maintenance, and home repair work. Because improperly disturbing lead-based paint may cause lead poisoning, it is necessary to use lead-safe work practices and comply with the EPA’s renovation, repair, and painting rule (and for federally assisted housing, HUD’s Lead Safe Housing rule). Many weatherization treatments have healthy homes benefits. For example, window replacement can help with lead poisoning prevention, and roof repair and insulation may help reduce moisture intrusion and prevent mold. Improving ventilation to ameliorate the ill effects of tightening a building can help ensure no harm from energy-efficiency

measures. Healthy Homes and weatherization/building performance are described in a report from the Department of Energy and the National Center for Healthy Housing: [https://www.energystar.gov/campaign/improvements/professionals/resources\\_library/health\\_and\\_home\\_performance](https://www.energystar.gov/campaign/improvements/professionals/resources_library/health_and_home_performance).

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

### Healthy Homes Initiative

The Healthy Homes Demonstration Grant Program develops, demonstrates, and promotes cost-effective, preventive measures for identifying and correcting residential health and safety hazards. HUD awards Healthy Homes Demonstration grants to nonprofits, for-profit firms located in the U.S., state and local governments, federally recognized Indian Tribes, and colleges and universities.

HUD also often awards Healthy Homes Supplemental funding to grantees when distributing lead hazard control and lead hazard reduction demonstration grants to allow grantees to address other healthy homes issues when conducting their lead programs.

### Lead Hazard Control Grants

The typical Lead Hazard Control award addresses hazards in several hundred homes and provides needed outreach and capacity-building services. Grants are awarded to states, counties, and cities for lead hazard control in privately-owned, low-income housing. At least 65% of the grant must be used for direct activities such as abatement, interim control, clearance, and risk assessment (and to a limited extent other healthy housing issues). Grantees are required to partner with community groups, typically by awarding sub-grants, and to provide a match of 10% to 25% from local or Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. More than \$1 billion has been awarded since the program started in 1992.

### Lead Hazard Reduction Demonstration Grants

The Lead Hazard Reduction Demonstration grant program targets funds for lead hazard control to the nation’s highest-risk cities as defined by the

prevalence of lead poisoning and the number of pre-1940 rental housing units. Grants may be as high as \$3 million, but 80% of the funds must be spent on direct activities, and HUD requires a 25% local match from local or CDBG funds. High-risk cities can receive demonstration grants in addition to basic lead hazard control grants. HUD now allows a portion of the lead grants to be used for other healthy homes issues.

### **Healthy Homes and Lead Technical Studies Grants**

Healthy Homes and Lead Technical Studies grants develop and improve cost-effective methods for evaluating and controlling residential health and safety hazards through a separate competition open to academic and nonprofit institutions, state and local governments, tribes, and for-profit and non-profit research organizations.

## **OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES**

Programs at CDC's National Center for Environmental Health and EPA provide complementary programs to HUD's OLHCHH. The EPA provides training and licensing programs and laboratory quality control programs; CDC-funded programs provide surveillance data, education, laboratory quality control for blood lead testing, and outreach on housing related diseases and injuries; and HUD-funded programs remediate homes to remove the health hazards.

For more information on healthy homes work at these and other federal agencies, see <https://nchh.org/who-we-are/nchh-publications/fact-sheets/agency-fact-sheets/>.

### **CDC Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program**

CDC's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program provides funding to state and local health departments to determine the extent of childhood lead poisoning by screening children for elevated blood lead levels, helping to ensure that lead-poisoned infants and children receive medical and environmental follow-up, and developing neighborhood-based efforts

to prevent childhood lead poisoning. Due to consistently increased funds, this program was able to issue grants to 48 states and 10 cities in 2021. This program also funds the Flint Lead Exposure Registry.

### **CDC National Asthma Control Program**

CDC's National Asthma Control Program funds states, localities, and others to improve asthma surveillance, build coalitions that implement interventions, translate asthma guidelines into public health practice, collect and analyze data not available elsewhere, and increase asthma awareness. This program typically funds about 30 states.

### **CDC's Environmental Public Health Tracking Program**

CDC's Environmental Public Health Tracking Program hosts an online database and visualization tool (the Environmental Public Health Tracking Network) that provides 23 datasets, 124 indicators, and 449 health measures on public health topics like air quality, water, asthma, carbon monoxide, and birth defects. The program also funds 25 states and one city to run their own tracking programs.

### **EPA Lead Programs**

EPA's Lead Risk Reduction Program updates and supports implementation of lead hazard standards, requires lead-safe work practices, ensures treatment of residential drinking water, and ensures disclosure of known lead during rent or sale of a home. EPA's Lead Categorical Grants fund states that have adopted EPA regulations around lead paint hazard abatement and renovation.

### **EPA Indoor Air Quality Programs**

EPA's Reduce Risk from Indoor Air program educates and equips individuals and organizations to reduce health risks from poor indoor air quality, including radon, secondhand smoke, carbon monoxide exposure, and asthma triggers like mold, pests, and dust. EPA's Indoor Air: Radon program and Radon Categorical Grants promote actions to reduce health risks from radon, including radon-reducing features

in new buildings and testing and fixing radon in existing homes, and administer the National Radon Action Plan.

### **EPA Children and Other Sensitive Populations**

EPA's Children and Other Sensitive Populations: Agency Coordination program ensures that EPA programs protect children's environmental health by developing regulations, improving policy, implementing community-level programs, and collecting and interpreting data.

## **FUNDING**

FY22 proposed budgets:

- HUD Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes: \$415 million passed by Congress.
- CDC Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program: \$50 million (House), \$46 million (Senate).
- CDC National Asthma Control Program: \$34 million (House), \$32 million (Senate).
- CDC National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network: \$34 million.
- EPA Lead Categorical Grants: \$21 million (House), \$14.6 million (Senate).
- EPA Radon Categorical Grants: \$11 million (House), \$8.9 million (Senate).

## **FORECAST FOR 2022**

The FY22 appropriation passed at \$415 million. This funding level is below the National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition's proposal of \$606 million but is a welcome increase (\$55 million more than FY21) and continues to build on the increases seen in the past few years. Please see this link for updates <https://nchh.org/information-and-evidence/healthy-housing-policy/national-current-nchh-work/federal-appropriations/>.

## **TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS**

Many communities have improved the quality of their housing stock through the development of better codes, such as the National Healthy Housing Standard, and proactive code

enforcement programs, instead of a complaint-driven process. For example, many housing codes prohibit peeling paint, standing water, chronic moisture, roof and plumbing leaks, and pest infestation. The International Residential Code requires carbon monoxide detectors in new homes with fuel-burning appliances or attached garages. Efforts are underway to require carbon monoxide detectors in existing housing and radon-resistant new construction and to prohibit lead hazards and excessive moisture that leads to mold. Increasing public awareness and concern about other housing-related hazards is fueling new attention to state and local regulation of healthy homes issues. Many communities have also urged strong collaboration between departments of housing, health, and environment; effective utilization of CDC surveillance data to guide HUD programs to families and areas of greatest need; enforcement of EPA requirements; and state Medicaid reimbursement for environmental health services in the homes of lead-exposed children and people with asthma.

Resources:

- Technical Assistance tools on local codes, RRP certification, and lead-safe demolition: <https://nchh.org/who-we-are/nchh-publications/nchh-tools-for-technical-assistance/lead-legal-strategies-partnership-technical-assistance-tool-series/>.
- How to make proactive rental inspection effective: <https://nchh.org/resource-library/how-to-make-proactive-rental-inspection-effective.pdf>.
- Creating effective and efficient primary prevention programs: <https://nchh.org/who-we-are/nchh-publications/nchh-tools-for-technical-assistance/creating-effective-and-efficient-primary-prevention-programs/>.
- Healthcare financing of healthy homes: <https://nchh.org/tools-and-data/financing-and-funding/healthcare-financing/>.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates should contact their Members of Congress, ask to speak to the person who deals with housing, health or environmental policy, and deliver the message that funding is needed to correct health and safety hazards and lead hazards in homes. Healthy homes interventions prevent injury, neurological and respiratory diseases, cancer, and even death from toxins such as carbon monoxide and radon. Addressing these hazards provides economic benefits, too; for example:

- Removing leaded drinking water service lines from the homes of children born in 2018 alone would protect more than 350,000 children and yield \$2.7 billion in future benefits, or about \$1.33 per dollar invested.
- Eradicating lead paint hazards from older homes of children from low-income families would provide at least \$3.5 billion in future benefits, or approximately \$1.39 per dollar invested, and protect more than 311,000 children born in 2018 alone.
- For every \$1 spent on home-based asthma control, there is a return on investment of \$2.03.

Advocates should use the Healthy Housing Fact Sheets for each state and five major territories at: <https://nchh.org/who-we-are/nchh-publications/fact-sheets/state-hh-fact-sheets/> and the Healthy Housing Agency Fact Sheets at <https://nchh.org/who-we-are/nchh-publications/fact-sheets/agency-fact-sheets/>.

Advocates should also inform legislators of the following ways through which they can lend support for reducing housing-related health problems:

- Fully fund HUD's Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes Program through which communities can fix homes with health hazards, including lead-based paint problems. This also requires full funding for allied HUD programs, such as the Community Development Block Grants, Public and Indian

Housing, Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, and others.

- Include lead paint funding in infrastructure-focused efforts.
- Fully fund healthy homes programs within CDC's National Center for Environmental Health, including the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, the National Asthma Control Program, and the Environmental Public Health Tracking Network.
- Fully fund lead and healthy homes activities at EPA.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Center for Healthy Housing, 410-992-0712, <http://www.nchh.org/>.

National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition, [www.nshhcoalition.org](http://www.nshhcoalition.org).

HUD's Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes, <https://www.hud.gov/lead>.

CDC's Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/>.

# Housing Needs of Survivors of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Dating Violence, and Stalking

---

By Monica McLaughlin, Director of Public Policy and Debbie Fox, MSW, Senior Housing Policy and Practice Specialist, National Network to End Domestic Violence

**Administering Agencies:** Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for the “Family Violence Prevention and Services Act” (FVPSA), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Treasury Department, and the Department of Justice (DOJ)/Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) for housing programs and protections under the “Violence Against Women Act” (VAWA) and Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) for “Victims of Crime Act” (VOCA) funds.

**Year Started:** FVPSA, 1984; VAWA, 1994; VAWA Housing Protections (under HUD, USDA and Treasury Department), 2005; HUD Continuum of Care Domestic and Sexual Violence Bonus funds, 2018.

**Number of Persons/Households Served:** More than one million survivors and their children are served each year.

**Populations Targeted:** Victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, human trafficking, and stalking (regardless of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation).

**Funding: (Request)** VAWA Transitional Housing, \$50 million; FVPSA, \$450 million; HUD Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Bonus Continuum of Care (DV CoC), \$75 million.

## HISTORY

FVPSA, which created the first federal funding stream for domestic violence shelters and programs, passed in 1984 and is administered by HHS. VAWA passed in 1994 and was

reauthorized in 2000, 2005, and 2013. The 2018 Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD) appropriations bill created the first annual funding set aside for domestic and sexual violence survivors administered by HUD Special Needs Assistance Program (SNAPS) office. VAWA created the OVW transitional housing federal housing funding stream in 2005 and the first federal law to encourage coordinated community responses to address and prevent domestic and sexual violence. Various federal agencies are responsible for VAWA housing rights compliance; housing-related agencies are HUD, USDA, and the Treasury Department.

## ISSUE SUMMARY

Domestic and sexual violence are consistently identified as significant factors in homelessness, especially for women, children, families, and LGBTQ+ individuals. Domestic violence is often life threatening; in the US, three women are killed each day by a former or current intimate partner. Survivors must often flee their homes to escape danger, yet do not have the means to secure affordable independent permanent housing. Complex relationships exist between housing insecurity, sexual assault, and power; homelessness and sexual violence often affect the most vulnerable members of society. When access to basic needs such as housing and safety are compromised, individuals can experience heightened risks of violence. Access to safe, affordable housing can be a critical protective factor from sexual violence. Advocates and survivors identify housing as a primary need of survivors and a critical component in survivors’ long-term safety and stability.

The impact of homelessness and domestic and sexual violence is compounded for women of color and LGBTQI communities, particularly

Native American and African American women. Native American and Alaska Native Women face both a lack of housing and disproportionate rates of violence. Discriminatory nuisance ordinances disproportionately target and impact African American survivors of violence resulting in evictions and homelessness. Racial and gender disparities have been exacerbated as a result of the pandemic, the recession, racist attacks, and on-going natural disasters.

Rates of domestic and sexual violence are increasing and the need for safe, affordable, trauma-informed housing has never been greater. Survivors face increased economic and health barriers caused by the pandemic, making it challenging to flee abuse. Over the course of the pandemic, domestic violence shelters have reduced the capacity of their communal buildings and are using hotel/motel space, extended stay apartments, flexible funding and/or rental assistance to house survivors. Programs have used HUD Emergency Solutions Grants Program (ESG) “CARES Act,” HUD ESG and CoC and permanent Emergency Housing Vouchers, Treasury Department Emergency Rental Assistance, VOCA, FVPSA, VAWA Transitional Housing and state, local and private funding to provide housing and assistance to survivors. Sexual violence programs struggled to meet the housing needs of survivors without adequate resources. Many survivors needed to leave their homes due to sexual violence and/or harassment by landlords, neighbors, or people in their home such as family and roommates. For most programs, providing any form of housing is not part of the services offered, nor do they receive any funding that would support housing services.

Although safe housing can give survivors pathways to freedom, there are many barriers that prevent survivors from maintaining or obtaining safe and affordable housing. Many survivors have faced economic abuse as part of the violence, meaning that they have not had access to family finances, have been prohibited from working, and have had their credit scores destroyed by their abuser or have faced sexual harassment from a landlord. Survivors often

face discrimination in accessing or maintaining housing based on the violent and criminal actions of perpetrators and systemic barriers endemic in housing markets such as racism, sexism, and family demographics. Additionally, survivors are limited in the locations and types of housing they can access because of their unique safety and confidentiality needs, and many housing/homelessness assistance programs have screening tools and barriers that inadvertently exclude victims of violence and their specific vulnerabilities. Finally, survivors face common economic barriers, such as unemployment, access to healthcare, lack of affordable housing, living-wage jobs, transportation, safety nets, and childcare options, with additional safety barriers as abusers sabotage their attempts to leave the relationship. As a result, many survivors face the impossible choice between staying with or returning to an abusive situation or becoming homeless because they cannot find or afford safe, long-term, permanent housing.

Domestic violence programs do their best to serve those in need of emergency, transitional housing, and permanent and supportive housing. Due to a lack of resources, however, every day thousands of abused adults and children are turned away from emergency shelters and denied housing services because programs lack adequate resources and funding. The National Network to End Domestic Violence’s *15th Annual Domestic Violence Counts: Census* found that in just one 24-hour period in 2020, almost 6,296 nationwide requests for shelter and housing went unmet.

## PROGRAM SUMMARIES

FVPSA shelters and services, the VAWA transitional housing program, and the HUD CoC Domestic and Sexual Violence set-aside are critical components in the effort to reduce homelessness and housing instability among victims of domestic and sexual violence. These essential programs respond to an array of victims’ needs, from emergency shelter and transitional housing to permanent housing.

## **“Family Violence Prevention and Services Act”**

FVPSA is administered by HHS. FVPSA created the first and only dedicated federal funding stream for community-based domestic violence programs and shelters. Approximately 1,600 emergency domestic violence shelters and programs across the country rely on FVPSA to sustain lifesaving support to victims trying to escape violence through emergency shelter and housing programs. The “American Rescue Plan” included almost \$1 billion in supplemental FVPSA funds that can be used to meet COVID related costs for testing, vaccines, mobile health units, and support for domestic and sexual violence and culturally specific programs. FVPSA funds cover basic needs and provide rental assistance, hotel and motel rooms, and utilities for domestic violence survivors and their children and can be utilized to match funds for HUD Continuum of Care resources. The funds are primarily distributed through a state formula grant. In addition to shelter, FVPSA-funded programs provide counseling, legal assistance, crisis intervention, and services for children.

## **“Violence Against Women Act”**

VAWA includes many discretionary grant programs, including the Transitional Housing program administered by OVW. The program distributes grants to more than 200 entities annually across the country on a competitive basis, including states, units of local government, Indian tribes, and other organizations such as domestic violence and sexual assault victim service providers or coalitions, other nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations, and community-based and culturally specific organizations. Transitional housing grants allow entities to offer direct financial assistance for housing and housing-related costs for six to 24 months, operate transitional housing programs, and provide supportive services including advocacy in securing permanent housing. With VAWA Transitional Housing funding, organizations can provide a critical bridge from crisis to stability. The vast majority of VAWA transitional housing participants exit the program to safe, permanent housing.

VAWA, originally passed in 1994 and reauthorized in 2000, 2005, 2013, and in 2022, created the first federal law to encourage coordinated community responses to combat domestic and sexual violence. The 2005 VAWA reauthorization instituted landmark protections to ensure that victims can access the criminal justice system without facing discrimination or jeopardizing their current or future housing, strengthened confidentiality protections for victims accessing housing and homelessness services, and maintained the transitional housing grant program. The 2013 and 2022 VAWA reauthorizations built upon the strengths of these housing programs and protections with key improvements.

VAWA housing protections prohibit covered housing programs from denying housing or evicting a victim (of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, or stalking) simply because they are victims; allow public housing agencies (PHAs) to prioritize victims for housing when their safety dictates; clarify that Housing Choice Vouchers are portable for victims; and delineate an emergency transfer policy process for victims who face continued threats or violence or who have been sexually assaulted on the premises. The covered federally subsidized housing programs are: public housing, tenant- and project-based Section 8, McKinney-Vento homeless assistance programs, the HOME Investment Partnerships Program, the Section 221(d)(3) Below Market Interest Rate Program, the Section 236 program, the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS Program, the Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly Program, the Section 811 Supportive Housing for People with Disabilities Program, USDA Rural Development Housing Properties, and Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) properties. See “For More Information” for list of implementing documents from HUD and other agencies.

HUD issued a final rule, the Office of Multifamily Housing and the Office of Public and Indian Housing issued guidance, and USDA’s Rural Development Office (RD) issued an Unnumbered

Letter (UL) implementing VAWA 2013 in the agency’s multifamily housing program. Treasury has not issued regulations or guidance on implementation for the LIHTC. *Projections Delayed: State Housing Finance Agency Compliance with the Violence Against Women Act* finds that inaction on the part of the Treasury has led to significant state-by-state variation in the implementation of VAWA protections under the LIHTC program. This has a substantial impact on the level of protection afforded to survivors.

VAWA was reauthorized in 2022. The updated bill enhances protections for survivors of violence by improving compliance review processes in federally assisted housing, ensuring no survivor is denied housing access or evicted from their current housing because of the crime committed against them. The bill also amends the federal definition of “homelessness” provided in the “McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act” to include the experiences of survivors escaping or attempting to escape domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking. Additionally, the 2022 VAWA reauthorization codifies a new VAWA Housing Director position at HUD to help coordinate the department’s response to survivors of violence.

Advocates call on HUD to issue timely updates to guidance for all programs, call on the USDA to issue further guidance, and for Treasury to issue guidance to fully implement the VAWA housing protections for survivors. New regulations, along with on-going training and technical assistance and expansions in VAWA reauthorization will help promote more consistent implementation of the protections. HUD and the other administering agencies should strongly enforce VAWA protections, ease the burden on victims to provide documentation, and reduce other barriers that arise when victims assert their rights or simply attempt to remain safe.

### **The “HEARTH Act” and McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Programs**

Domestic violence shelters and housing programs depend on HUD McKinney-Vento funding to operate and provide safe housing

and shelter for survivors. Dedicated funding to serve domestic violence survivors - the Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault (DV/SA) Bonus - coupled with targeted technical assistance, improvements to HUD’S Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) and related guidance, have recently increased the capacity of the domestic violence field to provide trauma-informed, safe and confidential housing to domestic violence survivors. The new funds and improvement are helping to build back capacity lost after a prior shift in policy reduced the number of domestic violence transitional housing programs funded by HUD. Since FY18, Congress has set aside at least \$50 million in the DV/SA Bonus to support projects serving victims of domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking via Rapid Rehousing (RRH), Joint Component (Transitional Housing and Rapid Rehousing) or Coordinated Entry Supportive Service Only projects. The FY18 and FY19 CoC NOFA awarded points to CoCs that demonstrated efforts to address the needs of persons fleeing domestic violence by including victim service providers on CoC boards, offering training on coordinated entry best practices for serving survivors of domestic violence, having safety planning protocols for coordinated entry, and determining the needs of domestic violence and homelessness victims based on data from victim service provider Comparable Databases. Advocates should urge HUD to provide clear guidance on how to evaluate the efficacy of domestic and sexual violence survivor housing, to maintain language in the NOFA encouraging communities to address domestic violence, and to continue to issue guidance and messaging to encourage communities to meet the needs of domestic and sexual violence survivors. HUD should also be encouraged to align their funding processes with their messaging by awarding points in the NOFA to ensure that domestic and sexual violence programs can be competitive and integral partners for the CoC funding and can continue their lifesaving services.

In FY17 and in subsequent NOFAs HUD included the Joint Transitional Housing (TH) and Permanent Housing (PH)-Rapid Rehousing (RRH) component project that allows two existing



program models to become a single project to better serve and expand housing options for homeless individuals and families, including individuals or families fleeing domestic and sexual violence. The project furthers HUD’s message to communities to create high quality projects regardless of component type and states that “transitional housing, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing for survivors each can and should have a place in a community’s system as long as these programs meet a need in the community, can show positive safety and housing related outcomes, and provide choice to the people who want these types of programs.”

The HUD NOFA highlights compliance with VAWA Final Rule housing protections 24 CFR 578.99(j)(3)0. To enable full compliance with this rule, each CoC must establish an emergency transfer plan and make related updates to the written standards for administering CoC program assistance.

Finally, the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) supports legislative changes to improve HUD’s responses to survivors, including the “Help End Abusive Living Situations (HEALS) Act,” which would help ensure that survivors’ unique housing needs are met.

### **Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs)**

As part of the “American Rescue Plan Act” (ARP) of 2021, Congress appropriated \$5 billion for Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs) intended to assist individuals and families who are homeless or facing housing instability, as well as individuals and families who are *fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, or human trafficking*.

EHVs are a form of permanent affordable housing tenant-based rental assistance similar to the Housing Choice Voucher program. Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) are the entities designated to receive and administer EHVs at the local level. Collaboration is not only highly encouraged by HUD, it is mandated in several instances, particularly in regards to working with CoCs and victim service providers, including culturally specific victim service organizations.

HUD requires that PHAs enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with their CoCs, victim services providers (VSPs), culturally specific victim service organizations, and other service providers to establish a partnership for the administration of the EHV program. The primary role of CoCs, VSPs, and other service providers is to make direct referrals of EHV-eligible survivors to the PHAs to access this new housing resource.

The HUD EHV website is dedicated to EHV-related information and resources. The webpage contains HUD guidance and materials related to EHVs, an EHV FAQ document, registration links for upcoming HUD EHV webinars, and recordings and materials from previous HUD EHV webinars.

### **HOME Funds**

In addition to EHV, ARP allocated \$5 billion to the HOME program to address homelessness, including addressing homelessness amongst those who are fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking, as defined by the Secretary. Communities should work with victim service providers to ensure funded projects target survivors.

## **TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS**

### **“Violence Against Women Act”**

Advocates can play a key role in promoting safe housing for victims of domestic and sexual violence by encouraging consistent implementation of VAWA housing protections in local jurisdictions. Housing advocates should work in partnership with domestic violence advocates to familiarize themselves with VAWA housing protections, improve advocacy for individuals, and improve PHAs’ policies and procedures. Domestic and sexual violence advocates can train PHA staff, hearing officers, Section 8 owners, resident groups and other stakeholders of covered housing programs on VAWA implementation and the dynamics of domestic and sexual violence. PHAs should be encouraged to institute a preference for survivors when making admission decisions. Advocates

must also get involved with their PHA's planning process to ensure that survivors' needs are addressed and that VAWA housing protections are adequately communicated to consumers.

## **"HEARTH"**

Implementation of the "HEARTH Act" and related funding decisions must reflect and respond to victims' serious safety needs and their desperate need for housing. Performance measures, evaluation, confidentiality, data collection, and more have an impact on funding decisions and ultimately on victims' access to safe housing. Implementation and funding decisions must support the unique role that domestic and sexual violence service providers play in meeting victims' specific needs. Communities must ensure that they have "HEARTH Act" funded domestic and sexual violence housing and shelter available. Each community should ensure that survivor advocates are significantly involved in all homelessness resource planning.

Communities should use guidance from HUD and USICH to help support funding for domestic and sexual violence programs. In 2015, HUD, OVW, Office for Victims of Crime, and FVPSA at HHS launched the Domestic Violence and Housing Technical Assistance Consortium (DVHTAC) to better address the critical housing needs of victims of domestic violence and their children. The Consortium aims to foster increased collaboration among domestic violence and homeless service providers and provide national training, technical assistance, and resource development on domestic violence and housing. Communities are encouraged to contact the DVHTAC to address specific needs around implementation of HEARTH (see [www.safehousingpartnerships.org](http://www.safehousingpartnerships.org)).

## **FUNDING**

Increasing funding for FVPSA and VAWA programs and the \$50 million CoC DV/SA funds is critical to ending domestic and sexual violence and homelessness. When adequately funded, these acts help to reduce the societal cost of domestic and sexual violence. In fact, by supporting critical services for victims, VAWA

saved \$12.6 billion in net averted social costs in its first six years alone. Despite their lifesaving potential and efficacy, these programs are woefully underfunded; there is a serious gap caused by a lack of available resources. It is unacceptable that victims fleeing violence should be turned away from emergency shelters because the programs are full. Victims who must wait in emergency shelter for an available housing unit remain unstable, while other victims in crisis cannot access shelter.

FY21 funding levels include \$37 million for VAWA transitional housing and \$175 million for FVPSA, and \$103 million for the DV Bonus set aside in combined FY20 and 21 CoC funds. In FY22, advocates should call on Congress to provide \$450 million for FVPSA, increase transitional housing VAWA funds, CoC funds, and affordable housing investments with any final reconciliation bill, with special emphasis on ensuring funds are allocated to domestic and sexual violence programs.

## **WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS**

Advocates should tell Members of Congress why emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing are essential for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Housing providers should talk about the victims that programs serve and about the struggles that programs face in meeting survivors' unique needs for safety. Advocates should share the latest information about the pervasive scarcity of emergency and transitional housing, and of safe, affordable long-term housing in their communities.

For these federal laws and programs to realize their full potential in meeting survivors' housing needs, program funding must be increased to its authorized level, new and existing VAWA housing protections must be fully implemented, and "HEARTH Act" funding and implementation must address survivors' needs.

Specifically, advocates should ask the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to increase investments in domestic violence shelter and housing programs including:

- In the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations bill, \$50 million for VAWA Transitional Housing.
- In the Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations bill, \$450 million for FVPSA/domestic violence shelters, including cash assistance that can be utilized for housing and housing-related expenses.
- In the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD) bill, support \$75 million designated for domestic violence housing and encourage CoC and Emergency Solutions Grants funding processes to reflect the needs of victims of domestic violence.
- \$1 billion in incremental housing vouchers (building on the ARPA EHV program) for PHAs to provide vouchers for use by survivors of domestic violence, or individuals and families who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness.

Advocates should tell their Senators to pass the “HEALS Act,” which will help communities better meet the needs of homeless survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

*National Network to End Domestic Violence, 202-543-5566, [www.nnedv.org/census](http://www.nnedv.org/census).*

*NNEDV Tools on Confidentiality, <https://www.techsafety.org/confidentiality>.*

*NNEDV Toolkit on Housing for Domestic Violence Survivors <https://nnedv.org/content/housing/>.*

*DVHTAC: [www.SafeHousingPartnerships.org](http://www.SafeHousingPartnerships.org).*

*NNEDV; National Alliance for Safe Housing <https://www.nationalallianceforsafehousing.org/>. National Resource Center on Domestic Violence [www.VAWnet.org](http://www.VAWnet.org) (search housing)*

*CSI, Inc. <http://www.collaborative-solutions.net/>*

*National Sexual Violence Resource Center <https://www.nsvrc.org/>.*

*National Housing Law Project VAWA protections <https://www.nhlp.org/initiatives/protections-for->*

*[survivors-of-domestic-and-sexual-violence/](#).*

*[SNAPS In-Focus on Addressing the Needs of Domestic Violence Survivors](#).*

*[USICH KM to Reviewing Domestic Violence Transitional Housing Programs](#).*

# Inclusionary Housing Policies

By Stephanie Reyes, State & Local Policy Manager, Grounded Solutions Network

As housing prices rise, so does the value of land. Inclusionary policies seek to capture a portion of the increased land value for affordable housing by requiring or incentivizing developers to include affordable units in developments that would otherwise be entirely market-rate. In this way, inclusionary housing policies tie the creation of affordable homes for low- and moderate-income households to the construction of market-rate housing or commercial development. In its simplest form, an inclusionary housing program might require developers to sell or rent 10 to 20% of new residential units to lower-income residents.

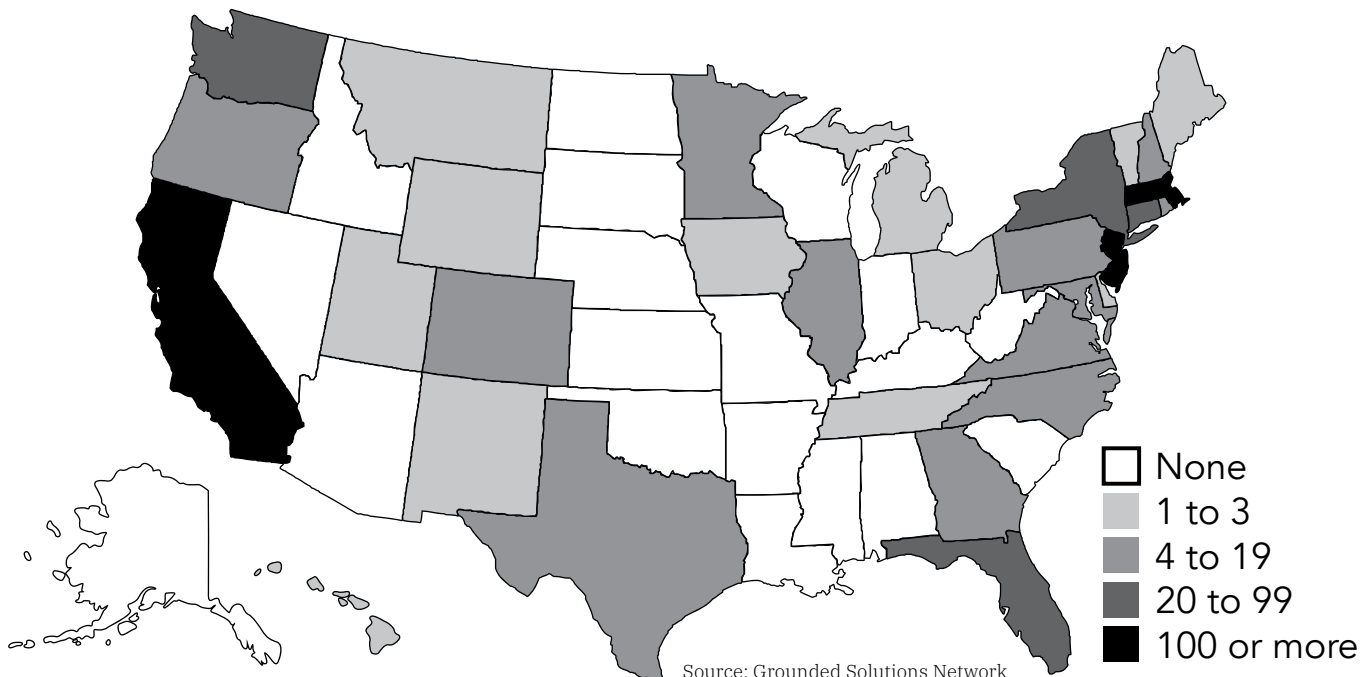
Scholars like Richard Rothstein have detailed the long history of race-based housing policies and practices in the United States. For example, exclusionary zoning practices (e.g., low-density zoning permitting only for-sale single-family homes) exacerbated economic and racial segregation by preventing developers from building naturally lower-cost homes and apartments, like small houses, duplexes, or apartment buildings.

Inclusionary housing, although not intended to completely right racial injustices embedded in our nation's housing practices, can provide an immediate supply of affordable housing for households earning below median income in neighborhoods already rich with services and amenities. As research from Raj Chetty at [Opportunity Insights](#) shows, upward mobility within a person's lifetime is highly dependent on where they reside. Providing safe housing in neighborhoods with access to better schools, food, and transportation is one key step to addressing racial disparities in health and wealth.

## HISTORY

Inclusionary housing policies have existed for nearly half a century. Fairfax County, Virginia, which has the oldest policy in the U.S., passed its first inclusionary zoning ordinance in 1971. Montgomery County, Maryland, established its Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit program in 1974. Since then, more than 1,000 inclusionary housing programs have been adopted by over 700 jurisdictions across 31 states and the District of Columbia.

INCLUSIONARY HOUSING PROGRAMS BY STATE



Source: Grounded Solutions Network

Inclusionary Housing Database (based on a survey conducted between 2018 and 2019 and database updates thereafter). For more information about the database, visit the [\*Inclusionary Housing Map and Program Database\*](#).

## LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Inclusionary housing programs generally rely on local governments' power to regulate land use. While the right of zoning power granted to governments has been established and upheld for generations, this is still a rapidly evolving area of law. Recent federal court decisions have limited zoning power in ways that do not prohibit inclusionary housing programs but can influence how they are designed.

In addition to federal legal considerations, state law can impact the design of inclusionary housing in significant ways. For instance, in some states there are statutory limitations on local policies that control rents on private property. In a subset of those states, such laws have been

interpreted by courts as rendering mandatory inclusionary policies for rental housing illegal. A few states have adopted legislation that either explicitly permits or preempts (prohibits or limits) local inclusionary housing policies. States also have different legal frameworks regarding municipal authority to enact local legislation; these differences in municipal authority also impact the ability of local jurisdictions to adopt inclusionary housing policies.

The [\*Inclusionary Housing Map and Program Database\*](#) summarizes the state legal framework relevant to local inclusionary housing policies for each of the 50 states.

## POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

No two inclusionary housing policies are exactly the same. Policymakers in each community must consider several distinct questions. Key policy design questions include: Will the policy be mandatory or voluntary? Will it apply city-wide or only to certain geographies or neighborhoods?



What household income levels should be served to address housing needs and racial disparities in the community? Will developers be offered incentives to help offset the cost of compliance? Will there be alternative methods of compliance beyond building the affordable units on site? What are the racial equity implications of each of these policy choices?

Every policy addresses each of these questions, though the specific answers differ considerably from place to place depending on local conditions. More details on these policy considerations can be found [here](#).

## PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

Passing a policy is only the first step in making inclusionary housing successful. Inclusionary housing programs cannot be successful unless they are well run and adequately staffed, and they must secure sufficient funding for ongoing administrative costs. Communities also need to be able to track program data in order to evaluate outcomes and make needed changes over time. Key program elements include supporting builders to comply with policy, monitoring rental units, and stewarding homeownership units.

Program implementation is also where some of the most powerful steps can be taken to advance racial equity. For example, programs can set strong marketing requirements for inclusionary housing units, require developers to select tenants based on a lottery system rather than first come/first served, and limit the reasons that property owners may deny applications for inclusionary housing units (e.g. limit use of eviction and/or criminal record reviews).

More details on program implementation can be found [here](#).

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR POLICY ADOPTION

At the local level, inclusionary housing policies tend to be popular when the housing market is strong (i.e., housing prices are high and there is sufficient new housing construction). However, there is usually a delay from the time at which an

inclusionary housing policy is first considered to the time it is adopted, which can sometimes mean that by the time a policy is adopted the housing market may already have begun to turn down. This is one of many reasons it may make sense to adopt an inclusionary housing policy before the market heats up. More communities with mixed housing markets, like Detroit and Minneapolis, have recently adopted inclusionary housing policies. Inclusionary housing is also appealing during periods of low federal and state funding because it leverages the profitability of new development to pay for affordable housing without significant public subsidy.

At the state level, there has been an increasing trend toward state preemption of local inclusionary housing policies, with Tennessee and Wisconsin passing new laws preempting inclusionary housing in 2018 and Florida passing a new law limiting inclusionary housing in 2019. Advocates for local policies in states without a history of inclusionary housing policies should assess the potential risk of triggering a preemptive backlash at the state level.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

The article *[Ten Ways to Talk About Inclusionary Housing Differently](#)* from the [Grounded Solutions Network](#) offers tips to help communicate about inclusionary housing in ways that circumvent common misperceptions and create a new narrative for policymakers in moderate markets and more conservative political climates.

Some of the key benefits of inclusionary housing that may be compelling to legislators include:

1. Sharing the benefits of growth. As housing and land costs increase, a relatively small number of landowners receive most of the benefit while, often, the lowest-income residents bear much of the burden in the form of higher rents and displacement pressure. Inclusionary housing leverages the profitability of new development to pay for new affordable housing units and supports the creation of more economically diverse and inclusive communities.

2. Economic integration. Inclusionary housing policies were first developed to specifically counteract a history of exclusionary zoning policies that reinforced economic and racial segregation. A wealth of recent research has convincingly demonstrated that concentrated poverty is a cause of many of the worst social problems and is especially damaging to children. Inclusionary housing has been successful in creating sustainable mixed-income communities.
3. Conservation of scarce public resources. Public funding for housing has been declining for decades, and in the current political climate, will probably continue to shrink. New affordable housing development can require over \$200,000 of local investment per unit. Inclusionary housing is one of the few ways to create reasonably priced housing without significant public subsidy. Jurisdictions can adopt inclusionary housing without draining the general fund.

Policymakers are often concerned that inclusionary housing requirements will become a barrier to housing development. While there is not much evidence of this outcome occurring at any significant level in real programs, this is an appropriate concern that plays a central role in the debate whenever any community considers affordable housing requirements.

There is evidence that it is possible to set affordable housing requirements so high that they prevent developers from wanting to build or landowners from wanting to sell. If this happens, it can result in a reduced supply of housing and ultimately higher housing prices. However, data suggest that programs that provide incentives and flexibility can successfully require significant affordable housing without any impact on market supply or prices. [Economic feasibility analyses](#) can analyze the extent to which local market-rate housing development projects can realistically support a set-aside of lower cost units without slowing or deterring construction.

Policymakers may also be concerned that the costs of inclusionary housing requirements will be passed on to market-rate renters and homeowners. This is unlikely to happen for two reasons:

1. Market rate is market rate. Developers can't "pass along" the costs of inclusionary housing policies to market-rate renters and buyers because those renters and buyers will only pay what the market will bear. If developers and property owners could charge more, they would already be doing so.
2. The costs of inclusionary housing requirements are generally borne by landowners. One common concern is that if affordable housing requirements are set too high, developers may not be able to make sufficient profits and will choose not to build or to build in another community with fewer requirements. But because landowners can't move to another community, they will have to lower land prices to attract developers, meaning that landowners are the ones whose profits ultimately drop.

[This page, \*Will Inclusionary Housing Prevent Development?\*](#) addresses these concerns in more detail and includes an easy-to-understand video.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

[InclusionaryHousing.org](https://inclusionaryhousing.org).

[Inclusionary Housing Map and Program Database](https://inclusionaryhousing.org/map/) (<https://inclusionaryhousing.org/map/>).

[Inclusionary Housing Calculator](https://inclusionaryhousing.org/calculator/) (<https://inclusionaryhousing.org/calculator/>).

[GroundedSolutions.org](https://groundedsolutions.org).

# Manufactured Housing

---

By Doug Ryan, Interim Vice President, Policy & Applied Research, Prosperity Now and Lance George, Director of Research & Information, Housing Assistance Council

**M**anufactured homes are an often overlooked and maligned component of our nation's housing stock, but these homes are an important source of housing for millions of Americans, especially those with low incomes and in rural areas. Although the physical quality of manufactured housing continues to progress, the basic delivery system of how these homes are sold, financed, and managed is still in need of improvement to ensure that they are a viable and quality source of affordable housing.

## ISSUE SUMMARY

There are approximately 6.7 million occupied manufactured homes in the U.S., comprising about 6% of the nation's housing stock. More than half of all manufactured homes are in rural areas around the country. New manufactured housing accounts for about 10% of all new single-family housing starts. Although the demographics of manufactured housing are changing, lower-income households are still the primary residents of manufactured homes. Modern manufactured homes have their origins in the automobile and recreational travel trailer industry, but factory-built dwellings produced today are more comparable in quality and safety to conventionally constructed single-family homes. It is equally important to recognize the existing stock of older manufactured or mobile homes. An estimated one-fifth of currently occupied manufactured homes were built before 1980. These older units are likely to be smaller, less safe, and have fewer amenities and less investment potential than newer manufactured homes. The adoption of the HUD Code (see below) in 1976 and subsequent updates have significantly improved this housing type.

Affordability and convenience make manufactured homes a popular housing option. The average sales price of a new manufactured home in 2020 was \$87,000 (excluding land costs); much less compared to an average of \$308,597 for a newly constructed single-family home and approximately \$225,897 for an existing site-built home (see the U.S. Census Bureau's *Manufactured Homes Survey* and *Characteristics of New Housing*, along with the National Association of Realtors' *Median Sales Price of Existing Homes*). Manufactured homes cost about half of what site-built homes cost per square foot, though transportation and onsite work slightly increase the final costs. Even though the purchase price of manufactured homes can be relatively affordable, financing them may not. Contrary to common narratives, just about 42% of manufactured homes are financed with personal property, or chattel loans (see the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's *Manufactured Housing Finance: New Insights from the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act Data*). With shorter terms and higher interest rates, personal property loans are generally less beneficial for consumers than conventional mortgage financing. Chattel loans do, however, typically have lower closing costs and can close faster than conventional mortgages. Approximately 93% of chattel manufactured home loans in 2019 were classified as high cost (having a substantially high interest rate) which is more than eight times the level of high cost lending for all homes nationally according to the Bureau. Data from the "Home Mortgage Disclosure Act" allows for a greater understanding of how specific manufactured home characteristics impact consumer lending rates and affordability. Borrowers whose loan was secured by both the unit and land on which the home is placed had a lower rate of high cost lending at about 52%. In some cases, dealers resort to unscrupulous sales and financing tactics, trapping consumers into unaffordable loans (*The Mobile Home Trap: How a Warren Buffett Empire Preys on the Poor*).



A significant portion of manufactured and mobile homes are in community or park settings, though this is becoming less common. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2020, approximately 27% of new manufactured homes were sited in such settings. Estimates suggest that approximately 40% of all manufactured homes are in an estimated 45,000 to 50,000 land lease communities. Though about three quarters of manufactured homes are owner-occupied, the sector has a history of being placed on rented land and therefore manufactured homes have a pattern of land tenure status that is unique to this form of housing. In manufactured home communities, many residents own their homes and rent the land, which can devalue the asset. Ownership of land is an important component to nearly every aspect of manufactured housing, ranging from quality to assets and wealth accumulation. Residents who do not have control over the land on which their home is placed often have reduced legal protections than other homeowners. Other common concerns faced by tenants of manufactured home communities include excessive rent increases, poor park management and maintenance, restrictive rules, and restricted access to municipal services. For these and other reasons, alternative park ownership models, such as resident, nonprofit, and government ownership are gaining traction.

## WHAT ADVOCATES SHOULD KNOW

### Federal Resources for Affordable Manufactured Housing

Manufactured housing is largely financed in the private marketplace. However, there are several existing federal resources that support the development, financing, and rehabilitation of affordable manufactured housing, such as HUD-HOME, USDA Rural Development, Veterans Affairs, and Weatherization funds. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are increasing their manufactured home loan offerings.

### High-Quality Manufactured Housing

Once shunned by nonprofit housing developers, manufactured homes are now seen as options

for infill, new developments, and other settings. Much of this progress is attributable to a growing and innovative group of advocates who challenged assumptions and convention about developing and preserving manufactured housing. Across the nation, several organizations and initiatives are utilizing manufactured homes to provide and maintain affordable housing. These efforts avoid the pitfalls of traditional dealer-based manufactured housing purchase and finance, and investor ownership of communities.

### The HUD Code

An important factor in the designation of a manufactured home is whether the unit was built before or after June 15, 1976. This date marked the implementation of the “Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Standards Act” (42 U.S.C. Sections 5401-5426) regulating the construction of manufactured homes and commonly referred to as the “HUD code.” HUD developed and administers the code that implements the statute. These federal standards regulate manufactured housing design and construction, strength and durability, transportability, fire resistance, and energy efficiency. The HUD code evolves over time and has undergone several major modifications since 1976. In 2018, HUD launched an effort to revise various regulations and other guidance governing the HUD Code.

## LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY ACTIONS

### Duty to Serve

The “Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008” mandates that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac (the government sponsored enterprises, or GSEs) have a duty to serve underserved markets. Manufactured housing was identified in the act as one of three underserved markets along with rural areas and housing preservation. Under the act, the GSEs will increase mortgage investments and improve the distribution of capital available for mortgage financing in these markets. In 2016, the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) issued a final rule on the [duty to serve requirements](#). While technically FHFA will

still considers personal property or chattel loans for duty to serve credit, the reality is that both GSEs have pulled back from developing chattel products (as per their 2020 and 2021 plans). In 2020, the regulator adopted significant limits on pilot and product development, which the new leadership largely reversed in 2021. These could lead to the Enterprises revisiting chattel products and expand their previously identified duty to serve goals.

In 2021, as a response to the pandemic, FHFA adopted a one-year plan program for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac's underserved markets plans. Both GSEs have launched new mortgage products for manufactured housing and new multifamily loan products for communities, including ones targeted to resident-owned communities and a loan program with required lease protections for residents. As of December 2021, FHFA was reviewing the 2022-24 three-year plans.

### **Energy Efficiency Standards**

In August 2021, the Department of Energy [released a supplemental notice of proposed rulemaking](#) for manufactured housing energy efficiency standards. These are 10 years overdue, per Congressional instruction. If adopted, these will lower the operating costs for new homes, a benefit to low- and moderate-income residents. That said, there are shortcomings in the proposal, which Energy needs to address.

### **2019 Appropriations - "Minibus - HR 1865"**

The appropriations bill that funded HUD for FY 2020 includes language from the HUD "Manufactured Housing Modernization Act of 2019." This requires HUD to "issue guidelines to jurisdictions on how to assess the potential inclusion of manufactured homes in a community's comprehensive housing and affordability strategy and community development plans." This will raise the profile of manufactured housing as part of a local community's affordable housing market as it decides priorities for federal housing funds. As of December 2021, HUD has not issued guidance on the act. Therefore, participating jurisdictions will likely delay analyzing the role manufactured

housing has in their local housing markets. This will limit resident access to federal resources and threaten local housing preservation efforts.

### **The "Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act"**

In 2018, the president signed into law S. 2155, which includes a provision on manufactured home loans. The statute amends the "Truth in Lending Act" (TILA) to specify that a retailer of manufactured housing is generally not considered a mortgage originator. The provision was not supported by affordable housing advocates on the grounds that it lessens already weak consumer protections in the manufactured housing market.

### **The "Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act" (PL 111-203)**

Enacted in 2010, Dodd-Frank revised TILA to establish specific protections for mortgage loans, origination activities, and high-cost lending. These provisions enhance consumer protections for purchasers of manufactured homes. Dodd-Frank also directs the newly created Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection to supervise manufactured housing finance activities. S. 2155 (above) modifies one provision of Dodd-Frank.

## **WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS**

Advocates should speak to lawmakers with the message that:

- Manufactured home owners should be provided opportunities to obtain standard mortgage lending instead of more costly personal property loans.
- Borrowers with personal property loans should be afforded consumer protections consistent with real property or standard mortgage loans.
- Legislation should be enacted that limits predatory lending practices involving manufactured homes.
- HUD must issue guidance to implement the HUD Manufactured Housing Modernization Act of 2019.

- USDA, HUD, and the GSEs should be encouraged to conduct innovative and responsible pilot programs to improve manufactured homeowners' access to credit.
- Policies and programs should be enacted to facilitate manufactured housing community preservation, such as protection from community sales, closures, and predatory rent increases. Residents should be properly notified and given first right of refusal on the sale of their community.
- Improved data collection for manufactured homes should be incorporated into publicly available data resources such as the "Home Mortgage Disclosure Act," The American Community Survey, and the American Housing Survey. Manufactured home data should indicate property status (personal property or real property) and location information indicating whether the unit is in a manufactured home community or on a scattered site lot. The inclusion of these updated and enhanced manufactured home data would provide a much more complete assessment of manufactured housing.

National Manufactured Homeowners Association:  
<http://www.nmhoa.org/>.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Prosperity Now's I'M HOME Network: 202-409-9788, <https://prosperitynow.org/get-involved/im-home>.

The Housing Assistance Council: 202-824-8600, <http://www.ruralhome.org/>.

Rural Data Portal: <http://www.ruraldataportal.org/>.

Manufactured Homes by County (Interactive Map): <http://bit.ly/1KDssyX>.

High Cost Manufactured Home Loans by County (Interactive Map): <http://bit.ly/14QHVLk>

Next Step: <https://nextstepus.org/>.

ROC USA: 603-856-0246 <http://www.rocusa.org>.

National Consumer Law Center: 202-452-6352  
<http://www.nclc.org/issues/manufactured-housing.html>.

# Olmstead Implementation

---

By Sherry Lerch, Director, Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc.

## SUMMARY

In its 1999 decision in *Olmstead v. L.C.*, the United States Supreme Court found that the institutionalization of persons with disabilities who were ready to return to the community was a violation of Title II of the “Americans with Disabilities Act” (ADA). States have made variable progress on supporting people with disabilities in the most integrated settings possible.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, several states were in the process of: (1) implementing “*Olmstead* Plans” that expand community-based supports, including new integrated permanent supportive housing opportunities; (2) implementing *Olmstead*-related settlement agreements that require thousands of new integrated permanent supportive housing opportunities to be created in conjunction with the expansion of community-based services and supports; or 3) implementing other related activities, such as Medicaid reform, that will increase access to services and supports intended to assist individuals with disabilities to succeed in integrated, community-based settings. Unfortunately, the pandemic has diverted many states’ attention away from *Olmstead* and other federal and state priorities, impacting transitions to integrated community settings.

The pandemic has further reinforced the negative consequences of serving individuals in congregate settings. According to a report published by the Kaiser Family Foundation, as of May 17, 2021, the US has reported over 184,000 COVID-19 deaths among long-term care facility (LTCF) residents and staff, accounting for nearly one-third of all COVID-19 deaths in the US. These data do not reflect the full extent of COVID-19’s impact on LTCFs beyond nursing homes, however, as data gaps for settings serving nonelderly people with disabilities are an ongoing challenge. Settings for which data

are incomplete include certain institutions, such as intermediate care facilities for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities (ICF/IIDs) and inpatient behavioral health settings, and congregate community-based settings, such as group homes, personal care homes, assisted living facilities (ALFs), and adult day programs.

Residents in facilities that serve a relatively large share of Black and Hispanic residents have been affected disproportionately by the coronavirus. People of color are not only at greater risk for illness due to COVID-19, they are disproportionately hospitalized in psychiatric settings. The disparities that increase COVID-19 risk for people of color generally - homelessness, unstable, low quality, or densely populated housing, concerns about immigration status, language barriers, and closure or underfunding of healthcare facilities that primarily serve minority populations - also increase the likelihood of people of color being incarcerated or arrested, thus compounding the risk of morbidity or mortality from COVID-19.

Although the Trump Administration rescinded guidance on *Olmstead* and employment services, the 2011 DOJ *Statement of the Department of Justice on Enforcement of the Integration Mandate of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Olmstead v. L.C.* that defines integrated and segregated settings remains. In June 2020, CMS reminded states that, consistent with the integration mandate, facilities are obligated to offer and provide discharge planning, case management, and transition services, as appropriate, to individuals who are removed from their Medicaid home and community based services during the course of the public health emergency, as well as to individuals with disabilities who may require these services in order to avoid unjustified institutionalization or segregation.

The impact of the pandemic on *Olmstead* implementation has been a double-edged sword. States have needed to divert their attention and resources from complying with *Olmstead*

to responding to the public health emergency. However, in response to the impact of the pandemic on the historically under-funded community-based systems that support people with disabilities, the Federal government has allocated unprecedented funding opportunities, increasing states' Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant awards, allowing states to expand and enhance their home and community-based services and supports and increasing federal funding to expand and enhance crisis response systems. States and communities have also received considerable funding to increase access to affordable housing. Several states are using these funding opportunities to fulfill their Olmstead obligations.

## ADMINISTRATION

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) is the federal agency charged with enforcing ADA and *Olmstead* compliance. Other federal agencies, including HUD and Health and Human Services (HHS), have funding, regulatory, and enforcement roles related to the ADA and *Olmstead*. Protection and Advocacy (P&A) agencies in each state are federally authorized and have legal, administrative, and other appropriate remedies to protect and advocate for the rights of individuals with disabilities.

## HISTORY

In its 1999 decision in *Olmstead v. L.C.*, the Supreme Court found that the institutionalization of persons with disabilities who were ready to return to the community was a violation of Title II of the ADA. In its decision, the court found that indiscriminate institutional placement of persons who can handle and benefit from community settings perpetuates unwarranted assumptions that persons so isolated are incapable or unworthy of participating in community life. The court also found that confinement in an institution severely diminishes everyday life activities, including “family relations, social contacts, work options, economic independence, educational advancement, and cultural enrichment.”

The court was careful to say that the responsibility of states to provide health care in the community was “not boundless.” States were not required to close institutions, nor were they to use homeless shelters as community placements. The court said that compliance with the ADA could be achieved if a state could demonstrate that it had a “comprehensive and effectively working plan” for assisting people living in “restrictive settings,” including a waiting list that moved at a “reasonable pace not controlled by the state’s endeavors to keep its institutions fully populated.”

Historically, community integration was achieved by moving people out of large, state-run institutions into community settings (deinstitutionalization). In recent years, there has been increasing scrutiny on ways that certain types of large, congregate residential settings in the community are restrictive, have characteristics of an institutional nature, and are inconsistent with the intent of the ADA and *Olmstead*. Such facilities are known by a variety of names (e.g., adult care homes, residential care facilities, boarding homes, nursing homes, assisted living), but share similar characteristics, including many residents primarily with disabilities, insufficient or inadequate services, restrictions on personal affairs, and housing that is contingent upon compliance with services.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Since 1999, states have made variable progress on supporting people with disabilities in the most integrated settings possible. Prior to the pandemic, several states were in the process of: (1) implementing “*Olmstead* Plans” that expand community-based supports, including new integrated permanent supportive housing opportunities; (2) implementing *Olmstead*-related settlement agreements that require thousands of new integrated permanent supportive housing opportunities to be created in conjunction with the expansion of community-based services and supports; or (3) implementing other related activities, such as Medicaid reform, that will increase access to services and supports

intended to assist individuals with disabilities to succeed in integrated, community-based settings. Unfortunately, many states never developed Olmstead plans, have outdated plans, or are doing very little to comply with Olmstead specifically.

DOJ defines the most integrated setting as:

“a setting that enables individuals with disabilities to interact with nondisabled persons to the fullest extent possible. Integrated settings are those that provide individuals with disabilities opportunities to live, work, and receive services in the greater community, just like individuals without disabilities. Integrated settings are located in mainstream society; offer access to community activities and opportunities at times, frequencies, and with persons of an individual’s choosing; afford individuals choice in their daily life activities; and, provide individuals with disabilities the opportunity to interact with nondisabled persons to the fullest extent possible. Evidence-based practices that provide scattered-site housing with supportive services are examples of integrated settings. By contrast, segregated settings often have qualities of an institutional nature. Segregated settings include, but are not limited to: (1) congregate settings populated exclusively or primarily with individuals with disabilities; (2) congregate settings characterized by regimentation in daily activities, lack of privacy or autonomy, policies limiting visitors, or limits on individuals’ ability to engage freely in community activities and to manage their own activities of daily living; or (3) settings that provide for daytime activities primarily with other individuals with disabilities.”

States with *Olmstead* litigation or settlement agreements, as well as states trying to comply with *Olmstead* through proactive strategies, are working to expand access to integrated permanent supportive housing opportunities for people with significant and long-term disabilities. *Olmstead*-related settlement agreements typically require significant numbers of new permanent

supportive housing opportunities. It is important to note, however, that prior to the pandemic, several of these states were struggling to meet supportive housing compliance targets due to lack of resources for housing assistance and services.

Implementation efforts have largely focused on expanding community living options and services that support transitions to and successful tenancy in community-based housing as opposed to integrated employment or other activities. Several *Olmstead* plans do address competitive, integrated employment and there have been limited actions on employment in some states such as Rhode Island and Oregon regarding persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities unnecessarily segregated in “sheltered workshops” and related day activity service programs.

The pandemic has contributed to housing affordability becoming an even greater barrier for states working to comply with ADA requirements. The cost of housing has sky-rocketed nationwide, both for the cost of home ownership and for rent. Nationally, **the cost of rent** has increased nearly 20% for a one-bedroom apartment, with all states experiencing an increase in rents. Most people with disabilities living in restrictive settings qualify for federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments that average only 20% of median income nationally. Even prior to the Pandemic the Technical Assistance Collaborative’s biannual *Priced Out* reports repeatedly demonstrated that in no housing market in the country could an individual on SSI afford the fair market rent. Several states have created or expanded state-funded rental subsidies directly related to their *Olmstead* efforts (see <http://www.tacinc.org/knowledge-resources/publications/reports/state-funded-housing-assistance-report/> and <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/cityscape/vol20num2/ch4.pdf>). These state rental subsidies are typically designed as “bridge” subsidies to help people until a permanent HUD subsidy can be obtained, but often come at the expense of funding that could have been used for other necessary services.

In June of 2013, HUD issued *Olmstead* [guidance](#) to provide information on *Olmstead*, to clarify how HUD programs can assist state and local *Olmstead* efforts, and to encourage housing providers to support *Olmstead* implementation by increasing integrated housing opportunities for people with disabilities. HUD’s guidance emphasizes that people with disabilities should have choice and self-determination in housing and states that “HUD is committed to offering individuals with disabilities housing options that enable them to make meaningful choices about housing, health care, and long-term services and supports so they can participate fully in community life.”

HUD also advises that, “For communities that have historically relied heavily on institutional settings or housing built exclusively and primarily for individuals with disabilities, the need for additional integrated housing options scattered through the community becomes more acute.” HUD 504 regulations require that HUD and its grantees/housing providers administer their programs and activities in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of individuals covered by the ADA. HUD’s guidance does not change the requirements for any existing HUD program, but points out that requests for disability-specific tenant selection “remedial” preferences may be approved by HUD’s Office of General Counsel if they are related to *Olmstead* implementation.

## OLMSTEAD ACTIVITY IN 2021

Throughout 2021, states worked to rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic, diverting attention and resources away from *Olmstead* and impacting transitions to integrated community settings. This comes at a time when LTCF residents and staff account for nearly one-third of all COVID-19 deaths in the US. These data do not reflect the full extent of COVID-19’s impact on LTCFs beyond nursing homes, however, as [data gaps](#) for settings serving nonelderly people with disabilities are an ongoing challenge. The pandemic has also amplified historic human resource issues; provider capacity nationwide is strained as direct service workforce shortages have reached crisis

proportion. Increased incidents of depression, anxiety and opioid overdoses have resulted in Emergency Department boarding and wait times for community inpatient psychiatric beds. Access to affordable housing units has been severely compromised as a result of well-intended eviction moratoria and federal funding for rental assistance/homelessness prevention.

Despite these exacerbated and newly emerging challenges, *Olmstead* activity did continue in some states through planning (e.g. North Carolina, Minnesota) and settlement agreement implementation. States have continued to provide services under the authority of [emergency waivers and state plan amendments](#) from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to increase flexibility and coverage of services. Several states have [extended waivers](#) allowing, and some have institutionalized, the expanded use of telehealth strategies to maintain access to services, including for transition and tenancy sustaining services. Many providers have resumed some face-to-face service contacts with individuals in community-based settings.

The most promising support for community integration are newly available funding opportunities for states. Enhanced Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) is available to expand home and community-based services and to enhance the array of crisis response services, through implementation of 988 and mobile crisis response teams. Section 9817 of the “American Rescue Plan Act” temporarily increases FMAP rates by 10 percentage points for certain Medicaid HCBS expenditures. This federal funding boost can help states increase community-based options for people with disabilities, promoting community inclusion. Through the creation of a nationwide and easy to remember number, 988, the “National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020” sets the stage for a centralized access to behavioral health services. With careful state planning and system expansion, 988 has potential to become the foundation of an effective emergency response system for individuals in behavioral health crisis.

In addition, the “[American Rescue Plan Act of 2021](#)” (ARPA) provides a state Medicaid option, through state plan amendment or waiver, for community mobile crisis intervention services for five years. It further incentivizes state participation with an 85% enhanced federal matching rate for the first three years of qualifying services. Every state received an increase in its Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant and the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant awards, to be expended by 2025.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

Emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic has been a primary focus for the Biden Administration and for states as federal and state agencies work to mitigate the stress of the virus on healthcare systems, increase vaccination rates, and push economic recovery. State budgets have received significant federal relief to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic, however budget cuts to critical housing and services that support people with disabilities in integrated community settings could still be on the horizon, including critical supports that facilitate transitions from institutional settings.

The potential expansion of home and community-based services and a more robust crisis response have the potential to reduce reliance on institutional and congregate care settings; however, realizing this potential will require aggressive strategies to address the workforce shortage crisis. Increased funding to states must be passed on through rate increases, and in turn used to raise direct service staff wages or providers will continue to struggle to maintain staffing to perform this critical work.

The Biden Administration has given indications of its intent to reinvigorate *Olmstead* activity, recently appointing Jennifer Mathis, Director of Policy & Legal Advocacy at the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law & Deputy Legal Director, as a Deputy Assistant Attorney General at the U.S. Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division, where she will help lead its disability rights work. Advocates should make the case that supporting

people with disabilities in integrated community settings is important public policy and aligns well with COVID mitigation and recovery plans. Stakeholders should continue to educate elected officials and policy makers on their obligations under the ADA and *Olmstead*. States and other public entities are legally obligated to ensure that all individuals with disabilities have the civil right to live and work in integrated, community-based settings.

On the positive side, several states continue *Olmstead*-related planning, and several continue to implement *Olmstead* settlement agreements that should result in additional community living opportunities despite state budgets. Among these include Louisiana, Minnesota, New York, and North Carolina. Many states have also made modifications to service delivery to sustain access. Telehealth has become an important tool to provide treatment and support services to people with disabilities, and several states have extended waivers allowing for, and some have institutionalized, the expanded use of telehealth.

## STAKEHOLDER ACTIONS WITH POLICY MAKERS

Mental health and substance use funding administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provided an additional \$5 billion each for the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant and the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant, to be expended by 2025. Stakeholders should advocate for these funds to be directed to filling gaps in community-based services and supports to both divert and transition individuals from institutional and congregate care settings.

States are faced with decisions about service waivers and flexibilities adopted during the Pandemic. Oregon and Massachusetts held listening sessions with providers, insurers, and consumers to get feedback on the state’s regulatory approach to the ongoing use of telehealth.<sup>19</sup> Through this monitoring, regulators learned that the changes succeeded in expanding use of telemedicine. For behavioral health, a few noted the benefits of



telemedicine, which appeared to produce more visits overall and fewer missed appointments. Advocates should inform policymakers about their perspectives on the ongoing role of telehealth in the behavioral health system.

According to the NLIHC, advocates and congressional leaders have secured nearly \$85 billion in emergency housing and homelessness assistance since the start of the pandemic through the “American Rescue Plan Act”, the December “COVID-19 relief bill”, and the “CARES Act.” They are now committed to ensuring emergency rental assistance (ERA) and other resources reach the lowest-income and most marginalized people.

Stakeholders must advocate for disparities in access to healthcare, housing, education and employment to be addressed in order to reduce psychiatric hospitalizations and incarceration in jails and prisons.

Finally, advocates should advise states to assess their progress with meeting the Integration Mandate, and to reenergize *Olmstead* planning and implementation if warranted. COVID-19 has dramatically exposed system failures, inadequate disability supports, and racial inequities. Yet the pandemic has also helped to propel large-scale policy changes and federal investments in housing and human services. Stakeholders should advocate for states and communities across the nation to reach across differences and programs to coordinate efforts and maximize the use of these resources. Stakeholders should advocate for states to leverage American Rescue Plan resources and other federal funds to ensure that more people have a safe, stable place to live with the services and supports they want and need to remain stably housed.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc. (TAC),  
617-266-5657, [www.tacinc.org](http://www.tacinc.org).

# Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure

---

By Kim Johnson, Policy Analyst, NLIHC

**Administering Agency:** The “Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act” (PTFA) is self-executing; no agency is responsible for administering the act

**Year Started:** 2009

**Population Targeted:** Renters living in a foreclosed building

A permanent extension of the “Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act” (PTFA) was signed into law in May 2018. The PTFA, which was enacted in 2009 but expired at the end of 2014, is the only federal protection for renters living in foreclosed properties.

Unlike homeowners who have some indication that a foreclosure is coming, renters are not typically aware that their landlords are behind on mortgage payments and are often caught entirely off guard by a foreclosure. Before the permanent extension, renters in most states could be evicted with just a few days’ notice.

The PTFA enables renters whose homes were in foreclosure to remain in their homes for at least 90 days or for the term of their lease, whichever is greater. The PTFA now applies in all states but does not override more protective state laws.

In the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, Representative Keith Ellison (D-MN) and Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) introduced legislation to remove the 2014 sunset date and make the law permanent. Congress eventually passed the PTFA as part of a larger deregulation bill (S. 2155) that became Public Law No. 115-174.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

During the financial crisis, inappropriate lending, falling home prices, and high unemployment led to a very high number of foreclosures across the U.S. However, the impact of these foreclosures was not limited to homeowners – renters lost their homes when the owner of the home they were renting went into foreclosure. In fact, one in five properties in the process of foreclosure

was a rental. Research from NLIHC concluded that because these properties often contained more than one unit, and many owner-occupied properties also housed renters, roughly 40% of the families that faced eviction as a result of the foreclosure crisis were renters. As expected, very low-income families and low-income and Black and Latino communities bore the brunt of rental foreclosures.

Before May 2009, protections for renters in foreclosed properties varied from state to state and in most states, tenants had few protections. Recognizing the hardships experienced by tenants in foreclosed properties, in early 2009 Congress acted to provide a basic set of rights for such tenants. On May 20, 2009, President Obama signed PTFA into law (Public Law 111-22, division A, title VII). The PTFA was extended and clarified in the “Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act” (Public Law 111-203, section 1484). The law expired on December 31, 2014 but was made permanent by Congress in May 2018.

## ISSUE

The PTFA requires the immediate successor in interest at foreclosure to provide *bona fide* tenants with notice 90 days before requiring them to vacate the property and allows tenants with leases to occupy the property until the end of the lease term. A *bona fide* lease or tenancy is defined as one in which: the tenant is neither the mortgagor, nor the spouse, parent, or child of the mortgagor; the lease or tenancy is the result of an arm’s length transaction; and, the lease or tenancy requires rent that is not substantially lower than fair market rent, or is reduced or subsidized due to a federal, state, or local subsidy. If the property is purchased by someone who will occupy the property, then that purchaser can terminate the lease with 90 days’ notice, even when the tenant has a lease that extends beyond 90 days after foreclosure.

Under PTFA, tenants with Section 8 Housing

Choice Voucher assistance have additional protections allowing them to retain their Section 8 lease and requiring the successor in interest to assume the housing assistance payment contract associated with that lease.

The PTFA applies to all foreclosures on all residential properties and traditional one-unit single family homes were covered, as were multi-unit properties. The law applies in cases of both judicial and nonjudicial foreclosures. Tenants with lease rights of any kind, including month-to-month leases or leases terminable at will, are protected as long as the tenancy was in effect as of the date of transfer of title at foreclosure.

The 90-day notice to vacate can only be given by the successor in interest at foreclosure. The successor in interest is whoever acquires title to the property at the end of the foreclosure process. It can be the financial institution that holds the mortgage, or it can be an individual who purchased the property at foreclosure. Notices of the pending foreclosure, although desirable, do not serve as the 90-day notice required by the PTFA.

The PTFA applies in all states but does not override more protective state laws. The PTFA specifically provides that it does not affect “any [s]tate or local law that provides longer time periods or other additional protections for tenants.” Consequently, state law should be examined whenever there is a tenant in a foreclosed property to maximize the protections available to tenants.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit NLIHC’s website at [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org) or call 202-662-1530.

*Renters in Foreclosure: A Fresh Look at an Ongoing Problem*, from NLIHC, <https://bit.ly/2rpeHEm>.

See NHLP’s chart of state and local laws, <https://bit.ly/35CWnWZ>.

Visit NHLC’s website at [www.homelesslaw.org](http://www.homelesslaw.org).

*Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act: Revised Comptroller’s Handbook Booklet and Rescissions, Version 1.0, March 2020*, <https://bit.ly/35XvPmh>.

# Housing Access for People with Conviction Histories

---

By Kim Johnson, Policy Analyst, NLIHC

The United States is the world's largest jailer, imprisoning just under 2.3 million people in state and local jails and prisons, juvenile correctional facilities, immigrant detention facilities, and prisons and jails on tribal or territorial lands. The FBI estimates as many as one in three Americans has a conviction record, and Black and Latino people, people with a disability, and members of the LGBTQ community are disproportionately represented in the criminal-legal system. After decades of imprisoning non-violent drug offenders with punitive and destructive mandatory minimum sentences, lawmakers and criminal-legal system reform advocates are making progress in the decarceration of prison inmates across the country. Since reaching its peak in 2009, the U.S. prison population has decreased 8%; however, as more formerly incarcerated people return to their communities, there is a growing concern about how they will fare upon reentry.

Formerly incarcerated people typically return to low-income communities where resources, particularly affordable, accessible housing, are scarce. Indeed, there is a national shortage of 7 million rental units affordable and available to extremely low-income households. A criminal record poses an additional barrier to accessing affordable, accessible housing for justice-involved individuals, placing them at risk of housing instability, homelessness, and ultimately recidivism. One study showed that returning individuals without stable housing were twice as likely to recidivate than those living in stable housing. Public housing authorities (PHAs) and owners of federally assisted housing have broad discretion in screening out applicants with conviction records or precluding returning citizens from rejoining their families. Unless the Administration and Congress work to reduce these barriers by providing additional guidance

and housing resources, large-scale decarceration efforts will result in an even greater unmet demand for affordable, accessible housing.

## LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

In past decades, Congress passed legislation that included increasingly stringent crime and drug enforcement policies in public housing. These policies increased penalties for certain drug-related activities and gave broad discretion to PHAs to evaluate potential and current residents. They also broadened resident accountability to include the behavior of a wider range of individuals, including minors and social acquaintances, and increased the oversight and penalties for PHAs that failed to make progress in implementing strategies to lower crime and drug use.

The “Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988” required PHAs to include a provision in their lease agreements that would allow them to evict tenants who used drugs or behaved in a way that threatened the safety of other tenants (Pub. L. No. 100-690, 102 Stat. 4181, 4300, 1988). Ten years later, Congress passed the “Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998,” which allowed PHAs to exclude applicants with conviction records and use discretion in determining whether an applicant was a potential safety risk to current residents (Pub. L. No. 105-276, 112 Stat. 2461, 2518, 1998). Additionally, the “Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act of 1990” created a mandatory three-year ban on readmitting tenants who had previously been evicted for engaging in drug-related criminal activity (Pub. L. No. 101-625, 104 Stat. 4079, 4180, 1990), and gave PHAs the option to increase the ban beyond the initial three years. The “Housing Opportunity Program Extension Act of 1996” (HOPEA) increased PHA’s ability to evict tenants and allowed them to request applicants’ criminal records from the

National Crime Information Center and local police departments (Pub. L. No. 104-120, 110 Stat. 834, 836, 1996). HOPEA also granted PHAs the ability to reject applicants they believed were abusing drugs or alcohol or whose history of drug or alcohol use could pose a potential risk to the health and safety of current residents.

## MANDATORY SCREENING POLICIES

Although PHAs have broad discretion in evaluating current and prospective tenants, there are several federal admissions policies that all PHAs and project owners are required to follow. However, these policies merely act as a floor that many PHAs supplement with additional screening policies. Under federal law and regulation, PHAs and project owners must impose a permanent admission ban when a household includes a person who is required to register as a sex offender for life [42 U.S.C. § 13663(a) (2015); 24 C.F.R. §§ 960.204(a) (4), 982.553(a)(2), 2012]. Additionally, PHAs must impose a permanent admission ban or permanently terminate a household's tenancy when a household member has been convicted of manufacturing methamphetamine on federally assisted property [42 U.S.C. § 1437f(n) (2015); 24 C.F.R. §§ 960.204(a)(3), 982.553(a)(1)(ii)(C), 2012].

PHAs and project owners are also required to prohibit admitting a household for three years if a household member has been evicted from federally assisted housing for drug-related criminal activity [42 U.S.C. § 13661(a) (2015); 24 C.F.R. §§ 960.204(a)(1), 982.553 (a)(1)(i), 2012]. However, the PHA or project owner has discretion to admit the household if it is determined that the member successfully completed drug rehabilitation or the circumstances leading to the eviction no longer exist (e.g., the incarceration or death of the person who committed the drug-related criminal activity). Additionally, households must be denied admission if a member is currently engaged in illegal drug use or alcohol abuse [42 U.S.C. § 13661(b) (2015); 24 C.F.R. §§ 960.204(a)(2)(i), 982.553 (a)(1)(ii)

(a), 2012]. PHAs and project owners must also prohibit admitting households where the PHA or property owner has reason to believe that a household member's historical or current abuse of illegal drugs or alcohol "may threaten the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises by other residents" [42 U.S.C § 13661(b)(1) (2015); 24 C.F.R. §§ 960.204(a)(2)(ii), 982.553(a)(1)(ii)(B) (2012)].

These policies, along with whatever additional screening criteria a PHA or project owner may develop, are contained in the housing provider's written admissions policy and grant housing providers broad discretion in screening out tenants with a conviction record. Depending on the program, these written policies are referred to as: admission and continued occupancy policies for public housing, administrative plans for the Housing Choice Voucher program, or tenant selection plans for project-based Section 8 developments.

## ISSUES

Much of HUD's guidance on evaluating current and potential tenants is advisory and not mandatory so PHAs and project owners across the country have developed their own criteria, creating additional barriers for people with conviction records and raising fair housing concerns.

One issue that continues to prevent people with a conviction history from accessing affordable housing arises from PHAs and project-owners using unreasonable lookback periods to evaluate applicants' conviction records. Federal law instructs housing providers to look back in an applicant's history of criminal activity within a "reasonable time," but neither the statute nor HUD explicitly define what constitutes a reasonable time; instead, HUD has provided suggested time limits or best practices for establishing a reasonable lookback time. This lack of formal guidance has allowed a large number of housing providers to establish admissions policies that have no time limit on using a person's conviction history to evaluate their application. Although HUD expects housing

providers to define a “reasonable time,” some neglect to do so or leave it open ended and, as a result, discourage people with conviction records from applying. Others impose blanket lifetime bans or use overly long lookback periods for particular crimes.

Despite HUD’s suggested limit on lookback periods for certain crimes (for example, five years for serious crimes), housing providers routinely look further back into a person’s conviction history, sometimes as long as 20 years. HUD has also long held that permanent bans contradict federal policy. Moreover, housing providers often neglect to include what events in a lookback period trigger denial (e.g., the criminal activity itself, a conviction, or release from incarceration), again making it difficult for people with conviction records to determine their eligibility. Until a 2015 HUD guideline banned the use of arrest records in federally assisted housing decisions (Notice PIH 2015-19), a criminal arrest alone could trigger denial even if it did not lead to a subsequent conviction.

Many housing providers utilize overly broad categories of criminal activity that reach beyond HUD’s three general categories: drug-related criminal activity; violent criminal activity; and other criminal activity that may threaten the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises by other residents or anyone residing in the immediate vicinity. By casting such a wide net over almost any felony, which can include shoplifting and jaywalking, housing providers screen out potential tenants to the point that anyone with a conviction record need not apply. As a result, housing providers create a de facto ban on individuals with a conviction record, even if they do not have a policy explicitly barring individuals with a conviction record from being admitted.

Housing providers are increasingly turning to private tenant screening companies to review applicants’ conviction records and make recommendations about whether to admit or deny. These companies usually pull criminal records data from public databases that are often incomplete or inaccurate. For example,

a jurisdiction might misreport a misdemeanor as a felony or vice-versa, fail to indicate when a record has been expunged or sealed, or mix up the conviction histories of two people with the same name. Tenant screening companies use the records they gather to make an “up or down” determination as to whether a prospective tenant should be approved for residency. Despite federal law guaranteeing tenants’ right to see a copy of their criminal background report, not all housing providers comply. This lack of transparency means applicants are typically left in the dark about the criminal record information used to deny their admission.

Too often, PHAs and project owners ignore or do not provide mechanisms for applicants to present mitigating circumstances to show they do not pose a risk to the community and will be good tenants. PHAs are required by federal law to consider mitigating circumstances during their admissions process, including the time, nature, and extent of the applicant’s conduct, as well as the seriousness of the offense. PHAs can also take into consideration actions that indicate future good conduct, such as an applicant successfully completing a drug rehabilitation program. However, PHAs often fail to inform applicants of their right to present evidence or choose to ignore mitigating circumstances when considering an application. For the Housing Choice Voucher program and Section 8 project-based properties, HUD merely encourages housing providers to consider mitigating circumstances rather than requiring them to do so. Some housing providers are reluctant to adopt such a policy, arguing that its subjective nature makes it too hard to apply uniformly and puts them at risk of violating the “Fair Housing Act” (FHA). However, adopting a one-size-fits-all policy that is not narrowly tailored and fails to consider mitigating circumstances may violate the FHA if it has a disparate impact on a protected class of people, including people of color and people with disabilities.

Returning citizens attempting to reunite with their families living in federally subsidized housing are sometimes barred from doing so or

are not permitted to be added to the household's lease. Although HUD has no prohibition on adding returning citizens to a lease, it is widely believed that PHAs and project owners are not permitted to do so. Housing providers' refusal to add returning citizens to a lease places these individuals and their families at risk of losing their housing if something happens to the head of household.

Finally, people with conviction records who have managed to secure a Housing Choice Voucher can run into trouble if they need to transfer their voucher to another jurisdiction. When a household moves from one jurisdiction to another, the receiving PHA might rescreen the household using a more stringent criteria than the one used by the initial PHA. If the receiving PHA determines that the household does not meet its criteria, it will try to terminate assistance. This practice of rescreening prevents individuals with a conviction history and their families from being able to move to new areas that offer greater opportunities. In 2015, HUD published a final rule on voucher portability that reiterated PHAs' ability to rescreen families, stating, "[R]eceiving PHAs should be allowed to apply their own screening standards consistently among families in their program and for families moving into their jurisdiction under portability. However, it is important that moving families be informed that they are subject to screening based on the receiving PHA's criteria, and that the receiving PHA's screening criteria may be different than that of the initial PHA."

### **Impact of COVID-19**

The coronavirus pandemic poses a particular threat to people residing in congregate settings, including jails and prisons. In an effort to decrease congestion, some state and local incarceration facilities have released incarcerated individuals with underlying health conditions more vulnerable to COVID-19 complications and individuals determined not to pose a threat to the health and safety of others. HUD issued in PIH Notice 2020-05 in April 2020, providing PHAs broad authority to waive regulatory and statutory provisions in an effort to increase

access to federally assisted housing. These waivers could be adopted by PHAs to allow individuals with a conviction history to obtain residency in housing supported by the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) or Project Based Voucher (PBV) program. However, adopting these waivers is not mandatory and is left up to the discretion of PHAs. HUD should mandate these waivers be adopted to increase access to housing for individuals exiting incarceration.

PHAs were given the option of waiving regulation HQS-10 § 982.401(d), which if adopted would allow current tenants of HCV- and PBV-assisted housing to add individuals to the household lease even if doing so would exceed HUD's minimum standard for adequate space. This waiver could allow people with a conviction record to be added to the lease of a family member residing in assisted housing. HUD also gave PHAs the option to waive 24 CFR § 960.202(c)(1) and 24 CFR § 982.54 (a), which would allow PHAs to amend and adopt changes to their Admission and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP) and Administrative Plans without formal board approval. If adopted, PHAs could use these waivers to change their tenant screening policies and reduce barriers to accessing housing for people with a conviction record. For example, PHAs could remove criminal record screening policies for individuals released from incarceration in response to COVID-19, as these individuals have already been determined not to pose a threat to the health or safety of others.

## **RECENT EFFORTS TO ADDRESS CRIMINAL RECORDS AND HOUSING**

### **Administrative Efforts**

The Obama Administration first took action in helping returning citizens gain access to housing in 2011, when then HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan issued a letter to PHA executive directors stating, "[T]his is an Administration that believes in the importance of second chances—the people who have paid their debt to society deserve the opportunity to become productive citizens and caring parents, to set the past aside

and embrace the future. Part of that support means helping justice-involved individuals gain access to one of the most fundamental building blocks of a stable life—a place to live.” Secretary Donovan further encouraged PHAs to allow people with a conviction history, when appropriate, to live with their families in public housing or the Housing Choice Voucher program and asked that when PHAs screened for criminal records, they “consider all relevant information, including factors which indicate a reasonable probability of favorable future conduct.” A year later, Secretary Donovan sent a similar [letter](#) to owners and agents of HUD-assisted properties.

In 2013, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) published a [guidebook](#) for PHAs that includes best practices and policies to increase access to housing. In the guidebook, USICH notes the relationship between incarceration and homelessness, “as difficulties in reintegrating into the community increase the risk of homelessness for released prisoners, and homelessness increased the risk of re-incarceration.” Like Secretary Donovan, USICH encourages PHAs to consider individual factors when screening potential tenants with conviction records in order to remove barriers to housing assistance.

In November 2015, President Barack Obama announced new actions to promote the rehabilitation and reintegration for formerly incarcerated people, including a new \$8.7 million demonstration program to address homelessness and reduce recidivism rates. President Obama also announced that HUD would provide \$1.75 million to aid eligible public housing residents under the age of 25 in expunging or sealing their criminal records under the new Juvenile Reentry Assistance Program.

In conjunction with the announcement, HUD released PIH 2015-19, recognizing the responsibility PHAs and project owners have in ensuring people with a conviction record are not automatically barred from federally subsidized housing. The guidance clarifies the use of arrest records to determine who can live in federally subsidized properties and notes an individual’s

arrest record cannot be used as evidence that they have committed a crime, stating “[T]he fact that there has been an arrest for a crime is not a basis for the requisite determination that the relevant individual engaged in criminal activity warranting denial of admission, termination of assistance or eviction.”

The guidance also makes clear that HUD does not require PHAs and project owners to adopt or enforce “one strike” policies that deny admission to anyone with a conviction record or that require families to be automatically evicted any time a household member engages in criminal activity in violation of the lease. However, it does not preclude PHAs and owners from utilizing such a policy. Instead, the guidance urges PHAs and owners to exercise discretion before making such a decision and to consider all relevant circumstances, including the seriousness of the crime and the effect an eviction of an entire household would have on family members not involved in the criminal activity. Additionally, the guidance reminds PHAs and property owners of the due process rights of tenants and applicants applying for housing assistance.

In April 2016, HUD issued legal guidance from the Office of General Counsel stating that housing providers, both in the public and private housing market, likely violate the “Fair Housing Act of 1968” when employing blanket policies refusing to rent or renew a lease based on an individual’s criminal history since such policies may have a disparate impact on racial minorities. The Fair Housing Act prohibits housing discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin or disability while coining these as “protected classes” of people and noting, “Because of widespread racial and ethnic disparities in the U.S. criminal justice system, criminal history-based restrictions on access to housing are likely disproportionately to burden African Americans and Hispanics.”

The guidance, known as the “disparate impact rule,” states that when a housing provider’s seemingly neutral policy or practice has a discriminatory effect, such as restricting access to housing on the basis of criminal history,



which has a disparate impact on individuals of a particular race, national origin, or other protected class, the policy or practice is unlawful under the Fair Housing Act if it is not necessary to serve a substantial, legitimate, nondiscriminatory interest of the housing provider, or if the interest could be served by another practice that has a less discriminatory effect.

Some landlords and property managers assert that the reason they have blanket conviction history policies is to protect other residents and the property. HUD's 2016 disparate impact guidance declares that "bald assertions based on generalization or stereotype that any individual with an arrest or conviction record poses a greater risk than those without such records are not sufficient." Landlords and property managers must be able to prove through reliable evidence that blanket policies assist in protecting residents and property.

The guidance also states that a housing provider with a policy that excludes people because of a prior arrest without conviction cannot satisfy its burden of showing the policy is necessary to achieve a "substantial, legitimate, nondiscriminatory interest," since an arrest is not a reliable basis upon which to assess an applicant's potential risk to residents or property. When a person has been convicted, the policy must be applied on a case-by-case basis considering the nature and severity of the conviction, what the individual has done since conviction, and how long ago the conviction took place.

In addition, the guidance discusses how a housing provider may violate the Fair Housing Act if the provider intentionally discriminates when using criminal history information in evaluating applicants and tenants, "which occurs when the provider treats an applicant or renter differently because of race, national origin or another protected characteristic. In these cases, the housing provider's use of conviction records or other criminal history information as a pretext for unequal treatment of individuals because of race, national origin or other protected characteristics is no different from the

discriminatory application of any other rental or purchase criteria."

In August 2019, the Trump Administration proposed changes to HUD's disparate impact rule that would have made it more difficult to challenge a housing provider's discriminatory policies. The revisions proposed shifting the burden of proving discrimination entirely to the plaintiff, who would have been required to show that the policy or practice under question is "arbitrary, artificial, and unnecessary" to achieve a valid interest. Plaintiffs would then have had to establish a "robust causal link" between the policy or practice and its disparate impact on members of a protected class, and show the disparate impact is directly linked to adverse outcomes for members of a protected class.

The Biden Administration moved in June 2021 to withdraw the proposed changes to the disparate impact rule and reinstate the 2016 guidelines. Under the rule's 2016 guidelines, bringing a disparate impact claim requires a three-part "burden-shifting" standard that begins with a plaintiff, usually the target of a discriminatory policy, showing a policy or practice causes (or will likely cause) a discriminatory effect. Next, the burden shifts to the defendant, usually a housing provider, to prove that the policy or practice is necessary to achieve a legitimate, nondiscriminatory interest. Finally, if the defendant can prove the policy is necessary, the burden shifts back to the plaintiff who must then prove that the defendant's interest can be achieved through another policy or practice that has a less discriminatory effect.

In March 2021, President Biden signed into law the "American Rescue Plan Act," a \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package with nearly \$50 billion in essential housing and homelessness assistance. The bill provided \$5 billion for an estimated 70,000 emergency housing vouchers (EHVs) targeted specifically to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness and those escaping domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking. HUD Notice PIH 2021-15 clarifies that people exiting incarceration "who are at-risk of homelessness

due to their low incomes and lack of sufficient resources or social supports” are eligible for EHVs.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) issued in November 2021 an advisory opinion warning consumer reporting agencies – including tenant screening companies – that using inadequate matching procedures like name-only matching may violate the “Fair Credit Reporting Act.”

### **Efforts in Congress**

In December 2018, Congress passed, and President Trump signed into law, the bipartisan “First Step Act” (P.L. 115-391), which rolls back mandatory minimum sentences in certain circumstances and expands on “good time credits” for incarcerated people looking to shorten their sentences. While advocates acknowledged the bill was not perfect, they agreed it was a modest step forward for comprehensive criminal legal reform. The bill also included the “Second Chance Reauthorization Act” that supports state, local, and tribal governments and nonprofit organizations in their work to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for people returning from incarceration. Second Chance grants support a variety of reentry services, including housing, job training, education, mentoring, and mental health treatment. The “Second Chance Reauthorization Act” expands opportunities for community-based nonprofits to apply for grants to develop support programs, such as housing, and drug treatment programs. It also requires coordination among multiple federal agencies (including HUD), state and local governments, and service providers on federal programs and policies related to reentry.

In July 2019, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) and then-Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA) introduced legislation to ensure that people with criminal records have access to federally assisted housing. The “Fair Chance at Housing Act” would ban “one-strike” and “no-fault” eviction policies, demand higher standards of evidence to reject an applicant on

the basis of their criminal record, and mandate an individualized review processes that takes into account both the totality of circumstances surrounding a criminal offense and any mitigating evidence provided by a prospective tenant. These measures would allow families to reunify when a household member returns home after serving time in prison or jail and help end the cycle of homelessness and recidivism too often experienced by justice-involved individuals.

In March 2020, the “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act” (CARES Act) was signed into law. The CARES Act provided states and communities with much-needed resources to respond to the coronavirus pandemic, including additional funding for housing and homelessness assistance. While the CARES Act failed to provide resources to specifically address the housing needs of people exiting incarceration, there is nothing in the bill prohibiting funds being used to assist people with a criminal record in finding or maintaining safe, stable, affordable housing.

In March 2021, President Biden signed into law the *American Rescue Plan Act*, a \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package with nearly \$50 billion in essential housing and homelessness assistance. The bill provided \$5 billion for an estimated 70,000 emergency housing vouchers (EHVs) targeted specifically to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, including people exiting incarceration, and those escaping domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking.

## **FORECAST FOR 2022**

The significant resources for affordable housing and community development enacted in response to the coronavirus pandemic present communities with new opportunities to meet the housing needs of people with a conviction history. State and community leaders should work with formerly incarcerated individuals and advocates to ensure a portion of this new funding is put towards the housing needs of people exiting incarceration. Congress and the White House must continue working together to enact meaningful reforms that would ensure people

exiting incarceration and those with a conviction history are able to obtain safe, stable, affordable housing.

During his campaign, President Biden set a goal of “ensuring 100% of formerly incarcerated individuals have housing upon reentry” by directing HUD to only contract with housing providers willing to rent to formerly incarcerated people, and by investing federal funding into the construction of transitional housing.

While important, in order to maximize federal investments and ensure longer-term housing stability funding should also be dedicated to the construction of permanent housing with supportive services where needed. Further, passing a federal source of income discrimination ban would help ensure that more people using a voucher find housing – including individuals with a conviction history – are able to fully utilize their voucher.

Additionally, it is crucial that the “First Step Act” receive full funding in the new fiscal year to fully implement the reforms established by the law. Criminal justice advocates will also continue pushing for new reforms and remind lawmakers that as its title suggests, the “First Step Act” is just that: a first step and one of many steps toward comprehensive criminal justice reform. Advocates can press for legislation, including the “Fair Chance at Housing Act,” that helps people returning from incarceration get back on their feet and reconnect with their communities.

## HOW ADVOCATES CAN TAKE ACTION

### Urge legislators to:

- Enact a federal ban on source of income discrimination.
- Pass comprehensive spending bills that include full funding for implementation of the “First Step Act.”
- Ensure that criminal legal system reform efforts include a comprehensive plan addressing the housing needs of people with criminal records.

- Support legislation that reduces housing barriers for people with criminal records, including the “Fair Chance at Housing Act.”

### Urge HUD to:

- Mandate PHAs adopt regulatory waivers to increase access to federally assisted housing for people with a conviction history.
- Ensure compliance with and build upon HUD guidance that would expand access to federally assisted housing for people with a criminal record.
- Require all federally subsidized housing providers to consider mitigating circumstances when making admissions decisions.
- Provide concrete guidance on reasonable lookback periods.
- Place limitations on what criminal activity housing providers may consider when reviewing applications.
- Set minimum standards for the quality and nature of criminal background information that can be used by PHAs and federally assisted housing providers to make housing decisions.
- Work with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and Federal Trade Commission to identify comprehensive, interagency solutions to tenant screening problems.
- Increase data collection on applicant screening practices.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the Reentry and Housing Working Group, <http://www.reentryandhousing.org>.

# Criminalization of Homelessness

---

Eric S. Tars, Legal Director, National Homelessness Law Center

Every day in America, people experiencing homelessness are threatened by law enforcement, ticketed, and even arrested for living in public spaces when they have no other alternative. Millions of individuals, families, and youth experience homelessness each year and millions more lack access to decent, stable housing they can afford. Rather than providing adequate housing options, too many communities criminalize homelessness by making it illegal for people to stand, sit, sleep, shelter oneself with anything from a blanket to a vehicle, or even ask for help. These laws and policies violate constitutional, civil, and human rights, traumatize homeless individuals and negatively impact their physical and mental health (including creating police encounters that can lead to unnecessary use of force or death), create arrest records, fines, and fees that stand in the way of homeless people securing jobs or housing, and perpetuate racial inequity. Criminalization harms entire communities, by giving resources to law enforcement that could be going, more effectively, to housing and services. With COVID-19 threatening to explode the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, which as always, disparately impacts Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC), now, more than ever, we need a united voice for Housing, Not Handcuffs.

## HISTORY

From vagrancy laws and the workhouses of pre-industrial England to legal segregation, sundown towns, and anti-Okie laws in the U.S., ordinances regulating the use of public space have long been used to exclude marginalized persons based on race, gender identity, national origin, disability, age, and economic class. With the advent of modern homelessness in the 1980s, rather than addressing the underlying lack of affordable housing, communities faced with increasingly visible homelessness began pushing

homeless persons out of public view with laws criminalizing life-sustaining acts such as self-sheltering (“camping”), sleeping, resting, eating, or asking for donations. Other communities have used disparate enforcement of other ordinances, such as jaywalking or littering, to harass and push homeless persons out of certain spaces. These practices gained even more traction with the trend toward “broken windows” policing in the 1990s. For homeless youth, paternalistic status offense laws like runaway statutes and curfews ignore youths’ own assessments of where they are safest and can turn them into criminals or “delinquents” the second they step out the door without the intent to return.

From 2006 to 2019, the National Homelessness Law Center tracked these laws in 187 cities and found that city-wide bans on camping increased by 92%, on sitting or lying by 78%, on loitering by 103%, on panhandling by 103%, and on living in vehicles by 213%. The Law Center also recently found state statutes criminalizing homelessness in 47 states and the District of Columbia. Meanwhile, a 1,300% growth of homeless encampments have been reported in all 50 states. Too often homeless residents experience forced evictions or “sweeps” of the encampments, usually with little notice and no provision of alternative housing, frequently resulting in the destruction of important documents, medicines, and what little shelter the residents have.

However, recent court victories have provided advocates with new opportunities to change the conversation. These include the 2018 victory in *Martin v. Boise* in the 9th Circuit, successfully defended from Supreme Court review in 2019, which held that in the absence of adequate alternatives, it is cruel and unusual punishment under the 8th Amendment to punish someone for life-sustaining activities like sleeping, resting, or sheltering oneself. Federal bills, such as the “Housing Is A Human Right Act” and “Ending Homelessness Act” would provide incentives to states to implement some of *Martin’s*

protections. At the local level, *Martin* has spurred some communities to reexamine their failed criminalization approaches and take more constructive steps. Similarly, since the 2015 *Norton v. Springfield* decision in the 7th Circuit, no panhandling ordinance challenged in court has withstood constitutional scrutiny under the 1st Amendment, and dozens of cities have repealed their ordinances, some instituting more effective day shelter and day labor programs. Other court cases have found sweeps of homeless encampments to violate due process and property protections under the 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment, and other laws criminalizing homelessness to violate the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment's equal protection clause, along with other state constitutional or common law protections. International human rights experts have also condemned the U.S. for violating its human rights obligations

In 2020, given the threat of COVID-19 spreading rapidly in congregate shelters, advocates were also able to obtain clear guidance on unsheltered homelessness from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) stating that homeless encampments should only be removed if residents can be provided with individual housing options, which some courts have found influential. However, as the COVID-induced economic crisis continues to worsen and initial aid is expiring, many communities are looking again to criminalization approaches to address their growing encampments, leading advocates to call for #HotelsNotHospitalBeds.

Similarly, as the pandemic of racism came to the forefront in 2020, so did its intersections with the criminalization of homelessness. BIPOC communities are more likely to experience homelessness, and more likely to be targeted by police for enforcement. Protests across the country raised arguments about the overpolicing of Black, Brown, and other marginalized communities and supported defunding the police and increasing other community services. In Philadelphia, Black Lives Matter protests merged completely with homeless concerns, resulting in a protest encampment that ultimately won its residents permanent housing.

## ISSUE SUMMARY

The growing affordable housing gap and shrinking social safety net have left millions of people homeless or at-risk, and most American cities have fewer emergency shelter beds than people who need shelter. Despite this lack of affordable housing and shelter space, many cities have chosen to criminally or civilly punish people living on the street for doing what any human being must do to survive, like sleeping, resting, and eating – activities we all do every day and take for granted. BIPOC communities; mentally and physically disabled persons; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning youth and adults, who are already disproportionately affected by homelessness, are most likely to be further marginalized by criminalization.

Criminalization policies are ineffective and, in fact, make homelessness harder to exit. Because people experiencing homelessness are not on the street by choice but because they lack choices, criminal and civil punishment serves no constructive purpose. Instead, arrests, unaffordable tickets, and the collateral consequences of criminal convictions make it more difficult for people to exit homelessness and get back on their feet. Criminalization of homelessness might mean that individuals experiencing homelessness are taken to jail, where they may remain for weeks if they cannot pay their bail or fines, perhaps losing custody of their children, property and/or employment in the process. Once released, they could have criminal records that make it more difficult to get or keep a job, housing, or public benefits. Moreover, fines and court fees associated with resolving a criminalization case can amount to hundreds, or even thousands, of dollars. Without the resources to pay, homeless people may be subject to additional jail time.

Criminalization is the most expensive and least effective way of addressing homelessness and wastes scarce public resources on policies that do not work. A growing body of research comparing the cost of homelessness, including the cost of criminalization, with the cost of

providing housing to homeless people shows that ending homelessness through housing is the most affordable option in the long run. Indeed, the provision of housing using a Housing First model, which focuses on providing people with quick, low-barrier access to housing followed by any needed services to maintain housing stability, is cheaper and more effective than all other strategies for addressing homelessness. For example, a [study](#) in Charlotte, NC, found that the city saved \$2.4 million over the course of a year after creating a Housing First facility, as tenants spent 1,050 fewer nights in jail and 292 fewer days in the hospital and had 648 fewer visits to emergency rooms. With state and local budgets stretched to their limit and the threat of additional federal cuts on the horizon, rational, cost-effective policies are needed, not ineffective measures that waste precious taxpayer dollars.

## PROGRAM SUMMARIES

In response to the growing cost data and advocacy at the international and domestic levels, many federal agencies have taken an increasingly strong stance against criminalization of homelessness, but these programs are under threat.

### U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness

In 2012, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) issued [Searching out Solutions: Constructive Alternatives to the Criminalization of Homelessness](#), stating that in addition to raising constitutional issues, criminalization of homelessness may violate [international human rights law](#), and provided numerous alternative practices. In 2015, the USICH issued guidance on [Ending Homelessness for Persons Living in Encampments](#), providing a checklist of steps for communities to constructively address homeless encampments without criminalization and added several [case studies](#) of positive practices in 2017. As of this writing, the USICH is drafting a new strategic plan, with [decriminalization](#) as a “core value.”

### U.S. Department of Justice

In 2015, DOJ filed a [statement of interest brief](#) stating that “Criminally prosecuting those individuals for something as innocent as sleeping, when they have no safe, legal place to go, violates their constitutional rights.” The DOJ has also offered informal guidance, ranging from [newsletters](#), to a [letter](#) on the impact of excessive fines and fees for poor, to a [comment](#) on a proposed encampment ordinance in Seattle. In 2021, the DOJ opened a [civil rights investigation](#) into the Phoenix police department, for the first time explicitly listing police violations of homeless communities as a subject of their investigation. While these are welcome steps, the agency could be doing more, such as requiring law enforcement agencies to disaggregate data by housing status to further understand the extent of the problem, weighing in through statement of interest briefs or other guidance, and opening more investigations.

### U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development

In 2015, HUD [inserted a new question](#) into its application for the \$2 billion Continuum of Care (CoC) funding stream, giving local governments and providers higher scores and potentially increased funding if they demonstrate that they are preventing the criminalization of homelessness. In 2016, this question was [updated with increased points](#) and more specific steps CoCs could take, which have remained in subsequent years. Again, HUD could be adding additional incentives in other grant streams, and making clearer consequences for localities that continue to criminalize.

### U.S. Department of Education

In 2016, the Department of Education issued [guidance on homeless students](#), reminding school personnel that they have to work outside the school building to remove barriers to homeless students’ success in school, including working with state legislatures and local governments to address the criminalization of homelessness.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

With the Supreme Court victory in *Martin v. Boise*, advocates are looking to try to push the decision as far as it can go to help turn communities from criminalization to housing solutions. However, a backlash is also brewing, with communities looking to find loopholes in constitutional compliance, and deep concern for what a additional growth in COVID-induced homelessness may bring. Advocates should help legislators look for opportunities to include incentives or requirements for non-criminalization in legislation. The “[Ending Homelessness Act](#),” “[Housing is a Human Right Act](#),” and the [Unhoused Bill of Rights](#) include anti-criminalization provisions and the “[George Floyd Justice in Policing Act](#)” includes requirements for data collection on use of force disaggregated by housing status. The U.S. must also respond to recommendations from the U.N. [Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#) on criminalizing poverty and law enforcement’s disparate impact on communities of color in April. Joining the thousands of national and local organizations and individuals, including the Law Center and NLIHC, in the [Housing Not Handcuffs](#) Campaign is an effective step to ensure advocates remain up to date on current activity.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

The Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign has developed [Model Policies](#) for local, state, and federal governments that emphasize 1) shortening homelessness by stopping its criminalization, 2) preventing homelessness by strengthening housing protections and eliminating unjust evictions, and 3) ending homelessness by increasing access to and availability of affordable housing. The [National Coalition for Housing Justice](#) also has a useful statement on criminalization, and the [American Bar Association](#), [American Medical Association](#), [American Public Health Association](#) have put out policies opposing criminalization, and even the [National League of Cities](#) has offered its critique.

The Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign also has [model one-pagers](#) and [Six Ideas for Talking About Housing Not Handcuffs](#) that may be useful in framing conversations with legislators, including a sample script:

**Value:** Together, we have the opportunity—and responsibility—to do better for the worst off amongst us. Everyone can agree that it does not make any sense to arrest people for being homeless. And we can also all agree that we don’t want to see people sleeping on the sidewalks.

**Problem:** But instead of solving homelessness, we have expensive policies that make it worse. Unfortunately, too many places in this country are ignoring data/common sense and are using handcuffs rather than housing to address homelessness. But when anyone experiencing homelessness faces criminal punishment for simply trying to survive on the streets, these criminal records only make it more difficult to hold a job and regain housing. Not only do these policies make homelessness harder to solve, they also cost MORE taxpayer dollars than the policies that actually work.

**Solution:** But there is a better way. We’ve seen in city after city that where they change their laws and policies to reduce their reliance on law enforcement and instead invest in affordable, supportive housing, it gets homeless people off the streets far more effectively, and, as it turns out, far more cheaply than endlessly cycling people through courts, jails, and back onto the streets. It increases public safety when police cars, jails, and courts aren’t clogged with people being arrested simply for trying to survive. It increases public health when people are able to get services and are housed, rather than forced to the margins.

**Action:** If you want to see an end to homelessness in your community, join our campaign for Housing Not Handcuffs, learn more about the best practices that are working around the country, and call for an end to criminalization and more support for housing so we can all enjoy a community where no one has to sleep on the streets or beg for their daily needs.

Recent court victories also provide an opportunity for local elected officials to shift some political pressure from themselves to the courts. When constituents come to them complaining of visible homelessness, they can now say “look, the courts have told us we can’t just criminalize people living on the streets, but if you work with me, we can find creative solutions that will be a win-win for everyone.”

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

National Homelessness Law Center, 202-638-2535, [email@nlchp.org](mailto:email@nlchp.org), <https://homelesslaw.org/>.

Housing Not Handcuffs Campaign, <http://www.housingnothandcuffs.org>.



# The Mortgage Interest Deduction

---

Andrew Aurand, Vice President for Research, NLIHC

**T**he mortgage interest deduction (MID) is a federal tax expenditure that allows homeowners to deduct from their federal taxable income the interest paid on the first \$750,000 of a home mortgage. Although the “Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017” significantly reduced its cost, the MID remains a regressive tax benefit for higher-income homeowners at a cost of \$125 billion between 2020 and 2024 in lost federal tax revenue ([Joint Committee on Taxation \(JCT\), 2020](#)). The revenue lost to the MID would be better spent on housing assistance for the lowest-income households with the greatest needs.

## HOW IT WORKS

Taxpayers can subtract from their federal taxable income either a fixed dollar amount known as the standard deduction or itemized deductions allowed by the federal tax code. Taxpayers must itemize their tax deductions to benefit from the MID. Most taxpayers, however, do not itemize their deductions, because their standard deduction is higher. Affluent households are more likely to itemize their deductions and, therefore, benefit from MID. The [Joint Committee on Taxation \(JCT\)](#) estimated that fewer than 10% of the nation’s 175 million federal tax returns in 2020 would include itemized deductions and that 70% of tax returns with itemized deductions would report annual incomes of more than \$100,000.

MID’s value to taxpayers depends on their marginal tax rate. Taxpayers in the 37% tax bracket, for example, can reduce their taxes by 37% of the interest paid for their mortgage, while taxpayers in the 22% tax bracket can reduce their taxes by 22% of the interest paid. Because higher-income homeowners are more likely to claim the MID and the value of the MID increases with income, 76% of tax returns with the MID are from taxpayers with incomes over \$100,000 and they receive 90% of MID’s benefits (*Ibid*).

## HISTORY

Contrary to popular belief, MID was not created to encourage homeownership. When the federal income tax was implemented in 1913, personal interest on all loans was an allowable deduction from taxable income. At the time, it was difficult to differentiate personal consumption and home loans from business loans for farms, small businesses, and individual proprietors ([Ventry, D., 2010](#)). There is no evidence that Congress intended to use the interest deduction to encourage homeownership. One-third of homeowners had a mortgage in 1910, but few benefited from the interest deduction since 98% of households were initially exempt from the federal income tax given its generously high tax-free income threshold (*Ibid*). The post-World War II housing boom, fueled by FHA- and VA-insured mortgages, and the broadening of the federal income tax to cover more households made the interest deduction available to an increasing number of homeowners with mortgages. The cost of MID grew significantly through the 1980’s to late 2000’s, along with the growth in homeownership rates and home values. Before tax reform in 2017, the cost of MID was approximately \$70 billion per year.

The “Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017” made significant changes to the value of the MID to taxpayers. The act reduced the amount of a mortgage eligible for MID from \$1,000,000 to \$750,000 for loans taken after December 15, 2017 and eliminated the MID for home equity loans not for substantial home improvement. Previously, interest paid on up to \$100,000 on any home equity loans could be deducted. The act also significantly increased the standard deduction for taxpayers, making itemized deductions less likely for middle-income taxpayers.

The “Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017” reduced the cost of the MID from approximately \$70 billion per year prior to tax reform to an estimated \$25.5 billion in 2020 ([JCT, 2020](#)), but skewed the MID’s

benefits even more to affluent taxpayers. JCT estimates that 62% of MID's benefits today go to taxpayers with annual incomes over \$200,000, up from 46% before tax reform (JCT, 2017).

## OTHER THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT MID

A study of MID reform in Denmark indicated that the tax benefit does not promote homeownership, but induces homeowners to buy larger, more expensive homes and incur greater debt than they otherwise would (Gruber, J., Jensen, A., and Kleven, H., 2017).

MID also contributes to racial and gender inequities. A study by Trulia found that single women were 6.2% less likely than single men of the same age and income to own a home with a mortgage (Chacon, F., 2016). Black and Hispanic households were 56.9% and 50.9%, respectively, less likely than white households to own a mortgaged home. Without mortgages, single women and people of color do not receive MID benefits to the same extent as white households. An analysis by the Institute for Economic and Racial Equity (IERE) at Brandeis University and NLIHC found that white households received 71% of MID's benefits even though they account for 66% of households in the United States. Black and Latino households received only 18% of MID's benefits yet they account for more than 26% of U.S. households.

The MID is a costly federal tax expenditure that disproportionately benefits higher-income households who do not need assistance to afford their homes. At the same time, nearly eight million extremely low-income renters spend more than half of their incomes on housing (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2021), forcing them to sacrifice other necessities. The federal revenue lost to the MID would be better spent on housing assistance for these lowest-income households who have the greatest need.

# Medicaid Expansion

---

By Noah Patton, Housing Policy Analyst,  
NLIHC

## INTRODUCTION

Although Medicaid and homeless service providers generally serve some of the same populations, housing and health collaborations have not always been robust. COVID-19, however, underscored the need for collaboration: it placed a spotlight on housing instability and health inequities, particularly along racial and ethnic lines. As a result of the pandemic, Congress has made monumental investments in both housing and health. A big question still looms: Can the housing and health sectors maximize their collective resources and expertise in a coordinated way to comprehensively meet the needs of the most vulnerable? Housing and health partnerships are the key to helping many people experiencing homelessness get the supports they might need to become stably housed.

## BACKGROUND

One of the most important provisions of the “Affordable Care Act” (ACA) is the expansion of health coverage to low-income individuals through Medicaid. The ACA extends Medicaid eligibility to adults with no children whose incomes are at or below 138% of the federal poverty level. Prior to the ACA, this group was largely excluded from the benefit. To date, 39 states (including DC) have adopted Medicaid expansion (National Academy for State Health Policy, 2020).

Before the expansion, over 44 million non-elderly people were uninsured. Medicaid expansion has been a lifeline for some of the most vulnerable populations, including people experiencing homelessness. Under the expansion, vulnerable adults have access to a broad range of needed services, particularly specialty care, substance abuse treatment, and life-saving surgeries often out of reach for the uninsured. Medicaid

also covers services for permanent supportive housing (PSH), which helps people remain housed and places them in a better position to manage their health and to reduce costs to the system.

Connecting people experiencing homelessness to health care has been even more crucial considering the devastating impacts of the pandemic on vulnerable populations: people experiencing homelessness were uniquely at severe risk for contracting COVID-19, given the prevalence of risk factors in homeless populations. Homelessness itself is a crisis and federal data shows that unsheltered homelessness among individuals grew by seven percent at a point in time in 2020, with some of the most vulnerable people with disabilities leading the increase. Also noteworthy, most minority groups continued to be overrepresented in the homelessness system. We saw similar disparities across racial and ethnic lines in terms of hospitalizations and deaths related to the pandemic. This is an opportune time to make an impact on homelessness, improve access to care, and address racial equity. There is now an abundance of available federal resources to address these issues, but the housing and health sectors must work strategically together to make sure the needs of the most vulnerable are appropriately met.

## HOUSING AND HEALTH INVESTMENTS

COVID-19 has induced states to greatly increased access to telehealth to ensure that Medicaid enrollees could receive services outside of their providers’ regular sites. The added flexibility of telehealth may be helpful in using Medicaid resources to keep people experiencing homelessness safely and securely housed. Whether telehealth can be a reliable substitute for traditional health care will require further study, particularly whether it maintains or even exacerbate racial inequities.

In response to the pandemic, Congress has made unprecedented investments in housing that can help many people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. From the “American Rescue Plan Act” (ARPA), enacted in March 2021, billions of dollars are available to serve some of the most vulnerable populations:

- **HOME-ARPA** (\$5 billion until 2030) – Helps people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless with supports like with tenant-based rental assistance, supportive services, homeless prevention services, and house counseling.
- **Emergency Housing Voucher Program** (EHV) – Provides \$5 billion for 70,000 emergency housing vouchers for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness, including domestic and sexual violence survivors and victims of stalking and human trafficking.
- **Emergency Rental Assistance** (ERA) – Provides \$21.6 billion for future rent or rental arrears, future utilities, and other housing related expenses up to 18 months for eligible households.
- **Home and Community Based Services** (HCBS) – provides states with a temporary 10 percentage point increase to the federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) for certain Medicaid HCBS from April 1, 2021, through March 31, 2022. HCBS can be used to provide supportive housing services for people experiencing homelessness with acute needs. Including state matching funds, California by itself will have \$1.3 billion in one-time ARPA funding that the state plans to spend on homelessness and has proposed that Medi-Cal managed care plans should be able to earn incentive funds for making investments and progress in addressing homelessness and keeping people housed.
- **Medicaid Expansion** – provides a 5% increase in FMAP for two years to states that implement expansion. The increased federal funds would more than offset the increased costs to states from expansion, although

the increased federal funds would be only temporary.

There could be additional investments in affordable housing. The fate of the Biden Administration’s “Build Back Better Act (BBBA),” a package of investments in child-care, income supports, health care, and affordable housing had not been decided before publication, but the \$1.7 trillion dollar measure had passed the House of Representatives and was pending before the Senate.

Among the investments in affordable housing included in the BBBA are:

- \$25 billion in permanent rental assistance, which is sufficient to fund 300,000 new housing vouchers over five years and maintain them until 2029;
- \$15 billion for the national Housing Trust Fund to preserve and build homes that affordable to extremely low-income households; and
- \$65 billion to restore to habitability tens of thousands of public housing units.

Three health care investments that were included in the that were included in the BBBA merit further discussion if enacted in future legislation, they would reduce racial disparities, improve health care for low-income people, and reduce homelessness.

- Bridging of Medicaid coverage gap: People living in non-expansion states would be able to buy coverage through the ACA marketplace with federal assistance from 2022 through 2025. The federal government would pay the full cost of the benchmark plan’s premium and members of the target population would become eligible for subsidies that would significantly reduce their out-of-pocket costs.
- Match rate increase: The federal match rate would be increased from 90% to 93% from 2023 through 2025, making Medicaid expansion an even better deal for states.

- \$150 billion to expand the HCBS program: Medicaid’s HCBS program would be provided with \$150 billion to expand home health care services and build a workforce that is more professional and experiences less turnover. Although not enough to eliminate the waiting lists for home health care in many states, this significant investment would allow more elderly and disabled people of modest means to live at home and avoid unnecessary institutionalization. In addition, states could use this investment to pay for supportive housing services for people with acute needs who have experienced homelessness, including those receiving housing choice vouchers.

Significant investments in both housing and health are a step in the right direction to ending homelessness and serving vulnerable populations. Learning how to braid all of these resources to achieve optimum outcomes, however, has its challenges. Both sectors need support for capacity building, and this includes state and local government agencies and community-based organizations (CBOs) that administer both housing and health services. Capacity is needed to create system-level linkages to allow for smoother pathways and simpler navigation of services for vulnerable people. For example, agencies offering HCBS may have no experience addressing homelessness or significant behavioral health needs. Homeless services or supportive housing CBOs usually have administrative structures built on grant funding, not on Medicaid billing. How do we connect the dots to fully take advantage of housing resources and the full scope of Medicaid benefits to make sure people experiencing homelessness are housed and have access to needed care? To leverage the new resources, CBOs will need to become better versed in government funding processes and various state and local players will need to build referral and collaboration capacity.

## POSSIBLE ACTION STEPS

- Develop training and tools/materials that simplify housing to health systems, and health to housing systems. What are the basic elements each must understand about the other and who are the appropriate players?
- Supporting the designation of a coordinator responsible for making connections across the sectors and helping to strategize about using housing and health resources to improve outcomes in a holistic way.
- Build Medicaid capacity among homeless service providers or build their capacity to form partnerships with Medicaid billing agencies/CBO to coordinate care.
- Work with state Medicaid programs to promote the use of any increased investment in Home and Community-Based Services for supportive housing services to help safely and securely house individuals and families with acute needs.

# Disaster Housing Programs

---

By Noah Patton, Housing Policy Analyst, NLIHC

**F**EMA leads the federal government's efforts to prepare for potential disasters and to manage the federal response and recovery efforts following any disaster that overwhelms local and state authorities. FEMA provides immediate, direct financial and physical assistance to those affected by disasters and is responsible for coordinating government-wide relief efforts.

## HISTORY

Until the 1930s, *ad hoc* legislation was passed in response to hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, and other natural disasters. When the federal approach to disaster-related events became popular, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation was given authority to make disaster loans for repair and reconstruction of certain public facilities following an earthquake, and later, other types of disasters. However, a piecemeal approach to disaster assistance continued. The "Disaster Relief Act of 1974" firmly established the process of presidential disaster declarations. Finally, on April 1, 1979, President Jimmy Carter signed Executive Order 12127, merging many of the separate federal disaster-related responsibilities into the newly created FEMA. In 2003, FEMA became part of the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Long-term recovery funding is also managed by HUD, which administers several programs focused on housing and economic recovery in areas struck by disasters.

The "[Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act](#)" (Public Law 100-707), amending the "Disaster Relief Act of 1974," became law on November 23, 1988. It created the system still in place today through which presidential disaster declaration of an emergency triggers financial and physical assistance through FEMA. The act gives FEMA responsibility for coordinating government-wide relief efforts and provides orderly and

systemic federal natural disaster assistance for state and local governments. Congress' intention was to encourage states and localities to develop comprehensive disaster preparedness plans, prepare for better intergovernmental coordination in the face of a disaster, encourage the use of insurance coverage, and provide federal assistance for disaster-related losses.

President George W. Bush signed the "Post-Katrina Emergency Reform Act" on October 4, 2006. The act significantly reorganized FEMA and provided substantial new authority to remedy gaps that became apparent in the response to Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, including a more robust preparedness mission for FEMA. President Barack Obama signed the "Sandy Recovery Improvement Act (SRIA) of 2013" on January 29, 2013. SRIA authorized several significant changes to the way FEMA delivered federal disaster assistance.

The "Disaster Recovery Reform Act," (Public Law 115-254), amending the "Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act," was signed into law on October 5, 2018. The act further reforms FEMA, increasing the agency's pre-disaster planning process and its overall efficiency after the destructive 2017 hurricane and wildfire seasons. Notably, the act changes the factors FEMA considers when advising a president to issue a federal disaster declaration. The agency will now consider a disaster-stricken state's ability to pay for its own recovery along with damage reports and assessments.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, FEMA was not initially called upon to coordinate the response. Instead, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) were placed in charge of the response. This was done in accordance with pandemic-related policies established in the past decade. As the scope of the pandemic became clear and CDC and DHHS capabilities began to be overwhelmed, FEMA was tasked with coordinating the federal response. You can find out more about FEMA's

actions in the “Role of FEMA in COVID-19 Response” section of this guide.

## FEDERAL PROGRAMS

### FEMA

Along with other government agencies, FEMA may provide disaster victims with low-interest loans, veterans’ benefits, tax refunds, excise tax relief, unemployment benefits, crisis counseling, and free legal assistance. These resources are available once the president grants a governor’s request for Individual Assistance (IA) programs as part of a major disaster declaration. FEMA determines whether to recommend that the president approve IA by collecting Preliminary Damage Assessments and looking at the response capability, demographic data, and economic indicators in disaster-affected areas. Disaster housing and community development programs unique to FEMA include:

**Transitional Shelter Assistance (TSA).** In recent, large-scale disasters, FEMA provided TSA to cover the cost of staying in an approved hotel or motel for an initial period of up to 14 days (which may be extended in 14-day intervals for up to six months). TSA does not cover additional fees, such as resort fees, that hotels may include in the cost of a room. Some participants in the program have been required to present credit cards before being provided access to rooms in accordance with an individual hotel’s policy on incidentals. These costs and requirements constitute major barriers to accessing temporary housing under this program. TSA is funded through the Public Assistance Program, discussed later in this article.

**The Individuals and Households Program (IHP).** The Housing Assistance provision of the IHP provides financial and direct assistance for disaster-caused housing needs not covered by insurance or provided by any other source. IHP Assistance lasts for 18 months, although the impacted state may request an extension that must be approved by FEMA personnel. To receive IHP housing funds, a disaster survivors’ home must be shown at inspection to be uninhabitable and require repairs to be made habitable or be

otherwise inaccessible due to disaster damage. It is important to note that individuals who were experiencing homelessness before a disaster are not eligible for the majority of IHP programs.

Since at least 1995, FEMA’s title requirement has barred many of the lowest-income survivors, including owners of mobile homes and other low-income homeowners who may not have updated title documentation, from receiving the assistance for which they are eligible. After some recent disasters, FEMA allowed survivors to use a declaration form to prove ownership of their home in cases where updated title documents were inaccessible, but these forms were never officially provided to disaster survivors by FEMA. Due to pressure from NLIHC and its partners, the agency recently expanded the list of eligible documentation permitted to demonstrate that a disaster survivor owns or occupies their home.

Four types of housing assistance are available under IHP. The first three are:

1. Temporary housing assistance, which includes:
  - Lodging Expense Reimbursement (LER). Financial assistance to reimburse for hotels, motels, or other short-term lodging while an applicant is displaced from their primary residence. Funds are awarded for expenses incurred from the start date of the disaster to seven days following the disaster survivor’s approval for rental assistance. While LER is similar in concept to the TSA program discussed above, program funding is only available to reimburse disaster survivors for short-term lodging costs that already have been paid. As a result, this program is often inaccessible to disaster survivors with lower incomes, who have less of an ability to pay such expenses up front.
  - Rental Assistance. FEMA may provide for 18 months of financial assistance to rent temporary housing. The initial amount is based on the impacted area’s Fair Market Rent (FMR) and covers rent plus utilities typically for two months, although it may

also be used as a security deposit equal to one month of FMR. Households may seek Continued Temporary Housing Assistance when alternate housing is not available. Full rental assistance is available for a period of 18 months. FEMA's rental assistance program often is unworkable for low-income survivors because assistance is only provided in 2-month increments and the amount of assistance may not be enough to secure housing.

– Direct Temporary Housing Assistance. FEMA may provide direct housing assistance when disaster survivors are unable to use Rental Assistance due to a lack of available housing resources. The program is open to renters whose primary residence was destroyed and to homeowners whose primary residence suffered damage above \$12 per square foot. Recipients of Direct Temporary Housing Assistance are required to work with a case manager to access alternative permanent housing at the conclusion of the program. Assistance is provided for up to 18 months unless extended at the request of the impacted government and approved by FEMA. Direct Temporary Housing Assistance is not counted toward the IHP maximum award amount and must be specifically requested by the impacted government. Direct Temporary Housing Assistance may include:

- a. Direct Lease Program, which allows FEMA to lease directly with existing, non-damaged, rental properties for disaster survivors. In recent years, Direct Lease Programs have been unable to serve many households because it has been challenging to recruit landlords to participate.
- b. Manufactured Housing Units provided by FEMA and made available to use as temporary housing.
- c. Multi-Family Lease and Repair, which allows FEMA to enter into lease agreements with owners of multi-

family rental properties and make repairs to provide temporary housing.

- d. Permanent or Semi-Permanent Housing Construction, which allows home repair and/or construction services to be provided in insular areas outside the continental U.S. and other locations where no alternative housing resources are available, and where other types of FEMA Housing Assistance are unavailable, infeasible, or not cost effective.
2. Home repair cash grants, available to homeowners for damage not covered by insurance. These grants are intended to repair homes to safe, sanitary, or functional conditions. Grants are not intended to return the home to its pre-disaster condition. However, recent FEMA reforms now permit accessibility features needed due to a disaster-created disability, as well as some home strengthening measures to be added.
  3. Home replacement cash grants, available to homeowners to help replace a destroyed home that is not covered by insurance.

**Other Needs Assistance (ONA):** In addition to housing assistance, the IHP includes Other Needs Assistance (ONA), which provides financial assistance for disaster-related necessary expenses. There are two categories of ONA: those that do not require a household to have been denied a Small Business Administration (SBA) loan, and those that do require such a denial. “Non-SBA dependent” types of ONA that may be awarded regardless of a household’s SBA status include covering medical, dental, childcare, and funeral expenses. Also included in this category is Critical Needs Assistance, which provides up to \$500 to meet lifesaving or life-sustaining needs such as water, food, first aid, prescriptions, infant formula, diapers, consumable medical supplies and durable medical equipment, and fuel for transportation. Assistance that depends on a household being denied an SBA loan or receiving a partial SBA loan that is not adequate to meet needs include funds to repair or replace damaged personal property, repair or replace vehicles, and



cover moving and storage costs. State, Tribal, and Territorial governments are required to pay for 25% of ONA costs, while FEMA covers the remaining 75%. Governments can decide to administer the program directly, in tandem with FEMA, or allow FEMA to fully administer the program.

**Public Assistance (PA):** FEMA provides disaster assistance to state, territorial, tribal, and local governments as well as certain private nonprofits through the PA program. Under the Permanent Work component of Public Assistance, FEMA provides grants to state and local governments to repair roads, bridges, water control facilities, public utilities, public buildings, and parks and recreational facilities (Categories C through G). In addition, PA can be provided to nonprofits to restore damaged facilities, which could include repair funds for public housing agencies. The Emergency Work component of PA aids in the removal of debris and carries out emergency protective measures – which can include emergency mass sheltering (Categories A and B). FEMA generally provides 75% of the cost of PA, requiring the state and subgrantees (for example, counties) to provide the remaining 25%. FEMA has the authority to temporarily modify this cost share ratio under certain circumstances.

**Hazard Mitigation Grant-Program (HMGP):** To reduce the risk of damage and reliance on federal recovery funds in future disasters, FEMA administers the HMGP. HMGP provides state and local governments funds for long-term mitigation following a federally declared disaster. Nonprofits, individuals, and businesses may apply through their local government. Uses of HMGP include acquiring an individual property in a flood-prone zone and permanently removing the property, raising a home so that flood water flows underneath, erecting barriers to prevent flood water from entering a home, flood diversion and storage, and aquifer storage and recovery. FEMA provides up to 75% of the funds for mitigation projects.

## NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) was created in 1968 to make flood insurance available to homeowners for the first time. The “Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973” made the purchase of flood insurance mandatory for properties in Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) if the property had a mortgage from a federally regulated or insured lender. To participate in NFIP, a community must adopt and enforce floodplain management ordinances. The NFIP has an arrangement with private insurance firms to sell and service flood insurance.

## HUD

**Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR):** CDBG-DR funding is provided for presidentially declared major disasters by appropriations acts and is generally tailored to specific disasters. To determine how much a state or local government receives, HUD uses a formula that considers damage estimates and disaster recovery needs unmet by other federal disaster assistance programs such as FEMA and SBA. In addition to any requirements cited in the specific appropriation act, the regular CDBG regulations at 24 CFR 570 apply to CDBG-DR funds. However, CDBG-DR appropriations generally grant HUD broad authority to issue waivers and alternative requirements identified in a *Federal Register* notice issued by HUD following the announcement of the appropriation.

CDBG-DR grantees, usually states, must prepare an action plan to assess housing, infrastructure, and economic revitalization needs and then identify activities to address unmet needs. Public participation in devising the action plan is required. In the regular CDBG program, a minimum 30-day public review and comment period is required. However, in recent CDBG-DR *Federal Register* notices, HUD has reduced the public participation period to a mere 14 days. Advocates stress that more time for public engagement is necessary, especially since the consequences of the final plan will have long-

term impacts on low-income households.

The regular CDBG program requires that at least 70% of the funds be used for activities that benefit low- and moderate-income households or those with income at or less than 80% of the area median income. The CDBG-DR *Federal Register* notices regarding funds for the 2017 disasters maintained the 70% low/mod-income benefit requirement; however, most of the major notices between Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and 2016 allowed waivers so that only 50% of the CDBG-DR had to meet the low/mod benefit test. In 2020 FEMA and HUD signed a Memorandum of Understanding that streamlined the use of CDBG-DR funds to pay for portions of FEMA PA projects. Under this new streamlining agreement, only the portion of the project funded directly by HUD CDBG-DR is required to meet CDBG requirements, such as targeting low income households. Previously, the use of CDBG-DR funding on FEMA PA projects would extend such requirements to the entire project.

Recent *Federal Register* notices have required that at least 80% of the total funds provided to a state address unmet needs within an area designated by HUD as being the most impacted and distressed. They have also required the action plan to propose allocating CDBG-DR to primarily address unmet housing needs and describe how the grantee's program will promote housing for vulnerable populations, including a description of activities to address the housing needs of homeless people and to prevent extremely low-income households from becoming homeless.

Grantees must submit Quarterly Performance Reports (QPRs) using HUD's electronic Disaster Recovery Grant Reporting System showing each activity's progress, expenditures, accomplishments, and beneficiary characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and gender.

**CDBG Mitigation** (CDBG-MIT): As part of a new focus on pre-disaster mitigation and preparedness after the destructive 2017 and 2018 hurricane seasons, Congress has begun to appropriate funds under a HUD CDBG-MIT program. Like CDBG-DR, CDBG-MIT funding

is provided for areas that suffered from a presidentially declared disaster and is distributed similarly to CDBG-DR. Program funding is available for mitigation and resiliency projects, defined as activities that reduce the risk to life and property by lessening the impact of a future disaster. These projects are not required to address an existing disaster impact, but rather, areas that are likely to be impacted in the future. Like the CDBG-DR program, the regular CDBG regulations at 24 CFR 70 apply to CDBG-MIT funding subject to waivers and alternative requirements released by HUD in the program's enacting *Federal Register Notice*.

The process for CDBG-MIT grantees is also essentially the same as the CDBG-DR program, with the grantee developing an action plan that outlines the planned use of the funds. The plans are subject to public comment and HUD approval. The program requires a 30-day public participation window and specifies a minimum number of public meetings to be held that correspond to the amount of funding allocated to that state. As this program is relatively new, program guidelines and policies can be expected to change as the program develops.

**Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP):**

The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 demonstrated that HUD, not FEMA, was best suited to oversee and administer federal disaster housing assistance to the lowest-income people. Congress amended the "Stafford Act" to require the federal government to create a disaster housing plan. In 2009, that plan made it clear that HUD should play a key role in creating and operating disaster housing assistance programs and recommended that Congress make the DHAP permanent. The 2011 National Disaster Recovery Framework also recommended that HUD, not FEMA, serve as the coordinating agency for delivering housing assistance. However, before HUD can put a DHAP program in place, FEMA must enter an interagency agreement with HUD. In the wake of recent major disasters, FEMA has resisted working with HUD to stand up DHAP programs.

DHAP has been used after past disasters,

including Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav, Ike, and Sandy, to provide low-income, displaced families with safe, decent, and affordable rental homes while they rebuild their lives and get back on their feet. DHAP is administered through HUD's existing network of local public housing agencies, which have significant local market knowledge and experience administering HUD's Housing Choice Voucher program.

DHAP provides displaced households with temporary rental assistance, covering the cost difference between what a family can afford to pay and their rent, capped at a reasonable amount. Over the course of several months, families are required to pay a greater share of their rent to encourage and help them assume full responsibility for housing costs at the end of the program. All families receiving DHAP rental assistance are provided wrap-around case management services to help them find permanent housing, secure employment, and connect with public benefits.

DHAP helps fill the gaps that low-income households experience with FEMA's Transitional Shelter Assistance (TSA) and Rental Assistance programs. Many hotels do not participate in TSA, and those that do often charge daily resort fees, ask for security deposits, and require that displaced households have credit cards, all of which are barriers for low-income households. Because disasters generally reduce the amount of available housing stock, low-income renters are often unable to use FEMA Rental Assistance in their communities. If a displaced household relocates, the Rental Assistance amount, which is based on the Fair Market Rent (FMR) of the impacted area, may not be enough to cover the cost of an apartment in a different community.

**Federal Housing Administration (FHA):** The FHA grants a 90-day moratorium on foreclosures and forbearance on foreclosures of FHA-insured home mortgages. HUD's Section 203(h) program provides FHA insurance to disaster victims who have lost their homes and need to rebuild or buy another home. Borrowers from participating FHA-approved lenders may be eligible for 100% financing. HUD's Section 203(k) loan program

enables those who have lost their homes to finance the purchase of or refinance a house along with repairs through a single mortgage. It also allows homeowners who have damaged houses to finance the rehabilitation of their existing single-family home.

## U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

After households apply to FEMA, they might be contacted by SBA to apply for a low-interest loan. If eligible, the household does not have to accept the loan. If a household is not eligible for an SBA loan, they will be referred to FEMA to be considered for a FEMA ONA grant. To be considered for an ONA grant, a household must have submitted an SBA loan application.

SBA can provide physical disaster loans to cover uninsured or uncompensated losses of a home or personal property. A homeowner can apply for a loan to repair or rebuild a primary residence to its pre-disaster condition based on the verified losses and homeowners may apply for up to \$200,000 to repair or replace their home to its pre-disaster condition. The loan amount can increase by as much as 20% to help homeowners rebuild in a manner that protects against damage from future disasters of the same kind, up to the \$200,000 maximum. Both homeowners and renters may apply for loans—up to \$40,000—to replace personal property (anything not considered real estate or part of the structure of the home) lost in a disaster. The interest rate on SBA physical disaster loans depends on the applicant's ability to secure credit from another source. In 2017, applicants unable to obtain credit elsewhere were charged 1.75% interest; for those who could obtain credit elsewhere, the interest rate was 3.5%. The term of loans is often 30 years.

Businesses, including rental property owners and nonprofit organizations, can apply for loans for real estate and personal property loss up to a maximum of \$2 million. In addition, businesses and nonprofits can apply for economic injury loans of up to \$2 million to cover working capital to meet their ordinary financial obligations.

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides loans, grants, and loan servicing options to its loan borrowers and their tenants or grant recipients. It also will adjust Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) limits to provide greater access to food in disaster-affected areas.

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Congress authorized the Department of the Treasury to provide special Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs) and other tax incentives after recent major disasters without a permanent disaster recovery program in place. In the case of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Treasury established Gulf Opportunity (GO) Zone tax credits, GO Zone tax-exempt bonds, and additional New Markets Tax Credits to help rebuild housing. After Superstorm Sandy in 2011, Congress also authorized additional LIHTCs, private activity bonds, and New Markets Tax Credits. The same occurred after the 2018 California wildfire season, with Congress approving additional LIHTC funding to replace destroyed housing stock.

Revenue Procedure 2014-49 (Rev. Proc. 2014-49) from 2014 provides guidance to owners and state housing finance agencies (HFAs) regarding temporary relief from certain requirements that apply to the LIHTC program. A key provision allows an owner to provide up to twelve months of emergency housing to households that have been displaced by a presidentially declared major disaster. Households are eligible for emergency housing in an LIHTC unit if their home is in an area eligible for FEMA individual assistance.

Unless a property's written policies and procedures provide a preference for households displaced by a presidentially declared disaster, an owner may not skip over households on a waiting list to provide emergency housing. Existing households cannot be displaced to provide emergency housing.

Rev. Proc. 2014-49 relieves an owner and

household of providing evidence of income eligibility. All other LIHTC rules apply, however, including LIHTC rent limits. The emergency relief period ends one year after the date the disaster was declared. After that date, displaced households that are not income-eligible under the LIHTC program cannot occupy a unit assisted under the LIHTC program. To provide emergency housing, an owner must request written approval from the HFA.

Additional issues can arise when LIHTC units are damaged by disasters. Owners of LIHTC units knocked out of service by a presidentially declared disaster have a "reasonable period" (defined as 25 months by the IRS) to finish rebuilding to retain their tax-credit status and avoid IRS tax credit recapture. Depending on the level of devastation caused by the disaster, some owners struggle to meet this deadline. Housing providers can petition the IRS for an extension to the 25-month deadline if needed although such extensions are considered rare. This issue was notably seen in California after the 2018 wildfire season and in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey in Houston. Advocates and housing providers should remain aware of this deadline and work proactively to avoid a lapse in tax-credit status and possible recapture.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

The ongoing recovery from 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 disasters, as well as the 2021 Atlantic Hurricane Season and West Coast Wildfire Season, pushed Congress to introduce several bills that encourage quick and equitable recovery. In 2021, Senators Brian Schatz (D-HI), Susan Collins (R-ME), Todd Young (R-IN), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Bill Cassidy, M.D. (R-LA), Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR), and Representative Al Green (D-TX) introduced the "Reforming Disaster Recovery Act," which permanently authorizes the CDBG-DR program. The bill also creates important safeguards and tools to ensure that federal disaster recovery and rebuilding efforts reach all impacted households, including those with the lowest incomes that are often hardest hit by disasters but have the fewest resources. NLIHC strongly supports this bill.

The bill has previously passed out of the House Financial Services Committee by unanimous vote and passed by a bipartisan vote of the House of Representatives.

In addition, the “Housing Survivors of Major Disasters Act” introduced in 2019 by Congressman Adriano Espaillat (D-NJ) and Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) passed unanimously out of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and then the entire House of Representatives in 2020. The bill addresses the requirement that applicants for FEMA disaster assistance provide title documentation to show ownership over disaster damaged property. This requirement constitutes a major barrier to aid for low income households. People living in manufactured housing such as mobile homes and people with “heirs property” ownership over their home often lack access to clear title. These households are forced into lengthy and expensive legal title clearing procedures before they can be found eligible for FEMA assistance. The bill would require FEMA to expand the list of documents eligible to prove ownership for the purposes of receiving recovery assistance and require the agency to develop a “declarative form” allowing owners who are unable to procure ownership documents to attest to ownership of their home under penalty of perjury. The bill will continue to be pushed by NLIHC and its congressional partners in 2022.

Several other Members of Congress introduced bills directing FEMA to standardize damage assessments, streamline emergency notification services, and boost pre-disaster planning efforts. Congress will work in the coming year to enact bills to assist those struck by disasters in 2020 and 2021, including Hurricane Laura, Sally, Delta, Zeta, and Irma, the West Coast Wildfires, the Puerto Rico earthquakes, the Iowa Derecho, and additional disasters as they occur. In October of 2021, Congress approved \$5 billion in long-term recovery funds for 2020-2021 disasters. Any future disaster relief bill should include resources to ensure that all survivors, including people with the lowest incomes, are served.

In addition to potential legislative changes,

advocates should remain aware of administrative and programmatic releases from federal agencies surrounding disaster recovery. FEMA has recently demonstrated a commitment to equity within its programs, indicating that substantial changes are underway at the agency. One major reform announced by FEMA in 2021 would permit some survivors to self-certify ownership of their homes when they do not have other documentation, overcoming a major hurdle to recovery. FEMA will also allow all survivors to submit a broader array of documents to prove occupancy and ownership of their homes. This reform was the result of sustained administrative pressure by NLIHC and its partners. Advocates should monitor FEMA and other federal agency releases on this and additional disaster recovery topics.

HUD has released guidance and allocations for almost all 2017, 2018, and 2019 CDBG-DR grantees in the *Federal Register*. Funds are currently being spent at different rates across 2017-2019 disaster regions with states pursuing the completion of their state CDBG-DR/CDBG-MIT action plans. The reasons for the slow disbursement range from issues with community input for the program, high administrative burdens, and the COVID-19 pandemic. As the process continues, advocates should be prepared to ensure that all guidelines and policies, including federal civil rights law, are being followed as long-term recovery dollars begin to reach disaster areas.

In October of 2021, Congress approved \$5 billion in long-term recovery funds for 2020-2021 disasters. Advocates should continue to push the Administration and state and local governments to ensure these CDBG-DR allocations reach disaster survivors with low-incomes especially as FEMA programs assisting in short-term disaster recovery begin to expire.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Low-Income Housing Coalition, 202-662-1530, [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org).

The NLIHC-led Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition: <https://nlihc.org/disaster-housing-coalition>.

The Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition’s webpage, <http://nlihc.org/issues/disaster>, including its recommendations:

- [To Congress.](#)
- [To HUD.](#)
- [To FEMA.](#)

NLIHC’s Report, “Reforming America’s Broken Disaster Housing Recovery System, Part One: Barriers to a Complete and Equitable Recovery”, <https://bit.ly/2RZHmuK> & “Part Two: Policy Framework Reform Recommendations”, <https://bit.ly/3n5lnzq>.

NLIHC’s Top Priorities for Any Disaster Recovery Package, <https://bit.ly/2K8Mp6b>.

NLIHC’s Disaster Recovery Resources webpage: <https://nlihc.org/issues/disaster/resources>.

NLIHC’s Disaster Housing Assistance Program fact sheet: <https://bit.ly/2QZ2WvP>.

NLIHC’s Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition’s Administrative Transition Recommendations, <https://bit.ly/3gD7GFf>.

# “Mixed Status” and “Public Charge” Rules: Attacks on Immigrants’ Access to Housing

---

By Xavier Arriaga, Policy Analyst, NLIHC

Under the Trump Administration, several agencies, including HUD, the Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Department of Justice (DOJ), introduced changes to current policy that would harm low-income immigrant families. Advocates mobilized to oppose these changes by holding meetings with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), submitting comments on proposed rules, working with members of Congress on legislative actions, and supporting litigation (for more information, see “Introduction to the Federal Regulatory Process” in Chapter 2). These regulatory changes would not help expand resources for U.S. citizens and others with eligible immigration statuses but would have served to prevent immigrants from accessing vital health, nutrition, and housing assistance. These changes would have impacted U.S. citizens who are children and elderly due to burdensome recertification requirements and fear from family members of varied immigration status. The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the threats facing low-income immigrant families, placing an additional burden on families subject to the harmful regulations that were enacted under the Trump Administration. While these rules have recently been vacated/withdrawn, they have had a significant negative impact on families eligible for those targeted federal programs. Research has confirmed that the lead-up to and the rollout of Trump-era rules created a pronounced and persistent “chilling effect,” with immigrants and their family members disenrolling from or failing to enroll in critical health, nutrition, housing, and economic supports. NLIHC opposes proposals that deter eligible immigrant families from seeking housing benefits or that force immigrant families currently receiving housing benefits to forego that assistance or face eviction.

## CHANGES TO THE DEFINITION OF “PUBLIC CHARGE”

### Background

The “public charge” test is a long-standing component of U.S. immigration policy used to determine if an individual is likely to depend on government benefits as their main source of support. If someone is deemed likely to become a “public charge,” the federal government can deny admission to the U.S. or deny an application for lawful permanent resident status (a “green card”). Permanent residents applying to become U.S. citizens are not subject to the public charge test. The current policy under *Field Guidance on Deportability and Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds* of 1999 defined public charge to mean a person “primarily dependent on the government for subsistence, as demonstrated by either the receipt of public cash assistance for income maintenance or institutionalization for long-term care at government expense.” When making public charge determinations, immigration officials look at the use of federal, state, or tribal cash assistance, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), in addition to the individual’s circumstances, including age, income, education and skills, health, family size, and support from friends or family in the U.S. All these factors are considered as part of the public charge test so that positive factors can help overcome negative factors.

The Trump Administration proposed expanding the list of benefits considered as part of the public charge test, which would make it easier for immigration officials to deny entry or permanent resident status to low-income immigrants because they use, or might in the future use vital health, nutrition, or housing assistance programs. Decisions about applications for admission or lawful permanent resident status inside the U.S.

are made by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) within DHS; applications for admission or green cards outside the U.S. at embassies or consular offices abroad are reviewed by the Department of State. Each agency has its own regulations, but the Administration worked to align the policies.

Refugees, asylees, survivors of trafficking and other serious crimes, certain people who have been paroled into the U.S., self-petitioners under the “Violence Against Women Act (VAWA),” special immigrant juveniles, and several other categories of noncitizens are exempt from the public charge rule.

### **DHS and DOS Final Public Charge Rule on Inadmissibility**

On August 14, 2019, DHS published the final version of its Rule on Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds (Public Charge Rule). The agency released its proposed rule in October 2018, which garnered more than 266,000 public comments during the 60-day comment period. The final rule was set to go into effect on October 15, 2019, but several courts blocked the rule from implementation until the lawsuits are settled. Two of the three national injunctions were later lifted after appeals by the Administration.

The final rule expands the public benefits included as part of the public charge test to include Housing Choice Vouchers, public housing, Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and most forms of Medicaid (with some exceptions) in addition to cash assistance programs. Receipt of any of these programs for a combined total of 12 months in a 36-month period will be a heavily weighed negative factor against applicants. The use of two benefits in the same month, such as receiving both SNAP and Medicaid, would count as two of the 12 months. Neither receipt of benefits by family members nor Medicaid for pregnant women or individuals under 21 would be considered. The use—or potential use based on other circumstances like education, income, and age—of any of these programs would be

considered a negative factor in the public charge test.

Tenants of Public Housing and Section 8 programs must already meet immigration status eligibility requirements established under Section 214 of the “Housing and Community Development Act.” Only some immigrants eligible for this federal housing assistance would also potentially be subject to the public charge test: parolees, immigrants granted withholding of removal, and those lawfully admitted pursuant to Section 141 of the Compacts of Free Association with the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau (COFA). Since family members’ use of benefits is not counted against an applicant, individuals subject to public charge living in a mixed-status immigrant household can continue living with family members receiving housing assistance without harming their own immigration case.

On October 24, 2019, DOS published an interim final rule to the *Federal Register* to align DOS’s public charge standards in cases decided at U.S. consulates and embassies abroad to those of DHS.

Both the DHS and DOS public charge rule went into effect on February 24, 2020. These rules have increased fear and confusion in immigrant communities, deterring eligible immigrant families from applying for needed housing, health, and medical assistance.

USCIS did not consider the testing, treatment, nor preventative care (including vaccines if a vaccine becomes available) related to COVID-19 are not part of a public charge inadmissibility determination. However, research has shown that low-income immigrant families are avoiding COVID-19 relief programs because of concerns brought by these public charge regulations and others proposed by the Trump Administration.

### **Legislative Action and Lawsuits**

Following the publication of the final Public Charge Rule, state, county, and city governments joined nonprofits and individuals in suing the Trump Administration in a total of nine cases. Three courts ordered national injunctions,



preventing DHS from implementing the rule until a final decision is made. These orders were eventually lifted by the Supreme Court and USCIS began implementing the rule on February 24, 2020.

Representative Judy Chu (D-CA) and an additional 117 House Democrats sponsored the “No Federal Funds for Public Charge Act of 2019” (H.R. 3222), which would prevent DHS from using funds to implement the Public Charge Rule. A companion bill, the “Protect American Values Act” (S. 2482)—was also introduced by the Senate. The House Appropriations Committee adopted similar language included in an amendment offered by Representative David Price (D-NC) in the Fiscal Year 2020 bill.

Advocates across the United States have frequently engaged in litigation against the public charge rule with mixed results in 2020.

A court order temporarily blocked both the DHS and DOS public charge rules. The court order barred the implementation, application, and enforcement of the rule nationwide so long as there is a declared national emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This order was eventually narrowed so that the DHS public charge rule was only subject to an injunction in states that are under the jurisdiction of the United States Courts of Appeals for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Circuit (Connecticut, New York, and Vermont). The injunction on the DHS rule was eventually lifted and USCIS has since reimposed the DHS Public Charge Rule.

The United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois found that the DHS public charge rule violated the “Administrative Procedures Act” and granted the plaintiffs, Cook County of Illinois, and the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights a summary judgment which would have vacated the final rule. However, a day after, the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh District stayed this decision, halting the vacatur order.

The United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit affirmed a decision made in the lower court that granted a preliminary injunction on

the DHS Public Charge rule. The ruling would have blocked the rule from being implemented in 18 plaintiff states and the District of Columbia. However, the Ninth Circuit granted DHS a delay on the effective date of the preliminary injunction until the U.S. Supreme Court determines if it will hear other Public Charge Rule challenges currently seeking review. The implementation of the Public Charge Rule resumed on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021.

### **Supreme Court Dismisses Appeals, Public Charge Rule No Longer in Effect Nationwide**

On March 9, 2021, the Supreme Court agreed to dismiss litigation on the previous Administration’s Public Charge Rule at the request of the Biden Administration. This allowed the Seventh Circuit to dismiss the appeal of the lower court’s final order, therefore the Northern District of Illinois’s final judgment entered on Nov 2, 2020, which vacated the Public Charge Rule nationwide is now in effect. DHS has announced in a statement that DHS and USCIS will follow the policy in the 1999 Interim Field Guidance, the policy that was in place before the 2019 rule. Under this policy, DHS will not consider a person’s receipt of Medicaid, public housing, or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits as part of the public charge inadmissibility determination. This means it will be safe for immigrants and their families to access health, nutrition, and housing programs that they are eligible for without fear of being considered a “public charge”. USCIS has recently updated its website also stating that they will no longer be applying the August 2019 Public Charge Final Rule.

### **President Biden Executive Order on Public Charge Rule**

President Joe Biden signed three Executive Orders (EO) on immigration reform on February 2, 2021 including an order on “[Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds](#),” which sets into motion changes to the previous Administration’s harmful Public Charge Rule. The Executive Order “[Restoring Faith in Our Legal Immigration Systems and Strengthening Integration and](#)

Inclusion Efforts for New Americans” directs agencies to develop strategies that promote integration, inclusion, and citizenship.

In the EO regarding public charge, Section 4 (Immediate Review of Agency Actions on Public Charge Inadmissibility) orders the Secretary of State, Attorney General, Secretary of Homeland Security, and heads of other relevant agencies to review all agency actions related to the implementation of the Public Charge Rule and examine the effects of the previous Administration’s harmful changes to the rule. The EO further orders that they consult with the heads of relevant agencies, including the Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary of Health and Human Services, and Secretary of HUD in considering the effects and implications of public charge policies.

DOS, DOJ, and DHS were ordered to submit a report to the President within 60 days identifying appropriate agency actions to address concerns about the current public charge policy’s effect on the integrity of the nation’s immigration system and public health, along with recommended steps agencies can take to communicate current public charge policies and proposed changes to reduce fear and confusion among impacted communities.

Led by the National Immigration Law Center and the Center for Law and Social Policy, the Protecting Immigrant Families (PIF) Campaign of over 1,500 organizations nationwide has organized opposition to the Public Charge Rule and is working to ensure that immigrant communities know their rights. PIF has consistently kept advocates up to date with the latest research on the impacts of the Public Charge Rule, updates on litigation, fact sheets and “Know Your Rights!” messages for community members, and guidance and additional resources for immigration lawyers. PIF members have been involved in legal battles against the Public Charge Rules over the last four years and were leaders during the public comment campaign. Lawyers and advocates affiliated with PIF were instrumental in the aforementioned cases and

their contributions led to the Public Charge Rule finally being suspended.

On March 15, 2021, USCIS published the final rule, “Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds; Implementation of Vacatur,” to the *Federal Register*. This rule removed regulatory language from the harmful 2019 Public Charge Rule from the previous Administration. The rule also made it so that immigrant families applying for admission to the country, Lawful Permanent Resident, or for extension of nonimmigrant stay or change no longer need to provide information or evidence that is solely related to the 2019 Public Charge Rule. This includes information provided on Form I-944, which was also discontinued by this rule.

## **EXCLUSION OF MIXED-STATUS FAMILIES FROM FEDERALLY SUBSIDIZED HOUSING**

### **Background**

Residents of certain federally subsidized units are subject to immigration status restrictions under Section 214 of the “Housing and Community Development Act of 1980” (Section 214). HUD programs under Section 214 include public housing, Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, Section 8 PBRA, Section 235 Home Loan Program, Section 236 Rental Assistance Program, and the Rent Supplement Program. Section 214 also governs the Section 542 Rural Development Voucher program, Section 502 Guaranteed Rural Housing Loans, the Section 504 Home Repair program, and Section 521 Rental Assistance for the Section 515 and Section 514/516 programs operated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Housing Service (RHS).

Under Section 214, individuals with the following immigration status are eligible for federal housing assistance programs: U.S. citizens and nationals, lawful permanent residents, VAWA self-petitioners, asylees and refugees, parolees, persons granted withholding of removal, victims of trafficking, individuals residing in the U.S. under COFA and immigrants admitted for lawful temporary residence under the “Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986.” Being ineligible

for housing assistance is not equivalent to being undocumented. Immigrants with student visas, Temporary Protected Status, U nonimmigrant status, and other statuses are also not eligible for federal housing subsidies.

Currently, families with at least one U.S. citizen or eligible immigrant are allowed to live in a HUD-subsidized housing unit. These families are referred to as “mixed-status” and receive prorated assistance so that the subsidy amount is decreased to only cover family members with eligible immigration status. Family members applying for assistance must have their immigration status verified; ineligible family members can choose not to contend eligibility, which allows the family to receive prorated assistance. Noncitizens 62 years old or older are only required to provide a signed declaration of eligible immigration status and a document proving their age.

RHS does not prorate assistance for mixed-status families. The agency attempted in 2004 to implement Section 214 for all residents of Sections 515 and 514/516 housing, but the proposed regulation failed to properly follow the law. The 2004 rule ignored the full list of eligible immigration statuses listed in Section 214, required all residents of Sections 515 and 514/516 units be citizens or legal permanent residents even if they were not receiving Rental Assistance, and did not allow for proration. After advocacy organizations threatened the agency with litigation, RHS indefinitely postponed the rule with respect to the Section 515 program but failed to widely publish this change. Given the inconsistent guidance, some owners enforce the requirements of the 2004 rule and others do not.

### **HUD Proposed Mixed-Status Families Rule**

On May 10, 2019, HUD released a proposed rule that would further restrict eligibility for federal housing assistance based on immigration status by prohibiting mixed-status families from living in subsidized units subject to Section 214. The rule would force impacted households to choose between separating as a family to keep their subsidy or facing eviction and potentially

homelessness. According to HUD’s own analysis, the proposed rule would effectively evict 25,000 immigrant families from their homes, including 55,000 children eligible for housing assistance. In fact, two-thirds of people in mixed-status families are already U.S. citizens, the majority of them children.

Additionally, the proposed rule would eliminate the option to not contend eligibility in order to receive prorated assistance. Instead, the immigration status of all household members under the age of 62 would need to be verified through DHS’s Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) system. Those aged 62 years or older would also be subject to new documentation requirements. The additional documentation requirements would create a substantial administrative burden for housing authorities and could force them to divert resources away from property maintenance and other services.

HUD claims that the new policy will address the public housing waiting list, but the agency’s own analysis found that the proposed rule would result in fewer families receiving housing assistance. Since mixed-status families do not receive housing assistance for ineligible family members, taking assistance away from these households would require HUD to provide full subsidies for additional, non-mixed-status families, costing the government at least \$193 million. HUD admits that the agency could be forced to reduce the quality and quantity of assisted housing to cover these additional costs.

In response to the proposed rule, the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the National Housing Law Project (NHLP), and other partners launched the Keep Families Together campaign to mobilize opposition. During the public comment period, individuals and organizations submitted over 30,450 comments; the previous time a HUD proposal garnered significant public attention resulted in just over 1,000 public comments. An NHLP analysis of these comments found that more than 95% of the comments opposed the rule.

The final rule was never published under the Trump Administration and will likely not be published under the Biden Administration. At the time of this writing, the proposed rule has yet to be rescinded.

### **Legislative Action**

Representative Sylvia R. Garcia (D-TX) and 14 other House Democrats sponsored the “Keeping Families Together Act of 2019” (H.R. 2763), which would prohibit HUD from implementing the proposed rule. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) introduced a companion bill in the Senate (S. 1904), and similar language was included in the House version of the fiscal year 2020 and 2021 spending bill.

### **RHS Rule on Mixed-Status Families**

The Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs at the Office of Management and Budget cleared RHS’s proposed rule “Implementation of the Multi-Family Housing U.S. Citizenship Requirements” and was included in its Spring Regulatory Agenda. The summary of the rule notes that the agency will align its immigration eligibility requirements with those at HUD. Given RHS’s inconsistent implementation of Section 214, the exact impact of a rule similar to HUD’s will be difficult to determine. The rule was never published to the *Federal Register* under the Trump Administration and was withdrawn by the current Administration.

### **FORECAST FOR 2022**

The vacatur and withdrawal of these harmful rules were due in part to the efforts of advocates and litigation partners in recent years. This year already presents more opportunities to expand resources to immigrant families and combat the chilling effects from the previous Administration’s anti-immigrant regulations.

DHS published an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPRM) on the Public Charge Rule titled “Public Charge Ground of Inadmissibility” on August 23, 2021. DHS published this ANRPM to seek broad public feedback on the public charge ground as they are preparing a regulatory proposal that would be consistent with law; that will reflect empirical evidence to

the extent relevant and available; that carefully considers public comments; that will be clear, fair, and comprehensible for officers as well as for noncitizens and their families; that will lead to fair and consistent adjudications and thus avoid unequal treatment of similarly situated individuals; that will not otherwise unduly impose barriers for noncitizens seeking admission or adjustment of status in the United States. The ANPRM is the first of three steps in the larger reform process that would lead to a final rule and DHS also intends to ensure that any regulatory proposal does not unduly interfere with the receipt of public benefits by applicants and their families, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting long-term public health and economic impacts in the United States. DHS requested information on the following topics:

- Purpose and definition of public charge.
- Prospective nature of the Public Charge Inadmissibility Determination.
- Statutory factors.
- Affidavit of support under section 213A of the INA.
- Other factors to consider.
- Public benefits considered.
- Previous rulemaking efforts.
- Bond and bond procedures.
- Specific questions for state, territorial, local, and tribal benefit granting agencies and nonprofit organizations.

In response to the ANPRM, PIF submitted a comment letter that urged DHS to implement common-sense reforms, including:

- Clearly and narrowly defining “public charge,”
- Affirm that qualifying immigrant families can use almost all safety net programs without triggering a public charge determination, and
- Direct immigration officers to consider affidavits of support as sufficient to overcome statutory considerations like age, disability, and income.

This comment letter was also signed by 630+ organizations from 46 states and the District of Columbia, representing diverse sectors ranging from faith to nutrition to housing and reproductive health groups. The Keep Families Together Campaign also created a comment template and submitted comments urging the Administration and DHS to ensure that critical housing programs remain not under consideration for Public Charge purposes as written in the 1999 field guidance and that communication of this policy be increased so that immigrant families know that they have access to these benefits without fear of retaliation.

DOS has also issued an interim final rule which reopened their public comment period titled “Visas: Ineligibility Based on Public Charge Grounds”. PIF and the Keep Families Together Campaign will provide resources to help advocates reply during this comment period as well.

Representatives Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) and Tony Cárdenas (D-CA) introduced on September 10 H.R. 5227, “Lifting Immigrant Families Through Benefits Access Restoration Act of 2021,” or the “LIFT the BAR Act.” The legislation would restore access to public programs for lawfully present immigrants by removing the five-year waiting period and other restrictions to accessing federal public benefits. Affected programs would include Medicaid, CHIP, SNAP, TANF, SSI, certain housing assistance, and other important services. NLIHC supports this legislation. The bill would also align Section 214 of the “Housing and Community Development Act of 1980” with the changes made in the “Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996” would expand and make consistent eligibility requirements for recipients of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), immigrants who are granted Special Immigrant Status (SIJS), and any other non-citizens federally authorized to be present in the United States. Such a change would allow access to federal housing programs such as public housing, Housing Choice Vouchers, Section 8 project-based rental assistance, and some rural housing programs.

## HOW ADVOCATES CAN TAKE ACTION

### Advocates should speak to lawmakers with the message that:

- Blaming struggling families will not fix the long waitlist for housing assistance or the affordable housing crisis. Congress should instead make significant new investments in affordable housing resources to ensure that every family, regardless of immigration status, who is eligible for HUD assistance has access to one of the most basic of human rights: a safe, accessible, and affordable place to call home.
- The previous Administration rules have directly impacted thousands of immigrant families’ access to housing and have had a chilling effect on children’s ability to receive essential health, food, and housing federal assistance. This country is already facing an affordable housing crisis and limiting access for more people will only exacerbate the problem.
- Human needs do not change based on immigration status. It is simply impractical, dangerous, and inhumane to only allow citizens to access critical, lifesaving benefits such as housing assistance. Members of Congress should work to restrict or halt the implementation of these harmful rules.
- Ensuring mixed-status families and immigrant families have access to affordable, secure, and safe housing will allow these families to safely isolate and prevent contracting the coronavirus.

### Urge Legislators to:

- Work to address the needs of low-income immigrant families.
- Work to pass essential immigration reform legislation such as the “LIFT the Bar Act” of 2021.

### Urge DHS/DOS/HUD/RHS to:

- Align HUD and RHS policy when addressing mixed-status families to limit confusion.

- Issue clear guidance and resources to community members on the policy changes to limit the chilling effect these rules have had on families pursuing public benefits.

National Housing Law Project: <https://www.nhlp.org/initiatives/immigrant-rights/>.

Protecting Immigrant Families campaign: <https://protectingimmigrantfamilies.org/>.

### **Urge the Biden Administration to:**

- Adequately address the needs of low-income immigrant families and undue the alterations made to immigration policy by the Trump Administration.
- Fully implement the Executive Order “Restoring Faith in Our Legal Immigration Systems and Strengthening Integration and Inclusion Efforts for New Americans” and work to address recent harm to immigrant families.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

DHS’s (formerly Immigration and Naturalization Service) 1999 “Field Guidance on Deportability and Inadmissibility on Public Charge Grounds” final rule: <http://bit.ly/3vizXYy>

DHS’s “Inadmissibility on Public Charge Ground” Final Rule: <https://bit.ly/38zU9K6>.

DOS’s “Ineligibility Based on Public Charge Grounds” Interim Final Rule: <https://bit.ly/2IsP3HE>.

DHS’s “Public Charge Ground of Inadmissibility” ANPRM: <https://bit.ly/3DrBcrz>.

DOS’s “Visas: Ineligibility Based on Public Charge Grounds”: <https://bit.ly/3lKknSt>.

HUD’s “Housing and Community Development Act of 1980: Verification of Eligible Status” Proposed Rule: <https://bit.ly/2YGfu07>.

A summary of USDA’s proposal, “Implementation of the Multi-Family Housing Citizenship Requirements,” was in the 2020 Spring Regulatory Agenda at: <https://bit.ly/3jZ2FbC>.

Executive Order “Restoring Faith in Our Legal Immigration Systems and Strengthening Integration and Inclusion Efforts for New Americans”: <http://bit.ly/3rkGdfW>.

Keep Families Together campaign: <https://www.keep-families-together.org/>.

# Land Use Restrictions and Affordable Housing

---

Andrew Aurand, Vice President for Research, NLIHC

Local governments use zoning and land use regulations to control which types of housing are permissible in which locations. Thirty years ago, HUD identified biases in residential zoning for lower density single-family housing and against multifamily housing that were significant barriers to affordable housing ([HUD, 1991](#)). A 2019 analysis published by the *New York Times* found that bias still exists today as up to 75% of residential land across many cities is zoned exclusively for detached single-family homes ([Badger & Bui, 2019](#)). Local zoning reform is necessary, but not sufficient, to address our national shortage of affordable housing and increase housing options for extremely low-income renters.

## THE IMPACTS OF LOCAL ZONING

The exclusion of higher-density housing like apartment buildings in favor of single-family homes is not the only local zoning practice that constrains the housing supply. Other restrictions within the zoning code like minimum lot sizes, set-back requirements, and parking requirements can constrain supply and raise prices, because they typically increase the amount of land needed for each home. These zoning practices are widespread. In addition to the *New York Times* investigation, a recent survey by the Urban Institute found that a majority of municipal representatives reported either little change or an increase during the last 10 to 15 years in land dedicated to single-family housing within their jurisdiction ([Badger & Bui, 2019](#); [Urban Institute, 2019](#)). And a survey of suburban land use regulations found minimum lot sizes are used more widely now than 10 years ago and are more severe ([Gyourko, Hartley, & Krimmel, 2019](#)). Between 2006 and 2018, the share of suburban municipalities with minimum lot size

requirements increased from 83% to 96% and minimum sizes of one or more acres became more common.

This exclusionary zoning hurts affordability by limiting the supply of housing. A study of communities in Massachusetts, for example, found that minimum lot size requirements could increase the price of single-family homes by as much as 40% over a ten-year period ([Zabel & Dalton, 2011](#)). Other studies also show relationships between more stringent land use regulation and higher housing prices ([HUD, 2018](#)).

These exclusionary zoning practices further limit housing opportunities for low-income households by prohibiting or curtailing the types of housing that are more likely to be rental housing and affordable, including small and large multifamily developments. More low-density and single-family zoning are associated with less rental housing in local communities, which in turn limits access for people with low incomes and people of color, populations who are disproportionately renters ([Pendall, 2000](#)). Because of this impact, low-density zoning is associated with greater racial segregation and also spatial concentrations of affluent households in wealthy communities where zoning has excluded others ([Rothwell & Massey, 2009](#); [Lens & Monkkonen, 2016](#)).

Developers may produce higher-density housing under restrictive zoning, but they must obtain special permits or zoning variances to do so. This need for approval from public boards, which typically require public input, creates opportunities for vocal opponents to block new development that includes higher-density or affordable housing.

## ZONING REFORMS

Some cities and states are beginning to reform zoning restrictions and allow somewhat higher-density housing by-right, meaning no special variance is needed. Minneapolis, for example, eliminated single-family districts in 2018 and now allows up to three units where previously only one was permitted. The state of Oregon enacted land-use policies in 2019 that allow duplexes in neighborhoods previously zoned single-family in cities with at least 10,000 residents and allow even higher densities in cities with more than 25,000 residents. California enacted reform in 2021 that allows owners to build duplexes or fourplexes on parcels previously zoned for single-family structures.

These reforms are too recent for us to fully know their impact. Allowing higher densities does not immediately guarantee an increase in the general housing supply or an increase in rental housing, but it at a minimum allows the opportunity for higher-density housing to be built. Recent research in Chicago found that five years after upzoning, mixed-use and commercial districts saw an increase in property values, but not in the supply of housing (Freemark, 2020). More time may be needed, however, to see the longer-term impact given the long timelines for development.

## FEDERAL IMPLICATIONS

Federal legislation could potentially incentivize or require local jurisdictions to enact less restrictive zoning. Legislation introduced in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress (2021-2022) includes a bill from Senators Todd Young (R-IN) and Brian Schatz (D-HI) that would require Community Development Block Grant recipients to make efforts to reduce barriers to affordable housing, including zoning reform that enables more multifamily housing and reduces minimum lot size requirements. CDBG funds, however, may be a weak incentive for smaller, affluent jurisdictions to change their zoning. In some states, few cities and towns with land use powers receive CDBG funds directly from HUD (Schuetz, 2018). In addition, CDBG's allocation formula provides more funds to larger and poorer communities than to more

affluent communities where more and less expensive housing is likely needed. Another bill introduced in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress by Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Rob Portman (R-OH), and Tim Kaine (D-VA) provides competitive grants for states, regions, and localities to support their development and implementation of comprehensive plans that reduce barriers, such as zoning restrictions, to new housing. The "Build Back Better Act" passed by the House included similar competitive grants.

Zoning reform in many communities is a necessary step for increasing the housing supply and creating housing options for households with limited incomes. On its own, however, reform will not eliminate the shortage of housing for extremely low-income renters. What many extremely low-income renters can afford to pay in rent is too low for the private market to adequately respond to their housing needs. A family of three with poverty-level income, for example, can afford a monthly rent of approximately \$550, assuming they should not spend more than 30% of their income on housing. Many families cannot even afford to spend 30%. This rent does not typically cover development and operating costs of new housing and often doesn't even cover the expenses of maintaining older housing. Zoning reform provides the opportunity for more housing and higher-density multifamily housing to be built, but we need significant federal investment in housing assistance like Housing Choice Vouchers, the national Housing Trust Fund, and the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, to enable extremely low-income renters to afford that housing.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Urban Institute. (2019). Zoning Matters: How Land-Use Policies Shape Our Lives.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (Spring, 2018). Regulatory Barriers and Affordable Housing.



# Equal Access for Transgender People: The Trump Administration’s Attempt to Eliminate Shelter Protections for Transgender People

---

By Xavier Arriaga, Policy Analyst, NLIHC

**T**he Trump Administration made a concerted effort to remove the protections and rights of the LGBTQ community after it came into power. This began on the day of Trump’s inauguration in 2017 when the Administration removed all mention of LGBTQ people from the White House, Department of State, and Department of Labor websites—the first action in a widespread regulatory onslaught of anti-transgender and anti-LGBTQ actions across many agencies. HUD was one of the first agencies to enact the Trump Administration’s anti-transgender agenda. In March of 2017, the agency withdrew two Obama-era HUD proposals designed to protect LGBTQ people from experiencing homelessness.

In 2019, HUD announced plans to gut protections for transgender and gender-nonconforming people experiencing homelessness by removing a crucial provision in the Equal Access Rule of 2016. This announcement came a day after HUD Secretary Ben Carson had testified before the House Financial Services Committee and said no such changes would be made to the Equal Access Rule—meaning he either lied to Congress or was seriously uninformed about what was going on in his agency. Nonetheless, the rule was consistent with Secretary Carson’s anti-transgender rhetoric that was made apparent whether he was testifying before Congress or making visits to communities experiencing high levels of homelessness.

This was an explicit attack on a community that already faced steep barriers to accessing shelter. One in three transgender Americans has been homeless at some point in their lives. When in shelters, the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey found

that 70% of respondents reported mistreatment in shelters due to their gender identity, and 44% reported they had to leave shelters due to poor or unsafe conditions. HUD’s proposed changes to the Equal Access Rule would allow taxpayer-funded discrimination against transgender people who are seeking emergency shelter amid a global pandemic.

## CHANGES TO THE EQUAL ACCESS RULE

### Background

In 2012, HUD published its final rule entitled “Equal Access to Housing in HUD Programs Regardless of Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity.” The 2012 Equal Access Rule was created to ensure that HUD’s housing programs would be open to all eligible individuals and families regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status. In 2016, HUD published a follow-up rule “Equal Access in Accordance with an Individual’s Gender Identity in Community Planning and Development Programs,” which built upon the Equal Access Rule of 2012 and ensures equal access to HUD’s Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD) programs, specifically shelters, in accordance with a shelter seeker’s gender identity. HUD’s 2016 Equal Access Rule amendments constituted crucial policy to improve the treatment of transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals in securing emergency shelter.

In 2019, HUD Secretary Ben Carson testified before the U.S. House Financial Services Committee and was questioned about the agency’s implementation and enforcement of the Equal Access Rule. When asked by Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton (D-VA) if

HUD was planning any changes for the Equal Access Rule, he responded: “I’m not currently anticipating changing the rule.” A day after, May 22, HUD announced its proposal to gut the rule and remove protections for transgender and gender-nonconforming people seeking shelter and emergency housing services.

On July 24, 2020, HUD published its proposed anti-transgender changes to the Equal Access Rule, “Making Admission or Placement Determinations Based on Sex in Facilities Under Community Planning and Development Housing Programs”.

### HUD’s Proposed Rule

Features of the harmful proposed changes include:

- Revisions to the definition of gender identity to mean actual or perceived gender-related characteristics (deleting the current rule’s “the gender by which a person identifies, regardless of the sex assigned to that person at birth and regardless of the person’s perceived gender identity”).
- Allowing shelter providers to place and accommodate individuals on the basis of the shelter provider’s policies for determining someone’s sex.
- Allowing shelter providers to deny admission using a range of factors, including the provider’s “good faith belief” that an individual is not of the sex that the shelter serves (e.g., a women’s shelter), an individual’s sex as reflected in official government documents, or the gender with which a person identifies.
- Allowing shelter providers to use physical characteristics as “reasonable considerations” to determine a person’s biological sex. This may include factors such as height, the presence of facial hair, the presence of an Adam’s apple, and other physical characteristics that HUD claims “when considered together, are indicative of a person’s biological sex.”

Despite admitting that data was lacking, HUD based its justifications on anecdotal evidence and dangerous stereotypes, undocumented “religious freedom” assertions, and unfounded regulatory burdens on shelters. HUD’s justifications include various false claims.

### HUD’s Justifications

**Claim #1:** The “2016 rule restricted single-sex facilities in a way not supported by congressional enactment.”

What the 2016 rule did was to allow people to go to a federally funded shelter consistent with their gender identity – a step that is not prohibited by statute. In fact, the “Violence Against Women Act” (VAWA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender identity in programs (including shelters) that receive federal funds from programs subject to VAWA. VAWA allows sex-segregated shelters to consider a person’s sex but requires grantees to provide comparable services to individuals who cannot be served by sex-specific programming.

**Claim #2:** The “2016 rule minimized local control.”

The 2016 rule established a consistent nationwide policy for HUD and taxpayer-funded shelters. Shelters that do not receive HUD funds are not impacted by the 2016 rule.

**Claim #3:** The “2016 rule burdened those shelters with deeply held religious convictions.”

HUD cites no evidence that the existing rule places an undue burden on faith-based shelter providers. In fact, the Center for American Progress made a “Freedom of Information Act” (FOIA) request in 2017 to HUD regarding any waivers or accommodations made under the 2012 and 2016 Equal Access Rule. The agency failed to locate any waiver requests or complaints from service providers indicating that any religious exemptions had been requested in the current or prior Administrations. Aside from a single anecdotal account and conjecture about how

religious organizations may be discouraged from participating in HUD programs, HUD's proposal provides no concrete evidence demonstrating that religious providers are unduly burdened by current HUD rules. In fact, the anecdotal account referenced above involved a single shelter that has sued to stop the application of a local anti-discrimination law on religious grounds; the lawsuit does not even involve the application of the Equal Access Rule itself.

**Claim #4:** The “2016 Rule has manifested privacy issues.”

HUD's proposal relies upon harmful stereotypes about transgender people (particularly transgender women) and fails to provide any evidence that HUD's nondiscrimination policy creates widespread privacy or safety concerns. HUD relied on individual anecdotes without providing data to demonstrate a larger issue. HUD cynically invoked survivors of domestic and sexual violence to attempt to lend credibility to its discriminatory proposal. However, HUD failed to acknowledge the view of domestic and sexual violence advocates, who have repeatedly made their stance clear. In 2016, over 300 domestic violence and sexual violence organizations across the country signed a National Consensus Statement. These leaders agreed: transgender women being served alongside other women is appropriate and not a safety issue. They updated their letter in 2018 reiterating their support. Furthermore, in a statement made July 2, 2020, the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence condemned HUD's anti-transgender proposal. More generally, nondiscrimination protections similar to the 2016 Equal Access Rule have been adopted in over 20 states and over 300 localities. These protections have helped increase fairness and opportunity for vulnerable people.

In response to the proposed rule, the Housing Saves Lives campaign was launched and co-led by over 50 national and local organizations,

including NLIHC, to encourage the public to submit comments during the 60-day comment period. Together the campaign worked with members of Congress to urge HUD to rescind the rule, hosted a *Week of Action* with an array of national events led by partner organizations, recruited mayors and other public officials from across the nation to submit a public comment and letter opposing the proposed rule, and submitted op-eds and contributed to news articles. More than 66,000 public comments were submitted during the 60-day period, becoming the largest comment campaign on a HUD regulation ever.

### **Legislative Action**

In the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, Representative David Cicilline (D-RI) and 239 original cosponsors introduced H.R. 5, “The Equality Act” which would amend several existing federal civil rights laws. The bill would prohibit discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity in a wide variety of areas including public accommodations and facilities, education, federal funding, employment, housing, credit, and the jury system. Specifically, the bill defines and includes sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity among the prohibited categories of discrimination or segregation.

Representative Jennifer Wexton introduced H.R. 3018, “Ensuring Equal Access to Shelter Act of 2019,” which would block HUD's proposed anti-transgender rule modifications to the 2016 Equal Access Rule. Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI) introduced a companion bill in the Senate (S. 2007), and similar language was included in the House version of the FY 20 and FY21 spending bills.

During the public comment campaign, Representatives Jennifer Wexton, Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Joe Kennedy III (D-MA), and Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI) submitted a public comment letter signed by 23 Senators and 122 Representatives to the *Federal Register* opposing HUD's proposal.

## **Bostock v. Clayton County Ruling**

On June 15, 2020, the United States Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling on the civil rights of LGBTQ people. In a 6-3 vote in *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia* and *R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes Inc. v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*, the court held that Title VII of the “Civil Rights Act” bars discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation. This landmark civil rights ruling protects LGBTQ people from discrimination in employment, extending protections for millions of LGBTQ workers, making it illegal to be fired for simply being LGBTQ. The majority’s interpretation is consistent with the Equal Access Rule’s 2016 provision to ensure protections for transgender people from discrimination in homeless shelters and HUD-funded services.

Title VIII of the “Civil Rights Act” (the Fair Housing Act) makes it unlawful to sell, rent, or otherwise make unavailable or deny a dwelling to anyone because of race or color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status, or disability. Prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sex was added in 1974. In addition to the Equal Access Rule of 2012 and 2016, HUD has historically enforced the Fair Housing Act’s prohibition of sex stereotyping to cover LGBTQ people. The *Bostock* ruling will influence fair housing rulings because the lower courts often rely on Title VII when interpreting the “Fair Housing Act. However, HUD had failed to consider the *Bostock* ruling while their proposed rule was under review at Congress and continues to explicitly ignore the Supreme Court’s decision.

Chairwoman Maxine Waters (D-CA) and Representative Jennifer Wexton sent a letter to Secretary Ben Carson calling on HUD to reconsider its anti-transgender rule proposal to the Equal Access Rule due to the potential contradictions with the *Bostock v County* ruling. Secretary Ben Carson responded to this letter, stating “The Supreme Court’s ruling in *Bostock* has no impact on the Department’s proposed rule” incorrectly stating that “We must not place the rights of one group over another as to diminish the rights of those we are seeking to serve.”

120 Members of Congress called on President Trump to direct the federal government to remove all regulations, executive orders, and agency policies that discriminate against the LGBTQ community in light of the *Bostock v. Clayton County* ruling.

## **President Biden’s Executive Order Preventing and Combatting Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation**

On his first day in office, President Joe Biden signed an Executive Order directing the federal government to fully implement the U.S. Supreme Court’s landmark ruling in *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia*. The order reinforces laws that prohibit sex discrimination, including the Fair Housing Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation.

This order repudiates the anti-transgender rhetoric that was commonplace in the previous Administration and is contrary to former HUD Secretary Ben Carson’s interpretation of the ruling. The Executive Order instructs the head of agencies to review all agency actions relating to sex discrimination and make decisions consistent with the instruction of the order within 100 days. This includes an order to agencies to consider whether to revise, suspend, or rescind such agency action, or new agency actions, as necessary to fully implement statutes that prohibit sex discrimination and the policy set forth in the Executive Order.

## **HUD Withdraws Anti-Transgender Proposal**

Due in part to the tremendous success of the Housing Saves Lives campaign and efforts by advocates, the publication of the final rule was delayed and never published by the previous Administration.

HUD published in the *Federal Register* on April 27, 2021, a withdrawal of its proposed rule “Making Admissions or Placement Determinations Based on Sex in Facilities Under Community Planning and Development Housing Programs; Withdrawal; Regulatory Review.” This removed the previous Administration’s harmful anti-transgender proposal from HUD’s Spring 2021 Unified Agenda and Deregulatory Actions. HUD also restored most

guidance and technical assistance from the 2016 Equal Access Rule to CPD funded emergency shelters, temporary housing, buildings, housing, and other programs that were designed to ensure they comply with the rule. HUD continued to release resources by technical assistance providers to HUD grantees.

This was a tremendous victory for advocates who have been fighting against anti-LGBTQ regulations for the past four years. This decision reaffirms HUD’s mission and commitment to creating inclusive communities and sends a signal that the agency will not engage in federally funded discrimination. Now there are further opportunities in the next few years to recreate the laws, regulations, and policies that make up the infrastructure of LGBTQ rights.

## HOW ADVOCATES CAN TAKE ACTION

### Urge Legislators to:

- Encourage Senators to pass S. 393, the “Equality Act.”
- Address issues of discrimination and violence against transgender people, especially Black and Latinx transwomen.

### Urge HUD to:

- Work to address the housing and emergency shelter needs of the LGBTQ community.

### Urge the Biden Administration to:

- Work with Members of Congress to pass S. 393, the “Equality Act” and ensure immediate and full enforcement across all federal departments and agencies.
- Work to address the housing and emergency shelter needs of the LGBTQ community.
- Address issues of discrimination and violence against transgender people, especially Black and Latinx transwomen.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

HUD’s “Making Admission or Placement Determinations Based on Sex in Facilities Under Community Planning and Development Housing

Programs” Proposed Rule: <https://bit.ly/3m2Jr4z>.

Executive Order “Preventing and Combatting Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation”: <https://bit.ly/2Mh4FzC>.

National Center for Transgender Equality: <https://transequality.org/>.

True Colors United: <https://truecolorsunited.org/>.

# Rent Control

---

By Dan Threet, Former Research Analyst, NLIHC, and Andrew Aurand, Vice President for Research, NLIHC

**R**ent control, or rent regulation more generally, refers to policies that either limit the maximum rent or the speed of rent increases for privately owned rental homes. While such policies will not solve the housing affordability crisis on their own, research suggests they can dampen price appreciation, slow displacement, and improve housing stability for some lower-income renters.

## TYPES OF RENT REGULATION

Rent control policies come in many forms. While historically some policies imposed a ceiling on rents, most forms of rent control today instead regulate the speed and size of rent increases, referred to as rent stabilization. Some rent stabilization policies sharply restrict increases, while others merely prohibit large and sudden spikes or price gouging. Rent control policies also vary in the proportion of the private-market rental stock they regulate. While some cover all rental homes in an area, most policies target older rental homes to avoid discouraging new construction. Some rent regulations exempt smaller buildings, and some allow homes to be brought up to market rate when they are vacated.

In recent years, there has been increasing support for rent regulation measures in some states and cities, though most jurisdictions with rent regulation are still found in New York, New Jersey, and California. In 2019, [Oregon limited annual rent increases](#) on many rental homes more than 15 years old to 7% plus the consumer price index (CPI) measure of inflation and [New York State strengthened existing rent regulations](#). In 2021, St. Paul, Minnesota voters passed stringent rent control to take effect on May 1, 2022. The ordinance limits annual rent increases to 3% and applies to most rental housing.

Rent regulation remains overwhelmingly an issue

for state and local politics, rather than a federal issue—partly because a permanent national policy would face greater legal challenges and partly because a uniform set of regulations would not serve high- and low-cost markets equally.

## RENT REGULATION AS AN ANTI-DISPLACEMENT TOOL

In some jurisdictions, rent control may be a useful means of preventing the displacement of renters in rapidly gentrifying areas. Proponents argue that regulation can correct power imbalances between landlords and renters and give due recognition to long-term tenants' interest in staying in their homes. Because rent control lowers the rent burden for existing tenants and protects them from sudden increases, renters in controlled rental homes tend to remain in their homes longer than those in uncontrolled homes. Longer tenures may reflect greater housing stability and better access to neighborhood opportunities. On the other hand, longer tenures may also reflect restricted mobility, if renters stay in regulated homes of the wrong size or far from work to keep lower rents.

Rent control benefits renters who happen to occupy regulated homes, not necessarily the renters who have the greatest need. While some higher-income renters will benefit, renters in regulated homes are much less likely than renters in unregulated homes to be wealthy. In New York City, the median income of renters in rent-stabilized homes is considerably lower than the median income of renters in unregulated homes. All the same, critics argue that insensitivity to need makes rent regulation inefficient, wasting resources on higher-income tenants.

Lower-income renters may be disadvantaged by poorly designed regulations. Lower-income households are more likely to need to move for work, health, or family, so they may not be able to hold onto regulated homes as well as higher-income renters. Higher-income renters may

be willing to initially pay above-market rents for stabilized units, confident that they will eventually benefit from slower increases, which lower-income renters are less likely to be able to do. Some have argued that regulations give landlords incentives to apply stricter screening criteria, which could make housing searches harder for younger tenants and tenants with children.

## **BROADER EFFECTS OF RENT REGULATION**

The benefits and risks of rent control for low-income renters not yet living in the area or not living in rent-regulated homes are less well understood. Research provides mixed evidence of how rent control affects overall housing supply, rent levels in uncontrolled homes, and housing quality. There is little evidence that rent control increases economic or racial integration or reduces homelessness.

### **Housing Supply**

Conventional wisdom holds that rent control will diminish the supply of available rental homes by discouraging new construction and encouraging landlords to pull homes out of the market, but empirical evidence is mixed. Several studies have found that rent regulation does not dampen new construction, though that likely depends on how much the policy restricts increases and how long new construction is exempted from regulation. Rent regulation can increase the likelihood that owners convert rental homes to condos or redevelop them for other purposes. What effect rent regulation has on housing supply may depend on related regulations, like whether landlords are prevented from taking homes off the market or are guaranteed a certain rate of return.

### **Rent Levels in Unregulated Homes**

If rent regulation limits housing supply, then it might raise rents in unregulated homes, but the empirical evidence is also mixed on this point. Some studies show rising housing costs for uncontrolled homes in cities with rent regulations, while other research has found

no impact or even a decrease in the rents of nearby uncontrolled rental homes. Given this uncertainty, it may be best to consider this an unresolved worry about the side effects of rent regulation—low-income renters who do not secure a regulated home may have to spend more on rent than they would in a city without regulation. Of course, the design of rent regulation affects the size of the unregulated market.

### **Housing Quality**

It is unclear what effect rent control has on housing quality. Some economists argue that regulation discourages landlords from investing in their buildings. While some research has found a modest decline in the quality of regulated buildings, which could point to decreased investment, others argue that factors like the state of economy matter more. A study of rent control in the District of Columbia found that unregulated homes had more maintenance issues than regulated homes. A recent review of studies from the University of Minnesota found some evidence that major capital improvements may not be impacted by rent regulation, especially if the costs can be passed through to rent, but more general upkeep may suffer.

### **Other Effects**

No consistent relationship has been observed between rent regulation and rates of homelessness. Likewise, existing research does not find any consistent effect on rates of overcrowding. While some proponents of rent regulation tout mixed-income neighborhoods as a goal of rent control policies, there is little evidence that rent control consistently increases economic integration in the long term. However, to the extent that rent regulation slows displacement, it could allow lower-income renters to stay in a neighborhood longer. Finally, there is mixed evidence whether people of color access rent-controlled homes in proportion to their share of the population. While people of color were overrepresented in regulated homes in New Jersey, they were underrepresented in Boston.

Proponents readily admit that rent regulation needs to be paired with other measures to create more affordable housing, since it does not increase the supply, benefit all lower-income renters, or ensure economic and racial integration. One common argument for rent regulation is that it is fast, scalable, and cheap, since it does not require a direct subsidy. It may allow many lower-income renters to remain in place in cities with rising housing prices. There are still opportunity costs involved, however, since rent regulation requires administrative oversight and enforcement, and lower rents can affect property values and tax revenue that could be used for other purposes. Given the uncertainties about how rent regulation affects housing supply, unregulated rent levels, and housing quality, any rent regulation policy needs to be carefully designed and paired with supplementary regulation to protect low-income renters.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Chew, A., & Treuhaft, S. 2019. [Our homes, our future: How rent control can build stable, healthy communities.](#) Washington, DC: PolicyLink.

Goetz, E., Damiano, A., Hendee Brown, P., Alcorn, P., & Matson, J. 2021. [Minneapolis rent stabilization study.](#) Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Center for Urban and Regional Affairs.

Pastor, M., Carter, V., & Abood, M. 2018. [Rent matters: What are the impacts of rent stabilization measures?](#) Los Angeles: USC Dornsife.

Rajasekaran, P., Treskon, M., & Greene, S. 2019. [Rent control: What does the research tell us about the effectiveness of local action?](#) Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute.

Sturtevant, L. 2018. [The impacts of rent control: A research review and synthesis.](#) Washington, DC: National Multifamily Housing Council.



# The Preservation of Affordable Housing

---

By Dan Emmanuel, Senior Research Analyst, NLIHC

**T**he United States faces a shortage of nearly 7 million rental homes affordable and available to the lowest income renters. Federal housing subsidies, meanwhile, provide a vital, albeit insufficient, supply of affordable housing. How to expand this supply and promote housing stability is a primary concern for federal affordable housing policy. Yet preserving the existing federally assisted housing stock is also a critical question for federal policy. The existing stock must be preserved to ensure both housing quality and stability for current tenants. Efforts to expand the federally assisted housing stock and close affordability gap also hinge on preservation, since the loss of federally assisted units can undermine efforts to expand supply through new production.

## BACKGROUND

### What is Preservation?

Federal project-based subsidies often provide a one-time upfront allocation of capital for development, or a time-limited operating subsidy (e.g. rental assistance contracts). Yet, federally assisted affordable housing receives limited rental revenue from tenants to finance future capital needs or ongoing operating costs when operating subsidies end. Sustained and renewed funding commitments are needed to ensure future affordability and habitability as federally assisted housing ages and existing rent and tenant eligibility requirements come up for renewal or extension. Ensuring sustained funding and the long-term affordability, quality, and financial viability of federally assisted housing is the cornerstone of affordable housing preservation.

Preservation efforts are shaped by different risks facing the federally assisted stock. Reina (2018) identifies three basic types of risks for preservation: expiration or exit, depreciation,

and appropriations. The applicability and extent of each risk varies across federal project-based subsidy programs, and the risks can be interrelated.

Exit risk results from affordability and eligibility restrictions that can expire or policies that enable property owners to exit these restrictions early. In exchange for receiving a federal project-based subsidy, property owners typically agree to affordability and eligibility restrictions for a set period. The duration of these restrictions is determined prior to the awarding of a one-time capital subsidy, tied to the payment of a mortgage, or subject to the renewal of a rental assistance contract. In some instances, property owners can exit before affordability and eligibility restrictions are set to expire through prepayment of a mortgage, foreclosure, or a legal loophole such as the qualified contract (QC) option in the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program. Properties with for-profit owners are generally considered to be at greater risk for exit, particularly in tighter markets where the owners can operate the properties more profitably as market-rate housing.

Depreciation risk refers to the degree to which the financial stability and physical quality of federally subsidized housing can deteriorate over time. The risk of depreciation can be a greater threat than exit risk to the preservation of federally assisted housing. The limited rental income resulting from the eligibility and affordability requirements essential to affordable housing programs mean that owners of federally assisted housing typically require ongoing operating or subsequent capital support, or sometimes both, to maintain the financial stability and physical viability of such housing. Absent continued public investment, federally assisted housing can become physically outdated, or even fall into disrepair, posing a threat to habitability. Failed physical inspections can lead to the removal of assisted housing from federal programs. Centralized data on the physical condition of the federally assisted stock

are, however, only available for some federal programs, significantly limiting our knowledge of depreciation risk.

Appropriations risk refers to the degree to which federally subsidized housing depends on Congress to provide continual funding in order to continue to operate as affordable housing. Federally assisted housing is not a one-time cost. Funding for rental assistance contracts or operating assistance must not only be continually renewed by Congress, but also be expanded to keep pace with inflation. Failing to do so means rental assistance contracts might not be renewed, or assistance might fail to keep pace with increasing operating costs, creating the potential for loss of affordable units through exits or depreciation. Capital subsidies must also continue to be made available by Congress after initial construction to ensure the availability of funds for physical preservation to prevent depreciation. In some programs, such as LIHTC, subsequent allocations of capital subsidies might present the only way to extend eligibility and affordability restrictions within a program.

### **Why Does Preservation Matter?**

Preservation is essential for any realistic approach to protecting the lowest-income renters and expanding the supply of affordable housing for them. Preservation stops displacement and housing instability for current tenants, prevents the loss of difficult-to-replace housing in desirable neighborhoods, mitigates further disinvestment from distressed communities, presents an opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through energy retrofitting, and prevents the further decline of the already limited federally subsidized housing stock.

The failure to preserve federally subsidized housing can lead to unaffordable rents, a loss of habitability, or evictions for current tenants. Preservation directly addresses these sources of housing instability. Though some federal housing programs offer tenant protection vouchers (TPVs) to tenants when preservation efforts fail, recent research questions their efficacy as a safety net and TPVs are not available to tenants of the

largest federal housing production program, LIHTC (NLIHC and PAHRC, 2018). Preservation might be the only existing option to ensure housing stability for many LIHTC tenants so long as existing eligibility and affordability requirements are maintained in the process.

Replacing federally assisted housing lost from neighborhoods offering a high degree of amenities such as access to transportation, good schools, and employment opportunities is also difficult, if not impossible. The cost of land, regulatory barriers, and ‘Not in My Backyard’ mentality (NIMBYism) can present significant barriers to new development in such neighborhoods. Preservation of affordable homes provides continued access to these neighborhoods for low-income households and combats displacement and further residential segregation. The same issues that make it difficult to replace housing in high-cost and exclusionary neighborhoods could also make preservation more cost-effective than new construction. In disadvantaged neighborhoods, preservation has the potential to prevent further disinvestment.

Preservation also presents a clear opportunity to retrofit older federally assisted housing for energy-efficiency, lowering greenhouse gas emissions and figuring in a larger national strategy to combat climate change. These efforts could also lower utility costs. The residential sector, when including emissions from electricity use, accounted for 14.9% of US greenhouse gas emissions in 2019 (EPA, 2021) Further research is needed to fully compare the environmental impact of new construction and preservation.

Finally, preservation prevents the loss of units from the federally assisted stock. Given the current shortage of approximately seven million affordable and available units for the lowest-income renter households and chronic underfunding for federal programs, preventing the loss of the already limited assisted stock is critical. The stock will remain the same or decline if the loss of units equals or exceeds new production. Preservation, for all these reasons, is central to promoting housing stability and

quality, as well as expanding the reach of federal affordable housing policy.

## FORECASTING PRESERVATION NEEDS

Nearly 5 million affordable rental homes are supported by federal project-based subsidies, representing 10% of the total U.S. rental housing stock. LIHTC supports half of federally assisted homes, making it the largest program, followed by project-based Section 8 (28%), public housing (18%), and Section 515 Rural Rental Housing Loans (8%). Since some subsidies only provide a portion of the funding needed to build or maintain federally assisted housing, 40% of federally assisted homes rely on funding from multiple subsidy programs.

The National Housing Preservation Database (NHPD) allows users to examine the federal subsidies associated with assisted housing at the property level, including when eligibility and affordability restrictions associated with these subsidies are set to expire. In cases where properties have multiple subsidies, the NHPD allows users to determine the latest effective end date for restrictions at a given property. Recent analysis of NHPD data indicates eligibility and affordability restrictions are set to expire for 312,446 federally assisted homes by the end of 2025, which is 6% of the federally assisted stock. LIHTC (44%) and project-based Section 8 (42%) currently account for most of these homes. The portion of expiring properties assisted by LIHTC is expected to continue rising towards the end of the decade as more properties begin to reach 30 years of service and the end of their federally mandated eligibility and affordability restrictions.

Many properties losing their restrictions will renew their assistance or secure new funding to remain affordable, while a smaller share will not. Others might be subject to local voluntary eligibility or affordability restrictions that are longer in duration than required under federal law. Properties in strong housing markets owned by profit-minded owners are at the greatest risk for converting to market-rate housing. Based past trends, 176,760 federally assisted

homes with affordability restrictions expiring over the next five years could be lost from the affordable housing stock if preservation efforts aren't expanded. An additional 21,954 homes not facing a subsidy expiration in the next year could also be lost through public housing disposition, foreclosure, or early owner opt outs if current trends persist. Whether these homes will continue to provide affordable rents in the private market is uncertain and will depend on a variety of factors including the motivations of owners, local housing market conditions, and capital needs.

The full scope of depreciation risk for the federally assisted stock is uncertain since housing quality data aren't required to be collected for 51% of federally assisted homes. Data on physical quality, however, are available for public housing and HUD Multifamily assisted properties through REAC scores. Inspectors assign a REAC score based on the frequency and severity of housing quality and safety deficiencies observed while examining the building exterior, systems, and a sample of homes at each property. Twenty-three percent of public housing homes and 4% of homes assisted by project-based Section 8 scored below 60 and failed their last REAC inspection. Ten percent of homes assisted by public housing and 2% assisted by project-based Section 8 failed at least two of their past three inspections and likely face higher depreciation risk. These properties likely require immediate investment to cover outstanding maintenance deficiencies and provide safe and healthy living conditions for residents. There is already an estimated \$70 billion capital needs backlog for public housing alone.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates should make it clear to legislators that continual reinvestment is needed to preserve existing federally assisted housing, and that preservation is needed to close the affordable housing gap. Specifically:

- Federal capital and operating subsidies should be increased to both preserve and expand the existing supply of affordable

housing. Priority should be given to funding programs such as the national HTF, public housing, project-based Section 8, and USDA rural rental assistance and preservation programs that serve the lowest income renters.

- Annual federal appropriations for public housing, project-based Section 8, USDA rural housing programs must, at a minimum, keep pace with inflationary costs.
- Congress must address the capital needs backlog for public housing. The best way to do this is through direct investment in the public housing capital fund.
- Congress should close the QC loophole for future LIHTC properties and revise the formula for determining the QC sale price to reflect actual market value for existing LIHTC properties.\*
- The federal government should do more to support data collection and transparency within the LIHTC program. Congress should direct HUD to assess and report on the funding, staff capacity, and technology needed to improve LIHTC data collection. Better data collection is needed to improve the completeness of existing LIHTC data and enable efforts to track property-level changes over time (e.g. changes in ownership). HUD and the IRS should also find ways to collaborate on the enforcement of data collection requirements and other issues pertaining to program oversight.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). (2021). Inventory of US greenhouse gas emissions and sinks. Retrieved from <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-04/documents/us-ghg-inventory-2021-main-text.f?VersionId=yu89kg1O2qP754CdR8Qmyn4RRWc5iodZ>.

NLIHC and PAHRC. (2021). Picture of preservation 2021. Washington, DC: Authors. Retrieved from [https://preservationdatabase.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/NHPD\\_2021Report.pdf](https://preservationdatabase.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/NHPD_2021Report.pdf).

NLIHC & PAHRC. (2018). Balancing priorities: Preservation and neighborhood opportunity in the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program beyond Year 30. Retrieved from <https://preservationdatabase.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Balancing-Priorities.pdf>.

Reina, V. (2018). The preservation of subsidized housing: What we know and need to know. Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. Retrieved from [https://www.lincolninst.edu/sites/default/files/pubfiles/reina\\_wp18vr1.pdf](https://www.lincolninst.edu/sites/default/files/pubfiles/reina_wp18vr1.pdf).

---

# Chapter 7:

## HOUSING TOOLS

---



# Housing Counseling Assistance

---

By Bruce Dorpalen, Executive Director,  
National Housing Resource Center

**Administering Agency:** HUD's Office of Housing Counseling

**Year Started:** 1968

**Number of Persons/Households Served:** More than 957,58 households in FY20

**Populations Targeted:** Low- and moderate-income households, people of color, people with limited English proficiency, and rural households

**Funding:** \$57.5 million in FY2021

**T**he Housing Counseling Assistance (HCA) Program provides grants to nonprofit, HUD-approved housing counseling agencies. Grants are distributed through a competitive grant process.

## HISTORY

The HUD Housing Counseling Program was first authorized by the "Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968" "to provide counseling and advice to tenants and homeowners, both current and prospective, to assist them in improving their housing conditions, meeting their financial needs, and fulfilling the responsibilities of tenancy or homeownership." In 2010, the Obama Administration signed the "Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act" into law. The new law made important changes to the HUD Housing Counseling program, including the creation of the Office of Housing Counseling (OHC) within HUD, and mandated that all counseling by HUD-approved counseling agencies be provided by certified counselors. HUD required that by August 2021 all HUD-approved housing counseling agencies must provide counseling services via certified counselors.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

Since its inception, HUD-approved housing counseling agencies that receive grants through

the HCA program have been on the frontlines of helping predominantly low and moderate-income households achieve their housing goals, whether by purchasing their first home, saving their home from foreclosure, or finding safe and affordable rental housing (in FY 2020, 72% of counseled households had incomes below 80% of area median income). In addition to addressing housing-specific issues, counselors also work to improve their clients' general financial outlook by teaching skills such as household budgeting, paying down debt, and increasing savings. Unfortunately, due to a lack of public awareness of housing counseling availability and value, many do not take full advantage of such services. Effective public education and advocacy are necessary to increase the visibility and access of these valuable services.

HUD-approved counseling agencies provide both counseling services and educational programs. Housing counseling is conducted one-on-one with a household and delivers personalized information including a review of income, credit, household budget, and saving. Education programs deliver generalized information in a group workshop setting or online. In FY20, almost two-thirds of all clients of HUD-approved counseling agencies sought one-on-one counseling and a little more than one-third sought group education.

All one-on-one counseling begins with an in-depth review of household finances, including income, expenses, credit, and debts. When the counselor and client have a better understanding of the client's financial picture, they work together to create an action plan to address the client's specific housing needs. Two-thirds of counseling clients seek to either purchase a home, often for the first time, or resolve or prevent a mortgage delinquency or default. The remaining one-third of counseling clients seek assistance with rental housing or homelessness, are seniors interested in a reverse mortgage (which requires counseling from a HUD-

approved agency), or are homeowners seeking home maintenance and financial management assistance.

Most clients who seek group education services from HUD-approved counseling agencies attend a pre-purchase homebuyer education workshop (47%) or a financial literacy workshop (41%) that covers home affordability, budgeting, and understanding credit.

## HOUSING COUNSELING ASSISTANCE FUNDING

Federal funding for housing counseling is a constant legislative push for advocates, especially in recent years. At its peak, federal funding for the HCA program was \$87.5 million for FY2010. However, since the elimination of the National Foreclosure Mitigation Counseling (NFMC) program and the lowering of HUD Housing Counseling Assistance allocations, the housing counseling field has had to deal with lower overall funding, staff reductions, and agency closings. For FY2019, the Housing Counseling Assistance program was funded at \$50 million. For FY2020, the House and Senate Conference funded the program at \$53 million. For FY2021, Congressional funding was \$57.5 million.

Another focus for housing counseling advocates will be integrating counseling into FHA mortgages. FHA-insured mortgages are the most common mortgage for people of color and low- and moderate-income buyers. As of the writing of this publication, there is legislation to incentivize FHA borrowers to participate in housing counseling programs by providing discounts on the required mortgage insurance. That legislation, the “Housing Financial Literacy Act of 2019,” has passed the House and may be introduced in the Senate.

Housing counseling advocates will remain involved in a wide range of housing policy advocacy, including the expansion of language capacity in the lending and servicing industries for people with limited English proficiency, expanding homeownership opportunities and bridging the wealth gap for people of color, eviction prevention, and integrating housing

counseling into the mortgage process. If Congress revisits housing finance reform of Fannie Mae, and Freddie Mac, there will be opportunities to include housing counseling in that conversation.

Finally, disaster recovery legislation should include housing counseling services. The bipartisan “Reforming Disaster Recovery Act” would permanently authorize Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery funding and make it year-round rather than requiring separate authorizations for each disaster, speeding up the availability of recovery funding and housing counseling services.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

When talking with legislators, keep advocacy as locally focused as possible.

- Discuss the local communities served by advocates, why people from those communities are seeking housing counseling services, and the outcomes advocates are helping them to achieve.
- Describe some of the local trends that advocates are seeing (e.g., are more first-time homebuyers seeking out pre-purchase counseling or are large numbers of folks still seeking delinquency and default counseling?).
- Focus on the real-life impact that HUD-approved counseling agencies have on people in the state/district. Include counseling clients in meetings. Meeting a first-time homebuyer or a former client of a housing counseling agency can have a lasting impact on a legislator or his or her staff. Offer to help constituents who call the district office with housing issues, which is the best way to develop a lasting bond with the legislator.

Do not assume that every congressional office is aware of the HUD-approved counseling agencies in their district or state. Provide a list of HUD-approved counseling agencies that serve relevant communities (search for HUD-approved counseling agencies by state using the HUD search tool at <https://apps.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/hcc/hcs.cfm> or by zip code using the CFPB search tool at <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/>



[find-a-housing-counselor/](#)). When providing a list of local agencies to staff, explain its value for their constituents who call the legislative office about housing issues.

Finally, data is always a powerful tool to showcase impact. Every HUD-approved counseling agency provides data to HUD (9902 data), including client income level, race and ethnicity information, and types of counseling sought. In addition to HUD 9902 data, local counseling agencies can provide their local data to present at advocate meetings. The national 9902 data is available [here](#) (fourth quarter data is the full data for the year).

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

The profile and perception of housing counseling has improved in recent years. With the creation of the OHC, past concerns about HUD's administration of the program seem to have dissipated and housing counseling advocates are generally well-received by both Democratic and Republican offices. That said, advocates should adjust their messaging appropriately for the office with which they are meeting.

- **Have a concrete ask.** If talking with a member of the Appropriations Committee, “Please support \$100 million for HUD Housing Counseling in the upcoming budget.” If talking with a legislator, “Please tell your Appropriations Committee leadership that you support \$100 million for HUD Housing Counseling in the upcoming budget.”
- **Focus on local issues.** Focus on the local impact counseling has in the legislator's state or district, including using localized data as often as possible, if available (please see “Tips for Local Success,” above).
- **Use current data and research.** Make sure any data presented demonstrates the effectiveness and value of counseling. Advocates should be prepared to point to one or two studies and talk to their representatives about the value of housing counseling services, not just for consumers but for all participants in the housing process (i.e., benefits to lenders, investors, servicers,

etc.). OHC has a comprehensive review of research into the effectiveness of housing counseling at <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/Housing-Counseling-Works.pdf>.

- **Connect program effectiveness to funding.** Highlight the connection between funding levels and the ability to start, continue, and/or expand operations to serve their communities (please see “Funding,” above).
- **Be a resource.** Turnover is very common on the Hill, so many legislators and their staff may hold a meeting with very little knowledge or understanding of housing counseling. In these instances, it's critical that advocates position themselves as a resource for the office. Highlight how an agency can be of assistance to their office, either for constituent services or if they need housing data for internal or external policy documents.
- **Build a champion.** The overall goal when meeting with legislators is to win them over as champions for housing counseling who will be willing to tell leadership that fully funding counseling is a top priority. Try to approach meetings with legislators as an opportunity to give that legislator a reason to want to be a champion for housing counseling.
- **Stay on message.** Not all lawmakers understand or support housing counseling assistance. Explain what a typical counseling session looks like. Be specific but clear. Focus on the holistic approach counseling takes to improve clients' overall financial well-being and sustainability. Emphasize stories and data from the local district.
- **Tell the National Housing Resource Center (NHRC) about a housing counseling champion.** Contact Bruce Dorpalen at NHRC about a strong housing counseling supporter at [bdorpalen@hsgcenter.org](mailto:bdorpalen@hsgcenter.org). NHRC will follow up your good work.

## TALKING TO APPROPRIATORS

When talking to appropriators or their staffs, advocates are likely to hear either that they are

unable to fully fund all of the programs because spending levels are too low or that they would love to fully fund HCA but do not have much say because they are in the minority. There are several responses to this, including:

- Housing counseling is a much cheaper investment than unnecessary foreclosures and evictions.
- Housing counseling is a small program with a high return on investment.
- Demand for pre-purchase counseling is soaring. It is critical that potential homebuyers are given the tools they need to become successful homeowners.
- Although foreclosures are down from their peak, default and delinquency continue to be a major share of our work (if that is true for the agency).

## RESOURCES FOR HOUSING COUNSELING

HUD's OHC website has relevant resources for housing counselors, advocates, homeowners, and tenants: <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/housing-counseling/>.

Find housing counseling in a specific area: <https://apps.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/hcc/hcs.cfm> (to search by state) or <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/find-a-housing-counselor/> (to search by ZIP code).

HUD 9902 quarterly reports (these are the quarterly reports each HUD-approved counseling agency is required to submit and include data on client demographics and types of counseling provided): <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/housing-counseling/9902-quarterly-reports/>.

OHC has an excellent summary of research into the effectiveness of housing counseling: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/Housing-Counseling-Works.pdf>.

A particularly helpful study on pre-purchase counseling: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/cityscpe/vol18num2/ch4.pdf>.

A particularly helpful study on foreclosure prevention counseling: [http://www.neighborworks.org/Documents/HomeandFinance\\_Docs/Foreclosure\\_Docs/ForeclosureCounseling\(NFMC\)\\_Docs/2014\\_NFMC\\_UrbanInstituteReport.aspx](http://www.neighborworks.org/Documents/HomeandFinance_Docs/Foreclosure_Docs/ForeclosureCounseling(NFMC)_Docs/2014_NFMC_UrbanInstituteReport.aspx).

NHRC is an advocacy organization for the nonprofit housing counseling community and has resources for counselors and advocates: [www.hsgcenter.org](http://www.hsgcenter.org).

# Fair Housing Programs

---

By Jorge Andres Soto, Associate Vice President of Advocacy & Government Affairs, National Fair Housing Alliance

**Administering Agency: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO)**

**Year Started:** The Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) was created in the federal “Fair Housing Act” in 1968. The Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) was created in the “Housing and Community Development Act of 1987.”

**Number of Persons/Households Served:** According to the [2021 Fair Housing Trend's Report](#), in 2020 organizations primarily funded by FHIP investigated 21,089 complaints of housing discrimination, and local or state civil and human rights government agencies that participate in FHAP processed 5,883 complaints.

**Population Targeted:** Protected classes under the Fair Housing Act are based on race, national origin, color, religion, sex, familial status, and disability.

**Funding:** FHAP, \$46.3 million in FY21 regular appropriations and \$20 million in the American Rescue Plan; FHAP, \$24.4 million in FY21 regular appropriations.

**See Also:** For related information, refer to the *Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing* sections of this guide.

The federal Fair Housing Act protects the public from discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, color, religion, sex, familial status, and disability in all housing transactions, public and private. HUD has also applied the Supreme Court's decision in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, 140 S. Ct. 1731, 590 U.S. (2020) to the Fair Housing Act's prohibition on sex discrimination to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in HUD-assisted housing and housing insured by the Federal Housing Administration.

## ADMINISTRATION

HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) is responsible for administering FHIP, FHAP, and HUD's investigation of fair housing and fair lending complaints submitted through its administrative complaint process. The Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) may also investigate complaints and is responsible for litigating on behalf of the federal government in cases of fair housing and fair lending violations. DOJ also retains exclusive fair housing authority over complaints the government receives involving zoning, land use, and pattern and practice cases.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

The federal Fair Housing Act was passed in 1968 and amended in 1974 to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex. In 1988, the Fair Housing Act was amended to prohibit discrimination based on familial status and disability status, as well as to provide additional enforcement powers to HUD to better implement the goals and purpose of the act. FHIP and FHAP were created as a means of carrying out the objectives of the act.

## PROGRAM SUMMARIES

There are two federal programs that support enforcement of the Fair Housing Act. FHIP is a competitive grant program that funds private fair housing organizations serving local housing markets across the nation. FHAP reimburses state and local government agencies that enforce a local fair housing law that is substantively equivalent to the Fair Housing Act.

### Fair Housing Initiatives Program

FHIP supports private nonprofit fair housing organizations in their efforts to provide education and outreach to the public and housing providers and to enforce the Fair Housing Act by investigating allegations of rental, real-estate sales, homeowner insurance, and

lending discrimination in their local housing markets. FHIP is a competitive grant program administered by FHEO. FHIP supports three primary activities: The Private Enforcement Initiative enables qualified private nonprofit fair housing enforcement organizations to conduct complaint intake, testing, investigations, and other enforcement activities. The Education and Outreach Initiative funds organizations to educate the public about fair housing rights and responsibilities and local housing providers about how to comply with the law. The Fair Housing Organizations Initiative builds the capacity and effectiveness of fair housing organizations and funds the creation of new organizations. According to the [2021 Fair Housing Trend's Report](#), in 2020, FHIP-funded organizations investigated over 21,089 complaints of housing discrimination across the country, more than twice that of all state and federal agencies combined and over three times as many as local and state government agencies participating in HUD's FHAP program combined during the same period.

### **Fair Housing Assistance Program**

State and local government agencies certified by HUD to enforce state or local fair housing laws that are substantially equivalent to the Fair Housing Act receive FHAP funds. HUD funds FHAP agencies by reimbursing them based on the number of cases they successfully process. In addition, FHAP funds help cover administrative expenses and training. New FHAP organizations receive three years of capacity building funding before moving to the reimbursement phase. According to the [2021 Fair Housing Trend's Report](#), in 2020, FHAP entities investigated 5,953 complaints of housing discrimination.

## **FUNDING**

The FY21 enacted budget is \$46.3 million for FHIP and \$24.4 million for FHAP. At least \$55 million, including \$5 million for a systemic testing program, must be provided for the FHIP program going forward. FHAP must be funded at \$35.2 million.

An increased FHIP appropriation would provide

fair housing groups with the capacity to address larger systemic issues, such as discriminatory sales practices, insurance policies, and bringing about investigations into increasingly harmful blanket policies that have a widespread impact on available housing choice in entire markets. FHIP must also be increased to allow for private nonprofit fair housing organizations to address discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity to fully implement the *Bostock decision*, as well as to continue to address discrimination in mortgage lending, home appraisals, and the increasing use of artificial intelligence and machine learning which may discriminate against protected classes. Additionally, the [2021 Fair Housing Trend's Report](#) found that in 2020 during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, complaints of harassment against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders as well as tenants who were unable to pay rent due to job loss or underemployment who were disproportionately women, contributed to the highest number of harassment-based complaints ever reported since the National Fair Housing Alliance began collecting data for its Fair Housing Trends Report.

## **FORECAST FOR 2022**

Advocates should call on Congress to increase funding for FHIP and FHAP and to maintain recently imposed accountability measures to ensure that HUD and the Office of Management and Budget release FHIP funding opportunities in a timely manner. Advocates must also advocate for increased funding for salaries and expenses to better staff HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, which is responsible for processing complaints submitted through HUD's administrative complaint portal by the public and FHIP grantees, and for managing FHIP and FHAP. Additionally, Congress has included \$700 million for FHIP and \$100 million for FHAP in the "[Build Back Better Act](#)." These funds are critical to ensuring that locally based nonprofit fair housing enforcement organizations and city and state civil and human rights agencies have the necessary resources to investigate and address various emerging issues, including discrimination

resulting from the use of Artificial Intelligence or machine learning in housing transactions and marketing; sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination; appraisal discrimination; and source of income discrimination. Build Back Better funds will also make critical changes to grant award amounts to ensure fair housing organizations and agencies can retain critical staff with specialized fair housing investigation expertise as housing discrimination becomes more difficult and technical to detect.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

Individuals and advocates who suspect or observe a fair housing violation, including a failure to affirmatively further fair housing, should contact a local fair housing organization, the National Fair Housing Alliance, or submit a request for assistance using the “Report Housing Discrimination” feature at [www.nationalfairhousing.org](http://www.nationalfairhousing.org).

Fair housing complaints can be submitted to local fair housing organizations, state or local government agencies, or HUD.

Individuals who experience hate crimes in a dwelling should call the local authorities, but they should also reach out to their local fair housing organization or the National Fair Housing Alliance. The Fair Housing Act has a criminal section that protects victims of certain hate crimes at their place of dwelling.

Advocates working with distressed homeowners who believe they may have been victims of lending discrimination should encourage borrowers to submit mortgage complaints to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). Individuals and advocates may submit mortgage complaints by visiting [www.consumerfinance.gov](http://www.consumerfinance.gov) or by calling 855-411-CFPB (2372). Non-English speakers can receive information and submit mortgage complaints in 200 languages by calling the CFPB.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates should speak to legislators with the message that private fair housing organizations investigate nearly three times as many fair housing complaints as all local and federal government agencies combined. This important service is historically underfunded and as a result, fair housing and fair lending violations remain under-reported and unaddressed. Advocates should also urge legislators to increase funding for FHAP to better support the work of local and state civil and human rights agencies that HUD relies on to process administrative complaints. Funding for FHAP should be at least \$55 million, including \$5 million for a systemic testing program, and funding for FHAP should be \$35.2 million going forward. Advocates should also urge Congress to pass the “Build Back Better Act.”

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Fair Housing Alliance, 202-898-1661, 800-910-7315, [www.nationalfairhousing.org](http://www.nationalfairhousing.org).

# Disparate Impact

---

By Jamie L. Crook, ACLU Foundation of Northern California

**D**isparate impact is best understood as a method for proving housing discrimination without having to show that the discrimination was intentional. Under the disparate impact theory, most courts, as well as HUD, use a “burden shifting” test (24 C.F.R. § 100.500, hereinafter “Disparate Impact Rule”).

First, the plaintiff must show that the challenged conduct, policy, or practice disproportionately harms members of a group that is protected by the “Fair Housing Act (FHA)” For example, a plaintiff could show that a municipal zoning ordinance that excludes mobile homes disproportionately harms Latinxs because in that jurisdiction, Latinxs are overrepresented among mobile home occupants. Second, the defendant may seek to prove that the challenged practice is justified by a legitimate, non-discriminatory purpose. In our hypothetical, the city might try to prove that it passed the ordinance to ensure a minimum level of habitability for all housing in the jurisdiction. At the final stage of the analysis, the plaintiff may prove that despite any legitimate, non-discriminatory purposes, the jurisdiction could achieve that goal in a way that has a less discriminatory impact on Latinxs. For example, the plaintiff might show that the city could achieve its habitability goals by enacting and enforcing specific codes for the maintenance of mobile home parks, rather than banning such housing altogether.

The burden-shifting proof framework ensures that courts apply the disparate impact standard in a pragmatic, fact-specific way, thereby reconciling two goals: (1) ferreting out conduct that unjustifiably discriminates by harming a protected class, and (2) allowing housing providers, lenders, local governments, and other potential defendants to pursue legitimate business and governmental goals. In fact, a quantitative survey of disparate impact cases

over the past four decades found that disparate impact plaintiffs only rarely prevail (see Stacy E. Seicshnaydre’s *Is Disparate Impact Having Any Impact? An Appellate Analysis of Forty Years of Disparate Impact Claims Under the Fair Housing Act*, 63 Am. Univ. L. Rev. 357 (2013), indicating that the availability of disparate impact liability is not an obstacle to legitimate planning or business objectives.

In *Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs v. Inclusive Communities Project* (135 S. Ct. 2507 (2015), hereinafter “ICP”), a civil rights organization claimed that the State of Texas’s methodology for allocating Low-Income Housing Tax Credits lead to increased racial segregation in Dallas. Dozens of friend-of-the-court briefs submitted to the Court on the plaintiff’s side argued that preserving the disparate impact standard was consistent with the statutory text and congressional intent and was critical to fulfill and further the broad mandate of the federal Fair Housing Act. On the state’s side, dozens of such briefs argued in contrast that a defendant should not be held liable without evidence of discriminatory intent, because allowing liability to turn on discriminatory effect alone would chill reasonable underwriting practices, local zoning decisions, city planning efforts, etc.

The majority opinion, by Justice Kennedy, addressed both themes. First, the Court recognized that disparate impact is a necessary tool for combatting ongoing, systemic discrimination of the type that motivated passage of the Fair Housing Act in the first place, such as exclusionary zoning. The Court found that “[m]uch progress remains to be made in our Nation’s continuing struggle against racial isolation” and that the Fair Housing Act has an important “continuing role in moving the Nation toward a more integrated society” by helping to combat, among other things, “discriminatory ordinances barring the construction of certain types of housing units” (*id.* at 2525-26). Thus, recognizing disparate impact liability enables “plaintiffs

to counteract unconscious prejudices and disguised animus that escape easy classification as disparate treatment,” and “prevent segregated housing patterns that might otherwise result from covert and illicit stereotyping” (*id.* at 2523).

Second, the Court emphasized that the disparate impact standard has been and remains properly limited “to give housing authorities and private developers leeway to state and explain the valid interest served by their policies... [H]ousing authorities and private developers [must] be allowed to maintain a policy if they can prove it is necessary to achieve a valid interest... The FHA does not decree a particular vision of urban development; and it does not put housing authorities and private developers in a double bind of liability, subject to suit whether they choose to rejuvenate a city core or to promote new low-income housing in suburban communities” (*id.* at 2522-23).

The *ICP* decision thus continues a long tradition of allowing disparate impact liability under the Fair Housing Act, while ensuring that the theory does not serve as a trap for housing providers or governments that are pursuing legitimate, housing-related objectives, so long as those legitimate objectives could not be achieved with less harmful impact on protected classes (a similar balancing is achieved in HUD’s Disparate Impact Rule).

As discussed in *ICP*, courts have historically applied disparate impact liability under the Fair Housing Act in “heartland” cases targeting “zoning laws and other housing restrictions that function unfairly to exclude minorities from certain neighborhoods without any sufficient justification” (*ICP*, 135 S. Ct. at 2522 citing *Huntington Branch NAACP v. Town of Huntington*, 844 F.2d 926 2d Cir. 1988) (holding that town’s zoning restrictions against multifamily housing had an unlawful adverse racial impact and perpetuated segregation); *United States v. City of Black Jack*, 508 F.2d 1179 (8th Cir. 1974); *Greater New Orleans Fair Hous. Action Ctr. v. Saint Bernard Parish*, 641 F. Supp. 2d 563 (E.D. La. 2009). But this pragmatic and flexible standard has also been used to challenge myriad other housing-

related practices that have discriminatory effects, such as subsidized housing waitlist preferences (see, e.g., *Langlois v. Abington Hous. Auth.*, 207 F.3d 43, 49 1st Cir. 2000), community redevelopment (see, e.g., *Mount Holly Gardens Citizens in Action Inc. v. Twp. of Mount Holly*, 658 F.3d 375 3d Cir. 2011), redlining and predatory lending (see, e.g., *Compl. for Declaratory and Inj. Relief and Damages, Mayor of Balt. v. Wells Fargo, N.A.*, No. 08-062 D. Md. Jan. 8, 2008) and *Ramirez v. GreenPoint Mortg. Funding Inc.*, 633 F. Supp. 2d 922 (N.D. Cal. 2008), mobile home registration requirements (see *Cent. Ala. Fair Hous. Ctr. v. Magee*, 835 F. Supp. 2d 1165 M.D. Ala. 2011), *vacated as moot* (No. 11-16114, 2013 WL 2372302 11th Cir. May 17, 2013), and condominium association rules restricting the presence of children (see, e.g., *Hous. Opportunities Project for Excellence Inc. v. Key Colony No. 4 Condominium Assoc.*, 510 F. Supp. 2d 1003 S.D. Fla. 2007), to give a few examples. Courts have also applied the disparate impact standard to conduct that, while facially neutral, would have the effect of perpetuating existing patterns of residential segregation.

Courts have long accepted that a diverse range of housing practices can be subject to a disparate impact challenge, and that has continued following *ICP*. One such example is redevelopment or urban renewal efforts. As cities throughout the country experience a massive resettlement of the urban cores (Leigh Gallagher, *The End of the Suburbs*; William H. Frey, *Demographic Reversal: Cities Thrive, Suburbs Sputter*), they are rapidly seeking to redevelop formerly blighted areas. Because long-time residents of these areas are disproportionately Black and Latinx, redevelopment can have a disparate impact if it causes displacement. In a case that settled before *ICP*, a group of African American and Latinx residents of a blighted neighborhood in Mount Holly, NJ, challenged a redevelopment plan using a disparate impact theory. The plaintiffs argued that the proposed redevelopment would displace them; indeed, their statistical evidence showed that that the negative impact would overwhelmingly affect African Americans and Latinxs, who were also significantly less likely to be able to

afford replacement housing in the community (*Id.* at 382-83). The plaintiffs got a favorable decision from the Court of Appeals, and the case subsequently settled in a fashion that permitted most of the families to move into newly constructed units in the same neighborhood.

Now that the *ICP* decision has resolved that plaintiffs can challenge this type of conduct using disparate impact, one can expect similar cases to be brought in areas facing rapid gentrification. Such cases may be brought against private developers as well as governmental entities. In the recently filed case *Crossroads Residents Organized for Stable and Secure Residences et al. v. MSP Crossroads Apartments LLC et al.*, No. 0:16-cv-00233 (D. Minn.), the plaintiffs, mostly low-income tenants, challenge a private housing provider's plan to "reposition the complex in the market in order to appeal to and house a different [young professional] tenant demographic population." See Compl. (Doc. 1), 1; *id.* pgs 49-59, 68-71 (disparate impact allegations). The District Court held that the plaintiffs adequately alleged both disparate treatment and disparate impact under the FHA and allowed those claims to proceed. *Crossroads Residents Organized for Stable and Secure Residences (CROSSROADS) v. MSP Crossroads Apartments LLC*, 2016 WL 3661146 (D. Minn. July 5, 2016). The case subsequently settled as a certified class action that will amend the screening criteria and fund the acquisition and preservation of affordable rental properties. *Soderstrom v. MSP Crossroads Apartments LLC*, Civ. No. 16-233, 2018 WL 692912 (D. Minn. Feb. 2, 2018).

An example along similar lines is addressed in a 2016 Second Circuit affordable housing case, *MHANY Management, Inc. v. County of Nassau* (819 F.3d 581 2d Cir. 2016). Citing the Supreme Court's recognition in *ICP* of the importance of such "heartland" zoning cases, the Second Circuit held that the plaintiffs met their burden of establishing that a rezoning decision by the City of Garden City, NY, prevented the development of affordable housing and therefore disproportionately harmed African Americans and Latinxs and perpetuated residential

segregation (*Id.* at 619-20). On remand from the Second Circuit, the District Court held that the plaintiffs' evidence at trial met their burden to show that Garden City could achieve its professed zoning goals through less discriminatory alternative means (*MHANY Mgmt., Inc. v. Cty. of Nassau*, No. 05CV2301ADSARL, 2017 WL 4174787, at \*1 E.D.N.Y. Sept. 19, 2017). The case settled in 2019 with terms that will allow for the creation of new affordable housing in Nassau County.

Similarly, in *Avenue 6E Investments, LLC v. City of Yuma*, the Ninth Circuit emphasized the importance of "policy to provide fair housing nationwide" in holding that the denial of an affordable housing provider's zoning request in order "to permit the construction of housing that is more affordable" may constitute an unlawful disparate impact, and rejected an argument that the availability of affordable housing in the same region necessarily precludes a plaintiff from showing disparate impact (818 F.3d 493, 509-13 9th Cir. 2016). On remand, the District Court denied the city's motion for summary judgment, holding that the record showed that the rezoning denial had a discriminatory effect on Latinxs and that whether the city could establish a valid justification and the availability of less discriminatory alternatives were material issues of fact for trial (217 F. Supp. 3d 1040 D. Ariz. 2017).

Plaintiffs have also used a disparate impact theory to challenge housing restrictions against people with criminal records, another area where bias may well be at play but can be difficult to prove. In *Sams v. Ga West Gate, LLC*, for example, current and former tenants and a fair housing organization challenged an apartment complex's "99-year criminal history rule," which "barred from residency any individual who had certain felony or misdemeanor convictions within the past 99 years" (*Sams v. Ga W. Gate, LLC*, No. CV415-282, 2017 WL 436281, at \*1 S.D. Ga. Jan. 30, 2017). The District Court held that the plaintiffs had adequately pleaded a disparate impact claim by showing that nationwide, African Americans were more likely than whites to have



criminal convictions and were over-represented in the prison population, and that the 99-year criminal history rule therefore adversely impacted African Americans (*Id.* at \*5). District courts across the country have recognized the viability of similar disparate impact challenges to criminal-record bans by housing providers. See *Fortune Soc’y v. Sandcastle Towers Hous. Dev. Corp.*, 388 F. Supp. 3d 145 (E.D.N.Y. 2019); *Conn. Fair Hours. Ctr. v. Corelogic Rental Prop. Solutions, LLC*, 369 F. Supp. 3d 362 (D. Conn. 2019); *Jackson v. Tryon Park Apartments*, No. 6:18-cv-06238 EAW, 2019 WL 331635 (W.D.N.Y. Jan. 25, 2019); *Alexander v. Edgewood Mgmt. Corp.*, No. 15-01140 (RCL), 2016 WL 5957673, at \*2-\*3 (D.D.C. July 25, 2016). It is critical in bringing such challenges to identify a policy of exclusion based on an applicant’s criminal history (for example, an automatic ban against anyone with a felony conviction) and relevant statistical racial disparities comparing the group excluded by the policy and the relevant housing market.

Drawing on this breadth of successful disparate impact challenges in new areas, advocates should explore more disparate impact challenges to “disorderly conduct” or “chronic nuisance” ordinances, which subject landlords to fines and other penalties based on (among other things), police activity at their properties. Because these ordinances are drafted broadly, they have often been applied to include police responses to domestic violence incidents. Such ordinances will often force landlords to take steps to evict affected tenants following a triggering number of police responses at the property, under threat of hefty fines or other penalties (see Matthew Desmond & Nicol Valdez, *Unpolicing the Urban Poor: Consequences of Third-Party Policing for Inner-City Women* and Emily Werth, *The Cost of Being “Crime Free”: Legal and Practical Consequences of Crime Free Rental Housing and Nuisance Property Ordinances*). These laws can have a clear disparate impact on women, who make up the very large majority of domestic violence victims.

One plaintiff who had experienced extreme and life-threatening domestic violence and had been threatened with eviction after the police were

called to her apartment three times sued the Borough of Norristown, PA, which had applied its disorderly conduct ordinance to compel her landlord to evict her (*Briggs v. Borough of Norristown*, Compl. Doc. 1, No. 2:13-cv-2191 E.D. Pa. 2013). The plaintiff argued, among other things, that the Norristown ordinance violated the Fair Housing Act because it adversely affected and penalized victims of domestic violence, who are disproportionately women.

Although the Norristown case ultimately settled, it provides an important model that should be studied and applied by fair housing practitioners. Hundreds of jurisdictions across the country have similar nuisance laws, some of which may have a chilling effect by discouraging victims from calling the police in an event of domestic violence for fear of losing housing (see *Briggs*, Compl. pgs 55–60, 68–75, 87–102; *Markham v. City of Surprise, AZ*, Compl. Doc. 1, No. 2:15-cv-01696 D. Ariz. 2015; and Annamarya Scaccia’s *How Domestic Violence Survivors Get Evicted from their Homes After Calling the Police*). To the extent that such laws lead to the evictions of tenants affected by domestic violence, they will also create a risk of increased homelessness for domestic violence victims and their children (nationwide, one in five homeless women cites domestic violence as the primary cause of her homelessness, demonstrating a strong correlation between domestic violence and homelessness). The availability of the disparate impact standard will allow plaintiffs to bring successful challenges if they can present evidence of a discriminatory effect on women or families with children, without having to also present frequently difficult or impossible-to-obtain evidence of bias.

Courts have also allowed disparate impact challenges to policies characterized by the delegation of discretion, relying on Title VII case law. For example, in *City of Oakland v. Wells Fargo Bank (City of Oakland v. Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.)*, No. 15-CV-04321-EMC, 2018 WL 3008538, at \*13 N.D. Cal. June 15, 2018 citing Title VII cases including *Watson v. Fort Worth Bank & Trust*, 487 U.S. 977 1988; *Rose v. Wells Fargo Co.*, 902 F.2d 1417 9th Cir. 1990; *Ellis v. Costco Wholesale*

*Corp.*, 285 F.R.D. 492 N.D. Cal. 2012), the Court held that the plaintiffs adequately identified a policy with a discriminatory effect—a lender’s granting of discretion to loan officers combined with incentives that encouraged them to sell more expensive and riskier loans than for which borrowers were qualified. The Court held that the complaint adequately alleged that the granting of such discretion and incentives was a specific policy, and that there was a “sufficient causal link between the specific policies and practices and the disparate impact on minority borrowers for pleading purposes.” The Court reached a similar conclusion in *National Fair Housing Alliance v. Federal National Mortgage Association*, holding that by identifying a policy of “delegate[ing] discretion or fail[ing] to supervise and differential maintenance based on the properties’ age and value,” the plaintiffs adequately alleged a policy that was the “robust cause” of disproportionate harm to communities of color (294 F. Supp. 3d 940, 948 N.D. Cal. 2018, hereinafter “*NFHA v. Fannie Mae*”).

Also consistent with HUD’s Disparate Impact Rule, courts have required that a defendant meet a burden of *proof*, not production, to justify a policy’s discriminatory effect. The Ninth Circuit recently affirmed summary judgment for fair housing plaintiffs, including an award of punitive damages, in a disparate impact challenge to an occupancy limitation because the defendant failed to produce evidence sufficient to justify the policy (*Fair Hous. Ctr. of Washington v. Breier-Scheetz, LLC*, 743 F. App’x 116 Nov. 19, 2018). The Court held that punitive damages were justified because the defendant did not change its policy even after being notified by the city’s Office of Civil Rights that the occupancy limit was a fair housing violation).

Several Circuit Courts’ adoption of HUD’s Disparate Impact Rule, the *ICP* decision, and post-*ICP* caselaw confirm that going forward, disparate impact will remain an important tool for combatting practices that may not be motivated by bias, but which nonetheless disproportionately harm protected groups. At the same time, the Court’s reference in *ICP* to a “robust causality requirement” has engendered

debate in subsequent disparate impact litigation, with defendants frequently arguing that plaintiffs face a new or heightened burden to show causation. Justice Kennedy wrote that requiring “robust causality” was “important in ensuring that defendants do not resort to the use of racial quotas.” Several courts have rejected this interpretation of *ICP*, applying longstanding disparate impact precedent in finding a sufficient causal link between the challenged practice and the disproportionate harm to a protected class.

The Fourth Circuit analyzed *ICP*’s “robust causality requirement” in detail in *de Reyes v. Waples Mobile Home Park Limited Partnership* (903 F.3d 415 4th Cir. 2018, *cert. denied*, 139 U.S. 2026 2019), in which non-U.S. citizen mobile home park residents claimed that a mobile home park’s policy of requiring that adult occupants provide documentation showing legal immigration status in order to renew their leases had an unlawful disparate impact on Latinxs. After holding that the plaintiffs demonstrated the policy’s disproportionate effect on Latinxs (based on statistical data showing that over 35% of the state’s Latinx population was undocumented, compared to less than 4% of the overall population), the Fourth Circuit held that the plaintiffs could demonstrate robust causality by: (1) showing a statistical disparity (e.g., the group of people who cannot demonstrate legal immigration status is disproportionately Latinx); (2) identifying the specific housing practice being challenged (e.g., a requirement to provide documentation of legal immigration status in order to renew a lease); and (3) demonstrating that the policy causes the statistical disparity (e.g., the requirement to demonstrate legal immigration status disproportionately excludes Latinx renters compared to non-Latinx renters) (*Id.* at 428-29). The Court emphatically rejected the defendant’s argument that unauthorized immigration status would preclude the plaintiffs from establishing a prima facie case of disparate impact: “That view ‘threatens to eviscerate disparate impact claims altogether’ by ‘require[ing] an *intent* to disparately impact a protected class in order to show robust causality . . . .’” *Id.* at 430.

A similar conception of “robust causality” drove the decision in *NFHA v. Fannie Mae*, in which the District Court found a sufficient causal connection between a habitational insurance policy that excluded landlords who rent to tenants who use Housing Choice Vouchers to pay their rent, and harm to African American and women-headed households (both protected classes under the Fair Housing Act), who were more likely to be voucher recipients in the relevant geographical housing market.

Yet other courts have been receptive to defense arguments that *ICP* changed or heightened the standard to prevail on a disparate impact claim under the Fair Housing Act, including in a recent decision from the Fifth Circuit. Despite the fact that the Supreme Court in *ICP* acknowledged HUD’s Disparate Impact Rule without rejecting or discrediting it, the Fifth Circuit held in *Inclusive Communities Project, Inc. v. Lincoln Property Co.*, 920 F.3d 890 (5th Cir. 2019), that *ICP* requires a “more demanding test” than HUD’s Disparate Impact Rule. *Id.* at 902. It concluded that the “robust causality” language in *ICP* meant that the plaintiff in *Lincoln Property* needed to show that the defendant’s policy of excluding Housing Choice Voucher recipients existing disparity in the racial composition of voucher-holding households—the argument the Fourth Circuit and D.C. District Court rejected.

In a deeply concerning effort that appears intended to align with industry goals, HUD has signaled its own willingness to backpedal from its 2013 Disparate Impact Rule. In August 2019, the agency issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) that proposes a new five-pronged standard for disparate impact claims, in a clear departure from the existing Disparate Impact Rule and decades of well-settled caselaw (Implementation of the Fair Housing Act’s Disparate Impact Standard, 84 Fed. Reg. 42,855 Aug. 19, 2019). The new proposed standard would require that plaintiffs show how a challenged policy or practice actually results in a disparity, demonstrate a harmful impact on members of a protected class, and show not only that a statistical disparity exists but that it

is directly caused by a specific policy or practice and not just attributable to chance. By requiring plaintiffs to plead, as an element of their claims, that a challenged policy or practice is “arbitrary, artificial, and unnecessary” to achieve a valid interest or legitimate objective, the Proposed Rule would force plaintiffs to anticipate at the pleading stage which justifications a defendant might invoke and preemptively debunk them.

The NPRM furthermore makes profit a legitimate justification and proposes a distinct framework for disparate impact challenges based on algorithmic modeling that would all but ensure that such challenges fail. Among other things, the proposed requirement to plead a “robust causal connection” between the challenged policy or practice and the discriminatory effect would be incredibly difficult in many cases, and especially in the context of algorithmic modeling, which is typically proprietary and incorporates a host of complex factors that are not transparent to the public. Moreover, the NPRM proposes a framework in which a business practice that relies on statistics or algorithms and has some predictive value will almost always be immune from liability, because such predictive algorithms, by nature and design, serve a valid interest or legitimate objective. The amendment would effectively shield many credit scoring, pricing, tenant screening, and underwriting models from liability under the FHA, even when it is clear that they result in the discriminatory denial of housing or credit.

As of the time of publication, the agency is reviewing comments on its NPRM. If and when HUD issues a final rule amending the current Disparate Impact Rule, it will likely face a number of legal challenges. Until HUD issues a final rule and such rule goes into effect, advocates should continue to plead and prove disparate impact claims consistent with the existing Disparate Impact Rule and any guidance in their Circuits.

# Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH)

---

By Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, NLIHC

**Administering Agency:** HUD’s Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO)

**Year Started:** 1968

**Population Targeted:** The Fair Housing Act “protected classes”—race, color, sex, national origin, disability, familial status (in other words, households with children), and religion

**See Also:** *Consolidated Planning Process*, and *Public Housing Agency Plan* sections of this guide

## AFFIRMATIVELY FURTHERING FAIR HOUSING

Title VIII of the “Civil Rights Act of 1968” (the “Fair Housing Act”) requires jurisdictions receiving federal funds for housing and urban development activities to affirmatively further fair housing. The Fair Housing Act not only makes it unlawful for jurisdictions to discriminate; the law also requires jurisdictions to take actions that can undo historic patterns of segregation and other types of discrimination, as well as to take actions to promote fair housing choice and to foster inclusive communities. The “protected classes” of the Fair Housing Act are determined by race, color, national origin, sex, disability, familial status, and religion.

This article describes the Interim Final Rule (IFR) “[Restoring Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Definitions and Certifications](#)” published in the *Federal Register* on June 10, 2021 shortly after the Biden Administration took office. The IFR, which went into effect on July 31, 2021, requires “program participants” (local and state governments as well as public housing agencies, PHAs) to submit “certifications” (pledges) that they will affirmatively further fair housing (AFFH) in connection with their Consolidated Plans (ConPlans), annual action plans to their ConPlans, and annual PHA Plans. The IFR does not require a specific planning process such as the one in the

2015 AFFH Rule; instead it creates a voluntary fair housing planning process.

HUD intends to undertake separate rulemaking to improve upon the [July 16, 2015 Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule](#), which was suspended by the Trump Administration in 2018 and then, on August 7, 2020, the Trump Administration abruptly and without public review and comment, published the “[Preserving Neighborhood and Community Choice](#).” The IFR rescinded that rule. Therefore, this article describes the 2015 AFFH rule and the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) process introduced by the 2015 AFFH rule because certain features of it might be restored.

## HISTORY

Although affirmatively furthering fair housing has been law since the “Fair Housing Act of 1968,” meaningful regulations to provide jurisdictions and PHAs with guidance on how to comply had not existed. The 1974 law creating CDBG required jurisdictions to certify that they would affirmatively further fair housing. Eventually, that certification was defined in CDBG regulations (and later in ConPlan regulations) to mean that the executive of a jurisdiction “certified” (pledged) that the jurisdiction had an Analysis of Impediments (AI) to fair housing choice, that the jurisdiction would take appropriate actions to overcome the effects of the impediments, and that the jurisdiction would keep records of its actions. In addition, the 1990 statute creating the Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy or CHAS (the statutory basis of the ConPlan) and the HOME Investment Partnerships Program statute, and the 1998 statute creating the PHA Plan for public housing agencies, each require jurisdictions and PHAs to certify in writing that they are affirmatively furthering fair housing (AFFH) in accord with the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

On July 16, 2015, HUD published the long-awaited final rule implementing the Fair Housing Act of 1968 obligation for HUD to administer its programs in a way that affirmatively furthers fair housing. HUD began planning for an AFFH rule in 2009 by meeting with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, mindful of vehement opposition that erupted in 1998, which ultimately doomed HUD's effort to publish a rule then. On July 19, 2013, HUD published a proposed AFFH rule. On September 26, 2014, HUD published a proposed Fair Housing Assessment Tool to help guide the AFFH planning process. A final Fair Housing Assessment Tool for larger CDBG entitlement jurisdictions was published on December 31, 2015. An Assessment Tool for PHAs was published on January 13, 2017; however, PHAs did not have to use the Tool until HUD provided the needed data and issued a notice in the *Federal Register* announcing a new submission date. That data was never provided, hence PHAs did not have to use an Assessment Tool, unless they joined with their local city or county, in which case the city or county took the lead and used the local jurisdiction Assessment Tool. A proposed tool for states was published on March 11, 2016, but never finalized.

The 2015 rule and process were to be implemented on a staggered basis. Only an estimated 22 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) entitlement jurisdictions were required to use this new rule and process in 2016. Another estimated 105 CDBG entitlement jurisdictions began in 2017. All other CDBG entitlement jurisdictions, states, and public housing agencies were required to use the pre-existing Analysis of Impediments (AI) process.

HUD under Secretary Carson suspended use of the 2015 AFFH rule for all but 32 jurisdictions on May 23, 2018. Then, on August 16, HUD published an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rule Making (ANPR) inviting public comment regarding amending the AFFH rule. Subsequently, Secretary Carson published a proposed rule on January 14, 2020 that was not an AFFH rule; in fact it would gut fair housing by, among other means, falsely equating increasing

the housing supply with fair housing choice. Finally, without public review and comment, the Trump Administration abruptly issued a final rule, "Preserving Community and Housing Choice" on August 7, 2020 repealing the 2015 regulations implementing the statutory obligation to "affirmatively further fair housing" (AFFH).

In its final form the Preserving Community and Housing Choice "AFFH" rule in essence was reduced to three lines, two of which were in a definition section. One defined "fair housing" to mean "housing that, among other attributes, is affordable, safe, decent, free of unlawful discrimination, and accessible as required under civil rights laws." The other defined "affirmatively further" to mean "to take *any* action rationally related to promoting *any* attribute or attributes of fair housing" (emphasis added). Theoretically, to "affirmatively further fair housing" a city could merely donate one abandoned building in a disinvested neighborhood to a developer to rehabilitate and rent to low-income households, some of whom might use Housing Choice Vouchers to make it affordable.

States, local governments, and public housing agencies receiving HUD funds ("program participants") had to certify that they were affirmatively furthering fair housing. The third line stated that such a certification "is sufficient if the program participant takes *any* action that is rationally related to promoting one or more attributes of fair housing." (emphasis added) Although the final rule was voluminous, the bulk of the document simply removed from all HUD regulations reference to the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) that the 2015 rule required.

On January 26, 2021, the Biden White House issued a Memorandum to the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, which declared that the affirmatively furthering fair housing provision in the Fair Housing Act, "...is not only a mandate to refrain from discrimination but a mandate to take actions that undo historic patterns of segregation and other types of discrimination and that afford access to long-denied opportunities." The Memorandum

ordered the HUD Secretary to examine the effects of the previous Administration's actions against the AFFH Rule and the effect that it has had on HUD's statutory duty ensure compliance with the Fair Housing Act and to affirmatively further fair housing.

HUD published the Interim Final Rule (IFR), "Restoring Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Definitions and Certifications" published in the *Federal Register* on June 10, 2021 and went into effect on July 31. The IFR restores a number of definitions from the 2015 AFFH rule the certifications that were removed by the previous Administration.

### **The Need for the AFFH Rule**

The pre-existing system based on the Analysis of Impediments (AI) to fair housing was not effective, as noted by the Government Accountability Office (GAO). There were numerous limitations of the pre-existing AFFH system, beginning with the absence of regulatory guidance (HUD published a booklet in 1996, the *Fair Housing Planning Guide*, but it did not have the authority of regulation, policy notice, or policy memorandum). Consequently, there was no authoritative source to suggest what might constitute impediments to fair housing choice, nor was there guidance to indicate what actions to overcome impediments might be adequate. Without guidance, many jurisdictions did not take meaningful actions to overcome impediments to fair housing. A classic abuse on the part of some jurisdictions was to assert that they were taking actions to overcome impediments to fair housing by placing fair housing posters around public places during Fair Housing Month. Without guidance and because public participation was not required in the preparation of an AI, many wholly inadequate AIs were drafted. Although other AIs were quite extensive, they seemed destined to sit on a shelf in case HUD asked to see them (AIs were not submitted to HUD for review). In addition, AIs were not directly linked to a jurisdiction's ConPlan or annual action plan, or to a PHA's Five-Year PHA Plan and annual plans. AIs also had no prescribed schedule for renewal; consequently, many were not updated in a timely fashion.

## **SUMMARY OF THE INTERIM FINAL RULE**

The AFFH webpage of HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity website has Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that are a bit clearer than the IFR itself. In addition, the AFFH webpage has links to the three 2015 rule Assessment Tools, AFFH Rule Guidebook, and links to the AFFH data and mapping tool.

### **Definitions**

The Interim Final Rule (IFR) restores certain definitions from the 2015 AFFH rule, in particular the definition of affirmatively furthering fair housing and the definition of meaningful actions.

"Affirmatively furthering fair housing means taking meaningful actions, in addition to combating discrimination, that overcome patterns of segregation and foster inclusive communities free from barriers that restrict access to opportunity based on protected characteristics. Specifically, affirmatively furthering fair housing means taking meaningful actions that, taken together, address significant disparities in housing needs and in access to opportunity, replacing segregated living patterns with truly integrated and balanced living patterns, transforming racially or ethnically concentrated areas of poverty into areas of opportunity, and fostering and maintaining compliance with civil rights and fair housing laws. The duty to affirmatively further fair housing extends to all of a program participant's activities and programs relating to housing and urban development."

"Meaningful actions means significant actions that are designed and can be reasonably expected to achieve a material positive change that affirmatively furthers fair housing by, for example, increasing fair housing choice or decreasing disparities in access to opportunity."

### **Certifications**

The IFR [at 24 CFR §5.152] requires program participants to certify that they will comply with

their obligation to affirmatively further fair housing when required by statutes governing HUD programs, such as the ConPlan statute. Under the 2015 rule, the ConPlan regulations, certification “meant that the program participant will take meaningful actions to further the goals identified in an Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH), and that it will take no action that is materially inconsistent with its obligation to affirmatively further fair housing.” Unfortunately, the IFR removes from the ConPlan and PHA Plan regulations the clause, “...Meaningful actions means significant actions that are designed and can be reasonably expected to achieve a material positive change that affirmatively furthers fair housing by, for example, increasing fair housing choice or decreasing disparities in access to opportunity.”

### **Fair Housing Planning**

The IFR does not require program participants to undertake any specific type of fair housing planning. They do not have to conduct an AFH using an Assessment Tool as required by the 2015 rule, nor do they have to conduct an Analysis of Impediments (AI) to Fair Housing Choice, as was required prior to the 2015 rule. The IFR allows a program participant to engage in a fair housing planning process that supports its certification that it is affirmatively furthering fair housing. Program participants may voluntarily use the 2015 Assessment Tool to create an AFH, or may voluntarily undertake an AI. Program participants are not required to submit their fair housing planning documents to HUD for review, unlike with the 2015 AFFH rule. HUD will only conduct a review when there is reason to believe a program participant’s certification is not supported by their actions. There is no formal mechanism for the public to file complaints regarding a program participant’s certification or compliance with its obligation to affirmatively further fair housing. The voluntary nature of the IFR will likely lead to similar failures by program participants to adequately examine whether their policies and practices are consistent with their obligation to affirmatively further fair housing.

### **No Public Participation Requirement**

The IFR does not have a public participation requirement specific to fair housing planning; instead, program participants merely have to follow the public participation requirements of the ConPlan or PHA Plan regulations – which will not necessarily provide adequate engagement regarding affirmatively furthering fair housing.

### **Loss of Text Regarding a Balanced Approach to AFFH**

IFR omits language from the 2015 AFFH Rule that included important language clarifying that AFFH encompasses more than mobility out of racially and ethnically concentrated areas of poverty and can include place-based strategies such as preservation of affordable housing. This key language illustrated what is commonly known as the “balanced approach” between mobility strategies and place-based investments adopted by the 2015 Rule. The 2015 rule’s explanation of the purpose of the rule read in part:

“...A program participant’s strategies and actions must affirmatively further fair housing and may include various activities, such as developing affordable housing, and removing barriers to the development of such housing, in areas of high opportunity; strategically enhancing access to opportunity, including through: Targeted investment in neighborhood revitalization or stabilization; preservation or rehabilitation of existing affordable housing; promoting greater housing choice within or outside of areas of concentrated poverty and greater access to areas of high opportunity; and improving community assets such as quality schools, employment, and transportation.”

### **SUMMARY OF THE 2015 AFFH RULE**

The opening text of the 2015 final AFFH rule declared that the purpose of the AFFH rule was to provide “program participants” (cities, counties, states, and PHAs) “with an effective planning approach to aid them in taking meaningful actions to overcome historic patterns

of segregation, promote fair housing choice, and foster inclusive communities that are free from discrimination.”

In the preamble, HUD stressed that the new AFFH approach did not mandate specific outcomes; rather, it established basic parameters to help guide public sector housing and community development planning and investment decisions. The rule encouraged a more engaged and data-driven approach to assessing fair housing and planning actions. The rule established a standardized fair housing assessment and planning process to give jurisdictions and PHAs a more effective means to affirmatively further the purposes of the Fair Housing Act.

### **How the 2015 Rule System Differed from the Pre-existing AI System**

The key differences the 2015 AFFH rule established, compared to the pre-existing AI system, included:

1. The Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) replaced the AI. There was no formal guidance for preparing an AI. The AFFH rule provided a standardized framework for “program participants” (the generic name given to local governments, states, and PHAs) to use to identify and examine what HUD called “fair housing issues” and the underlying “contributing factors” that cause the fair housing issues.
2. HUD provided each program participant data covering not only the local jurisdiction, but also the surrounding region. Program participants were required to consider this data when assessing fair housing.
3. HUD would for the first time receive and review AFHs; HUD did not receive or review AIs.
4. The fair housing goals and priorities that program participants set in their AFH were to be incorporated into their ConPlans and PHA Plans.
5. Public participation was required in the development of the AFH.

6. The AFH had to be submitted every five years in sync with a new ConPlan or PHA Plan.

### **The AFFH Rule Supported a Balanced Approach to AFFH**

In the AFFH rule, HUD clarified that it supported a balanced approach to AFFH.

“Strategies and actions must affirmatively further fair housing and may include, but are not limited to, enhancing mobility strategies and encouraging development of new affordable housing in areas of opportunity, as well as place-based strategies to encourage community revitalization, including preservation of existing affordable housing, including HUD-assisted housing.”

At several places in the preamble to the AFFH rule, HUD stressed that the final rule supported a balanced approach to AFFH. For example:

“The concept of affirmatively furthering fair housing embodies a balanced approach in which additional affordable housing is developed in areas of opportunity with an insufficient supply of affordable housing; racially or ethnically concentrated areas of poverty are transformed into areas of opportunity that continue to contain affordable housing as a result of preservation and revitalization efforts; and the mobility of low-income residents from low-opportunity areas to high-opportunity areas is encouraged and supported as a realistic, available part of fair housing choice.”

“HUD’s rule recognizes the role of place-based strategies, including economic development to improve conditions in high-poverty neighborhoods, as well as preservation of the existing affordable housing stock, including HUD-assisted housing, to help respond to the overwhelming need for affordable housing. Examples of such strategies include investments that will improve conditions and thereby reduce disparities in access to opportunity between impacted neighborhoods and the rest of the city or efforts to maintain and preserve the existing affordable rental housing stock,



including HUD-assisted housing, to address a jurisdiction's fair housing issues."

## WHAT DID IT MEAN TO "AFFIRMATIVELY FURTHER FAIR HOUSING"?

There was a new AFFH definition:

"Affirmatively furthering fair housing means taking meaningful actions, in addition to combating discrimination, that overcome patterns of segregation and foster inclusive communities free from barriers that restrict access to opportunity based on protected characteristics."

"Specifically it means taking meaningful actions that:

1. Address significant disparities in housing needs and in access to community opportunity.
2. Replace segregated living patterns with truly integrated and balanced living patterns.
3. Transform racially and ethnically concentrated areas of poverty into areas of opportunity.
4. Foster and maintain compliance with civil rights and fair housing laws."

### What Are "Meaningful Actions"?

Meaningful actions are "significant actions that are designed and can be reasonably expected to achieve a material positive change that affirmatively furthers fair housing by, for example, increasing fair housing choice or decreasing disparities in access to opportunity."

### What Would It Mean to "Certify"?

Jurisdictions submitting ConPlans and PHAs submitting PHA Plans have always had to certify (pledge) that they are affirmatively furthering fair housing choice. The AFFH rule amended the old definitions of certifying AFFH compliance to mean that program participants would:

- Take meaningful actions to further the goals in the AFH.
- Not take any action that is materially

inconsistent with its obligation to AFFH.

- PHAs would also have to address fair housing issues and contributing factors in their programs.

## FIRST, A FEW DEFINITIONS OF OTHERWISE SIMPLE WORDS

### Fair Housing Choice

Fair housing choice meant people would have enough information about realistic housing options to live where they chose without unlawful discrimination and other barriers. For people with disabilities, it also meant accessible housing in the most integrated setting appropriate to the person's needs, including disability-related services needed to live in the housing.

### Fair Housing "Issue"

This definition was important. The term was used throughout the AFFH rule. Fair housing issue meant a condition that restricted choice or access to opportunity, including:

1. Ongoing local or regional segregation, or lack of integration.
2. Racial or ethnic concentrations of poverty.
3. Significant disparities in access to opportunity.
4. Disproportionate housing needs based on the "protected classes" of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, familial status, or religion.

A fair housing issue also included evidence of illegal discrimination or violations of civil rights laws, regulations, or guidance.

### Fair Housing "Contributing Factor"

This definition was important. The term was used throughout the AFFH rule. Fair housing contributing factor meant something that created, contributed to, perpetuated, or increased the severity of one or more fair housing "issues."

### Definitions for the Four Fair Housing Issues

- Integration meant that there was not a high concentration of people of a particular protected class in an area subject to analysis

required by the Fair Housing Assessment Tool, such as a census tract or neighborhood, compared to the broader geographic area.

- Segregation meant that there was a high concentration of people of a particular protected class in an area subject to analysis required by the Assessment Tool, such as a census tract or neighborhood, compared to the broader geographic area.
- Racially or Ethnically Concentrated Area of Poverty (R/ECAP) meant a geographic area with significant concentrations of poverty and minority populations. The rule did not define “significant” or give metrics. However, the mapping system provided by HUD outlined R/ECAPs on maps and indicated them on data tables. An obscure document, “AFFH Data Documentation,” defined a R/ECAP as an area with a non-white population of 50% or more and a poverty rate greater than 40%, or that was three or more times the average poverty rate for the metropolitan area, whichever threshold was lower.
- Significant disparities in access to opportunities meant substantial and measurable differences in access to education, transportation, economic, and other important opportunities in a community, based on protected class related to housing.
- Disproportionate housing need referred to a significant disparity in the proportion of a protected class experiencing a category of housing need, compared to the proportion of any other relevant groups or the total population experiencing that category of housing need in the geographic area. Categories of housing need were:
  - Cost burden and severe cost burden (paying more than 30% and 50% of income, respectively, for rent/mortgage and utility costs).
  - Overcrowded housing (more than one person per room).
  - Substandard housing conditions.

## **Fair Housing Assessment Tool**

The Fair Housing Assessment Tool referred to forms or templates provided by HUD that had to be used to conduct and submit an AFH. The Assessment Tool consisted of a series of questions designed to help program participants identify racially and ethnically concentrated areas of poverty, patterns of integration and segregation, disparities in access to opportunity, and disproportionate housing needs. The Assessment Tool gave more detailed definitions of those than the rule did. HUD stated that the Assessment Tool questions were intended to enable program participants to perform meaningful assessments of fair housing issues and contributing factors, and to set meaningful fair housing goals and priorities. The Assessment Tool provided more detailed examples of fair housing issues and contributing factors. There were to be separate assessment tools for local jurisdictions, states, and PHAs.

Although in 2021 program participants are not required to use the 2015 Assessment Tools, HUD has reposted them on the FHEO AFFH webpage for any city, county, state, or PHA that chooses to use them.

## **What Was an Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH)?**

An Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) was an analysis of fair housing data, identification of fair housing “issues,” and assessment of “contributing factors” leading to the establishment of fair housing priorities and statement of fair housing goals, all of which were to be submitted to HUD using the Assessment Tool. The purpose of the AFH was to identify goals to affirmatively furthering fair housing that had to inform fair housing strategies in the Five-Year ConPlan, Annual ConPlan Action Plan, PHA Plan, and other community plans regarding transportation, education, or the environment. The introduction to the AFH in the regulation stated that in order to develop a successful AFFH strategy, it was necessary to assess the factors that cause, increase, contribute to, or maintain fair housing problems such as segregation, racially or ethnically concentrated areas of poverty,

significant disparities in access to opportunity, and disproportionate housing needs.

Although in 2021 program participants are not required to conduct an AFH following the 2015 AFFH rule, they may voluntarily do so in order to be able to certify that they are meeting their obligation to affirmatively further fair housing. Program participants may also voluntarily use the older Analysis of Impediments (AI) process or devise another fair housing planning process of their own design.

## CONTENT OF AN AFH

Program participants had to conduct an AFH using the HUD-prescribed Assessment Tool. The rule set out a structure for the AFH, unlike the AI it replaced, requiring the AFH to:

1. Analyze data and other information, such as HUD-provided data, other readily available local data, and local knowledge—including information gained from community participation. The purpose of this analysis was to identify—across the protected classes, both within the jurisdiction and region—the “fair housing issues” of integration and segregation patterns and trends, racially or ethnically concentrated areas of poverty, significant disparities in access to opportunity, and disproportionate housing needs.
2. Assess fair housing issues by using the Assessment Tool and the data analysis of step #1 to identify “contributing factors” for segregation, racially or ethnically concentrated areas of poverty, disparities in access to opportunity, and disproportionate housing needs.
3. Identify fair housing priorities and goals based on the identified “fair housing issues” and “contributing factors” of steps #1 and #2. The AFH had to:
  - Identify and discuss the fair housing issues.
  - Identify significant contributing factors, assign a priority to them, and justify the priorities.

- Set goals for overcoming the effects of the prioritized contributing factors. For each goal the program participant had to:
  - a. Identify one or more contributing factors that the goal was designed to address;
  - b. Describe how the goal related to overcoming the contributing factor(s) and related fair housing issue(s); and,
  - c. Identify the metrics and milestones for determining the fair housing results to be achieved.
- 4. Summarize the public participation, including a summary of efforts to broaden participation in developing the AFH, public comments received in writing and/or orally at public hearings, and unaccepted comments and the reasons why they were declined.
- 5. Review progress by summarizing (after the first AFH) the progress achieved in meeting the goals and related metrics and milestones of the previous AFH and identifying any barriers that prevented achieving those goals.

## LINKAGE BETWEEN THE AFH AND THE CONPLAN OR PHA PLAN

Strategies and actions to implement the fair housing goals and priorities in an AFH had to be included in a program participant’s Five-Year ConPlan, Annual ConPlan Action Plan, or Five-Year PHA Plan. However, the AFH did not have to include the strategies and actions. If a program participant did not have a HUD-accepted AFH, HUD would not approve its ConPlan or PHA Plan.

ConPlan or PHA Plan strategies and actions had to affirmatively further fair housing. Strategies and actions could include (but were not limited to) enhancing mobility, encouraging development of new affordable housing in areas of opportunity, encouraging community revitalization through place-based strategies, and preserving existing affordable housing.

Activities to affirmatively further fair housing could include:

- Developing affordable housing in areas of high opportunity.
- Removing barriers to developing affordable housing in areas of high opportunity.
- Revitalizing or stabilizing neighborhoods through targeted investments.
- Preserving or rehabilitating existing affordable housing.
- Promoting greater housing choice within or outside of areas of concentrated poverty.
- Promoting greater access to areas of high opportunity.
- Improving community assets, such as quality schools, employment, and transportation.

The ConPlan regulations were modified to require the Strategic Plan portion of the ConPlan to describe how a program participant’s ConPlan priorities and specific objectives would affirmatively further fair housing by having strategies and actions consistent with the goals and “other elements” identified in the AFH. Annual Action Plans submitted in between Five-Year ConPlans had to describe the actions the program participant planned to take during the upcoming year to address fair housing goals.

## HUD REVIEW OF THE AFH

The AFH (unlike the AI) had to be submitted to HUD for review and “acceptance.” HUD would determine whether the AFH had a fair housing analysis, assessment, and goals. HUD could decide not to “accept” an AFH, or a part of an AFH, if:

- The AFH was “inconsistent” with fair housing or civil rights laws, examples of which included:
  - The analysis of fair housing issues, fair housing contributing factors, goals, or priorities in the AFH would result in policies or practices that would discriminate.
  - The AFH did not identify policies or practices as fair housing contributing factors even though they could result in

excluding protected class people from areas of opportunity.

- The AFH was “substantially incomplete,” examples of which included an AFH that:
  - Was developed without the required community participation or required consultation with other entities.
  - Failed to satisfy a required element of the AFFH regulation, examples of which included an AFH with priorities or goals materially inconsistent with the data and other evidence and an AFH that had priorities or goals not designed to overcome the effects of contributing factors and related fair housing issues.

The AFH would be considered “accepted” by HUD within 60 calendar days. HUD “acceptance” did not mean a program participant was meeting its obligation to AFFH; rather, it meant that for purposes of administering HUD funds (such as CDBG) the program participant had provided the elements required in an AFH. If HUD did not “accept” an AFH, HUD had to provide specific reasons and describe actions that must be taken to gain “acceptance.” Program participants had 45 days to revise and resubmit an AFH. A revised AFH would be considered “accepted” after 30 calendar days, unless HUD did not “accept” the revised version.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE AFH PROCESS

To ensure that the AFH is informed by meaningful community participation, the rule required program participants to give the public reasonable opportunities for involvement in both the development of the AFH and its incorporation into the ConPlan, PHA Plan, and other planning documents. The public participation provisions of the ConPlan and PHA Plan regulations had to be followed in the process of developing the AFH.

Program participants “should” use communications means designed to reach the broadest audience. Examples in the rule included: publishing a summary of each document in one or more newspapers; making

copies of each document available on the program participant’s official website; and, making copies of each document available at libraries, government offices, and public places.

### **The AFFH Rule Amended the ConPlan Public Participation Regulations to Include the AFH Encouraging Public Participation in the Development of the AFH**

The AFFH rule added to the ConPlan rule, requirements for jurisdictions to:

- Provide for and encourage residents to participate in the development of the AFH and any revisions to the AFH.
- Encourage participation by the Continuum of Care, local and regional institutions, and other organizations (including community-based organizations) in the process of developing and implementing the AFH.
- Encourage participation by public housing residents, public housing Resident Advisory Boards, resident councils, and other low-income residents of a targeted revitalization area where a development was located, regarding developing and implementing the AFH.
- Describe procedures for assessing residents’ language needs, including any need for translation of notices and other vital documents. At a minimum, jurisdictions had to take reasonable steps to provide language assistance to ensure meaningful access to participation by people with limited English proficiency.

### **Make Data, the Proposed and Final AFH, and Records Available to the Public**

The AFFH rule added to the ConPlan rule, requirements for jurisdictions to:

- Make available to the public as soon as practical [but] “after the start of the public participation process,” the HUD-provided data and any supplemental information the jurisdiction intended to use in preparing the AFH.
- Publish the proposed AFH in a manner that

gives the public a reasonable opportunity to examine it and submit comments. The public participation plan had to indicate how the proposed AFH would be published. Publishing could be met by:

- Summarizing the AFH in one or more newspapers of general circulation. The summary had to include a list of places where copies of the entire AFH could be examined.
- Making copies available on the jurisdiction’s official website, and at libraries, government offices, and other public places.
- Provide a reasonable number of free copies of the proposed AFH to those who request it.
- Make available to the public the HUD-accepted AFH and any revisions—including in forms accessible to people with disabilities—when requested.
- Provide the public with reasonable and timely access to records from the last five years that relate to the AFH.

### **Public Review and Comment During the Development of the AFH and the ConPlan**

The AFFH rule added to the ConPlan rule, requirements for jurisdictions to:

- Have at least one public hearing during the development of the AFH.
- Have at least one public hearing before the proposed AFH was published for comment, in order to obtain public comments about AFH-related data and affirmatively furthering fair housing in the jurisdiction’s housing and community development programs.
- Provide the public at least 30 days to comment on the proposed AFH.
- Consider public comments submitted in writing, or orally at public hearings, when preparing the final AFH. A summary of the comments had to be attached to the final AFH, and an explanation of reasons for not accepting comments had to be attached to the final AFH.

- Have at least one public hearing before a proposed ConPlan was published for comment in order to obtain public comments about affirmatively furthering fair housing concerns.
- Make one of the two required public hearings about the ConPlan address a program participant’s proposed strategies and actions for affirmatively furthering fair housing consistent with the AFH.
- Respond to written complaints from the public about the AFH or any revisions to it. The response had to be in writing, meaningful, and provided within 15 working days.

### **A Few Additional Key Public Participation Features of the ConPlan Regulations**

- Jurisdictions had to take appropriate actions to encourage participation by people of color, people who do not speak English, and people with disabilities. Localities also had to encourage participation by residents of public and assisted housing.
- Access to information had to be reasonable and timely. For local jurisdictions (not states) the public had to have “reasonable and timely” access to local meetings, such as Advisory Committee meetings, City Council subcommittee meetings, etc.
- There had to be “adequate” public notice of and access to upcoming hearings. Publishing small print notices in the newspaper a few days before the hearing was not adequate notice. Two weeks’ notice was adequate. Hearings had to be held at times convenient to people who were likely to be affected. Hearings had to be held in places easy for lower-income people to get to.

### **Consultation with Other Entities and the AFH Process**

The AFFH rule also amended the ConPlan regulations’ consultation requirements to include the AFH. When preparing the AFH and then the ConPlan, jurisdictions were required to consult with community and regionally based (or state-

based) organizations, including:

- Organizations that represent protected class members.
- Organizations that enforce fair housing laws (including participants in the Fair Housing Assistance Program).
- Fair housing organizations and nonprofits receiving funding under the Fair Housing Initiative Program.
- Other public and private fair housing service agencies.
- Adjacent governments, including agencies with metro-wide planning and transportation responsibilities, particularly for problems that go beyond a single jurisdiction.
- Entities previously listed in the ConPlan regulations, such as public and private agencies that provide assisted housing, health services, and social services.
- PHAs, not only about the AFH, but also about proposed strategies and actions for affirmatively furthering fair housing in the ConPlan.
- Any organizations that had relevant knowledge or data to inform the AFH, and that were independent and representative.
- Organizations that had the capacity to engage with data informing the AFH and that were independent and representative.

Consultation had to occur at various points in the fair housing planning process, at least in the development of both the AFH and the ConPlan. Consultation regarding the ConPlan had to specifically seek input about how the AFH goals would inform the priorities and objectives of the ConPlan.

## **HUD ENCOURAGED JOINT AND REGIONAL AFHS**

HUD encouraged program participants to collaborate to submit a joint AFH or a regional AFH. A joint AFH involved two or more program participants submitting a single AFH. A regional AFH involved at least two program participants

that had to submit a ConPlan. Collaborating program participants did not have to be adjacent to each other, and they could cross state lines, as long as they were in the same Core Based Statistical Area. One of the program participants had to be designated as the lead entity. All program participants were accountable for the analysis and any joint goals and priorities. Collaborating program participants had to include their individual analysis, goals, and priorities in the collaborative AFH, and were accountable for them. A joint or regional AFH did not relieve each program participant from its obligation to analyze and address local and regional fair housing issues and contributing factors, and to set priorities and goals for its geographic area to overcome the effects of contributing factors and related fair housing issues. Collaborating program participants had to have a plan for public participation that included residents and others in each of the jurisdictions.

## TIMING OF THE AFH

As originally designed in the AFFH rule, most program participants were not required to use the new AFFH system until 2019. Until a program participant was required to submit an AFH, it had to continue to follow the AI to fair housing choice process.

There were five categories of due dates for the initial AFH. In each case, the first AFH had to be submitted to HUD 270 calendar days before the start of the program participant's program year in which a new Five-Year ConPlan or Five-Year PHA Plan was due.

1. CDBG entitlement jurisdictions receiving \$500,000 or more in FY15 and that were required to have a new Five-Year ConPlan on or after January 1, 2017, had to submit an initial AFH 270 calendar days before that new ConPlan was due. It was estimated that there were 22 such jurisdictions. However, HUD indicated that several of those jurisdictions decided to join with another jurisdiction which had a later due date.
2. CDBG entitlement jurisdictions receiving \$500,000 or less in FY15 and that were

required to have a new Five-Year ConPlan on or after January 1, 2018, had to submit an initial AFH 270 calendar days before that new ConPlan is due. It was estimated that there were 105 entitlement jurisdictions with less than \$500,000 expected to have to submit a new Five-Year ConPlan on or after January 1, 2018. However, on October 24, 2016, HUD announced in the Federal Register that the deadline for submitting an AFH for them was extended to new Five-Year ConPlans due on or after January 1, 2019. The Assessment Tool published on January 13, 2017, had an "insert" intended to streamline compliance for local governments with a CDBG entitlement of \$500,000 or less that chose to collaborate with another local government completing the regular Assessment Tool.

3. States that were required to have a new Five-Year ConPlan on or after January 1, 2018, had to submit an initial AFH 270 calendar days before that new ConPlan was due. Six states were expected to start then. However, although a proposed Assessment Tool for states was published on March 11, 2016, it was never finalized. In response to comments from states, HUD started working with states to redesign the state Assessment Tool. In addition, HUD had not fully developed the data and mapping tool for states. HUD introduced interim guidance on January 18, 2017.
4. PHAs with more than 550 public housing units and vouchers, combined, ("non-qualified PHAs") had to submit an AFH 270 calendar days before a new Five-Year PHA Plan was due on or after January 1, 2018. An Assessment Tool for PHAs was published on January 13, 2017; however, PHAs did not have to use the Tool until HUD provided the needed data and issued a notice in the Federal Register announcing a new submission date. HUD introduced interim guidance on January 18, 2017.
5. PHAs with fewer than 550 public housing units and vouchers, combined ("qualified PHAs") had to submit an AFH 270 calendar

days before a new Five-Year PHA Plan was due on or after January 1, 2019. As with the non-qualified PHAs, qualified PHAs did not have to use the Assessment Tool right away. HUD introduced interim guidance on January 18, 2017.

The PHA Assessment Tool published on January 13, 2017, had an “insert” intended to streamline compliance for PHAs with 1,250 or fewer public housing units and vouchers (combined), that chose to collaborate with a local government completing the regular Assessment Tool. In addition, HUD indicated its intent to create a separate Assessment Tool for qualified PHAs.

After the first AFH, all program participants were to submit a new AFH 195 calendar days before the start of the first year of their next Five-Year ConPlan or Five-Year PHA Plan. All program participants were to submit an AFH at least every five years.

## REVISING THE ASSESSMENT OF FAIR HOUSING

An AFH had to be revised if there was a “material change” that would affect the information the AFH was based on so that the analysis, fair housing contributing factors, or priorities and goals no longer reflected the present situation. Examples included a presidentially declared disaster, major demographic changes, new significant contributing factors, or significant civil rights findings. HUD could also require a revision if it detected a significant change. A revised AFH had to be submitted within 12 months of the onset of the material change. For presidentially declared disasters, the revised AFH was due two years after the date the disaster was declared.

A revised AFH might not require submitting an entirely new AFH. It only needed to focus on the material change and any new fair housing issues and contributing factors. It had to include appropriate adjustments to the analysis, assessments, priorities, or goals.

A jurisdiction’s ConPlan-required “Citizen Participation Plan” and a PHA’s definition of a significant amendment had to specify the

criteria that would be used for determining when substantial (ConPlan) or significant (PHA Plan) revisions to the AFH were appropriate. When there were revisions to the AFH, the ConPlan and PHA Plan public or resident participation regulations pertaining to substantial/significant amendments had to be followed. Completed revisions had to be made public and submitted to HUD, following the ConPlan or PHA Plan regulations.

## RECORDKEEPING

ConPlan participants and PHAs preparing their own AFHs were required to have and keep records, including:

The information that formed the development of the AFH.

- Records demonstrating compliance with the consultation and community participation requirements, including: the names of the organizations involved in the development of the AFH, written public comments, summaries or transcripts of public meetings or hearings, public notices, other correspondence, distribution lists, surveys, interviews, etc.
- Records demonstrating actions taken to AFFH.

The records had to be made available to HUD. The AFFH rule did not state that these records were to be made available to the public as well. However, the modified ConPlan regulations required ConPlan jurisdictions to provide the public with reasonable and timely access to information and records relating to the jurisdiction’s AFH.

## FOCUS ON PUBLIC HOUSING AGENCIES

The AFFH rule offered PHAs three ways to meet their obligation to affirmatively further fair housing:

1. A PHA could work with a local or state government in preparing an AFH. If a PHA served residents of two or more jurisdictions, the PHA could choose the jurisdiction that most closely aligned with its PHA Plan activities.



2. A PHA could work with one or more other PHAs in the planning, resident participation, and preparation of an AFH. One of the PHAs had to be designated the lead agency.
3. A PHA could conduct its own AFH.

A PHA had to certify that it would affirmatively further fair housing. This meant the PHA would take meaningful actions to further the goals identified in the AFH, take no action that was materially inconsistent with its obligation to affirmatively furthering fair housing, and address fair housing issues and contributing factors.

A PHA was obligated to affirmatively furthering fair housing in its operating policies, procedures, and capital activities. A PHA's admission and occupancy policies for public housing and vouchers had to comply with the PHA's plans to affirmatively furthering fair housing. A PHA's policies should be designed to reduce the concentration of tenants by race, national origin, and disability. Any affirmative steps or incentives a PHA planned to take had to be stated in the admission policy. PHA policies should include affirmative steps to overcome the effects of discrimination and the effects of conditions that resulted in limiting participation because of race, national origin, disability, or other protected class. Affirmative steps could include:

- Marketing.
- Tenant selection and assignment policies that lead to desegregation.
- Providing additional supportive services and amenities (for example, supportive services that enable someone with a disability to transfer from an institutional setting into the community).
- Coordinating with agencies serving people with disabilities to provide additional community-based housing opportunities.
- Connecting people with disabilities to supportive services to enable them to transfer from an institutional setting into the community.

HUD could challenge a certification if a PHA failed to meet the requirements in the AFFH regulations, failed to take meaningful actions to further the goals of its AFH, or took action that was materially inconsistent with affirmatively furthering fair housing.

A PHA's certification was in compliance if it met the above requirements and it:

- Examined its programs.
- Identified any fair housing issues and contributing factors in those programs.
- Specified actions and strategies designed to address contributing factors, related fair housing issues, and goals in its AFH.
- Worked with local governments to implement those local governments' efforts to affirmatively furthering fair housing that required the PHA's involvement.
- Operated its programs in a manner consistent with local jurisdictions' ConPlans.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

Advocates should organize to convince their local jurisdictions and PHAs to follow the lead of the AFFH rule and use the Assessment Tool to create an AFH.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

HUD indicated in the IFR that it intends to undertake separate rulemaking to improve upon the July 16, 2015 Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule. Look for a *Federal Register* notice in 2022 seeking comments or read NLIHC's weekly *Memo to Members and Partners* for announcements of such a notice and sample comments to submit to HUD.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Remind your congressional delegation that the 2015 AFFH rule did not mandate specific outcomes; rather, it established basic parameters to help guide public sector housing and community development planning, along with investment decisions. The 2015 rule encouraged a more engaged and data-driven approach to

assessing fair housing and planning actions. The rule established a standardized fair housing assessment and planning process to give jurisdictions and PHAs a more effective means to affirmatively further the purposes of the Fair Housing Act.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

NLIHC, 202-662-1530, <http://nlihc.org/issues/affh>, particularly a webpage containing archived information, <https://nlihc.org/racial-equity-and-fair-housing>.

National Housing Law Project, 415-546-7000, <https://www.nhlp.org/initiatives/fair-housing-housing-for-people-with-disabilities/affirmatively-furthering-fair-housing>.

National Fair Housing Alliance, 202-898-1661, <http://nationalfairhousing.org/affirmatively-furthering-fair-housing>.

Poverty & Race Research Action Council, <https://prrac.org/fair-housing/affirmatively-furthering-fair-housing>.

The Interim Final Rule, <https://public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2021-12114.pdf>.

HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) homepage, [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/fair\\_housing\\_equal\\_opp](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp).

FHEO's Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing webpage, [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/fair\\_housing\\_equal\\_opp/affh](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/affh).

FHEO's Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), [https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/FHEO/images/Frequently\\_Asked\\_Questions\\_7\\_14-21.pdf](https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/FHEO/images/Frequently_Asked_Questions_7_14-21.pdf).

# Consolidated Planning Process

---

By Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, NLIHC

**Administering Agency:** HUD's Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD)

**Year Started:** 1990 as Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS), significantly modified in 1994 as the Consolidated Plan

**See Also:** For related information, refer to the *Public Housing Agency Plan* and *The National Housing Trust Fund* sections of this guide

The Consolidated Plan, popularly called the ConPlan, is a tool advocates can use to influence how federal housing and community development dollars are spent in their communities. The ConPlan merges into one process and one document all the planning and application requirements of five HUD block grant programs: the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program, the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program, the Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) Program, and the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF) Program. States, large cities, and urban counties that receive any of these grants must have a ConPlan. In addition, Public Housing Agency Plans (PHA Plans) must be consistent with the ConPlan.

## HISTORY

The statutory basis for the ConPlan is the Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS), a provision of the "Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act of 1990." CHAS established a state and local planning process that required a housing needs analysis and assignment of priorities for addressing those needs. In order to receive CDBG, HOME, ESG, or HOPWA dollars, jurisdictions had to have a CHAS. In 1994, HUD amended the CHAS regulations to create the ConPlan; there is no ConPlan statute.

The ConPlan regulations interwove the planning, application, and performance reporting

processes of the four block grants and the CHAS, resulting in one long-term plan (the Strategic Plan), one application document (the Annual Action Plan), and one set of performance reports, the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER), which no longer includes CDBG's Grantee Performance Report (GPR). The interim regulations implementing the HTF require the HTF Allocation Plan to be integrated into a state's Strategic Plan and Annual Action Plans.

## SUMMARY

Jurisdictions develop ConPlans at least once every five years in the form of the long-term Strategic Plan and jurisdictions must prepare Annual Action Plans during that period to show how resources will be used in the upcoming year to address Strategic Plan priorities. The regulations are at 24 CFR Part 91.

### The Seven Key ConPlan Elements

1. **Housing and Community Development Needs:** The ConPlan must estimate housing needs for the upcoming five years. It must also describe "priority non-housing community development needs." According to the regulations, the needs in the ConPlan should reflect the public participation process and the ideas of social service agencies, must be based on U.S. Census data, and "shall be based on any other reliable source." NLIHC's *Out of Reach* and *Congressional District Housing Profiles* are excellent sources of data.

The ConPlan must estimate housing needs by:

- Income categories, including households with income less than 30% of the area median income (AMI) or less than the federal poverty line, called extremely low-income; between 30% and 50% of AMI (low-income), between 50% and 80% of AMI (moderate-income), and between 80% and 95% of AMI (middle-income).

- Tenure type (whether the household rents or owns)
- Family type, including large families (five or more people), individuals, and elderly households.
- A summary of the number of people who have a housing cost burden (pay more than 30% of their income for rent and utilities) or severe cost burden (pay more than 50% of their income for rent and utilities), live in very poor quality housing, or live in overcrowded housing. Each of these characteristics must be presented by income category and tenure type.

The ConPlan must estimate the housing needs of:

- Domestic violence survivors,
- Persons with disabilities,
- Persons with HIV/AIDS and their families, and
- Persons who were formerly homeless and receive rapid re-housing assistance that is about to expire.

The ConPlan must estimate:

- The need for public housing and Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8), referring to waiting lists for those programs.
- The supportive housing needs of people who are elderly, have physical or mental disabilities, have addiction problems, are living with HIV/AIDS, or are public housing residents.
- The number of housing units containing lead-based paint hazards occupied by low-income households.
- The needs of any racial or ethnic group if their needs are 10% greater than all people in the same income category.

The ConPlan must describe the nature and extent of homelessness, addressing:

- The number of homeless people on any given night, the number who experience homelessness each year, and the number of days people are homeless.

- The nature and extent of homelessness by racial and ethnic groups.
- The characteristics and needs of people, especially extremely low-income people, who are housed but who are threatened with homelessness.

2. Housing Market Analysis: The housing market analysis requires a description of key features of the housing market, such as the supply of housing, demand for housing, and the condition and cost of housing. It must also have an inventory of facilities and services for homeless people, with categories for permanent housing, permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, and emergency shelters. A description of facilities and services for people who are not homeless but require supportive housing must be included, along with a description of programs ensuring that people returning from mental and physical health institutions receive supportive housing.

Localities (not states) have additional requirements:

- A description of the housing stock available to people with disabilities, HIV/AIDS, or special needs.
- An estimate of the number of vacant or abandoned buildings, with an indication of whether they can be rehabilitated.
- A narrative or map describing areas where low-income people and different races and ethnic groups are concentrated.
- A list of public housing developments and the number of units in them, along with a description of their condition and revitalization needs.
- A description of the number of units assisted with other federal (e.g., Project-Based Section 8), state, or local funds, including the income levels and types of families they serve.
- An assessment of whether any units are expected to be lost, such as through Section 8 contract expiration.

3. Strategic Plan: This long-term plan must be done at least every five years. It must indicate general priorities for allocating CPD money geographically and among different activities and needs (“CPD money” is used here to refer to each of the five block grant programs administered by CPD subject to the ConPlan). The Strategic Plan must describe the rationale for the fund allocation priorities given to each category of priority needs among the different income categories. Needs may refer to types of activities, such as rental rehabilitation, as well as to demographic groups, such as extremely low-income renter households. Although the regulations do not specifically require it, past HUD guidance required jurisdictions to assign to each priority need a relative priority of high, medium, or low. Since August 2012, HUD has only required priority assignments of high or low priority. The ConPlan must identify proposed accomplishments in measurable terms and estimate a timetable for achieving them.

For housing, the regulations add that the Strategic Plan must explain the reasoning behind priority assignments, the proposed use of funds, and how the reasoning relates to the analysis of the housing market, the severity of housing problems, the needs of the various income categories, and the needs of renters compared to owners. The number of families who will receive affordable housing must be shown by the income categories of extremely low, low, and moderate. The Strategic Plan must also describe how the need for public housing will be met.

Priority homeless needs must be shown. The Strategic Plan must also describe strategies for reducing and ending homelessness by helping people to avoid becoming homeless, reaching out to homeless people to determine their needs, addressing needs for emergency shelter and transitional housing, and helping homeless people make the transition to permanent housing.

For people with special needs who are not homeless, the Strategic Plan must summarize

the priority housing and supportive service needs of people who are elderly or who have disabilities (mental, physical, or developmental), HIV/AIDS, alcohol or drug addiction, or who are public housing residents.

For jurisdictions receiving CDBG funds, the Strategic Plan must summarize non-housing community development needs, such as daycare services, health centers, parks, roads, and commercial development.

4. Anti-poverty Strategy: The statute calls for a description of goals, programs, and policies for reducing the number of people with income below the poverty level. It also requires a statement of how affordable housing programs will be coordinated with other programs and the degree to which they will reduce the number of people in poverty.
5. Lead-based Paint: The Strategic Plan must outline actions to find and reduce lead paint hazards.
6. Fair Housing: Each year the jurisdiction must certify that it is affirmatively furthering fair housing (AFFH). Because under the Trump administration HUD suspended the 2015 Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule, instead of carrying out that rule’s AFFH and related ConPlan provisions, virtually every jurisdiction must follow the flawed Analysis of Impediments (AI) to fair housing choice process – until HUD reinstates an AFFH rule (hopefully in 2022). That means that a jurisdiction has an AI, is taking appropriate action to overcome the effects of impediments and keeps records. The AI is not required to be a part of the Strategic Plan or Annual Action Plan. Although HUD’s official 1996 *Fair Housing Planning Guide* says an AI “must be completed/updated in accordance with timeframes for the Consolidated Plan,” a September 2004 memorandum says that each jurisdiction “should maintain its AI and update the AI annually where necessary.” See the *Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing* article.

7. Annual Action Plan: The Annual Action Plan must describe all the federal resources reasonably expected to be available, including those in addition to CDBG, HOME, ESG, HOPWA, and HTF, such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs), Continuum of Care (CoC) funds, and Housing Choice Vouchers. The Annual Action Plan must also indicate other private and local and state resources expected to be available. The geographic areas that will get assistance in the upcoming year must be indicated, and the Annual Action Plan must give reasons why these areas have priority.

Local jurisdictions' Action Plans must describe the activities a jurisdiction will carry out in the upcoming year and the reasons for making these allocation priorities. Local jurisdictions must describe the use of CDBG for each activity in enough detail, including location, to enable people to determine the degree to which they could be affected.

State Action Plans must describe their method for distributing funds to local governments and nonprofits, or the activities the state will undertake itself. States must describe the criteria used to select CDBG applications from localities. States must also describe how all CDBG money will be allocated among all funding categories (e.g., housing, economic development, public works, etc.).

There must be an estimate of the number and type of households expected to benefit from the use of CPD funds (this does not apply to states). In addition, based on any funds available to the jurisdiction, the Action Plan must specify one-year goals for the number of non-homeless, homeless, and special needs households to be provided affordable housing through new construction, rehabilitation, acquisition, and rental assistance.

The Annual Action Plan must indicate the activities that will be carried out in the upcoming year to reduce homelessness by: preventing homelessness, especially for those with income less than 30% of AMI, meeting

emergency shelter and transitional housing needs, helping people make the transition to permanent housing and independent living, and meeting the special needs of people who are not homeless but have supportive housing needs.

### **The Five Steps of the ConPlan Calendar**

1. Identify Needs: The CDBG and CHAS laws require a public hearing to gather the public's ideas about housing and community development needs. HUD's regulations require this hearing to take place before a proposed ConPlan/Annual Action Plan is published for comment.
2. Proposed ConPlan/Annual Action Plan: There must be a notice in the newspaper that a proposed ConPlan/Annual Action Plan is available. Complete copies of the proposed ConPlan/Annual Action Plan must be available in public places, such as libraries. A reasonable number of copies of a proposed ConPlan/Annual Action Plan must be provided at no cost. There must be at least one public hearing during the development of the ConPlan/Annual Action Plan (this does not apply to states). The public must have at least 30 days to review and comment on the proposed ConPlan/Annual Action Plan.
3. Final ConPlan/Annual Action Plan: The jurisdiction must consider the public's comments about the proposed ConPlan/Annual Action Plan, attach a summary of the comments to the final ConPlan/Annual Action Plan, and explain in the final ConPlan/Annual Action Plan why any suggestions were not used. A copy of the final ConPlan/Annual Action Plan must be available to the public.

HUD can disapprove the final ConPlan/Annual Action Plan for several reasons, including if a jurisdiction did not follow the public participation requirements, did not "satisfy all of the required elements," or provided an inaccurate certification (for example, if HUD finds that a jurisdiction's certification that it took appropriate actions to overcome impediments to fair housing is not accurate).

4. The Annual Performance Report: In this report a jurisdiction shows what it did during the past year to meet housing and community development needs. The report must include a description of the money available and how it was spent; the location of projects; and the number of families and individuals assisted, broken down by race and ethnicity as well as by income category, including income less than 30% of AMI. For CDBG-assisted activities, the performance report must describe the assisted activities and explain how they relate to the ConPlan priorities, giving special attention to the highest priority activities. The Annual Performance Report must describe the actions taken to affirmatively further fair housing.

There are several public participation features related to the Annual Performance Report. There must be reasonable notice that a report is completed, and the report must be available to the public. The public has only 15 days to review and comment on it; nevertheless, the jurisdiction must consider public comments and attach a summary of the comments.

The annual performance reporting requirements of the five block grant programs have been merged into a set of computer-based records, the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) for local jurisdictions and the Performance and Evaluation Report (PER) for states. These performance reports only offer a general, aggregate picture of what a jurisdiction accomplished. Although no longer a part of the CAPER, local jurisdictions receiving CDBG must still complete a Grantee Performance Report (GPR), which also goes by the term IDIS Report PR03 (IDIS stands for Integrated Disbursement and Information System). The GPR should provide detailed information about each activity funded by CDBG. Although many jurisdictions do not make the GPR known to the public, it must be provided if requested.

5. Amendments to the ConPlan: The ConPlan must be amended if there are any changes in

priorities, or in the purpose, location, scope, or beneficiaries of an activity, or if money is used for an activity not mentioned in the Annual Action Plan. If there is a substantial amendment, then public participation similar to that for Annual Performance Reports is required, but with a 30-day comment period. HUD allows a jurisdiction to define substantial amendment. At a minimum, the regulations indicate that a substantial amendment must include a change in the use of CDBG funds, and a change in the way a state allocates CDBG money to small towns and rural areas.

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In addition to the public participation requirements mentioned in the previous paragraphs, each jurisdiction must have a written “citizen participation plan” available to the public. The plan must provide for and encourage public involvement in the creation of the ConPlan/Annual Action Plan, review of the Annual Performance Report, and any substantial amendment. It must encourage involvement by people with low incomes, especially in low-income neighborhoods and areas where CDBG money might be spent. Jurisdictions “are expected to take whatever actions are appropriate to encourage the participation of all of its citizens, including minorities and non-English speaking persons, as well as persons with disabilities.” Jurisdictions must also encourage involvement by residents of public and assisted housing.

There must be reasonable and timely access to information and records relating to the ConPlan/Annual Action Plan. The public must be able to review records from the previous five years related to the ConPlan and any use of federal money covered by the ConPlan. For local jurisdictions (not states) the public must have reasonable and timely access to local meetings, such as community advisory committee meetings and city council meetings.

Public hearings must be held after adequate notice to the public. “Publishing small print notices in the newspaper a few days before the hearing is not adequate notice,” according to the

regulations, but “two weeks’ notice is adequate.” Public hearings must be held at times and places convenient for people with low incomes. Where there are a significant number of people with limited English proficiency, the public participation plan must show how they can be involved. The jurisdiction must give written, meaningful, and timely responses to written public complaints; 15 days is considered timely if the jurisdiction gets CDBG funding.

## CONPLAN TEMPLATE AND MAPPING TOOLS

ConPlans, their subsequent Annual Action Plans, and CAPERs must be submitted electronically using an electronic template tied into CPD’s management information system, known as IDIS.

The template is a combination of data tables and narratives that set a baseline of HUD’s expectations for the type and amount of information required. Jurisdictions can customize their templates by adding additional text, data, or images from other sources. The data tables required by the regulations pertaining to housing and homelessness needs and the housing market are automatically pre-populated with the required data; however, jurisdictions may substitute better data if they have it. Some of the data includes the five-year American Community Survey data from the Census Bureau, special Census CHAS tabulations, public housing resident characteristics from HUD’s *Picture of Subsidized Housing*, and business and employment data from the Census.

Most jurisdictions’ ConPlans are [posted on HUD’s ConPlan website](#). Advocates will benefit from reviewing the [ConPlan Desk Guide](#) containing the components of the template because it outlines the regulatory requirements that jurisdictions must follow and because it helps advocates know what the various template tables should look like (especially starting on page 80 of the June 2021 version, with the Strategic Plan on page 167, Action Plan on page 203, and CAPER on page 253). Unfortunately, advocates cannot use the template to electronically create their own alternative ConPlan because only jurisdictions

have access to IDIS. Nevertheless, the Desk Guide provides advocates an outline of what jurisdictions must submit that advocates can use to manually fashion their own ideal ConPlan to promote prior to the public participation process.

CPD also has a mapping tool that allows both grantees and members of the public to access a large amount of data in a relatively user-friendly, web-based format. Jurisdictions are not required to use the maps. Users can search, query, and display information on the map that will help them identify trends and needs in their communities. Some of the features available on the mapping tool include the capacity to show where CDBG and HOME activities have been provided and where public housing and private, HUD-assisted housing and LIHTC housing is located. It is also possible to see housing, economic, and demographic characteristics of an area down to the census tract level. The web-based software enables advocates to draw custom geographies, such as neighborhood boundaries, which might not fit neatly into census tracts.

## THE CONPLAN AND THE NATIONAL HOUSING TRUST FUND

The HTF statute requires states to prepare an Allocation Plan each year showing how the state will allot the HTF dollars it will receive in the upcoming year. Each state must distribute its HTF dollars throughout the state according to the state’s assessment of priority housing needs as identified in its approved ConPlan.

HTF advocates should determine which state agency is responsible for drafting the HTF Allocation Plan (available on [HUD’s HTF website](#) and on [NLIHC’s HTF website](#)). It is probably not the same agency that drafts the ConPlan/Annual Action Plan. Advocates should inform the ConPlan agency (if it is different than the HTF state agency) that they are interested in participating in the process for planning where and how HTF money will be used.

Although the HTF statute requires public participation in the development of the HTF Allocation Plan, the HTF interim rule does not explicitly declare that, in order to receive HTF



money, states must develop their Allocation Plans using the ConPlan public participation rules. It merely requires states to submit an HTF Allocation Plan following the ConPlan rule, which does have public participation requirements. After 2016, most state HTF Allocations Plans are found in a section of the ConPlan/Annual Action Plan concerning “program-specific” information, or in an appendix to the ConPlan/Annual Action Plan.

Action around the HTF Allocation Plan takes place at the state level. For advocates only accustomed to ConPlan/Annual Action Plan advocacy at the local level because a locality gets CDBG and HOME directly from HUD, the state HTF process will be an important new experience. To better ensure that HTF dollars are used properly, it might be necessary for advocates to learn how to influence their state ConPlan.

The interim HTF rule requires states receiving HTF dollars to submit a performance report according to the ConPlan regulations. The HTF performance report must describe HTF program accomplishments, and the extent to which the state complied with its approved HTF Allocation Plan and all of the requirements of the HTF rule. NLIHC will monitor how HUD addresses performance reporting through changes to the ConPlan template.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

The ConPlan is a potentially useful advocacy tool for directing funds toward activities more beneficial to people with low incomes because jurisdictions must provide for and encourage public participation, particularly by people with low incomes. Advocates and residents should monitor the needs assessment and priority setting processes, making sure that all needs are identified and assigned the level of priority they deserve. With the mapping tool, advocates can add information and data that a jurisdiction might not include, such as data from studies conducted by local universities. Advocates can also devise an alternative plan using the mapping tool to draw neighborhood boundaries that

more realistically reflect community dynamics. Through the Annual Action Plan’s public participation process, advocates and residents can strive to ensure that federal dollars are allocated to activities that will truly meet the high priority needs of low-income people.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

NLIHC, 202-662-1530, [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org).

HUD Consolidated Plan on HUD Exchange <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/consolidated-plan>.

ConPlan template Desk Guide, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2641/econ-planning-suite-desk-guide-idis-conplan-action-plan-caper-per>.

ConPlan mapping tool, <https://egis.hud.gov/cpdmaps> and CPD Maps Desk Guide, <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2405/cpd-maps-desk-guide>.

Find jurisdictions’ ConPlans and Annual Action Plans at <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/consolidated-plan/con-plans-aaps-capers>.

End of year reporting, <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/idis/idis-reporting>, and <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/3312/hud-memo-caper-for-entitlement-grantees-for-1997-program-year>.

# Public Housing Agency Plan

---

By Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, NLIHC

**Administering Agency:** HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing

**Year Started:** 1998

**See Also:** For related information, refer to the *Public Housing* and *Resident Participation in Federally Subsidized Housing* sections of this guide

The Public Housing Agency Plan (PHA Plan) is the collection of a public housing agency's key policies (such as admissions policies) and program intentions (such as demolition). This includes a Five-Year Plan and Annual Plan updates. The PHA Plan was meant to ensure local accountability through resident and community participation. However, various administrative and legislative efforts have weakened PHA Plans.

## ADMINISTRATION

PHA Plans are administered by local public housing agencies (PHAs), with oversight by HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH). There are 3,747 PHAs. PHA Plan regulations are at 24 CFR Part 903, Subpart B.

## HISTORY

The "Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998" (QHWRA) established the PHA Plan because of the significant shift of authority to PHAs provided by that law. The PHA Plan was meant to ensure local accountability through resident and community participation opportunities. Resident Advisory Boards (RABs) were also created by QHWRA to ensure participation in the PHA Plan process by public housing residents and voucher-assisted households.

In June 2004, HUD issued regulations streamlining the Annual Plan requirements for PHAs with fewer than 250 public housing units and any number of voucher units, known as "small PHAs." There are 2,149 "small PHAs." These PHAs are only required to submit certifications regarding capital improvement

needs and civil rights compliance. Congress broadened this regulatory streamlining in 2008, enacting several reforms that essentially eliminated the requirement to submit an Annual Plan for PHAs administering fewer than 550 units of public housing and vouchers combined, known as "qualified PHAs." There are 2,678 qualified PHAs. Also in 2008, HUD took administrative action to dilute the information provided to residents and the general public through the PHA Plan template.

## PLAN SUMMARY

All PHAs must develop Five-Year PHA Plans that describe the overall mission and goals of a PHA regarding the housing needs of low-income families in its jurisdiction. Larger PHAs, called "non-qualified PHAs," must also develop an Annual Plan, which is a gathering of a PHA's program intentions, such as demolition, as well as key policies, such as those relating to admissions, income targeting, rents, and pets. However, these larger PHAs must submit only a short PHA Plan template to HUD each year.

### The 19 Required PHA Plan Components

- 1. Housing Needs** of extremely low-, very low-, and low-income families, elderly families, families with a member who has a disability, and those on public housing and Section 8 waiting lists.
- 2. Tenant Eligibility, Selection, and Admissions Policies** as well as waiting list procedures, admissions preferences, unit assignment policies, and race and income deconcentration policies.
- 3. Financial Resources** and planned uses of these resources for the upcoming year listed in categories such as operating funds, capital funds, other federal funds, and non-federal funds.
- 4. Rent Determination** including rent policies for tenants, and for landlords receiving vouchers.

- 5. Operations and Management** of facilities, including PHA programs, their organization, and policies governing maintenance (including policies regarding pest infestation).
- 6. Grievance Procedures** for residents and applicants.
- 7. Capital Improvement Needs** and planned actions for the long-term physical and social health of public housing developments. This should include plans and costs for the upcoming year and a Five-Year Plan.
- 8. Demolition and Disposition Plans** that the PHA has applied for, or will apply for, including timetables.
- 9. Designation of Public Housing for Elderly or Disabled** identified.
- 10. Conversion of Public Housing** to tenant-based vouchers through Section 33 (required conversion) or Section 22 (voluntary conversion) of the “United States Housing Act.”
- 11. Homeownership Programs** described, such as Section 8(y) or Section 5(h).
- 12. Community and Self-Sufficiency Programs** that aim to improve families’ economic or social self-sufficiency, including those that will fulfill community service requirements. This also refers to a PHA’s Section 3 jobs efforts.
- 13. Safety and Crime Prevention** including coordination with police.
- 14. Pets** policy.
- 15. Civil Rights** as reflected in a formal pledge that the PHA will comply with the “Civil Rights Act of 1964,” the “Fair Housing Act,” Section 504 of the “Rehabilitation Act,” and the “Americans with Disabilities Act.”

**16. Financial Audit** from the most recent fiscal year.

**17. Asset Management** for long-term operating, capital investment, rehabilitation, modernization, or sale of the PHA’s inventory.

**18. Domestic Violence** activities, services, or programs that prevent or serve survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking as added by the “Violence Against Women Act of 2005” as amended in 2013.

**19. Additional Information** including progress in meeting or deviating from the PHA’s mission and goals as listed in the Five-Year Plan.

### **Resident Advisory Boards**

As part of this planning process, PHAs are required to have at least one Resident Advisory Board (RAB) to assist in the development of the PHA Plan and any significant amendments to the plan. RAB membership must adequately reflect and represent residents served by the PHA, including voucher holders if they make up at least 20% of all those assisted.

In order to ensure that RABs can be as effective as possible, a PHA must provide reasonable means for RAB members to become informed about programs covered by the PHA Plan, communicate with residents in writing and by telephone, hold meetings with residents, and obtain information through the Internet.

A PHA must consider RAB recommendations when preparing a final PHA Plan or any significant amendment. A copy of the RAB’s recommendations and a description of whether those recommendations were addressed must be included with the final PHA Plan.

### **Resident and Community Participation**

The law and regulations provide for a modest public participation process. A PHA must conduct reasonable outreach to encourage broad public participation. A PHA’s board of commissioners must invite public comment regarding a proposed PHA Plan and conduct a public hearing

to discuss the plan. The hearing must be held at a location convenient to PHA residents. At least 45 days before the public hearing, the PHA must publish a notice indicating the date, time, and location of the public hearing, as well informing the public that the proposed PHA Plan, required attachments, and other relevant information is available for public inspection at the PHA's main office during normal business hours.

The final, HUD-approved PHA Plan, along with required attachments and other related documents, must be available for review at the PHA's main office during normal business hours. Small PHAs submitting so-called streamlined Annual PHA Plans must certify that any revised policies and programs are available for review at the PHA's main office during normal business hours.

There are four places in the regulations indicating that writing and calling HUD to complain about the PHA Plan might secure attention and relief from HUD:

1. If a RAB claims in writing that a PHA failed to provide adequate notice and opportunity for comment, HUD may make a finding and hold up approval of a PHA Plan until this failure is remedied.
2. Before approving a PHA Plan, HUD will review "any... element of the PHA's Annual Plan that is challenged" by residents or the public.
3. HUD can decide not to approve a PHA Plan if the Plan or one of its components:
  - Does not provide all of the required information.
  - Is not consistent with information and data available to HUD.
  - Is not consistent with the jurisdiction's Consolidated Plan.
4. To ensure that a PHA complies with all of the policies adopted in its HUD-approved PHA Plan, "HUD shall, as it deems appropriate, respond to any complaint concerning PHA noncompliance with the plan...HUD will take whatever action it deems necessary and appropriate."

## Significant Amendments

A PHA Plan must identify a PHA's basic criteria for determining what makes an amendment significant. Significant amendments can only take place after formal adoption by a PHA's board of commissioners at a meeting open to the public and after subsequent approval by HUD. Significant amendments are subject to all RAB and public participation requirements discussed above.

Advocates and residents should be alerted to changes to the PHA Plan at any time of the year because any policy or program in it can be modified. Advocates and residents should review the PHA Plan's criteria defining significant amendments and work to change them if they are written so that few modifications would be judged significant and therefore escape the RAB and public participation requirements.

## Major Changes Since 2008

Congress weakened the usefulness of the PHA Plan with changes made in the "Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008." This law included a provision greatly diminishing PHA Annual Plan requirements for PHAs that administer fewer than 550 units of public housing and vouchers combined. In 2020 there were 2,678 so-called "qualified PHAs." This means that 71% of the nation's PHAs were exempt from developing an Annual Plan. Qualified PHAs only need to certify that they are complying with civil rights law and that their Five-Year PHA Plan is consistent with the local or state government's Consolidated Plan. Qualified PHAs must still hold a public hearing annually regarding any proposed changes to a PHA's goals, objectives, or policies. They must also have RABs and respond to RAB recommendations at the public hearing.

HUD also took action in 2008 that weakened the usefulness of the PHA Plan for larger PHAs. Previously, HUD required public housing agencies to use a computer based PHA Plan template. This was a helpful outline of all PHA Plan components required by the law. But HUD drastically diminished the template in 2008, reducing it from a helpful 41-page, easy-to-

access electronic guide, to a mere page-and-a-half-long form, making it much more difficult for residents and the public to know what the law requires and what changed at the PHA during the previous year.

The 2008 PHA Plan template made it more difficult for residents and others to understand the PHA Plan process, engage in it, and have access to information associated with the 19 statutorily required PHA Plan components. The template merely asked PHAs to indicate which of the components were revised, not how the components were revised. Also, there was no longer a list of required plan components prompting residents and others to proactively recommend their own revisions to the Annual Plan.

After proposing changes to the 2008 template in 2011 and 2012, HUD issued [Notice PIH 2015-18](#) on October 23, 2015, announcing final revised PHA Plan templates. Instead of one single Annual PHA Plan template used by all PHAs, HUD now has four types of Annual PHA Plan templates to be used for different categories of PHAs. These templates included several modest improvements over the streamlined PHA Plan in use since November 2008; however, they were still far less helpful for residents and advocates than the pre-2008 template.

These templates have an expiration date that has passed (February 20, 2016) but continue to be available for PHAs with fiscal years ending 3/31/2022 or before if they choose. PHAs with fiscal years beginning 4/1/2022 and later are required to use new PHA Plans templates and certification forms. The new versions of the forms can be found here on [HUD'S Client Information Policy Systems \(HUDCLIPS\) website](#).

The Annual PHA Plan templates are:

- **HUD-50075-ST for Standard PHAs and Troubled PHAs**. A Standard PHA owns or manages 250 or more public housing units and any number of vouchers for a combined total of more than 550. The PHA was designated “standard” in its most recent assessments for the Public Housing

Assessment System (PHAS) and Section Eight Management Assessment Program (SEMAP). A Troubled PHA has an overall PHAS or SEMAP Score of less than 60%.

- **HUD-50075-HP for High Performer PHAs**. A High-Performer PHA owns or manages any number of public housing units and any number of vouchers, for a combined total of more than 550 and the PHA was designated a “high performer” in its most recent assessments for PHAS and SEMAP.
- **HUD-50075-SM for Small PHAs**. A Small PHA owns or manages fewer than 250 public housing units and any number of vouchers, for a combined total of more than 550 and the PHA was not designated as troubled in the most recent PHAS or SEMAP assessment, or at risk of being designated as troubled.
- **HUD-50075-HCV for HCV Only PHAs**. A Housing Choice Voucher (HCV)-only PHA does not own or operate any public housing units but does administer more than 550 vouchers and the PHA was not designated as troubled in its most recent SEMAP assessment.

Qualified PHAs that were not designated as troubled in the most recent PHAS assessment or as having a failing SEMAP score during the prior 12 months are not required to complete and submit an Annual PHA Plan. However, Qualified PHAs must submit a Five-Year PHA Plan.

Previously, the PHA Plan template for the Five-Year PHA Plan and the Annual Plan were the same. Notice PIH-2015-18 introduced a separate template for the [Five-Year PHA Plan](#) to be used by all PHAs.

Several modifications made in 2015 were improvements over the 2008 template. Each of the current and new templates clearly state that a proposed PHA Plan, each of the statutorily required PHA Plan elements, and all information relevant to the public hearing about a proposed PHA Plan and the proposed PHA Plan itself must be available to the public. The current and new templates also require PHAs to indicate where the public can access the information. At a minimum,

PHAs are required to post PHA Plan templates at each Asset Management Project (public housing developments or a group of developments) and at the PHA's main office. PHAs are encouraged to post PHA Plans on their official websites and provide copies to resident councils. Notice PIH-2015-18 added that the approved PHA Plan and required attachments and documents related to the PHA Plan must be made available for review and inspection at the principal office of the PHA during normal business hours. The PIH website does not have links to individual PHA's PHA Plans.

### **Three New Features in the New Templates**

The new PHA Plan templates for PHAs with fiscal years beginning April 1, 2022 and later all have a welcome new box called "Challenged Elements." A PHA is required to include information about any element of the PHA Plan that was challenged by residents or the public, a description of the challenge, the source of the challenge, and the PHA's response to the public.

A new certification, in addition to the "Civil Rights Certification," is the "Certification Listing Policies and Programs that the PHA has Revised since Submission of its Last Annual Plan." The instructions state that this is a certification that any plan elements that have been revised were provided to the Resident Advisory Board (RAB) for comment before being implemented, approved by the PHA Board, and made available for review and inspection by the public. (Note: The template for High Performing PHAs already had this certification.)

Each new template has a new chart, "Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing" (AFFH). It will require a statement of a PHA's strategies and actions to achieve fair housing goals outlined in an accepted "Assessment of Fair Housing" (AFH). The term "Assessment of Fair Housing" (AFH) is tied to the 2015 affirmatively furthering fair housing (AFFH) regulation that was eliminated by the Trump Administration. The Biden Administration will be issuing a proposed AFFH rule, probably sometime in 2022, but it is likely to use a different term. The template indicates that

PHAs are not required to submit the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing chart on the new PHA Plan templates until a PHA is required to submit an AFH. So, this new feature will not really be required until a new AFFH regulation is finalized, which could be another two years.

The instructions indicate that even if a PHA does not have to submit the AFFH chart, it must still follow the PHA Plan regulations regarding AFFH [(24 CFR § 903.7(o)(3)]. This means that a PHA: examines its own programs or proposed programs; identifies any impediments to fair housing choice within those programs; addresses those impediments in a reasonable fashion in view of the resources available; works with local jurisdictions to implement any of the jurisdiction's initiatives to affirmatively further fair housing that require the PHA's involvement; and maintain records reflecting these analyses and actions.

### **The Current Standard/Troubled PHA Template**

This article focuses on the template for Standard/Troubled PHAs. The 2015 template offered several modest improvements over the 2008 version. In a section titled "Revision of PHA Plan Elements," the template lists key statutorily required PHA Plan elements (for example, rent determination policies or grievance procedures), with boxes to check if a change has been made. This modification offers residents a clue about what some of the required elements are; without listing them, the 2008 template merely directed PHAs to identify any elements that were revised during the year. The 2015 and 2022 templates also direct PHAs to describe any revisions.

The Standard/Troubled PHA Plan template was also improved in 2015 because it has (and retains in 2022) a "New Activities" section for a PHA to indicate whether or not it intends to undertake a new activity, such as project-basing vouchers, converting public housing units under the Rental Assistance Demonstration, demolishing or selling public housing developments, or undertaking a mixed finance project. Any new activities must be described.

The 2015 and 2022 templates require PHAs

to include any comments received from the RAB, along with the PHA's analysis of the RAB's comments and a description of the PHA's decision regarding RAB comments.

One of the changes trumpeted in Notice PIH-2015-18 was that the templates would have descriptions of a PHA's policies or programs to enable a PHA to serve the needs of survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking in accord with requirements of the "Violence Against Women Act" (VAWA). However, the body of the templates do not mention VAWA-related information. Only by reading the instructions regarding any revision to a PHA Plan statutorily required element and then carefully examining the last half of the entry pertaining to "Safety and Crime Prevention" does one detect VAWA-related language.

The 2008 template required PHAs to submit as an attachment to the PHA Plan any challenge to one of the statutorily required PHA Plan elements. The regulations call for HUD to review any such challenge. Although Notice PIH-2015-18 acknowledges this aspect of the regulations, it removed the requirement to submit any challenge from the 2015 templates. The 2022 templates add this as a unique box, which is a welcome improvement.

### **Ongoing Concerns**

NLIHC remains concerned that resident involvement in the PHA Plan will continue to diminish due to the loss of guidance in the PHA Plan template. The template still has fewer reminders about the role of the RAB in developing the PHA Plan. The template no longer includes the list of RAB members or residents on the PHA Board, nor does it include a description of the process for electing residents to the PHA board.

NLIHC is also concerned that HUD no longer posts a directory of approved PHA Plans by state. HUD should resume posting PHA Plans on its website.

PHA Annual Plans should be enhanced to provide additional data on:

- The number of Annual Contributions Contract (ACC) units a PHA has, by development, the occupancy level at each development, and a plan to reduce any development's vacancy rate that is above 3%.
- The number of ACC units planned for redevelopment that will no longer be available or affordable to extremely low-income households.
- The number of authorized housing vouchers that a PHA has under lease.
- A PHA's SEMAP ratings, any audits of the PHA performed by HUD, and any corrective action the PHA took regarding SEMAP or audit findings.

In addition, NLIHC thinks that more PHAs must be required to comply with the PHA Plan so that residents and community members can have an opportunity to learn about and participate in the decisions affecting the nation's investments in public housing and vouchers.

### **TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS**

Advocates should participate in the development of their local agency's PHA Plan. Find out the dates PHA Plans are due to HUD; those dates are based on a PHA's fiscal year start dates. Ask your PHA to provide notice well in advance of the required public hearing and ask specifically about proposed changes. Review all PHA Plan components thought to be important and prepare written comments as well as comment at the public hearing. Work with others, especially residents of public housing, voucher households, and other low-income people in the community to increase participation in the PHA Plan process. All year long advocates should be on the lookout for significant amendments and submit written comments as well as verbal comments at the public hearing required for significant amendments.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates should let their Members of Congress know that:

- The PHA Annual and Five-Year Plans are important, local tools that should be expanded to more PHAs and enhanced to require more information about components important to residents and other community members.
  - HUD’s diminished template for Annual PHA Plan submission should be returned to its original state.
  - HUD should post all PHA Plans on its website as it had in the past.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

NLIHC, 202-662-1530, [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org).

HUD PHA Plan webpage, including the 2015 templates, [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/pha](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha).

The new templates for PHAs with program years stating after April 1, 2022, [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/administration/hudclips/forms/hud5](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/administration/hudclips/forms/hud5) (scroll down to forms starting with “HUD-50075.”

Notice PIH-2015-18, <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/PIH-2015-18.pdf>.

HUD list of Qualified PHAs, [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/pha/lists](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/lists).



# The “Community Reinvestment Act”

---

By Josh Silver, National Community Reinvestment Coalition

The “Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) of 1977” established continuing and affirmative responsibilities for banks to meet the credit needs of low- and moderate-income (LMI) neighborhoods in a manner consistent with safety and soundness. Congress has considered updating this critical law to strengthen CRA as applied to banks and expand CRA to non-bank financial institutions.

In the summer of 2020, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) finalized a new rule on CRA that would decrease lending, investments and services in low- and moderate-income (LMI) neighborhoods. In December of 2021, the [OCC rescinded](#) its harmful rule. In early 2022, it is anticipated that the OCC will join the two other federal bank regulatory agencies, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) and the Federal Reserve Board (Board), in proposing an interagency rule to update the CRA regulations.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

Congress passed CRA in 1977 at a time when many banks and other financial institutions would routinely “redline” low-income or minority communities, refusing to invest in them or to extend credit to their residents. Since its enactment, CRA has expanded access to banking services and increased the flow of private capital into LMI communities.

## PROGRAM AND ADMINISTRATION SUMMARY

Three bank regulatory agencies ensure that banks comply with CRA: the Board, the OCC, and the FDIC. These three agencies are charged with evaluating the extent to which banks are meeting local credit needs. This takes the form of a periodic CRA examination of a bank, during which the bank is given a rating for its performance.

Under CRA, large banks with assets exceeding

\$1.322 billion are evaluated with three tests that measure performance in LMI communities (asset levels for the bank size categories are adjusted annually to take inflation into account):

- The lending test evaluates a bank’s record of meeting credit needs in its assessment area(s) through home mortgage, small business, and small farm lending, as well as financing community development projects such as the construction of rental units.
- The investment test evaluates the number and responsiveness of investments, including Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and equity investments in small businesses.
- The service test evaluates the availability of bank branches, basic banking services, and community development services in low- and moderate-income communities.

Banks with less than \$1.322 billion in assets are evaluated primarily on lending and mid-sized banks (between \$330 million and \$1.322 billion in assets) also undergo an examination of their community development performance. Exams for smaller institutions below \$250 million in assets occur every four to five years, depending on their previous performance. Banks with assets exceeding \$250 million are examined once every two to three years.

CRA exams issue one of four ratings: outstanding, satisfactory, needs-to-improve, or substantial noncompliance. The last two ratings are considered failing ratings. In a particular assessment area, a bank can also receive a low or high satisfactory rating. Even a passing rating, such as satisfactory or low satisfactory, can motivate a bank to do better since ratings influence banks’ public relations and business strategies.

The federal agencies also consider banks’ CRA records when ruling on merger applications. A weak CRA record may be grounds for denying a merger application. Although denials are rare, federal agencies occasionally approve merger

applications subject to specific conditions around improving CRA and fair lending performance.

## RESULTS

Because it holds lenders publicly accountable and empowers citizens and communities to engage in the regulatory process, CRA is effective in increasing access to credit and capital for traditionally underserved communities. Since 1996, CRA-covered banks have made more than \$2.5 trillion in small business and community development loans in LMI tracts. From 2009 through 2018, CRA-covered banks made more than \$2.3 trillion on home loans to LMI borrowers or LMI tracts.

A HUD publication reviewed CRA's accomplishments over its 40-year history. Studies conclude that lending is higher in low- and moderate-income census tracts than in tracts with median incomes just above CRA-income thresholds. In addition, a report published by the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia concluded that home purchase lending in LMI tracts would have declined by about 20% had CRA not existed. In addition, the Penn Institute for Urban Research also published a series of CRA research and policy papers, one of which found that CRA has prevented branch closures in LMI communities.

CRA has also inspired community benefits agreements. During merger applications, regulatory agencies and the public at large review the banks' past CRA records and future plans for providing a public benefit after the merger as required by law. These reviews have prompted banks to negotiate community benefit plans with community-based organizations. The plans specify future levels of loans, investments and services banks plan to make to communities of color and LMI neighborhoods.

Recently, NCRC and our members negotiated a community plan that committed PNC Bank to make \$88 billion in reinvestment available over a four year time period. The plan included \$47 billion in home purchase lending and \$14.5 billion in community development lending and investment (CDLI) such as investments in housing tax credit programs, Opportunity

Zone investments, economic empowerment and social justice initiatives, as well as loans and investments to Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs). Since 2016, the National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC) has facilitated the creation of community benefit plans worth \$384 billion with 16 banks.

## RECENT REGULATORY AND LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

The OCC's final rule issued in June of 2020 would have fundamentally weakened CRA.

In its 2020 CRA regulation, the OCC implemented concepts that would reduce CRA-related lending and investing in future years. In particular, the agency proposed a "one ratio" measure that would consist of all CRA activity (the dollar amount of loans and investments) divided by bank deposits. Under the one ratio measure, banks could choose to forego certain activities such as low dollar mortgage lending to lower-income homebuyers in favor of large deals such as purchases of mortgage-backed securities that are not as responsive to immediate credit needs.

The OCC broadened the activities that would count under CRA. Financing large infrastructure such as bridges would count, which would divert bank attention away from affordable housing and community development in LMI neighborhoods.

To compound matters, rental housing would be considered affordable if LMI households can afford the rent without verifying that they would be the actual tenants. All these changes would again deviate from the purpose of the CRA legislation, which was focused on addressing the credit needs in lower-income communities that were redlined. Fortunately, the OCC rescinded its rule in December 2021.

The Board issued an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) in fall 2020. The ANPR is not a proposed rule change but offered the Board's ideas for updating the CRA regulation. The Board's ANPR is a solid foundation from which to propose changes to CRA's regulations. The ANPR builds upon the existing CRA exam structure and improves the objectivity of performance

measures. [NCRC](#), our members, and allies offered thoughts to the Board regarding how to strengthen some of the Board’s ideas for reform during a comment period that ended in February of 2021.

We now anticipate that the OCC, the Board and the FDIC will issue a proposed update to the CRA regulations in early 2022. The update will likely be based on the Board’s ANPR.

On the legislative front, Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) introduced the “[American Housing and Economic Mobility Act of 2021](#).” This ambitious bill strengthens CRA as applied to banks by updating assessment areas to include geographical areas in which banks make considerable numbers of loans and engage in other business activity but do not have branches. It would also mandate the inclusion of mortgage company affiliates on bank CRA exams. Finally, it would expand CRA to include independent mortgage companies.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

CRA is vital to promoting safe and sound lending and investing in communities. Community organizations are encouraged to comment on CRA exams and merger applications. The federal agencies post lists on their websites every quarter of upcoming CRA exams. Additionally, organizations should establish and expand upon dialogues with CRA officers at banks in their service areas to see how banks can increase their support of affordable housing. NCRC can help advocates get started with CRA dialogues in their community.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Legislative efforts to weaken CRA may arise at any time. Members should:

- Oppose bills that would weaken or repeal CRA.
- Support any proposed bills such as Senator Warren’s that update and strengthen CRA.
- Ask Members of Congress to oppose regulatory efforts to weaken CRA and support those that would strengthen CRA.

## WHAT TO SAY TO REGULATORS

We anticipate an interagency proposal to update the CRA regulations in early 2022. Community-based organizations are encouraged to comment on the interagency proposal.

An important means to preserving and strengthening CRA is to use it. Comment on CRA exams and merger applications. Engage with the regulatory agencies and insist that their CRA exams and merger reviews are rigorous.

Keep in touch with NCRC regarding opportunities to comment on any additional proposed changes to CRA regulation.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Community Reinvestment Coalition, 202-628-8866, [www.ncrc.org](http://www.ncrc.org).

For CRA exam results, [www.ffiec.gov](http://www.ffiec.gov).

# Section 3: Job Training, Employment, and Business Opportunities Related to HUD Funding

---

By Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, NLIHC

**Administering Agency:** HUD's Office of Field Policy and Management (FPM)

**Year Started:** 1968

**Population Targeted:** Public Housing residents, other low- and very-low income households

**Funding:** zero

## SUMMARY

Section 3 is a federal obligation tied to HUD funding. The Section 3 statute states that recipients of HUD housing and community development funding must provide, "to the greatest extent feasible," job training, employment, and contracting opportunities for low-income and VLI residents, "particularly those who are recipients of government assistance for housing." Another Section 3 obligation is to support businesses owned or controlled by low-income people or businesses that hire them ("Section 3 businesses"). A "recipient" is an entity that receives Section 3-covered funds directly from HUD, such as a PHA, state, city, or county.

Section 3 applies to all HUD funding for public housing and Indian housing, such as the public housing Operating Fund and Capital Fund, Resident Opportunity and Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) grants, Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) grants, and the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD). Section 3 also applies to other housing and community development funding, including Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships, national Housing Trust Fund, and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA). Public housing agencies (PHAs) and jurisdictions using those non-public housing programs, such as CDBG must comply with Section 3 and ensure that contractors and subcontractors comply.

## ADMINISTRATION

Historically, Section 3 regulations had been at 24 CFR part 135 under the umbrella of the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO). The final rule moves Section 3 regulations from part 135 to a new 24 CFR part 75 under the Office of the HUD Secretary. Monitoring and enforcement of Section 3 is removed from FHEO and transferred to the relevant HUD program offices.

The relevant program offices are those that provide the funds that trigger the Section 3 obligation, such as the Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH), the Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD), and the Office of Recapitalization (ReCap) for Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD), demolition, rehabilitation, or new construction. This is a problem because Section 3 monitoring and enforcement should be carried out by HUD staff who are independent of the HUD program offices since program staff (PIH, CPD, and ReCap) are too close to the PHAs, jurisdictions, and the development projects funded by their programs. According to a separate *Federal Register* notice on [October 5](#), a separate HUD office will manage Section 3 evaluation and reporting – the Office of Field Policy and Management (FPM).

## HISTORY

The Section 3 obligation was created as part of the "Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968." The Section 3 statute has been amended four times; each time the amendments primarily sought to expand the reach of Section 3 and to better benefit low-income households. After statutory amendments in 1992, revised regulations were proposed and ultimately an interim set of regulations were published on June 30, 1994.

The Section 3 obligation is too often ignored by the recipients of HUD funds and not enforced by HUD; therefore, Section 3's potential benefits for low-income and VLI people and for qualified businesses is not fully realized. At the beginning of the Obama Administration in 2009, both lawmakers and HUD officials expressed interest in strengthening the program. Proposed improvements to the 1994 interim Section 3 regulations were published on March 27, 2015, but a final rule was not sent to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as the Obama Administration ended. On May 9, 2018, HUD's spring Regulatory Agenda under the Trump Administration removed the 2015 proposed rule. The new HUD Secretary, Ben Carson, had publicly expressed support for Section 3. On April 4, 2019 HUD published a proposed rule; a final rule was published on September 29, 2020 and become effective on November 30, 2020.

## HUD ELIMINATES SECTION 3 COMPLAINT PROCESS

The final rule eliminates any Section 3-specific complaint process. Instead, complaints may be reported to the relevant HUD program office or to the local HUD field office. The relevant program offices are those that provide the funds that trigger the Section 3 obligation and are too close to the development projects funded by their programs. However, the preamble to the rule causes confusion by stating that the Office of Field Policy and Management (FPM) will filter complaints to the appropriate HUD program office, instead of every HUD program office having its own complaint process.

The 1994 regulation had an entire section about complaints and compliance, including a section with details explaining how residents could submit complaints to FHEO. Other HUD program areas such as public housing, CDBG, HOME, and RAD do not have detailed provisions for residents to register a PHA's or jurisdiction's failure to meet a program requirement like Section 3.

## SWITCH TO "LABOR HOURS WORKED" FROM "NEW HIRES"

The final rule follows the recommendations made by advocates for many years: PHAs and jurisdictions must switch their employment opportunities compliance and reporting from "new hires" to "labor hours worked" by "Section 3 workers."

However, Small PHAs, those with fewer than 250 public housing units, will not be required to report the number of labor hours worked by Section 3 workers (Note: The Section 3 definition of "Small PHA" differs from that of the PHA Plan definition.) Instead they have the option to report "qualitative efforts," such as holding job fairs, referring residents to services supporting work readiness, and outreach efforts to generate job applicants. Out of 3,747 PHAs, 2,149 are small PHAs. "Qualitative efforts" are discussed later in the "Reporting" section of this article.

The 1994 interim rule required PHAs and jurisdictions to have goals of 30% of "new hires" at projects be so-called Section 3 residents. However, advocates had long observed that some contractors would hire Section 3 residents for a short time so that they would "count" toward the 30% goal but lay them off in short order. Or, a Section 3 resident would only be given 20 hours or less of work per week. Some contractors would shift some of their existing workforce to a Section 3 project so that the contractor could claim that they did not need to hire anyone new for the Section 3 project.

## SECTION 3 WORKER

The final rule introduces a new term, "Section 3 worker," someone who currently fits or when hired within the past five years fit at least one of the following criteria:

- a. The worker's income for the previous or annualized calendar year is less than the income limit set by HUD for the program triggering Section 3 (for example 80% of the area median income, AMI, for CDBG and HOME); or,
- b. The worker is employed by a "Section

- 3 business” (explained later); or
- c. The worker is a YouthBuild participant.
- d. (YouthBuild programs receive assistance under the “Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act” and are administered by the U.S. Department of Labor)

HUD explains that the addition of “or when hired within the past five years” is intended to encourage an employer to keep Section 3 Workers.

The definition of Section 3 worker states that someone’s status as a Section 3 worker shall not be negatively affected if they have had a prior arrest or conviction. In addition, the rule clearly states that an employer is not required to hire someone just because they meet the definition of a Section 3 worker, and the Section 3 worker must be qualified for the job.

NLIHC comment: Retention is good, but does a five-year look-back period unduly reward a business that hired a low-income person at low wages five years ago and still pays low wages? Even if a person’s income grows over five years as HUD assumes, is that a realistic assumption and is that too long to look back?

NLIHC comment: The definition is not written to clearly state that a low-income person hired today could still be counted for five years going forward, but the preamble to the final rule shows that HUD intends a business to also have a five-year forward option. The rule’s section on “Recordkeeping” makes it clear that a business can look forward or backward five years.

NLIHC comment: Option ii, a worker “employed by a Section 3 business,” is a potential dead end because one option in the definition of a “Section 3 business” (option ii) uses the definition of Section 3 worker (discussed next).

## SECTION 3 BUSINESS

Section 3 is not just about employment and training opportunities – there is also an obligation to make “best efforts” to give preference in awarding contracts to businesses owned and controlled by low-income people, or to

businesses that hire a substantial number of low-income people.

A “Section 3 Business” is one that meets one of the following criteria documented within the last six-month period:

- a. Is at least 51% owned and controlled by low- or very low-income persons;
- b. More than 75% of the labor hours performed for the business over the prior three-month period were performed by Section 3 workers; or
- c. Is a business at least 51% owned and controlled by current public housing residents or residents who currently live in Section 8-assisted housing.

The final rule states that the status of a Section 3 business shall not be negatively affected by a prior arrest or conviction of the owners or employees. In addition, the rule clearly states that there is no requirement to contract or subcontract with a Section 3 business, and any Section 3 business must meet the specifications of a contract.

## SECTION 3 EMPLOYMENT PRIORITIES

The final rule reflects the statute’s requirements for giving priority to certain categories of Section 3 workers.

### PHAs

PHAs and their contractors and subcontractors must make “best efforts” to provide employment and training opportunities to Section 3 workers in the following order of priority:

- a. Residents of the public housing project funded with public housing money.
- b. Residents of a PHA’s other public housing projects, or residents with Section 8 vouchers or project-based rental assistance.
- c. YouthBuild participants.
- d. People in the metro area (or non-metro county) with income less than 80% of the area median income (AMI).

## Jurisdictions

The final rule states that jurisdictions and their contractors and subcontractors must “to the greatest extent feasible” ensure that employment and training opportunities “arising in connection with” Section 3 projects are provided to Section 3 workers who live in the metro area (or non-metro county).

The final rule adds that “where feasible” jurisdictions “should” give priority to providing employment and training opportunities to Section 3 workers who live in a project’s “service area or neighborhood” and to YouthBuild participants.

HUD defines the “service area or neighborhood” of a project as an area within one mile of the Section 3 project. If there are fewer than 5,000 people within one mile, then within a circle centered on the Section 3 project that includes at least 5,000 people.

While the final rule repeats the language in the statute, it strays from the old rule’s priorities, which gave first priority to residents of the service area or neighborhood of a project, (second priority to YouthBuild participants), third priority to homeless people, and only as a last priority other Section 3 residents in the metro area or non-metro county.

## SECTION 3 CONTRACTING PRIORITIES

### PHAs

PHAs and their contractors and subcontractors must make “best efforts” to award contracts and subcontracts to businesses that provide economic opportunities to Section 3 workers in the following order of priority:

- a. Section 3 businesses that provide economic opportunity for residents of the public housing project funded with public housing money;
- b. Section 3 businesses that provide economic opportunity for residents of the PHA’s other public housing projects, or residents assisted with

Section 8 vouchers or project-based rental assistance;

- c. YouthBuild participants; *and*,
- d. iv. Section 3 businesses that provide economic opportunity to low-income people living in the metro area (or non-metro county).

## Jurisdictions

Jurisdictions and their contractors and subcontractors must “to the greatest extent feasible” ensure that contracts for work awarded “in connection with” Section 3 projects are provided to Section 3 businesses that provide economic opportunities to Section 3 workers in the metro area (or non-metro county).

Where “feasible” jurisdictions “should” give priority to:

- a. Section 3 businesses that provide economic opportunities to Section 3 workers living in the service area or neighborhood of the project; and
- b. YouthBuild participants.

HUD defines the “service area or neighborhood” of a project as an area within one mile of the Section 3 project. If there are fewer than 5,000 people within one mile, then within a circle centered on the Section 3 project that includes at least 5,000 people.

## TARGETED SECTION 3 WORKER

This is a new idea HUD intends as an incentive to PHAs and jurisdictions to focus on reaching workers given priority in the statute and workers at Section 3 businesses. Targeted Section 3 workers are a subset of all Section 3 workers.

### PHAs

A Targeted Section 3 Worker for PHAs is:

1. A Section 3 worker employed by a Section 3 business; or,
2. A Section 3 worker who currently fits or when hired fit at least one of the following categories, as documented within the past five years:
  - c. A resident of any of the PHA’s public

- housing or any resident assisted by Section 8, whether a voucher or project-based rental assistance; or,
- d. A resident of other public housing projects or Section 8-assisted housing managed by the PHA that is using public housing assistance; or,
- e. A YouthBuild participant.

The five-year look-back is HUD’s intent to encourage long-term employment.

NLIHC comment: A worker employed by a Section 3 business might be an acceptable but not entirely accurate substitute for an actual low-income person when defining “Section 3 worker” (someone employed at a Section 3 business is merely assumed to be low income, documentation is not needed). However, it is not acceptable for the definition of “Targeted Section 3 worker” when that definition is “a worker employed by a Section 3 business concern.” Repeating a “worker employed by a Section 3 business” as one option in the definition of a “Targeted Section 3 worker” dilutes HUD’s targeting idea for benchmarking (see next section).

### Jurisdictions

A targeted Section 3 worker for jurisdictions is:

1. A Section 3 worker employed by a Section 3 business; or,
2. A Section 3 worker who currently fits or when hired fit at least one of the following categories, as documented within the past five years:
  - a. Living in the service area or neighborhood of a project; or,
  - b. A YouthBuild participant.

The problems are the same as those regarding PHAs (explained above), compounded by the geographic limitations of the rule’s definition of service area, which HUD defines as an area within one mile of the Section 3 project. If there are fewer than 5,000 people within one mile, then within a circle centered on the Section 3 project that includes at least 5,000 people. Just because someone lives in the service area or neighborhood does not mean that they are low-income.

## SECTION 3 BENCHMARKS

The final rule establishes Section 3 “benchmarks” to replace the old rule’s “goals.”

The benchmarks will be used to monitor a PHA’s and a jurisdiction’s accomplishments toward directing job opportunities to Section 3 workers and the new subcategory of Section 3 worker called “targeted Section 3 worker.” The benchmarks are the same for PHAs and jurisdictions:

1. Section 3 workers make up 25% of the total number of labor hours worked by all workers; and
2. Targeted Section 3 workers make up 5% of the total number of labor hours worked by all workers.

The 5% of targeted Section 3 workers is included as part of the overall 25% threshold.

NLIHC and other advocates commented that the benchmark of 5% for targeted Section 3 workers was far too low; at least 15% was recommended. HUD indicates that it will review benchmarks every three years and adjust if appropriate.

## SAFE HARBOR

If a PHA or jurisdiction certifies (pledges) that it has met the priorities for job and contract opportunities and has met the jobs benchmark, then HUD presumes the PHA or jurisdiction is complying with Section 3 – unless residents or advocates tell HUD about evidence that contradicts the PHA or jurisdiction. HUD calls this the “safe harbor.” At this stage, a PHA or jurisdiction would not have to continue reporting any additional Section 3 employment or contracting activities. If a PHA or jurisdiction cannot certify that it has met the job and contract priorities and jobs benchmark, then it will have to send “qualitative efforts” reports to HUD describing those efforts (discussed in “Reporting” next). Residents and advocates should monitor and report to HUD any evidence that contradicts a PHA’s or jurisdiction’s certifications or qualitative efforts.



## REPORTING

The reporting requirements are the same for PHAs and jurisdictions, requiring them to report to HUD each year their benchmark data:

- Total number of labor hours worked;
- Total number of labor hours worked by Section 3 workers; and,
- Total number of labor hours worked by targeted Section 3 workers.

This includes labor hours worked by contractors and subcontractors.

Section 3 workers' and targeted Section 3 workers' labor hours may be counted for five years from when their status as a Section 3 worker or targeted Section 3 worker is established following the "recordkeeping" section of the rule. HUD states that this five-year period is there to "ensure that workers meet the definition of a Section 3 worker or targeted Section 3 worker at the time of hire or the first reporting period..." This means a PHA or jurisdiction can count back five years or count forward for five years.

The final rule does not require professional services be included in the benchmark. Professional services are defined as non-construction services that require an advanced degree or professional licensing such as contracts for legal services, financial consulting, accounting, environmental assessments, and architectural and engineering services. PHAs and jurisdictions may include labor hours worked by people in professional services when counting Section 3 workers and targeted Section 3 workers for their benchmark, without including them in the total number of hours worked. This could increase a PHA's or jurisdiction's benchmark number.

If a contractor or subcontractor does not track labor hours, a PHA or jurisdiction "may" accept the contractor's or subcontractor's "good faith assessment" of the labor hours of full-time or part-time employees.

If the benchmark is not met, a PHA or jurisdiction will be required to use a HUD form to report on

the "qualitative" nature of its activities or the activities of contractors and subcontractors. Small PHAs may choose to only report their qualitative efforts. The final rule lists 14 examples of possible qualitative efforts, such as reaching out to generate job applicants, holding job fairs, connecting people with entities that help draft resumes and prepare for job interviews, referring people to job placement services, and reaching out to identify bids from Section 3 businesses.

## SECTION 3 PROJECT

The final rule defines a "Section 3 project" as one that is not funded with the public housing Capital and Operating Funds, but instead receives at least \$200,000 in funds from other HUD programs, such as CDBG and HOME, for housing rehabilitation or new housing construction or for other public construction projects (such as road repair). The per-project threshold is \$100,000 for various Lead Hazard and Healthy Homes programs. NLIHC had long raised concerns about the old rule's \$100,000 per project threshold (for non-lead projects); the new rule makes things even worse by going up to \$200,000.

A "project" is defined as "the site or sites together with any buildings and improvements located on the site(s) that are under common ownership, management, and financing." With this definition of "project" and a \$200,000 per project threshold, many contractors would not have to comply with Section 3. Contractors awarded significant amounts of Section 3 covered funds in a single year to spend, all together, on a number of small, discreet activities (such as homeowner housing rehabilitation) would not have to hire Section 3 workers or subcontract with Section 3 businesses because each component activity costs less than \$200,000. For example, if a contractor receives \$1 million in CDBG funds to rehabilitate seven single-family homes and the contractor spends \$130,000 per home, that contractor would not have to comply with Section 3 because each home is considered a single project and not one of the seven rehabs had a contract for more than \$200,000.

## RENTAL ASSISTANCE DEMONSTRATION (RAD)

The Notices that govern the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program limit Section 3 to the construction- or rehabilitation-related activities identified in the RAD Financing Plan and RAD Conversion Commitment. After the conversion, Section 3 no longer applies unless additional federal financial assistance is later used for rehabilitation. NLIHC has long urged HUD to extend Section 3 obligations post-conversion because application of Section 3 obligations that apply to permanent PHA staff – a potential source of Section 3 training and employment – can greatly shrink if a significant portion of the public housing portfolio is converted, or can be totally lost if an entire portfolio is converted.

The public housing portion of the Section 3 statute that applies to the operating assistance provided by the public housing program does not extend to public housing converted to Project-Based Rental Assistance. PHAs will continue, however, to “manage” or have a controlling interest in public housing converted to Project-Based Vouchers (PBVs). Therefore, NLIHC has urged that the RAD Notice be modified to state that Section 3 will still apply to the permanent staff slots of the entities owning or managing a development converted to PBVs. This would extend some Section 3 training and employment opportunities post-conversion, rather than reduce them. Without such a change in the RAD Notice, economic opportunities shrink for residents of RAD-converted properties because only new construction or rehabilitation will trigger Section 3 after RAD conversion; as with public housing, Section 3 obligations should continue to apply to non-professional services staff involved in project operations.

## MULTIPLE FUNDING SOURCES

When a project is funded with public housing funds and also meets the Section 3 project criteria (receiving additional HUD funds such as CDBG), the project must follow the public housing Section 3 requirements for the public housing

portion of the funds and may follow the public housing Section 3 requirements or the Section 3 project requirements for the community development funds. When a Section 3 project receives housing and community development funds from two different HUD programs (for example CDBG and HOME), HUD will tell the jurisdiction which HUD program office to report to. This *Advocates’ Guide* does not summarize this section of the final rule.

## FUNDING

There is no independent funding for Section 3. The number of jobs created or contracts provided to Section 3 individuals or businesses depends on the level of funding for the applicable public housing or housing or community development program.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

NLIHC has recommended that the Biden Administration review the Section 3 proposed rule published by the Obama Administration, identify acceptable provisions of the final rule, meet with advocates and residents, and issue a revised Section 3 rule.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

The successes of Section 3 are almost exclusively attributed to oversight, monitoring, and advocacy by local advocates and community groups, as well as some local staff of recipient agencies implementing Section 3.

Advocates should contact resident organizations, local unions, minority and women-owned businesses, community development corporations, and employment and training organizations to discuss how they and their members or clients can use the Section 3 preferences to increase employment and contracting opportunities for the targeted low-income and very low-income individuals and Section 3 businesses.

In addition, advocates should meet with PHAs and other local recipients of housing and community development dollars (generally

cities and counties) to discuss whether they are meeting their Section 3 obligations with respect to public housing funds or the CDBG, HOME, and RAD programs. Advocates should create or improve upon a local plan to fully implement Section 3 and seek information on the number of labor hours worked by low-income and very low-income individuals in accordance with Section 3 and the number of contracts with Section 3 businesses. Compliance with Section 3 should be addressed in the annual PHA Plan process or the Annual Action Plan updates to the Consolidated Plan process.

If compliance is a problem, urge HUD to monitor and conduct a compliance review of the non-complying recipients of federal dollars for public housing or housing and community development. Low-income persons and businesses with a complaint about recipients of HUD funds or contractors' failure to comply with their Section 3 obligations should consider filing an official complaint with HUD.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Advocates should speak to legislators about the connection between HUD funding and jobs, and work with the Biden Administration as it reviews the Section 3 proposed rule published by the Obama Administration, identifies acceptable provisions of the final rule, meets with advocates and residents, and assess any whether revising the Section 3 rule should be issued by the new HUD. Advocates should recommend that the Section 3 requirements that currently apply to PHA staff involved in a PHA's day-to-day operations be extended to properties that convert to RAD beyond post-conversion rehabilitation or construction.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

HUD's FHEO Section 3 website, <https://bit.ly/2pSnTR1>.

Barely visible on that page is a PDF of FAQs, <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/11SECFAQS.PDF>.

The HUD Exchange page for Section 3, which

includes a menu of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), is at <https://bit.ly/31VILcX>.

The *Federal Register* version of the final Section 3 rule is at: <https://bit.ly/33e0Vos>.

An easier to read version of the final rule is at: <https://bit.ly/30mPLf7>.

The benchmark *Federal Register* notice is at: <https://bit.ly/3520zko>.

An easier to read version of the benchmark notice is at: <https://bit.ly/3j2PbKc>.

NLIHC has both a detailed Summary and Analysis of the final Section 3 rule and a shorter outline summarizing the final Section 3 rule on NLIHC's Public Housing webpage at: <https://nlihc.org/explore-issues/housing-programs/public-housing>.

HUD published three separate guidance documents for implementing the new Section 3 rule for various programs:

- [Notice CPD-21-07](#) pertains to HOME and the national Housing Trust Fund.
- [Notice CPD-21-09](#) pertains to CDBG.
- ReCap posted [a two-page document](#) pertaining to RAD.

# Continuum of Care Planning

---

By Kristi Schulenberg, National Alliance to End Homelessness

**Administering Agency:** HUD’s Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs within the Office of Community Planning and Development

**Year Started:** 1994

**Population Targeted:** People experiencing homelessness

**See Also:** For related information, refer to the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Programs, Ten-Year Plans to End Homelessness*, and the *Federal Surplus Property to Address Homelessness* sections of this guide

The Continuum of Care (CoC) planning process is used by communities to apply for funding from HUD’s CoC program. Through the CoC planning process, government agencies, service providers, advocates, and other stakeholders evaluate the needs of homeless people in the community, assess the performance of existing activities, and prioritize activities going forward. The CoC process was introduced by HUD in the mid-1990s. It was codified into law by Congress through the “Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009.”

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

The CoC process was developed by HUD in 1994 to coordinate the distribution of several competitive homeless assistance programs. Prior to the CoC process, organizations applied individually for funding from several homeless assistance programs. As a result, there was little coordination between these programs or between different organizations receiving funding in the same community. The CoC process was established to promote coordination within communities and between programs. It was also designed to bring together a broader collection of stakeholders such as public agencies, the faith and business communities, and mainstream

service providers. Guidelines for the CoC planning process were included in annual Notices of Funding Availability (NOFAs), recently changed to Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) in 2021. HUD regularly modifies the process.

On May 20, 2009, President Barack Obama signed the “HEARTH Act” (Public Law 111-22), providing congressional authorization of the CoC process. Regulations governing the CoC program were published in the summer of 2012. The “HEARTH Act” reauthorized the housing title of the “McKinney-Vento Act.” HUD began issuing regulations in 2011, with the release of interim regulations on the Emergency Solutions Grant and the Homeless Management Information Systems, along with a final regulation on the definition of homelessness.

Regulations on the CoC program were published in the summer of 2012. Key changes made by the “HEARTH Act” include changes to outcome measures, funding incentives, eligibility for assistance, matching requirements, rural assistance, and administrative funding.

## SUMMARY

The term Continuum of Care (CoC) is used in many ways and can refer to the planning process, the collection of stakeholders involved in the planning process, the geographic area covered by the CoC, or the actual grant received from HUD.

The CoC planning process is typically lead and staffed by either a local government agency or a community-based nonprofit. The geography covered by a CoC can vary, covering an entire city, state, or a collection of counties. The goal of the CoC is to create a system-wide response to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and nonrecurring. The CoC is tasked with compiling information about homelessness in the community, including information about homeless populations and performance of homeless service programs and the community in reducing homelessness.

In recent years, HUD has incentivized coordination between CoCs and various entities including Consolidated Plan jurisdictions, public housing authorities, Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Runaway and Homeless Youth, Head Start programs, and other programs.

Due to the pandemic, there was no FY 2020 CoC Program Competition, instead awarded \$2.5 billion to renew approximately 6,600 existing grants for local homeless assistance programs across the country. Renewed funding continued to support various interventions for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

The FY2021 CoC NOFO was released on August 18, 2021, and the submission deadline was November 16, 2021. FY2021 made approximately \$2.7 billion available nationally to serve people experiencing homelessness. In addition, \$102,000 was made available nationally for Domestic Violence Bonus Projects (only \$50,000,000 was made available in FY2019).

The “HEARTH Act” placed more of the responsibility for measuring outcomes and overseeing performance on the leaders of local CoCs. Like the FY2019 CoC competition, the FY 2021 NOFO continued to require CoCs to submit data on their system’s performance and to place a strong emphasis on performance measures that ensure homelessness is a rare, brief, and one-time experience. As CoC data collection and quality improve, HUD will likely use requested data to establish baselines for measuring improvements in future competitions. Demonstrating reductions in homelessness, the time people experience homelessness, and the effectiveness of programs continue to be emphasized.

The FY2021 CoC NOFO competition deemphasized system performance (however, HUD clarified that it would be a higher priority in the FY2022 CoC Competition) instead focusing policy priorities (1) to determine and address the impact of COVID-19, (2) continue promoting racial equity in homelessness and in the local

COC competition process, including in the local planning process current and former homeless persons with lived experience, (3) using a Housing First approach to ending homelessness, (4) reducing unsheltered homelessness, and (5) partnering with housing, health, and services agencies to improve all available resources in light of the “CARES Act” and American Rescue Plan and ensuring that communities maximize the use of mainstream and other community-based resources when serving people experiencing homelessness.

Finally, the FY2020 NOFO made Tribes and Tribally Designated Housing Entities (TDHEs) eligible to apply for projects through existing CoCs, made points available if including at least one new permanent supportive housing or rapid re-housing program that utilizes housing subsidies or subsidized housing units funded through other sources other than COC or emergency solutions grant programs, and made points available if including at least one new permanent supportive housing or rapid re-housing program that leverages health care resources to support program participants.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

The CoC planning process is intended to focus on the needs of homeless people in the community and should focus on the most effective strategies for reducing homelessness. Yet many CoCs struggle to assist lower performing providers to improve their performance or shift to more effective strategies. Similarly, accessing mainstream resources, generally available for low-income people, is often difficult for people experiencing homelessness. For example, there are numerous barriers for homeless people to access employment services, housing assistance, cash assistance, and treatment services, and due to historical and ongoing structural racism, these barriers are magnified for Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) experiencing homelessness.

Advocates play a crucial role in ensuring that the CoC equitably serves people most in need of assistance and expands access to mainstream

resources. For CoCs to be effective, it is important that key stakeholders have a seat at the table. In many communities, the needs of children, BIPOC, LGBTQ people, veterans, people with disabilities, youth, and domestic violence survivors are not always adequately represented. Advocates should work to ensure that they are part of the CoC planning process. By joining their local CoC, advocates can inform and shape a community's priorities in addressing homelessness for current and emerging populations.

Critically, all stakeholders should participate in data collection efforts whenever appropriate and ensure that programs achieve positive and equitably outcomes. Information about the CoC Program and the local CoC coordinator can be found at HUD's Homelessness Resource Exchange website.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Alliance to End Homelessness, 202-638-1526, [www.endhomelessness.org](http://www.endhomelessness.org).

HUD Homelessness Resource Exchange, <https://www.hudexchange.info>.

# Additional Housing Programs: Housing First

---

By Kim Johnson, Policy Analyst, NLIHC

**T**wo decades of research and evaluation support the efficacy of Housing First as a means of ending homelessness, including for chronically homeless individuals (people with severe disabilities, including mental illness or substance use disorders, who have been homeless for a long time). Housing First prioritizes access to safe, stable, accessible housing with services when needed to ensure long-term housing stability and effective treatment for underlying health conditions, including substance use and mental health disorders.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

Housing First is a whole-systems model for addressing homelessness that prioritizes access to permanent, stable housing with services when needed. Housing First recognizes that stable housing is a prerequisite for effective psychiatric and substance abuse treatment, for stable employment, and for improving quality of life. Once stably housed, individuals are better able to take advantage of wrap-around services that help support stability, employment, and recovery – goals that are difficult to attain without stable housing.

Rapid re-housing (RRH) and permanent supportive housing (PSH) can both utilize the Housing First model. In RRH, individuals and families experiencing homelessness receive assistance identifying, leasing, and moving into new housing quickly and are connected to supportive services if needed. Similarly, PSH provides longer-term housing assistance and voluntary supportive services, including health care, employment, and treatment services, to ensure people experiencing chronic homelessness can attain long-term housing stability.

## Evidence Supporting Housing First

Research shows that Housing First rapidly ends homelessness, is cost-effective, and improves quality of life and community functioning. This model was first developed for people with serious psychiatric or substance use disorders who had been homeless for long periods of time and was later extended to all homeless populations. Housing First has been credited with helping reduce chronic homelessness by 20% since 2007 and veteran homelessness by 50% since 2009.

Key to the success of Housing First is its emphasis on low-barrier access to permanent, stable housing with supportive services when needed. Access to Housing First programs is not contingent upon minimum income requirements, sobriety, criminal history, successful completion of a treatment program, or participation in supportive services; rather, Housing First recognizes that stable, supportive, accessible housing is fundamental to being able to effectively utilize wrap-around services. The model eschews a “one-size-fits-all” approach to addressing homelessness and instead pairs people and families with the level of financial assistance and supportive services necessary to achieve long-term housing stability.

A random assignment study found that homelessness programs utilizing low-barrier access to housing and services were more successful in reducing homelessness than programs where housing and services were contingent upon sobriety. When individuals were provided access to stable, affordable housing and given autonomy in deciding whether and when to use services, 79% remained stably housed at the end of six months, compared to 27% of individuals in the control group.

In addition to greater housing retention, Housing First has shown success in reducing drug use among chronically homeless people with a history of substance use, more effectively

increasing outpatient service utilization, and increasing outreach to and engagement of clients not appropriately served by the public mental health system. Housing First has also been shown to decrease costs among chronically homeless individuals utilizing emergency medical services. Housing First provides a vital option to the many people who are not able to maintain perfect treatment immediately after exiting homelessness and ensures they will not be relegated to long-term homelessness.

### **Attempts to Undermine Housing First**

Despite its proven success and bipartisan support in Congress, during its tenure the Trump Administration sought to replace Housing First models with programs that would deny people and families experiencing homelessness stable housing if they were unable to maintain treatment or attain perfect sobriety. This shift in policy not only ignored the decades of research attesting to the validity of Housing First, but failed to address the underlying, systemic causes of homelessness and housing instability.

Under past Republican and Democratic Administrations, HUD and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) have endorsed Housing First as a best practice to ending homelessness and the model has enjoyed bipartisan support from congressional leaders. First incorporated into federal recommendations under the George W. Bush Administration, Housing First was credited with reducing homelessness by 30% between 2005 and 2007. During the Great Recession, implementation of RRH under the Obama Administration helped an estimated 700,000 people at-risk of or experiencing homelessness find stable housing.

Rather than building on these successes, the Trump Administration rejected decades of research, learning, and bipartisan support for Housing First to focus instead on returning to failed “behavioral modification” strategies. Trump Administration officials made several false claims about Housing First, relying on manipulated data and misrepresented research to make its case.

Former USICH Director Robert Marbut, appointed under the Trump Administration and relieved from his position in February 2021, frequently used misleading and inaccurate data to falsely claim that homelessness has increased as a result of the widespread adoption of Housing First. Marbut inflated the number of people experiencing homelessness by including individuals in RRH and PSH programs in his homelessness count – individuals living in their own apartments or houses and who are, by definition, not homeless. He also falsely claimed that Housing First does not provide supportive services when needed and has drawn false conclusions about the underlying causes of homelessness to support his misguided policies.

Rather than Housing First, Marbut advocated for an approach that would make it more difficult for homeless families and chronically homeless individuals to obtain safe, stable housing. While Marbut touted his approach as “treatment first,” in reality, high-barrier programs that mandate perfect sobriety or treatment as a prerequisite to housing are not nearly as successful at ensuring long-term housing stability. A metaanalysis of existing research found that 65-85% of individuals participating in Housing First programs remained housed in the two years after entering the program, compared to just 23-39% of individuals in programs emphasizing “treatment first.” Even USICH’s own documents support the efficacy of Housing First programs, finding that pairing Housing First with supportive services when needed results in housing retention rates between 75-85% for individuals and 80-90% for families.

Available research on the efficacy of “treatment first” approaches to ending homelessness did not yield promising results. One 2004 study concluded “there is no empirical support for the practice of requiring individuals to participate in psychiatric treatment or attain sobriety before being housed.” Studies have also suggested that requiring “perfect abstinence” as a prerequisite for housing can actually hinder participants in achieving long-term housing stability, recovery, and employment.



## **Housing First, Homelessness, and COVID**

Access to safe, stable, accessible, and affordable housing is a key determinant of health, a connection that has never been more apparent than throughout the ongoing pandemic. Policies that would actively deny people experiencing homelessness or housing instability access to housing risk furthering the spread of coronavirus, prolonging the pandemic, and exposing already marginalized people to irreparable harm.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) enacted a federal moratorium on evictions for nonpayment of rent lasting from September 2020 to August 2021, citing the “historic threat to public health” posed by the virus and noting “eviction moratoria...can be an effective public health measure utilized to prevent the spread of communicable disease.” The CDC further stated that “housing stability helps protect public health because homelessness increases the likelihood of individuals moving into congregate settings, such as homeless shelters, which then puts individuals at higher risk to COVID-19.”

People experiencing homelessness who contract coronavirus are twice as likely to be hospitalized, two to four times as likely to require critical care, and two to three times as likely to die from the illness as the general population. People who are homeless are more susceptible to severe complications from the virus due to a higher prevalence of underlying health conditions, lack of vaccine access, and the inability to engage in preventative measures recommended by the CDC, including social distancing, regular handwashing, and avoiding high-touch surfaces. The greater risk of severe illness and death for people experiencing homelessness who contract coronavirus makes ensuring low-barrier access to safe, stable, accessible housing both a moral imperative and a public health necessity.

## **FORECAST FOR 2022**

During his campaign, President Biden committed to pursuing a “comprehensive approach to ending homelessness,” starting with developing a strategy to make housing a right for all people. Housing First’s foundational

tenet of providing people experiencing or on the verge of homelessness low-barrier access to affordable housing and supportive services when needed is central to realizing this goal. Indeed, President Biden has pledged to ensure the federal government “commits to a ‘Housing First’ approach to ending homelessness,” including by conducting a comprehensive review of federal housing policies to ensure they incentivize a Housing First approach. Adequately adopting a Housing First approach to ending homelessness requires a major investment in expanding housing vouchers, as well as developing and preserving homes affordable to the lowest-income people.

In March 2021, President Biden signed into law the “American Rescue Plan Act,” a \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package with nearly \$50 billion in essential housing and homelessness assistance. The bill provided \$5 billion in emergency housing vouchers (EHVs) targeted specifically to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness and those escaping domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking. An additional \$5 billion in homelessness assistance was also allocated to provide rental assistance and supportive services, develop affordable rental housing, and acquire and convert non-congregate shelters like hotels into permanent affordable housing or non-congregate emergency shelter.

In December 2021, Congress enacted the “Build Back Better Act,” a \$1.75 trillion economic recovery package that includes over \$150 billion in affordable housing and community development investments. The bill provides \$15 billion in funding for the national Housing Trust Fund, the only federal program dedicated to the construction, preservation, and operation of housing affordable to households with extremely low incomes. The private sector cannot, on its own, build or maintain homes at a price extremely low-income people can afford, making it necessary for the federal government to play a leading role in the construction and maintenance of these homes. The bill also allocates \$65 billion to repair and preserve the nation’s deteriorating

public housing stock, home to over 2 million households with the lowest incomes.

The “Build Back Better Act” provides \$25 billion to expand housing vouchers to an estimated 300,000 new households, including a \$7.1 billion set-aside for vouchers targeted to people experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness. These vouchers will help bridge the growing gap between wages and housing costs, keep people stably housed, and ensure people experiencing homelessness can find safe, affordable housing.

The housing voucher investments provided in the “Build Back Better Act” represent the most significant expansion of the program in its history, and a significant down payment towards the goal of providing universal housing assistance. With greater investments in this program, low-income households will be able to keep more of their income for other essentials like food, medical care, education, and transportation, and will be able to save money for larger investments, like a down payment on a home or a child’s college savings account.

It is imperative to invest in culturally responsive homeless assistance systems as well, so that people who slip into homelessness can be quickly identified, moved into homes, and engaged in Housing First programs with supportive services if needed. In order to begin addressing the longstanding racial inequities in housing, it is also vital to target resources to historically marginalized communities. Targeting resources to those with the greatest need would increase the impact of investments and help build up communities that have faced generations of disinvestment.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

Having a safe, stable, affordable place to live and the right supports can lead to positive outcomes beyond those provided by services alone. Over two decades of research prove that housing stability, quality of life, and community functioning are consistently higher among participants in Housing First programs.

Moving away from evidence-based approaches to addressing homelessness would deny individuals and families in need of safe, decent, affordable and accessible homes. Requiring treatment or sobriety as a prerequisite to receiving stable housing does not solve homelessness – rather, it can make solving homelessness more difficult by demanding people overcome the challenges of substance abuse or mental illness without the stability and safety of a home. “Treatment first” ignores the systemic issues that allow people to live unhoused and ensures there will always be people who are homeless.

Congress and the Biden Administration should continue working together to increase investments in decent, safe, affordable, and accessible rental homes for people with the lowest incomes; work to actively undo the generations of racist policies that have disproportionately exposed Black and Native people to housing instability and homelessness; and continue to pursue Housing First as a proven solution to homelessness.

# HUD-Funded Service Coordination Programs: ROSS, Family Self-Sufficiency, and Service Coordinators in Multifamily Housing for Elderly and Disabled

---

By Melissa Harris, Director of Government Affairs, American Association of Service Coordinators

**S**ervice coordinators are the foundation of successful affordable housing. They ensure that older adults who reside in the limited number of federally subsidized rental units can thrive in their communities instead of moving to costlier facilities that provide unnecessary higher levels of care or to inappropriate or sub-standard housing. Service coordinators in family housing understand that putting a roof over a family is just the first step to a journey of economic and personal stability that could break a cycle of generational poverty.

HUD currently has three distinct service coordinator programs, each with its own federally appropriated funding stream:

- Service Coordinators in Multifamily Housing for the Elderly/Disabled.
- The Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) Service Coordinator Program.
- The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program.

HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) administers the ROSS Service Coordinator and FSS programs. The Service Coordinators in Multifamily Housing for the Elderly/Disabled program funds the work of service coordinators in Section 202 housing and is administered by HUD's Office of Multifamily Housing Programs.

A service coordinator is a social service staff person hired or contracted by a property owner, housing management company, public housing agency (PHA), resident association (RA), or Tribal Housing entity.

In the past, a service coordinator acted as an information and referral resource for families, seniors, and persons with disabilities residing in publicly funded subsidized apartments or other affordable housing environments. However, the role of the service coordinator has evolved to a more hands-on, enhanced level of coordination, motivation, and assistance.

This model represents a proactive approach to service coordination in which the service coordinator reaches out to and engages residents, conducts non-clinical assessments of resident interests and needs, and makes referrals to service providers in the community as necessary and appropriate. The service coordinator's primary role is to coordinate the provision of supportive services and provide access to benefits and community-based resources for low-income residents. Service coordinators also empower residents to remain independent and increase their assets and self-sufficiency by influencing positive behavior changes.

## HISTORY

Service coordination is a growing profession that expanded when Congress created HUD's Service Coordinator Program through Section 808 of the "National Affordable Housing Act of 1990" (also known as the "Cranston-Gonzalez Affordable Housing Act," Public Law 101-625). This law gave HUD the authority to use Section 8 funds to employ service coordinators in Section 202 Multifamily Housing for the Elderly/Disabled. The act also enacted the FSS program.

Service coordination programs received additional authority through the 1992 "Housing and Community Development Act" (HCDA; Public Law 102-550). The HCDA Amendments of 1992 amended Section 808 through Sections

674 and 677 and added Sections 675 and 676. Section 851 of the “American Homeownership and Economic Opportunity Act of 2000” (Public Law 106-569) further amended these acts. These amendments allowed service coordinators to serve low-income elderly and disabled persons living in the vicinity of the development and expanded the program by broadening authority for funding of service coordinators in most HUD-assisted and conventional public housing (PH) developments designated for the elderly and people with disabilities. The “Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2015” authorized voluntary FSS participation for owners of private multifamily projects that have a project-based Section 8 Housing Assistance Payment contract.

As a response to the “Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998” (the “Public Housing Reform Act”), ROSS is a redefined and restructured combination of programs funded in prior years: The Tenant Opportunities Program, Economic Development and Supportive Services Program, and Public Housing Service Coordinators Program.

## PROGRAM SUCCESSES

Ninety-three percent of elderly residents with service coordinators continued living independently instead of moving to facilities with higher care levels in 2020. Living independently is significant because it allows residents to continue living in their communities and saves the costs associated with their move to an institutional setting. The majority of people in federally assisted housing do not have the financial means to support their care and must rely on Medicaid to afford long-term care, assisted living, or nursing homes. Nationally, it costs taxpayers 66% less to serve low-income older adults in affordable housing with a service coordinator than in a nursing home. Further, national research conducted in the past 30 years has chronicled the widely recognized preference by older adults to remain independent and in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.

HUD has invested in a new reporting model called Standards for Success (SfS) that all Multifamily Service Coordinators and ROSS Service Coordinators began using in 2019. For the first time in program history, HUD has the ability to track outcomes that may be related to service coordinator-led programming and assistance using resident-level data in addition to aggregate data. HUD PIH has created a data dashboard that allows ROSS grantees to track outcomes and compare their programs with others using SfS data.

National data about service coordination is also available from the American Association of Service Coordinators’ (AASC) online documentation system, which has shown the benefits of service coordination in terms of providing access to services and supports, increased length of independent living, and improved health outcomes for elderly residents through wellness and healthy habits programs, health status checks, and other services arranged for and brought to the property by the service coordinator. Additionally, the AASC Online system has identified cost savings for residents through their access to needed services, benefits, and supports and for property owners/managers by preventing evictions, intervening faster when tenancy issues arise, and keeping the property “leased up.”

HUD’s Office of Policy Development and Research has evaluated the level of satisfaction among property managers in multifamily housing properties with the provision of service coordination. The report, *Multifamily Property Managers’ Satisfaction with Service Coordination*, was based on a survey of property managers in multifamily developments who have or did not have a service coordinator program in place.

Overall, the report found a high level of satisfaction from property managers regarding the service coordinator program, as well as a strong belief that service coordinators improve the quality of life for residents in their housing properties. The report also describes longer resident occupancies in properties with a service coordinator when compared to properties without

the position. Specifically, the length of occupancy in developments with a service coordinator was 10% longer than at developments without a service coordinator. This increased length of independent living serves to reduce the long-term care costs for this population.

The value of service coordination has been underscored during the coronavirus pandemic. Surveys of service coordinators conducted in 2020 separately by the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University and Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health found that service coordinators have played an especially critical role in the health and safety of older adults during the pandemic. As trusted leaders in their communities, service coordinators have been a source for reliable information, ensured supports were in place when services were disrupted, and facilitated on-site vaccination clinics. Service coordinators have also increased their focus on preventing social isolation and helping residents use the internet and devices to remain connected to their communities and manage chronic conditions through telehealth during this time.

## PROGRAM SUMMARIES

### **Service Coordinators in Multifamily Housing for the Elderly/Disabled and Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency Service Coordinators**

On average, service coordinators assist each of the residents they serve more than 30 times per year. Most of that assistance addresses social determinants of health, including access to meals, transportation, and positive social interaction. Service coordinators also regularly help residents understand medical plans and billing, access translation services, and adhere to care plans once they return to the property from hospital, rehab or long-term care stays.

Service coordinators also collaborate with community providers to host regular programs that inform residents about managing chronic health conditions such as diabetes and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). Preventive programs are even more common, with service coordinators bringing in falls

prevention instructors and mobile podiatrists and dentists. They also partner with nursing schools to host blood pressure checks and flu vaccine clinics. Coordinators reporting through the AASC online case management system organized more than 16,000 wellness programs in 2020.

The service coordinator position is funded to carry out the following activities:

- Asses each elderly resident’s needs in Activities of Daily Living and determine their respective service needs.
- Assist residents with obtaining needed community-based services and/or public benefits.
- Motivate residents to adopt self-directed care options that maximize independence and promote wellness.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of supportive services provided to residents individually and collectively.
- Identify and network with appropriate community-based supports and services.
- Advocate on behalf of residents individually and collectively to ensure their needs are met.
- Assist residents with establishing and working with RAs/Resident Councils, as requested.
- Assist residents in setting up informal support networks.
- Assist heads of family households with removing barriers to gainful employment and self-sufficiency.
- Assist residents with resolving problems with their tenancy.
- Develop and update a profile of the property through resident capacity and needs assessments to acquire appropriate health, wellness, education, and other programs for the housing community.
- Develop and acquire appropriate health and wellness programs for the housing community.

- Develop after-school youth, job readiness, literacy, volunteer, and financial management programs for residents and their families.
- Develop health/wellness and other property-wide outcomes to promote improved health conditions among residents as well as increased independence and financial self-sufficiency.
- Perform other functions to eliminate barriers to enable frail and at-risk low-income elderly, people with disabilities, and families to live with dignity and independence.

Eligible applicants for Service Coordinator in Housing for the Elderly and Disabled funds include owners of HUD-assisted multifamily housing, namely developments built with or subsidized by the following programs: Section 202, project-based Section 8, Section 236, and Section 221(d)(3) Below-Market Interest Rate. All housing must be designed or designated for sole occupancy by elderly persons aged 62 and older, or by people with disabilities aged 18 to 61. Prior to FY14, funds were distributed by national competitive grant processes through HUD Notices of Funding Availability (NOFAs). Beginning with FY14, federal appropriations have been insufficient to allow for new grants in the Service Coordinator in Housing for the Elderly and Disabled program. Currently, federal appropriations for this program are distributed by one-year grant renewal/extension procedures.

Although HUD allows service coordinators to be funded through a property's residual receipts funds or to be incorporated into the property's operations budget, most federally assisted properties and PHAs do not have sufficient resources in their operating budgets or are unable to complete a modest rent increase to staff service coordinators.

Eligible applicants for ROSS Service Coordinator funds include PHAs, tribes/tribally designated housing entities, RAs such as resident management corporations, resident councils, and intermediary resident organizations and nonprofit organizations supported by residents and/or PHAs. Funds are distributed by national

competitive grant processes through HUD NOFAs.

### **Family Self-Sufficiency**

The FSS program helps Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) holders and PH residents to build assets, increase their earnings, and achieve other individual goals including homeownership, if desired. FSS supplements stable, affordable housing in two ways: (1) with case management to help families overcome barriers to work and develop individualized skills training and services plans and (2) with escrow accounts that grow as families' earnings rise. The program is voluntary and allows participants up to five years to achieve their goals and "graduate" from the program.

The FSS program is administered through PHAs that elect to participate in FSS by filing an FSS Action Plan with HUD. Housing agencies may apply for funding for FSS coordinator costs as part of an annual competitive grant process.

Each family participating in the FSS program works with an FSS coordinator who assists the family in developing an individual training and services plan and helps the family access work-promoting services in the community, such as résumé building, job search, job counseling, and education and training. The nature of the services varies based on families' needs and local program offerings.

A significant component of the FSS program is the escrow account that serves as both a work incentive and an asset-building tool. Like most families in public or assisted housing, participants in the FSS program must pay higher rental payments if their incomes increase. FSS participants, however, have an opportunity to obtain a refund of some or all of these increased rent payments. As the rent of an FSS participant increases due to increased earnings, an amount generally equal to the rent increase is deposited into an escrow account monthly. Upon graduation, the participant receives all of the escrowed funds to meet a need they have identified. If the housing agency agrees, the participant may also make an interim withdrawal when needed to meet expenses related to work

or other goals specified in the participant’s FSS plan. A participant who fails to successfully complete the FSS program loses the funds in his or her escrow account.

Congress has appropriated funds for FSS grants, but private multifamily projects that have a project-based Section 8 Housing Assistance Payment contract are not applicable. However, owners who participate in FSS may now use residual receipts to hire FSS coordinators.

## FUNDING

For FY21, Congress appropriated \$125 million for the Service Coordinators in Multifamily Housing for the Elderly and Disabled grant program. This was \$25 million more than the FY20 appropriation. It allowed for the renewal of existing grants and will result in a new Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) to distribute remaining funds to new grantees. These new grants will be the first in nearly a decade.

At the time of this guide’s writing, the House and Senate FY22 appropriations bills would maintain the \$125 million funding level. At this amount, it is expected that a portion of this fiscal year’s funds would be put toward a NOFA as well. Funding for new service coordinators is also included in the “Build Back Better Act,” which is under negotiation at the time of writing. The bill calls for \$450 million for Section 202 that would go toward new construction and new service coordinators.

The FSS program also saw a \$25 million funding increase in FY21 to \$105 million and that total is expected to rise again in FY22. The House and Senate are respectively proposing \$150 million and \$120 million for FSS. Both chambers have requested level funding of \$35 million for ROSS service coordinators.

The FY21 spending bill also included \$14 million for a two-year extension of the Integrated Wellness in Supportive Housing Demonstration (IWISH), which pairs service coordinators and wellness nurses in HUD senior housing with the goal of improving resident health outcomes. The three-year demonstration was initially set to

end in September 2020. Contracts for the two-year extension began in FY22 and are set to run through September 2023.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

### **Service Coordinators in Multifamily Housing for the Elderly and Disabled Grant Program**

There continues to be a need for a multifaceted strategy for funding service coordinators that includes maintaining the service coordinator grant programs and increasing the ability for routine staffing of service coordinators from a property’s operating budget through modest rent adjustments or through the property’s residual receipts. Although statutory authority exists to allow HUD-subsidized properties to fund service coordinators, many senior housing facilities continue to be unable to secure the necessary rent adjustments to accommodate them. Currently, fewer than half (approximately 5,000) of the eligible properties have a service coordinator on staff. There is a critical need for service coordinators in these properties to aid with accessing benefits and supportive social and health/wellness services to maintain independence as well as improve the health outcomes for these low-income elderly tenants.

There is also a need to expand the funding for community-based service coordinators to assist frail older adults and non-elderly people with disabilities in the surrounding community where the property is located. Even though Section 851 of the “American Homeownership and Economic Opportunity Act of 2000” (Public Law 106-569) granted authority to enable service coordinators to assist residents in the surrounding community, there are insufficient funds to enable service coordinators to effectively assist these residents, especially as the needs of this population are increasing as residents age in place.

Additionally, Section 515 of the “American Housing Act of 1949” (Public Law 81-171) provided preliminary language for the use of service coordinators at rural multifamily housing developments administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). In the 515 program, the service coordinator can be funded

through the property's operations budget. Again, lack of sufficient resources in the operations budgets at these properties has prevented many of them from staffing a service coordinator. If a Section 515 Rural Housing property has a Section 8 contract, they are also eligible to apply for Service Coordinators in Multifamily Housing for the Elderly/Disabled new grant funds, if available, and are eligible for one-year extension funding for existing grants.

### **Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency Service Coordinator Grant Program**

The need for service coordination in PHAs continues to be a critical concern as older adults are becoming the predominant residents of public housing properties. For the past few funding cycles, the Operating and Capital Funds appropriated to PHAs have decreased to the point that funds are insufficient to meet PH operating and repair needs, much less fund a service coordinator. It is imperative that PHA residents have access to the information, assistance, and case management of a service coordinator that would enable them to gain or maintain their independence, improve their health outcomes, and achieve economic self-sufficiency. If a \$45 million funding level could be achieved without any carve-outs for other initiatives, there would be a modest amount available to fund new ROSS Service Coordinators in additional PHAs.

It is also necessary for HUD to consider the impact of refinancing on the ROSS program. As HUD encourages PHAs to take advantage of recapitalization tools that provide operational financial security, it may need to expand the types of properties that are eligible for a ROSS service coordinator. Losing a service coordinator is devastating to properties and it's important that any refinancing decisions at the ownership level don't prevent residents from realizing the benefits of service coordination.

### **Family Self-Sufficiency Grant Program**

For the FSS program, the key issue is expansion and making effective use of the program to help families build assets and make progress toward self-sufficiency. There is no limit to the

number of families that may be enrolled in FSS, so one key goal for local advocacy is expansion of current programs to serve additional families. For housing agencies without an FSS program, advocates may wish to focus on starting a new FSS program at a multifamily property operated by a nonprofit housing organization.

At the same time, there is a limit to the number of families that can be effectively served with a given number of coordinators. There is no formal caseload standard, but HUD generally uses 50 families per coordinator as a rule of thumb. Caseloads vary dramatically from agency to agency, and in some cases, it may be more important to add FSS coordinator staff to reduce caseloads to manageable levels at the outset and then work to expand the number of enrolled families. Advocates should work collaboratively with local housing agencies to find local in-kind or cash resources to expand the number of FSS program coordinators to serve additional families.

The key federal advocacy issue related to FSS is funding stability, principally for FSS coordinators. Congress should renew and expand funding for FSS coordinators. AASC continues to advocate for a change in the program's funding restrictions and an increase in funding for FSS coordinators to cover the costs of training, computer equipment, and case management software for FSS coordinators. It should be noted that shortfalls in Section 8 and PH funding hurt FSS by making it more difficult for housing agencies to rely on HUD funding to cover the costs of escrow deposits for FSS participants.

## **WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS**

### **Service Coordinators in Multifamily Housing for the Elderly and Disabled Grant Program**

Advocates are encouraged to contact their Members of Congress with the message that Service Coordinators in Multifamily Housing for the Elderly/Disabled save taxpayer dollars by keeping frail, low-income older adults living independently in cost-effective housing instead of being placed in costly institutional care. They are also playing a vital part in nationwide goals to



improve health outcomes and reduce healthcare costs by addressing social determinants of health. Funding for service coordinators remains very limited despite the critical need in eligible properties without a service coordinator on staff.

Members of Congress should be urged to:

- Deploy service coordinators to all federally subsidized housing properties serving older adults. An additional \$100 million for new, three-year HUD multifamily service coordinator grants would be an incremental approach to this long-term goal.
- Explore innovative approaches to placing service coordinators in community settings with the goal of improving wellness outcomes and increasing the number of residents capable of aging in place.
- Recognize the opportunity for service coordinators to be a workforce solution as the nation faces a social worker shortage and a sharp increase in the number of older adults who must age in place because of a severe lack of senior housing.
- Fully fund Section 8, Project Rental Assistance Contracts, other rent subsidies, and project operating funds to permit the staffing of a service coordinator as a routine part of the housing property's operating budget. Just like the property manager and maintenance person, the service coordinator should be considered essential staff for the operation of affordable housing for the elderly. The service coordinator position not only saves funds for the residents on fixed incomes, but also saves taxpayer dollars by keeping residents in less costly, independent living environments as opposed to assisted living or even more costly nursing home care.
- Appropriate a minimum of \$10 million to fund a competitive grant for service coordinators in Section 514, 515, and 516 programs under USDA.
- Direct HUD and its regional hub offices to provide necessary budget adjustments and regulatory relief to remove any barriers

restricting the staffing of service coordinators through a property's operating budget.

### **Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency Service Coordinator Grant Program**

Advocates are urged to contact their Members of Congress with the message that service coordination in public housing is as critical a need as it is in multifamily housing for the elderly. Residents of PHAs should be afforded access to information, assistance, and linkages to community-based supports and services afforded by a service coordinator to enable them to gain or maintain their independence, improve health and wellness outcomes, and achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Members of Congress should be urged to restore the \$45 million funding level for ROSS Service Coordinator grants without any carve-outs for other programs. This would ensure that existing ROSS grants are maintained and would allow more PHAs to have access to grant funds for service coordinators.

### **Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinators Grant Program**

Advocates should speak to the person in the office of their Member of Congress who deals with housing policy with the message that HUD's FSS program is critical for helping families in subsidized housing to build assets and make progress toward self-sufficiency and economic independence.

To support FSS, Congress should appropriate additional funding for FSS program coordinators to include training for FSS coordinators as well as needed case management tools and equipment as allowable expenses.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

American Association of Service Coordinators, 614-848-5958, [www.servicecoordinator.org](http://www.servicecoordinator.org).

HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing's ROSS website, [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/ph/ross/about](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/ross/about).

HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing's FSS website, [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/)

[public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/hcv/fss](https://www.hud.gov/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/fss).

HUD's Office of Multifamily Housing Program's Service Coordinator's website, [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/housing/mfh/scp/scphome](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/housing/mfh/scp/scphome).

HUD's Service Coordinator in Multifamily Housing Program Resource Guide, <https://bit.ly/2Qf0V2x>.

Family Self Sufficiency Program Guidebook for Owners of Project-Based Section 8 Developments, <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/FSS-Guidebook-for-Multifamily-Owners.pdf>

Running ROSS Step-By-Step, <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/ross/guide/ross-program-requirements-and-expectations/what-are-the-core-functions-of-a-ross-service-coordinator/>

The HUD report Multifamily Property Managers' Satisfaction with Service Coordination, <http://bit.ly/XoZo5d>.

Joint Center for Housing Studies Report: Service Coordinators Helped Older Adults who live in Publicly Funded Housing Respond to COVID-19, <https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/blog/service-coordinators-helped-older-adults-who-live-publicly-funded-housing-respond-covid-19>.

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Report: Impact of COVID-19 on Residents Living in Federally-Assisted Housing, [https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.servicecoordinator.org/resource/resmgr/files/reports/johns\\_hopkins/impact\\_of\\_covid-19\\_on\\_reside.pdf](https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.servicecoordinator.org/resource/resmgr/files/reports/johns_hopkins/impact_of_covid-19_on_reside.pdf).



---

# **Chapter 8:** COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

---



# Capital Magnet Fund

---

By Mark Kudlowitz, Senior Director of Policy, Local Initiatives Support Corporation

**Administering Agency:** Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund at the U.S. Department of the Treasury

**Year Started:** 2008, with seven funding rounds to date: FY10 and FY16-21

**Number of Persons/Households Served:** To date, 23,600 rental units, 4,500 owner-occupied units, and 25 community facilities have been completed. According to the [Capital Magnet Fund Award Book FY 2020](#), for all completed projects as of September 30, 2020, 60% of the affordable rental housing units are restricted for very low-income and extremely low-income persons, while 90% of affordable homeownership units are affordable for low-income persons

**Population Targeted:** Households with income less than 120% area median income (AMI); at least 51% with income less than 80% AMI

**Funding:** In FY20, \$175.3 million was awarded to 48 organizations

**See Also:** For related information, refer to the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund section of this guide

The Capital Magnet Fund (CMF) provides competitive enterprise-level grants to community development financial institutions (CDFIs) and nonprofit housing developers to finance and develop housing for low- and moderate-income households, as well as community facilities and economic development projects that support housing. CMF grants are used to fund financing tools such as loan loss reserves or loan guarantees and must be matched at least 10 to 1 with funding from other sources. Moving forward, the Administration should continue to support funding for the CMF under current law, and Congress should preserve the program as the housing finance reform system evolves.

## HISTORY

The CMF was created as part of the “Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008” (HERA) to provide flexible public funds to attract private investment into housing projects for low- and moderate-income households. As originally envisioned, the CMF (along with the national Housing Trust Fund, HTF) would have received funding through an assessment on new business of the Government Sponsored Enterprises (GSE) Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. However, in the fall of 2008, financial losses at the GSEs caused them to be placed in conservatorship and their obligation to contribute to the CMF and to the HTF was suspended. The suspension of contributions of assessments on new business of the GSEs was lifted at the end of 2014; contributions began on January 1, 2015 and have been distributed to the CMF and HTF since March 2016.

The legislation creating the CMF also allowed it to be funded through regular appropriations, which occurred in FY10 with an appropriation of \$80 million to kick off the program. Until the FY16 funding round, the FY10 round was the only funding provided to the CMF. For the FY10 round, the CDFI Fund received applications requesting more than \$1 billion. In October 2010, the CDFI Fund announced the inaugural CMF awardees. Out of 230 applicants, 23 organizations received awards; 13 were nonprofit housing developers, nine were CDFIs, and one was a tribal housing authority. According to the CDFI Fund, the \$80 million appropriation for CMF grants resulted in each \$1 of CMF funding attracting more than \$22 in other capital for affordable housing. Thus, \$80 million in CMF grants created upwards of \$1.8 billion in investment in affordable housing and community facilities, creating more than 13,000 homes.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

The CMF is administered by the Treasury's CDFI Fund as a competitive grant program to attract private capital for high-performing organizations to develop, preserve, rehabilitate, or purchase housing for low-income families. Unlike other federal programs such as HOME, the CMF is not a block grant to state or local governments or housing authorities.

A minimum of 70% of an awardee's CMF money must be used for housing. One hundred percent of housing project costs must be for units for households with incomes less than 120% of AMI; at least 51% of housing project costs must be for units for households with incomes less than 80% of AMI. If CMF finances rental housing, then at least 20% of the units must be occupied by households with incomes less than 80% of AMI. CMF award recipients normally commit to utilizing the award for deeper income targeting than the minimum standards described. For instance, 97% of all housing units to be developed from the FY20 CMF funding round are for households with incomes less than 80% of AMI. Maximum rent is fixed at 30% of either 120% AMI, 80% AMI, 50% AMI, or 30% AMI, depending on the household's income. For example, if an assisted household has income at 120% AMI, its maximum rent is 30% of 120% AMI. CMF funded housing must meet affordability requirements for at least 10 years.

In order to leverage funds, CMF dollars may be used to provide loan loss reserves, loan guarantees, capitalize a revolving loan fund or an affordable housing fund, or make risk-sharing loans. The CMF can also finance economic development activities or community service facilities, such as daycare centers, workforce development centers, and healthcare clinics, which in conjunction with affordable housing activities implement a concerted strategy to revitalize low-income or underserved rural areas.

Eligible recipients are Treasury-certified CDFIs or nonprofit organizations that include the development or management of affordable housing as at least one of their purposes.

Applications for the competitive grants are required to include a detailed description of the types of housing and economic and community revitalization projects for which the entity would use the grant, and the anticipated timeframe in which they intend to use the grant. No institution can be awarded more than 15% of all CMF funds available for grants in a given year, and those receiving grants must commit the funds within two years of the date they were received. All projects funded with CMF awards must be completed within five years.

Prohibited uses include political activities, advocacy, lobbying, counseling services, travel expenses, and endorsement of a particular candidate or party. Each grantee must track its funds by issuing periodic financial and project reports and by fulfilling audit requirements.

## FUNDING

The CMF's funding source was designed to come from a percentage of new business of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Under current law there is to be a 4.2 basis point assessment on each enterprise's new business, with the CMF receiving 35% and the HTF receiving 65%. However, these assessments were previously suspended due to the government conservatorship. In December 2014, the Federal Housing Finance Agency lifted the suspension and the assessment has been collected for the last seven calendar years. Sixty days after the close of the calendar year, Treasury is to distribute funds to the CMF and HTF.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

The Capital Magnet Fund is funded through an annual assessment on the GSE's new business, so the main threat to the program is if, and when, Congress begins GSE reform efforts.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

If housing finance reform debate returns in 2022, advocates need to ensure that any subsequent reforms of the housing finance system include a continued source of funding for the CMF.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

The CDFI Fund, 202-653-0421, [www.cdfifund.gov](http://www.cdfifund.gov).

Local Initiatives Support Corporation, 202 739-9279, <http://www.lisc.org>.



# Community Development Block Grant Program

---

By Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, NLIHC

**Administering Agency:** HUD's Office of Community Planning and Development

**Year Started:** 1974

**Population Targeted:** Households with income less than 80% of the area median income (AMI)

**Funding:** As *Advocates' Guide* went to press, Congress had not passed an FY22 appropriation's act; a short-term Continuing Resolution keeps CDBG funding at FY21 levels until further congressional action. Congress appropriated \$3.475 billion in FY21, which was slightly up from \$3.4 billion in FY20, which was up slightly from \$3.3 billion in FY19.

**See Also:** For related information, refer to the *Consolidated Planning Process* section of this guide.

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program is a federal program intended to strengthen communities by providing funds to improve housing, living environments, and economic opportunities, principally for persons with low- and moderate-income. At least 70% of CDBG funds received by a jurisdiction must be spent to benefit people with low- and moderate-income (less than 80% of the area median income, AMI).

## HISTORY

The CDBG program was established under Title I of the "Housing and Community Development Act of 1974," which combined several existing "categorical" programs, including Urban Renewal and Model Cities, into one block grant. This change was intended to provide greater local flexibility in the use of federal dollars.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

The primary objective of the CDBG program is to have viable communities by providing funds to improve housing, living environments, and

economic opportunities principally for persons with low- and moderate- income. The regulations for entitlement jurisdictions are at 24 CFR Part 570, and the states and small cities regulations are at 24 CFR Part 570, Subpart I.

## Eligible Activities

CDBG funds can be used for a wide array of activities, including: rehabilitating housing (through loans and grants to homeowners, landlords, nonprofits, and developers); constructing new housing (but only by certain neighborhood-based nonprofits); providing down payment assistance and other help for first-time home buyers; detecting and removing lead-based paint hazards; purchasing land and buildings; constructing or rehabilitating public facilities such as shelters for people experiencing homelessness or domestic violence survivors; making buildings accessible to those who are elderly or disabled; providing public services such as job training, transportation, healthcare, and child care (public services are capped at 15% of a jurisdiction's CDBG funds); building the capacity of nonprofits; rehabilitating commercial or industrial buildings; and making loans or grants to businesses.

## Formula Allocation

The program's emphasis on people with low incomes is reinforced by the formulas that determine how much money local jurisdictions and states receive. The formulas are based on factors heavily weighted by the degree of poverty and indicators of poor housing conditions in a jurisdiction; the more poverty and the worse the housing conditions, the more CDBG a jurisdiction receives. Seventy percent of each annual appropriation is automatically distributed to cities with a population of more than 50,000 and counties with a population of more than 200,000; these are called "entitlement jurisdictions." The remaining 30% goes to states for distribution to small towns and rural counties.

## Beneficiaries

At least 70% of CDBG funds received by a jurisdiction must be spent to benefit people with low and moderate incomes (often referred to as “lower-income”). The remaining 30% can also benefit people with lower incomes, or it can be used to aid in the prevention or elimination of slums and blight (often used by local governments to justify downtown beautification) or to meet an urgent need such as a hurricane, flood, or earthquake relief. Major hurricane, flood, wildfire, or earthquake needs are generally addressed by special congressional appropriations referred to as CDBG-Disaster Relief (DR) that usually have much less rigorous provisions regarding eligible uses and income targeting. See *Disaster Housing Programs* in Chapter 6.

Low- and moderate-income is defined as household income equal to or less than 80% of AMI, which can be quite high. In FY21, for instance, 80% of the AMI in Chicago was \$74,550. AMI in some jurisdictions is so high (like in the Lowell, MA, metropolitan area where the AMI was \$112,900) that HUD caps the qualifying household income at the national median income, which in FY21 was \$79,900 for a four-person household. However, HUD makes upward adjustments in high-cost areas such as the Boston metropolitan area that had an AMI of \$120,800 in FY21, allowing CDBG to benefit four-person households with income up to \$101,050.

A CDBG activity is counted as benefiting people with low and moderate incomes if it meets one of four tests:

1. **Housing Benefit.** If funds are spent to improve a single-family home, the home must be occupied by a low- or moderate-income household. In multifamily buildings, at least 51% of the units must be occupied by low- or moderate-income households. In addition, the housing must be affordable, as defined by the jurisdiction. In FY21 only 24% of CDBG was allocated for some type of housing program, which is typical. Key housing-related uses included 10% for single-unit rehabilitation, 3% for code enforcement, 5% for rehabilitation administration, 2.5% for multi-unit rehabilitation, 0.5% for public housing modernization, 0.46% for new construction, 0.22% lead hazard abatement, and 0.07% for energy efficiency improvements.
2. **Area Benefit.** Some CDBG-eligible projects, such as road and park improvements, can be used by anyone. To judge whether such a project primarily benefits people with lower incomes, HUD looks at a project’s “service area.” If 51% of the residents in the activity’s service area are people with lower income, then HUD assumes people with lower income will benefit. The regulations provide several ways to challenge that assumption. The primary challenge is to show that “the full range of direct effects” of an activity do not benefit people with lower incomes.
3. **Limited Clientele.** A service or facility assisted with CDBG funds must be designed so that at least 51% of its users have lower income. The three most common ways to meet this test are to: (a) limit participation to people with lower income; (b) show that at least 51% of the beneficiaries are lower income; or (c) serve a population that HUD presumes is lower income, including abused children, domestic violence survivors, people with disabilities, illiterate individuals, migrant farm workers, and seniors. Advocates can challenge a presumed benefit claim if an activity does not actually benefit people with lower incomes.
4. **Job Creation or Retention.** If job creation or retention is used to justify spending CDBG money, then at least 51% of the resulting jobs on a full-time-equivalent basis must be filled by or be available to people with lower income. “Available to” means either the job does not require special skills or a particular level of schooling, or the business agrees to hire and train people with lower income. Those with lower income must receive first consideration for the jobs.

## Public Participation

Every jurisdiction must have a public participation plan that describes how the jurisdiction will provide for and encourage involvement by people with lower income. Public hearings are required at all stages of the CDBG process. Hearings must give residents a chance to indicate community needs, review proposed uses of CDBG funds, and comment on past uses of these funds. There must be adequate public notice to people who are likely to be affected by CDBG-funded projects, and people must have reasonable and timely access to information. Since the creation of the Consolidated Plan (ConPlan) in 1994 (see *Consolidated Planning Process* in Chapter 7), the CDBG public participation process is the statutory basis for and is merged into the ConPlan public participation process. To effectively participate in this process, advocates should get a copy of the draft Annual Action Plan of the ConPlan and the latest Grantee Performance Report (GPR). Many jurisdictions will try to deny the public copies of the GPR but it must be made available. The GPR also goes by the name IDIS Report PR03. It is not part of the larger Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER).

## FUNDING

As *Advocates' Guide* went to press, Congress had not passed an FY22 appropriation's act; a short-term Continuing Resolution keeps CDBG funding at FY21 levels until further congressional action. Congress appropriated \$3.475 billion in FY21, which was slightly up from \$3.4 billion in FY20, which was up slightly from \$3.3 billion in FY19, the same as FY18. Funding for FY17, 16, and 15 was \$3 billion, 25% reductions from FY10's \$3.99 billion.

## TIPS FOR LOCAL SUCCESS

Because only 70% of CDBG funds must benefit people with low or moderate incomes, and because all funding could benefit people with moderate incomes, many of the lowest-income households realize little benefit from the program. Locally, people can organize to get

100% of a jurisdiction's CDBG dollars to be used for activities that benefit people with low incomes and can strive to have more of the dollars used to benefit people with extremely low incomes (income less than 30% of AMI).

The public participation process can be used to organize and advocate for more CDBG dollars to be used for the types of projects people with low incomes really want in their neighborhoods and then to monitor how funds are actually spent. To do this, advocates should obtain and study a jurisdiction's Annual Action Plan, which lists how a jurisdiction intends to spend CDBG funds in the upcoming year. Advocates should also obtain the Grantee Performance Report (CO4PR03), which should provide a detailed, activity-specific list of how CDBG money was spent the previous year. These documents must be available to the public from the staff in charge of CDBG in local jurisdictions, in departments with various titles such as "Community Development."

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

NLIHC, 202-662-1530, [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org).

There are two HUD CDBG web platforms. One is the traditional site, [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/comm\\_planning/communitydevelopment](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment).

Most CDBG information has migrated to the HUD Exchange site:  
<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/cdbg>.

The Entitlement Program page is <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/cdbg-entitlement>,

State Program page is <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/cdbg-state>.

On both pages, you can find the statute and regulations, FAQs, CPD Notices, and "[Explore CDBG](#)." There you can find "[Basically CDBG Online Training](#)" and other online tools.

# Opportunity Zones

---

Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, NLIHC

**Administering Agency:** Internal Revenue Service (IRS) of the U.S. Department of the Treasury (Treasury)

**Year Enacted:** 2017

**Number of Persons/Households Served:**

There is no information regarding the number of persons or households served because neither IRS nor Treasury require this information to be reported

**Population Targeted:** The statute creating Opportunity Zones and subsequent regulations do not target specific populations, such as low-income people. There are no requirements to hire or train low-income zone residents or to pay living wages, create truly affordable housing, or create or preserve small businesses owned by or serving low-income zone residents. Nor are there protections to prevent displacement of low-income people or existing local small businesses as a result of OZ investments.

The IRS states that the purpose of Opportunity Zones (OZs) is to spur economic growth and job creation in low-income communities while providing capital gains tax breaks to investors.

See also: [\*A Critical Explanation of Opportunity Zones\*](#)

## HISTORY

As early as 2007, former Facebook president and Napster founder Sean Parker conceived the notion of dangling the prospect of reducing or avoiding capital gains taxes to corporations and extremely rich individuals entice them to fund investments in disinvested low-income communities. Years later he created the Economic Innovation Group (EIG) to promote his idea, which came to be known as Opportunity Zone capital gains tax breaks. OZs were endorsed by Senators Tim Scott (R-SC) and Corey Booker (D-NJ) and inserted as a very small provision in the “Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017,” the massive,

nearly \$2 trillion tax cut legislation signed into law by President Donald Trump that overall primarily benefits corporations and extremely wealthy individuals. The OZ component of the 2017 tax act was not considered and debated through the normal congressional hearing process.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

An Opportunity Zone is composed of “low-income” census tracts that have a poverty rate of at least 20% and median family income no greater than 80% of the area median income (AMI). A census tract that is not “low-income” may be designated as part of an OZ if it is contiguous to low-income tracts that make up an OZ and it has a median household income that does not exceed 125% of the median income of the contiguous low-income census tracts that form an OZ. Up to 5% of the census tracts may qualify under this exemption. Some census tracts that were low income based on census data several years ago have since experienced significant demographic changes resulting in them no longer being truly low-income and that are often gentrifying.

Governors, the Mayor of the District of Columbia, and the chief executive officers of the five U.S. territories could nominate up to 25% of their total eligible census tracts, along with up to 5% of that 25% that were contiguous non-low-income census tracts. According to the IRS, Treasury designated 8,764 zones that retain their designation for ten years. Congress later designated each low-income community in Puerto Rico as an OZ.

### What is the Tax Break?

The theory of Opportunity Zones is provide an “incentive” for an investor to reinvest an unrealized capital gain, which is a gain in the value of an investment (such as a stock) that has not been taxed because the investor has not sold it yet. The OZ “program” allows an investor to

defer (delay) until 2027, the capital gains tax that would otherwise be due when the investment is sold, as long as the amount of the gain is invested in a Qualified Opportunity Fund (QOF). (Taxes on the original capital gain is due no later than December 31, 2026.) In addition, if an investor holds the QOF investment for five years, the basis of their original investment is increased by 10% (meaning they will only owe taxes on 90% of the rolled-over capital gain). If the investment was made by December 31, 2019, and an investor holds it in the QOF for seven years, the basis increases by a further 5% (for a total exclusion of 15% of the gain over the seven-year period). The investor must “realize” (sell the investment) by 2027.

Significantly, an investor can exclude from taxable income until the end of 2047, all of any capital gain accrued from the investment in an Opportunity Fund (not the original gain which was deferred until 2027) held for at least ten years. In other words, after settling their original tax bill in 2027, patient investors in QOFs will face no capital gain tax on their OZ investment until the end of 2047. The OZ capital gain tax break is on top of the usual advantages for capital gains, which have a lower tax rate than the tax rate on regular income, plus the ability to defer capital gain tax until an asset is sold.

### **Aside from Investors, Who Benefits?**

As previously noted, neither the statute nor the final regulations require investments to benefit low-income OZ residents by building truly affordable housing in the OZ, employing low-income OZ residents, or providing affordable capital for OZ small businesses or minority-owned or women-owned businesses. Nor are there protections to prevent the displacement of low-income OZ residents or OZ small businesses as a result of new investments in distressed communities.

Because the entire “Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017” was passed using the Senate budget reconciliation process, a provision in the OZ portion of the bill requiring some reporting was removed. Consequently, the statute does not

have data collection and reporting requirements. Due to opposition from developers and potential investors, the final regulations also fail to require data collection and meaningful reporting.

Therefore, anecdotal evidence is all that is available to assess the outcome of the capital gain tax breaks. Anecdotal evidence from the first three years suggests that extremely wealthy individuals and corporate investors are the beneficiaries. Anecdotes point to luxury hotels and apartments, parking lots, storage facilities, luxury student housing in census tracts next to major universities, and mostly projects long in the works or ready to go before the OZ capital gain tax break existed.

### **Early Warnings**

Red flags were waved by numerous sources in 2018.

In February, 2018, the [Brookings Institution](#) wrote:

“The value of the tax subsidy is ultimately dependent on rising property values, rising rents, and higher business profitability. That means a state’s Opportunity Zones could also serve as a subsidy for displacing local residents in favor of higher-income professionals and the businesses that cater to them...With few guardrails that might promote...policies to retain local residents and preserve or expand low- and middle-income housing, it is uncertain whether poor residents will benefit or be kicked out.”

The [Dallas Federal Reserve](#) wrote on October 18, 2018:

“Opportunity Funds could potentially direct capital largely to projects in areas already on the verge of gentrifying—places where high returns are most likely. In that eventuality, investors would get a tax break while neighborhoods would simply continue on the path of gentrification, displacing some of the highest-need households from the area.”

The [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#) (CBPP) wrote on January 1, 2019:

“..it [the law] includes no requirements to ensure that local residents benefit from investments receiving the tax break. Thus, this tax break could amount to a “subsidy for gentrification” in many areas instead of, as intended, for providing housing and jobs for low-income communities.”

“This tax break does *not* include rules or tests requiring its direct beneficiaries to make specific investments that actually produce public benefits or requiring that opportunity zone businesses hire workers from, or provide services to, the local community. If anything, its incentives push in the opposite direction: the tax break is worth the most with respect to investments whose value rises the fastest. As a result, investors will likely select investments – such as luxury hotels rather than affordable housing – based mainly on their expected financial return, not their social impact.”

Toward the end of 2019, Brett Theodos, Senior Fellow at the Urban Institute testified before the Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Tax, and Capital Access of the House Committee on Small Business. He stated OZs “lack any mechanism for community input or control,” and “There are no requirements that new apartments be rented to low- or moderate-income residents; no requirements that federally backed investment occur only when fully private-market financing is unavailable...The federal government has not sufficiently narrowed the eligible uses of this incentive to activities that will directly benefit low- and moderate-income residents or contribute to broader economic development in truly disinvested communities.”

### **An OZ Picture Starts to Emerge in 2019**

As 2019 rolled around, numerous media reported on long-planned, high-end projects located in OZs, sometimes after affluent developers lobbied governors to include their project’s area in a tract that either had not been selected or was not eligible for OZ designation.

*The New York Times* highlighted: a luxury hotel and opulent restaurant in New Orleans’ already

trendy Warehouse District; a 46-story luxury apartment tower in a Houston neighborhood already occupied by projects aimed at the affluent; a luxury office tower in Miami’s Design District where commercial real estate prices had nearly tripled in the last decade, and which developers had already planned 12 residential towers and large-scale retail and commercial spaces; a 35-story tower in downtown Portland, OR with a Ritz-Carlton hotel, condominiums, and office space; and, a self-storage center in Connecticut (and another in San Antonio reported by the *San Antonio Express-News*).

*ProPublica* published a series of articles.

In Florida, billionaire Wayne Huizenga Jr. had long planned to build luxury apartment towers, Marina Village, adjacent to the existing Rybovich superyacht marina on the West Palm Beach, FL waterfront. The census tract of the planned Marina Village was not originally picked to be a part of an OZ but was included after lobbying by Mr. Huizenga. Not included were three other low-income and racially diverse tracts identified by city leaders that were attractive areas for growth, rebounding from significant blight, and well positioned for new investment.

In Maryland, years before OZs, Sangamore Development, owned by Under Armor CEO Kevin Plank, started quietly buying waterfront properties in a mostly vacant, isolated area cut off from downtown Baltimore by I-95. The intent was to move Under Armor’s headquarters there and develop the area dubbed Port Covington with offices, a hotel, apartments, and shopping – all geared to millennials. Prior to gaining OZ designation, Port Covington already had \$660 million in tax increment financing, a Brownfields tax credit, and \$233 million from Goldman Sachs. Did it need more tax breaks to be viable?

The Port Covington tract, which includes a gentrified corner, was too wealthy to be an OZ. It couldn’t even meet the test to be included as a contiguous, non-low-income tract. Due to intensive lobbying with the governor and to a mapping error, Port Covington is now in an OZ.

In Michigan, Quicken Loans founder and

Cleveland Cavaliers owner, Dan Gilbert, had spent the past decade buying 100 buildings in downtown Detroit. Three areas of downtown Detroit with Gilbert holdings were selected as OZs, two of which critics assert are significantly wealthier than the surrounding area. One of the tracts sought by Gilbert was not initially included but eventually added after lobbying, even though it did not meet the poverty criteria. These census tracts already included Gilbert-owned office space with high-end tenants including Microsoft, JP Morgan, and Quicken Loans. A boutique hotel sits in another Gilbert property that is now in one of the OZs.

## THE OZ PICTURE COMES INTO FOCUS IN 2020 AND 2021

The Urban Institute’s [“An Early Assessment of Opportunity Zones for Equitable Development Projects”](#) set out to assess how OZs were working as a community development tool for mission-oriented entities that have a purpose of helping people in poverty with quality jobs, affordable housing, and community amenities like grocery stores. The report lists a number of challenges faced by mission-oriented actors: Many mission-oriented actors struggled to access capital from wealthy individuals and corporations with capital gains. In addition, many mission-oriented projects yield below-market returns that most OZ investors appeared unwilling to accept. A further challenge was that mission-driven sponsors want to develop a community asset with a lifetime greater than the ten-year period an OZ investor has to hold an investment, but OZ investors usually do not want to tie up investments that long.

### **Kresge Foundation Model and Trepidations about OZs**

An example of a mission-oriented investor discussed above has been the Kresge Foundation, which announced in March 2019 that it was committed to providing \$22 million in investments to two goal-aligned investment managers, Arctaris and Community Capital Management, which agreed to covenants committing them to develop affordable housing, create living wage jobs, prohibit displacement,

and form community advisory boards.

Unfortunately, as early as June 2019, the Kresge Foundation signed on to a letter from the U.S. Impact Investment Alliance which states, “...this transformative tax break could leave residents and communities vulnerable to displacement. These residents understandably fear losing their voice in defining their economic futures. Meanwhile, there is no guarantee capital will flow to the most distressed neighborhoods, or to the projects that are best for those who work and live there.”

In 2021 Aaron Seybert, managing director of social investments at the Kresge Foundation remarked:

“We have always and continue to want this incentive to succeed, but we continue to have trepidations about that. Those fears have only grown as we hear directly from people in communities who say the incentive is causing more harm than good...OZ doesn’t require measurement, accountability or tracking of any impact beyond dollars in; it rewards appreciation regardless of social impact. If millions go into a community, but they’re invested into liquor stores, storage units, and condominiums that price people out of housing opportunity, are the people who live there any better off? OZ is just the latest example of policymakers and investors doing something *to* low-income communities rather than *with* them.”

Mr. Seybert concluded:

“In short, I trust our community partners who have been investing in low-income communities far longer than OZ has been around. The majority tell me it’s not working for them, and, in some cases, it’s making their work harder. The news-friendly bright spots are a tiny fraction of capital flowing through this incentive. I’m not interested in continuing to evaluate OZ by anecdote when there are likely billions in investments we will never know about. We can no longer put lipstick on the proverbial pig. We need full transparency into OZ, we need some level of local accountability for the capital invested,

and we need better evidence that the tool can deliver against community needs at scale. Without these, I don't think the incentive should continue to exist at all."

**Testimony Before the Oversight Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee, November 16, 2021**

**BRETT THEODOS, SENIOR FELLOW AT THE URBAN INSTITUTE**

"In the years since Opportunity Zones' inception, it has become increasingly clear that their structure is preferenced against operating businesses, against smaller and rural projects, and against the types of mission-aligned projects that could deliver maximum community benefit."

He found that the OZs structure disadvantages high social impact projects in several ways:

- The tax exemption on OZ projects is structured to provide the largest financial benefits to projects that provide the highest returns, rather than reward investors willing to support projects with large social impacts.
- The ten-year time horizon of most OZ investments is not long enough for many beneficial projects, such as affordable housing, health care centers, or schools.
- For investors, the OZ incentive is a shallow subsidy and the permanent exclusion of gains is speculative. However, disinvested rural and urban OZs often require a deeper subsidy than OZs can provide. It is unlikely that OZ financing alone can spur the small business growth or types of development needed to promote sizable job creation or equitable growth.

Mr. Theodos' testimony included a footnote from an April 12, 2021 paper by Patrick Kennedy and Harrison Wheeler, *Neighborhood-Level Investment from U.S. Opportunity Zone Program: Early Evidence*. They found that OZ investments are highly concentrated in a relatively small number of census tracts, 84% of designated OZ tracts in their sample received zero OZ investment. Among tracts designated as OZs, investors favored neighborhoods with higher income, educational

attainment, home values, declining shares of non-white residents, and pre-existing population and income growth.

**DAVID WESSEL, DIRECTOR OF THE HUTCHINS CENTER ON FISCAL AND MONETARY POLICY, SENIOR FELLOW IN ECONOMIC STUDIES, BROOKINGS INSTITUTION**

"Nothing in law or regulation requires OZ investors to put their money into those [OZ] census tracts that really need the money or into projects that will benefit the people who live in the zones. The available evidence and my reporting suggest that the bulk of the money is going to real estate projects that would have been done otherwise or projects that will not do much to improve the lives of the low-income residents of the zones. Proponents and drafters of the Opportunity Zone legislation were so determined to make the tax break attractive to wealthy investors and so allergic to oversight from Washington that they avoided the guardrails and oversight that might have directed more money to places and people most in need of private investment. They also underestimated the cleverness and aggressiveness of the huge industry of accountants, lawyers, wealth advisers and real estate fund managers who find every possible way to exploit the tax code to save their clients' money. I fear that when we finally get all the data, we will learn that Opportunity Zones did more to cut taxes for the wealthy than to improve the lives of people who live in the zones."

## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EXPERTS

For all of the following, Treasury should take the initiative, and Congress should act if Treasury cannot (due to legal reasons) or will not.

- Treasury should require QOFs to provide basic transaction data: where are OZ funds going and how much is going to each OZ, what types of projects are developed, and who benefits (by various categories).
- An agency such as the Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) Fund



should have administrative authority over OZs to provide oversight of QOFs and to collect, aggregate, and share data with the public.

- Provide larger OZ capital gain tax breaks for projects in the most economically depressed communities. The current one-size-fits-all approach will tend to direct money to places already attractive to investors.
- Target the size of OZ capital gain tax breaks to investments with the greatest impacts. OZ capital gain tax breaks could be based, for example, on the number of quality jobs created by an OZ investment.
- Limit the type of eligible projects, prohibiting projects such as self-storage facilities, luxury hotels and housing, or upscale shopping districts. And, for real estate investments, which are the bulk of OZ projects, create a limited set of eligible uses. For instance, only allow real estate transactions involving an operating business that is owner-occupied, or commercial and industrial real estate in tracts with high vacancy rates, or housing sold or rented at below-market prices.
- Require a rigorous certification process to qualify as a Qualified Opportunity Fund (QOF). Currently, a QOF does not have to assert that it is helping low-income people or communities. Require QOFs to demonstrate an intention to invest in projects that provide genuine community benefit, and to adhere to disclosure and reporting requirements and community engagement processes.
- Support mission-driven QOFs that are accountable to the community by giving preferential treatment to CDFI-controlled and other mission-driven vehicles.
- Provide better investment support for small businesses.
- Redesignate and remove OZs based on the most current Census data to avoid designating tracts that seemed “low-income” due to out-of-date Census data but had improved demographically and were experiencing

economic gains. Phase out the OZ capital tax gain break in these tracts for any projects not yet initiated. OZ designation should be subject to public comment before becoming final.

- Remove all contiguous tracts, those that did not meet the low-income threshold but were eligible because they bordered low-income tracts.
- Restrict the OZ capital gain tax break to a project that demonstrates, “but for” the additional aid of the OZ capital gain tax break, the project cannot succeed with private market resources alone.

## PAST CONGRESSIONAL EFFORTS

As early as June 2018, Senator Corey Booker (D-NJ), an original champion of OZs, [wrote to Treasury](#) urging stronger regulations to ensure low-income communities benefit from OZs. Senator Booker followed that up on April 7, 2019, sponsoring [S.1344](#), which would strengthen OZ reporting requirements and specifically require Treasury to collect data on QOFs and their impact on low-income communities.

Various bills proposing to modify OZs were introduced by Democrats in 2019: Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) introduced [S. 2787](#), and Representatives James Clyburn (D-SC) and Henry Johnson (D-GA), introduced [H.R. 5042](#) and [H.R. 4999](#), respectively. Overall, these bills would: establish annual reporting requirements; prohibit investments in private planes, sports stadiums, self-storage facilities, parking facilities, and luxury rental properties; eliminate and terminate OZ designations of contiguous communities that are not low-income; disqualify a census tract that had a median family income greater than 120% of the national median income; disqualify rental property unless 50% or more of the units are both rent-restricted (following the Low Income Housing Tax Credit rules) and occupied by individuals whose income is 50% or less of area median income (AMI); disqualify rental housing unless 20% of the units were occupied by households with income no greater than 30% of AMI or 200% of the poverty line.

Representative Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) introduced [H.R. 5252](#) to eliminate OZs.

In 2021, Representative Michelle Steele (R-CA) introduced [H.R.4608](#), which would create additional OZ designations every ten years, and Representative Jim Hagedorn (R-MN) introduced [H.R. 4147](#), which would create an estimated 950 additional OZs.

Ultimately, no bills modifying OZs passed.

## FUNDING

The Opportunity Zones capital gain tax break is not funded through federal appropriations; it is a “tax expenditure,” resulting in the federal government losing tax revenue. The Joint Committee on Taxation estimates that OZ tax expenditures will total \$8.2 billion between 2020 and 2024.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

On December 20, 2021, nine Democrats on the U.S. House of Representatives’ Ways and Means Subcommittee on Oversight sent a [letter](#) asking Treasury to consider three changes to OZ requirements: implement a rigorous certification process for QPOs, allocate a dedicated agency staff to oversee OZs, and require transaction reporting separate from tax forms. Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR), Chair of the Senate Finance Committee sent [letters](#) to several billionaires on January 13, 2022 demanding information to determine whether they are abusing OZs.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

*[A Critical Explanation of Opportunity Zones.](#)*

The IRS Opportunity Zones webpage, <https://bit.ly/3GXNEle>.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, <https://bit.ly/3rQKny1>.

The Urban Institute, <https://urbn.is/3rPAY9B>.

The Brookings Institution, <https://brook.gs/3H2sUsO>.

ProPublica, <https://bit.ly/344Ewg6>.

# Community Development Financial Institutions Fund

---

By Olivia Barrow, Policy Manager, Low Income Investment Fund

**Administering Agency:** U.S. Department of the Treasury

**Year Started:** 1994

**Funding:** \$270 million in FY 2021; \$330 million proposed in FY 2022

**See Also:** For related information, refer to the *Capital Magnet Fund* section of this guide.

The Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund comprises seven programs designed to expand the capacity of financial institutions to provide credit, capital, and financial services to underserved populations and communities.

## HISTORY

The CDFI Fund was created by the “Riegle Community Development Banking and Financial Institutions Act of 1994.”

## OVERVIEW

CDFIs are specialized private sector financial institutions that serve economically disadvantaged communities and consumers. As of December 2020, there were more than 1,100 CDFIs according to the CDFI Fund. CDFIs assume different forms, including banks (147), credit unions (321), depository institutions (104), loan funds (556), and venture capital funds (16). CDFI customers include small business owners, nonprofits, affordable housing developers, and low-income individuals. Nearly 85% of CDFI customers are low-income persons, 58% are racial minorities, and 48% are women. CDFIs operate in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

United by a primary mission of community development, CDFIs work where conventional financial institutions do not by providing financial

services coupled with financial education and technical assistance to help alleviate poverty for economically disadvantaged people and communities. CDFIs offer innovative financing that banks would not typically offer. CDFIs also provide basic financial services to people who are unbanked, offering alternatives to predatory lenders. CDFIs implement capital-led strategies to fight poverty and to tackle economic infrastructure issues such as quality affordable housing, job creation, wealth building, financial literacy and education, community facility financing, and small business development and training.

## PROGRAM SUMMARIES

The CDFI Fund operates seven primary programs designed to both build the capacity of CDFIs and increase private investment in distressed communities nationwide. These programs are the CDFI program, the Native Initiatives program, the Bank Enterprise Award program, the New Markets Tax Credit program, the Capital Magnet Fund (CMF) program, the Healthy Food Financing Initiative, and the CDFI Bond Guarantee program. The CDFI Fund is the largest single source of funding for CDFIs and plays an important role in attracting and securing non-federal funds for CDFIs.

The CDFI Fund is unique among federal programs because it aims to strengthen institutions rather than fund specific projects. CDFIs match the federal investment from the CDFI Fund multiple times over with private money, using these funds to help revitalize communities through investment in affordable housing, small businesses, and community facilities and by providing retail financial services to low-income populations.

## **CDFI Program**

The CDFI Program has two components: Financial Assistance (FA) and Technical Assistance (TA). Through these two components, the CDFI Program provides loans and grants to CDFIs to support their capitalization and capacity building, enhancing their ability to create community development opportunities in underserved markets. CDFIs compete for federal support based on their business plans, market analyses, and performance goals.

FA awards are for established, certified CDFIs and may be used for economic development, affordable housing, and community development financial services. FA awards must be matched at least one-to-one with non-federal funds. TA awards are for startup or existing CDFIs and are used to build capacity to serve a target market through the acquisition of goods and services such as consulting services, technology purchases, and staff or board training. The FY21 funding level for this program was \$167 million and the proposed funding level for FY22 is \$211 million.

## **Native Initiatives Program**

The CDFI Fund's Native Initiatives are designed to overcome identified barriers to financial services in Native communities (including Native American, Native Alaskan, and Native Hawaiian populations). Through TA and FA, the CDFI Fund seeks to foster the development of new Native CDFIs and strengthen the capacity of existing Native CDFIs. Financial education and asset building programs, such as matched savings accounts, are particularly important to Native communities.

Though founded in 1994, the first TA grants were not made until 2002 after a comprehensive study of the capital and credit needs of Native communities had been performed. FA followed in 2004. The CDFI Fund continues to collaborate with tribal governments and tribal community organizations through ongoing research and analysis that informs the recommendations for Native CDFIs. The FY21 funding level for the Native Initiatives program was \$16.5 million

and the proposed funding level for FY22 is \$21.5 million.

## **Bank Enterprise Award Program**

The Bank Enterprise Award (BEA) program was created in 1994 to support Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)-insured financial institutions around the country dedicated to financing and supporting community and economic development activities. The BEA program complements the community development activities of insured depository institutions (i.e., banks and thrifts) by providing financial incentives to expand investments in CDFIs and to increase lending, investment, and service activities within economically distressed communities. Providing monetary awards for increasing community development activities leverages the fund's dollars and puts more capital to work in distressed communities. The FY21 funding level for the BEA program was \$26 million and the proposed funding level for FY22 is \$28 million.

## **New Markets Tax Credit Program**

Congress established the New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) program as part of the "Community Renewal Tax Relief Act of 2001" to encourage investments in low-income communities that traditionally lack access to capital for developing small businesses and revitalizing neighborhoods. The NMTC provides financial institutions, corporations, and other investors with a tax credit for investing in a Community Development Entity (CDE). The investor takes a tax credit over a seven year period equal to 39% of the original amount invested. CDEs are domestic partnerships or corporations that are intermediaries that use capital derived from the tax credits to make loans to or investments in businesses and projects in low-income communities. A low-income community is one with census tracts that have a poverty rate of at least 20% or that have a median family income less than 80% of the area median income (AMI).

The NMTC program is administered by the CDFI Fund which allocates tax credit authority, the

amount of investment for which investors can claim a tax credit, to CDEs that apply for and obtain allocations. To date, the CDFI Fund has made 1,254 allocation awards totaling \$61 billion in NMTC allocations, which has leveraged nearly \$500 billion in private investment. Between 2003 and 2015, NMTC investments created over one million jobs at a cost to the federal government of under \$20,000 per job. Since its inception, the NMTC Program has supported the construction of 57 million square feet of manufacturing space, 94 million square feet of office space, and 67 million square feet of retail space.

In December 2020, Congress enacted a five-year extension of the NMTC program with an annual allocation of \$5 billion. This will provide \$25 billion in new NMTC authority between 2021-2025, the largest extension the program has received since it was created in 2000.

### **Capital Magnet Fund Program**

(See the separate *Advocates' Guide* section for more detail on the Capital Magnet Fund Program).

The Capital Magnet Fund (CMF) was created through the “Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008.” Through the CMF, the CDFI Fund provides competitively awarded grants to CDFIs and qualified nonprofit housing organizations. CMF awards can be used to finance housing for low- and moderate-income households as well as related economic development activities and community service facilities. Awardees utilize financing tools such as loan loss reserves, loan funds, risk-sharing loans, and loan guarantees to produce eligible activities with aggregate costs at least 10 times the size of the award amount.

A minimum of 70% of an awardee’s CMF money must be used for housing. One hundred percent of housing-eligible project costs must be for units for households with income below 120% of the AMI); at least 51% of housing eligible project costs must be for units for households with income below 80% of AMI. If CMF finances rental housing, then at least 20% of the units must be occupied by households with income below 80% of AMI. Maximum rent is fixed at 30% of either 120% AMI, 80% AMI, 50% AMI, or 30%

AMI, depending on the household’s income. For example, if an assisted household has income at 120% AMI, their maximum rent is 30% of 120% AMI. Assisted housing must meet the above affordability requirements for at least 10 years.

As with the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF), funding for the CMF is intended to be provided in part by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Because Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac went into conservatorship soon after the authorizing statute creating those programs became law and the collection of the contributions was suspended, in FY10 the Administration requested, and Congress approved, an initial appropriation of \$80 million to capitalize the CMF. Two hundred and thirty CDFIs and nonprofit housing organizations applied, requesting more than \$1 billion. Twenty-three awards were made, which leveraged at least \$1.6 billion for the financing of housing within underserved communities and helped put underserved neighborhoods on the path to recovery and revitalization. There have been no further appropriated funds for the CMF.

The suspension of contributions of assessments on new business of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac was lifted at the end of 2014 and contributions began January 1, 2015. The FY 2016 CMF round awarded \$91.5 million; the FY 2017 round awarded \$119.5 million; the FY 2018 round awarded \$142.9 million; and the FY 2019 round awarded \$130.9 million. These awards totaled more than \$565 million to CDFIs and qualified organizations, and awardees anticipate more than \$18.6 billion in total leverage – significantly more than the minimum of \$5.65 billion required in public and private leverage.

The FY 2020 awards were the most recent round and totaled \$175.35. 137 organizations applied for the FY 2020 round, requesting more than \$642.2 million in CMF awards. Awardees plan to:

- Develop nearly 23,000 affordable housing units, including more than 20,300 rental units and more than 2,600 homeownership units. 97% of all housing units will be developed for low-income families.
- Leverage nearly \$5.3 billion in public and

private investment, more than 81% from the private sector.

In FY 2021, 146 organizations requested more than \$991.8 million in CMF awards. The CDFI Fund is expected to announce awards in Spring 2022.

### **CDFI Healthy Foods Financing Initiative**

The CDFI Healthy Food Financing Initiative, launched in 2011 as part of the multi-agency Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI), provides grants to CDFIs focused on developing solutions for increasing access to affordable healthy foods in low-income communities. The HFFI is an interagency initiative involving the Treasury, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. HFFI represents the federal government's first coordinated step to eliminate "food deserts" by promoting a wide range of interventions that expand the supply of and demand for nutritious foods, including increasing the distribution of agricultural products, developing and equipping grocery stores, and strengthening producer-to-consumer relationships. The FY21 funding level for the Healthy Food Financing Initiative was \$23 million and the proposed funding level for FY22 is \$25 million.

### **CDFI Bond Guarantee Program**

Enacted through the "Small Business Jobs Act of 2010," Treasury may issue up to \$1 billion each year in fully guaranteed bonds to support CDFI lending and investment. Long-term, patient capital such as this is difficult for CDFIs to obtain. The program experienced regulatory delays related to making it cost-neutral to the federal government. To date, the CDFI fund has guaranteed \$1.1 billion in bond loans. The CDFI Bond Guarantee Program was authorized through FY21 at \$500 million.

Authorized uses of the loans financed may include a variety of financial activities, such as: supporting commercial facilities that promote revitalization, community stability, and job creation/retention; community facilities; the provision of basic financial services; housing that

is principally affordable to low-income people; businesses that provide jobs for low-income people or are owned by low-income people; and community or economic development in low-income or underserved rural areas. Since the bonds have a minimum size of \$100 million that is larger than most CDFIs can readily invest, groups of CDFIs can put in joint applications.

## **FUNDING**

The appropriation for the CDFI Fund in FY21 was \$270 million. The Administration's FY22 budget requested \$330 million, a \$60 million increase from the FY21 enacted level. Congress is expected to enact this proposed funding level.

Applications for CDFI Fund awards consistently exceed the supply of funds. Since 1996, applicants to the CDFI Program have requested more than four times the amount awarded. The CDFI Fund received 208 applications for the 2020 round of the NMTC Program, representing \$15.1 billion in NMTCs; three times the available funding.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress enacted \$12 billion in new funding for CDFIs and minority depository institutions (MDIs), including \$9 billion for a new emergency capital investment program (ECIP) in MDIs and CDFIs that are depository institutions, as well as \$3 billion in grants for CDFIs. Of the \$3 billion in grants, \$1.25 billion was deployed through the CDFI Rapid Response Program in 2021. Of the remaining \$1.75 billion, Congress set-aside \$1.2 billion for minority lending institutions, a new term referring to "those CDFIs that predominantly serve minority communities and are either MDIs or meet other standards for accountability to minority populations as determined by the CDFI Fund." The CDFI Fund continues to develop the rules surrounding the future deployment of these funds.

## **FORECAST FOR 2022**

The Biden-Harris administration's FY 2022 budget request reflects a 22% increase in funding for the CDFI Fund but does not yet meet its stated

commitment to double the funding for the CDFI Fund. The CDFI industry is requesting at least \$1 billion for the CDFI Fund.

Throughout 2022, the CDFI Fund will continue to be responsible for deploying the remaining stimulus grants enacted in December 2020. This will include developing policies, procedures, and systems to structure funding through the newly created minority lending institution definition.

## WHAT TO SAY TO LEGISLATORS

The importance of increasing resources for the CDFI industry has only grown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing racial disparities. CDFIs design innovative below-market products that banks would not offer, providing homeownership and financial opportunities to underserved individuals and communities, including communities of color who have historically been denied access to critical financial products and services. Advocates play an active role in helping to communicate the positive role of CDFIs in low-wealth markets.

Advocates should contact Members of Congress, especially members of the Senate and House Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Subcommittees, to encourage enactment of at least \$330 million for the CDFI Fund in FY22 and an extension of the CDFI Bond Guarantee Program to help meet the demand for financial services and capital in low-income communities.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

The CDFI Fund, 202-653-0300, <https://www.cdfifund.gov/Pages/default.aspx>.

CDFI Coalition, 202-393-5225, [www.cdfi.org](http://www.cdfi.org).

Opportunity Finance Network, 215-923-4754, [www.ofn.org](http://www.ofn.org).

Housing Partnership Network, 617-720-1999, <http://www.housingpartnership.net>.





---

# **Chapter 9:** CORONAVIRUS, HOUSING, AND HOMELESSNESS

---



# Eviction Protections during the COVID-19 Pandemic

---

By Alayna Calabro, Housing Policy Analyst, NLIHC

**H**ousing instability and homelessness have enormous consequences for individuals, their communities, and our nation's public health. Evictions put lives at risk and strain our already overstretched public health systems. Families evicted from their homes and forced to double or triple up with other families face greater challenges in practicing social distancing. This challenge is heightened for people experiencing homelessness – whether in shelters or encampments – who find it impossible to self-quarantine. People who are homeless and contract coronavirus are twice as likely to be hospitalized, two to four times as likely to require critical care, and two to three times as likely to die than the general public.

Recognizing that eviction moratoriums – like quarantine, isolation, and social distancing – are effective public health measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus, the federal government issued two temporary moratoriums on evictions for nonpayment of rent during the COVID-19 pandemic. The federal eviction protections enacted through the “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act” and then by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) were supplemented by a patchwork of state and local moratoriums implemented by governors and local officials.

Eviction moratoriums proved to be an essential public health measure. Research conducted on the efficacy of state, local, and federal eviction moratoriums provide evidence that such moratoriums are effective at reducing both eviction filings and COVID-19 transmission and fatalities. Researchers estimate the CDC eviction moratorium alone prevented at least 1.55 million eviction filings nationwide, and state and local eviction protections prevented an

additional 900,000 eviction filings throughout the country. Nationally, researchers found that expired eviction moratoriums led to an additional 433,700 cases of COVID-19 and 10,700 associated deaths. The risk of infection increases substantially when people are evicted or forced to live doubled-up with another household, but people who are evicted are not the only ones at risk – spillover transmission amplified by evictions also places the broader community at increased risk of infection.

## “CARES ACT” EVICTION AND FORECLOSURE MORATORIUM

The “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act” (Pub. L. No. 116-136), enacted March 27, 2020 instituted a 120-day federal eviction moratorium for tenants in certain rental properties with federal assistance or a federally-backed mortgage. The moratorium prohibited owners of covered properties from filing new evictions against tenants for nonpayment of rent and charging additional fees related to nonpayment. Under the CARES Act moratorium, housing providers were required to provide tenants a 30-day notice to evict for nonpayment, which could not be given until after the 120-day moratorium period ended on July 24, 2020.

The moratorium enacted in CARES Act Section 4024(b) covered most residents of federally-subsidized housing programs, including those supported by HUD, USDA, or Treasury (Low Income Housing Tax Credit developments). The moratorium also extended to renters living in single-family and multifamily properties financed by federally-backed mortgages, such as those financed through Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, HUD, or other federal agencies.

Additionally, the CARES Act instituted a moratorium on foreclosures for federally-backed mortgages. Landlords of federally-

backed multifamily properties could request up to 90 days of forbearance, during which they were prohibited from evicting any tenants for nonpayment of rent.

The CARES Act offered renters eviction protections broader in scope than the measures enacted by the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) in response to the pandemic. FHFA, the regulator that oversees federally-backed mortgages, enacted a moratorium on some evictions and single-family foreclosures with loans backed by Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac. The FHA also enacted a foreclosure and eviction moratorium for homeowners with FHA-insured single-family mortgages covered under the CARES Act.

As part of the Biden Administration's all-of-government approach to reduce evictions, the White House [announced](#) in June 2021 that HUD and other federal agencies will continue to enforce the CARES Act's 30-day notice to vacate requirement. Housing providers of federally backed and federally assisted properties must provide tenants with a 30-day notice to vacate in accordance with the CARES Act. Federally supported properties include all multifamily and single-family homes that have an FHFA-insured mortgage, Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac securitized mortgage, or a federal housing subsidy.

HUD published an [interim final rule](#) in the *Federal Register* on October 7, 2021, that requires providers of public housing and project-based rental assistance (PBRA) to provide tenants facing eviction for nonpayment of rent with a 30-day notice that includes information about the availability of federal emergency rental assistance (ERA). Currently, the CARES Act requires a 30-day notice prior to eviction, but it does not require the notice to provide information about ERA. The interim final rule is not limited to the current pandemic. Rather, whenever funding is available to assist tenants with nonpayment of rent during a national emergency, HUD may determine that tenants must be provided with adequate notice and time to secure that funding.

NLIHC and the National Housing Law Project, along with affordable housing and tenants' rights organizations, [called on HUD](#) to use its authority to act more comprehensively to prevent evictions by amending the interim final rule. The rule improperly limits the CARES Act's 30-day notice requirement to only public housing and PBRA tenants, when the requirement applies to all HUD tenants, including Housing Choice Voucher participants. Additionally, the interim final rule creates a sunset date for the 30-day notice requirement – the end of a presidentially-declared disaster – where no such time limit exists under the CARES Act.

### **Shortcomings of CARES Act Moratorium**

While the moratorium provided many renters an important short-term reprieve, it did not prevent people from accruing housing debt. Additionally, the limited CARES Act moratorium covered only 30% of renters nationwide, leaving many low-income households at risk of losing their homes during the pandemic.

Our country's complicated housing finance system made it difficult for renters to know if they were protected under the CARES Act, allowing some landlords to continue evicting tenants despite the moratorium. NLIHC created a searchable database and interactive map to allow some renters to determine whether their home was covered by the CARES Act moratorium. The federal eviction moratorium, however, lacked compliance and enforcement mechanisms, resulting in families losing their homes through evictions that violated the CARES Act.

Advocates urged Congress and federal agencies to enact a national, uniform moratorium on eviction and foreclosures for nonpayment of rent that would provide broader protections for renters and homeowners.

## **CDC FEDERAL EVICTION MORATORIUM**

The CDC took unprecedented action on September 1, 2020 by issuing a [temporary national moratorium on most evictions](#) for nonpayment of rent to help prevent the spread of

coronavirus. Citing the historic threat to public health posed by coronavirus, the CDC declared that an eviction moratorium would help to ensure that people are able to practice social distancing and comply with stay-at-home orders. The CDC eviction moratorium followed the expiration of many state and federal orders, including the CARES Act.

Effective September 4, the order declared a national moratorium on residential evictions for eligible renters for nonpayment of rent and nonpayment of other fees or charges until December 31, 2020. Any evictions for nonpayment of rent that may have been initiated before September 4, 2020, and had not been completed, were subject to the moratorium. The CDC moratorium did not include rental assistance, and renters remained responsible for paying any back rent and fees accumulated during the moratorium. Congress, however, provided rental assistance separately in COVID-19 relief packages.

To qualify for the protections, an individual was required to 1) be a “tenant, lessee, or resident of a residential property” and 2) provide a signed declaration to their landlord stating that they:

- Have “used best efforts to obtain all available government assistance for rent or housing;”
- Expect to earn no more than \$99,000 annually in 2020-2021 (or no more than \$198,000 jointly), or were not required to report income in 2019 to the IRS, or received an Economic Impact Payment;
- Are unable to pay rent in full or make full housing payments due to loss of household income, loss of compensable hours of work or wages, lay-offs, or extraordinary out-of-pocket medical costs;
- Are making their best efforts to make timely partial payments as close to the full rental/housing payment as possible;
- Would likely become homeless, need to live in a shelter, or need to move in with another person (aka live doubled-up) because they have no other housing options;

- Understand they will still need to pay rent at the end of the moratorium; and
- Understand that any false/misleading statements may result in criminal and civil actions.

The order applied to every state and territory with reported cases of coronavirus and to all standard rental housing, including mobile homes or land in a mobile home park.

In issuing the order, the CDC cited section 361 of the “Public Health Service Act” (42 USC § 264 and a regulation pursuant to the act, 42 C.F.R. 70.2), which grants the Secretary of Health and Human Services broad authority to enact measures to prevent the spread of disease. Landlords, property owners, and housing industry groups, however, filed numerous legal challenges against the CDC eviction moratorium in federal, state, and local courts, often arguing that the CDC did not have the authority to issue the order. These lawsuits contributed to legal uncertainty about the order, resulting in varying interpretations in court and uneven application and protections for renters.

The emergency COVID-19 relief legislation enacted by Congress in December 2020 extended the CDC eviction moratorium through January 31, 2021. President Biden extended it three additional times through March, June, and July. On July 29, the Biden Administration announced the CDC could not extend the moratorium due to a Supreme Court decision on June 29 that upheld the moratorium but declared the CDC could not grant an extension without congressional authorization. A measure to extend the moratorium failed to garner the support needed to pass the House of Representatives, and the eviction moratorium expired on July 31.

NLIHC urged President Biden to use his authority to extend the eviction moratorium and, in the meantime, to take all other possible actions to reduce evictions. Representative Cori Bush (D-MO) and other members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus staged rallies outside of the Capitol building to demand an extension of the moratorium and, along with NLIHC,

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Representative Maxine Waters (D-CA), demanded that the Biden Administration use every authority to extend eviction moratorium protections for renters. As a result of the extraordinary dedication of congressional champions and housing and homelessness advocates across the country, the CDC announced on August 3 a limited eviction moratorium through October 3. The new moratorium covered renters living in communities experiencing a substantial or high level of COVID-19 transmission, an estimated 90% of all renters.

The federal eviction moratorium continued to face legal challenges. One day after the CDC announced the new limited moratorium, the Alabama and Georgia Associations of Realtors, backed by the National Association of Realtors, again petitioned the federal district court in D.C. to overturn it. The Supreme Court ruled on August 26 to end the temporary stay on a lower court ruling seeking to overturn the CDC eviction moratorium. In doing so, the Supreme Court invalidated the eviction moratorium, eliminating vital protections that kept millions of households in their homes during the pandemic.

### **Shortcomings of the CDC Eviction Moratorium**

The federal eviction moratorium extended vital protections to renters at risk of eviction during the pandemic, helping to keep stably housed millions of people who otherwise would have been evicted. The CDC order, however, had significant shortcomings that prevented renters from making full use of the moratorium's protections.

To receive protection under the CDC order, renters had to know about the moratorium and take affirmative steps to be protected. As a result, far too many eligible renters, especially those with the lowest incomes who may not have access to legal aid attorneys, internet, or printers, and other marginalized people such as immigrants, seniors, and people with disabilities, were wrongfully evicted from their home.

The CDC issued on October 9 a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document that created loopholes

in the moratorium's protections, undermining the intent of the order by eroding protections for renters and making it more difficult for struggling renters to remain stably housed. The FAQ stated, contrary to the original order, that landlords may challenge tenant declarations and initiate eviction proceedings at any time, as long as physical executions are not executed. Allowing landlords to challenge renters' declarative statements created new opportunities for landlord intimidation and further shifted the burden to struggling renters who must gather paperwork to prove they need assistance to stay housed during the pandemic. Permitting landlords to initiate eviction proceedings – even when covered renters cannot be evicted until the moratorium ends – served no purpose other than to mislead, pressure, scare, or intimidate renters into leaving sooner.

While the CDC order imposed criminal penalties on landlords who violated the moratorium, no entity or persons were enforcing the order and there was no mechanism for renters to file complaints against landlords who violated the order. As a result, the criminal penalties in the order did not deter improper evictions and landlords continued to evict renters in violation of the moratorium without consequence. There were numerous cases where landlords evicted renters from their homes, even though renters provided their landlords with a signed declarative statement.

The CDC moratorium was a public health necessity, providing stability to millions of people who would have lost their homes. NLIHC and advocates across the country urged the CDC to extend, strengthen, and enforce the order's protections. The CDC could have addressed the eviction moratorium's shortcomings by making the protections automatic and universal, rescinding its FAQ document that weakened the moratorium's protections, establishing a hotline number that renters could use to file complaints against landlords who violate the moratorium, and directing the U.S. Department of Justice to enforce the order.

## EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE

The federal eviction moratoriums, paired with a patchwork of state and local protections, provided critical, short-term relief to many low-income households. Congress provided emergency rental assistance to keep renters stably housed after moratoriums ended and to ensure the continued viability of our country’s essential affordable housing infrastructure.

Congress approved \$46 billion in emergency rental assistance (ERA) through the “[Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021](#)” and the “[American Rescue Plan Act of 2021](#).” State and local governments have worked to design, scale up, and distribute aid to renters and landlords – a significant and time-consuming undertaking during a global pandemic. While some jurisdictions successfully ramped up their programs by adopting the flexibilities provided by the Treasury Department to expedite assistance, many programs failed to utilize proven best practices in program design and implementation. The elimination of the federal eviction moratorium on August 26, 2021, heightened the urgency of ensuring renters and landlords can access ERA. NLIHC continues to call on state and local governments to ensure that ERA programs are [visible, accessible, and preventive](#) of evictions. In addition to urging program administrators to implement strategies to ensure ERA reaches those with the greatest needs, NLIHC recommends state and local governments create, strengthen, or extend local eviction protections. Eviction moratoriums provide states and localities more time to ramp up their efforts to distribute ERA to households in need. State and local leaders should adopt additional measures, such as right to counsel, expungement of eviction records, and just-cause eviction standards, which can help protect renters during the pandemic and in the long term.

In collaboration with NLIHC’s state and local partners, the End Rental Arrears to Stop Evictions (ERASE) team released a [State and Local ERA Tenant Protections Database](#), a resource of emergency rental assistance (ERA) tenant protections enacted during the pandemic.

The resource includes policies, legislation, ordinances, executive orders, and court orders that cities, counties, and states across the country have put in place to protect renters and prevent evictions.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

The “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act” (Pub. L. No. 116-136), <https://bit.ly/36HqwrX>.

NLIHC’s Analysis of the CARES Act, <https://bit.ly/2JODPxe>.

National Housing Law Project (NHLP) Summary and Analysis of Federal CARES Act Eviction Moratorium, <https://bit.ly/39yMwXk>.

CDC Order: Temporary Halt in Residential Evictions to Prevent the Further Spread of COVID-19, <https://bit.ly/2VEDJv2>.

The “Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021” (Pub. L. No. 116-260), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/133>.

NLIHC’s National Eviction Moratorium resource page, <https://bit.ly/3mULNUx>.

NLIHC and NHLP, Overview of CDC Eviction Moratorium, <https://bit.ly/3g8x1H7>.

NLIHC and NHLP, National Eviction Moratorium: FAQ for Renters, <https://bit.ly/2JHG99n>.

The “American Rescue Plan Act of 2021” (Pub. L. No: 117-2), <https://bit.ly/30BD8wz>.

NLIHC State and Local Tenant Protections Database, <https://tinyurl.com/53wxx55y>.

# The Role of FEMA in COVID-19 Response

---

By Alayna Calabro & Noah Patton,  
Housing Policy Analysts, NLIHC

**T**he coronavirus pandemic is uncharted territory for our country's current disaster response and recovery system. In the lead up to the crisis, FEMA's role in the COVID-19 response was to supply logistical expertise to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the lead agency for pandemic response. As the pandemic spread, first prompting President Trump's National Emergency Declaration and subsequent Major Disaster Declarations for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five territories, FEMA has taken on a larger role in the COVID-19 response.

As a result of the national emergency declaration for COVID-19, FEMA activated its Public Assistance (PA) Grant Program to aid state, territorial, tribal, and local government entities and certain private non-profit organizations as they work quickly to respond to and recover from the pandemic. FEMA generally does not provide PA funding for emergency sheltering in non-congregate environments, which are locations where each individual or household has living space that offers some level of privacy, such as hotels, motels, or dormitories. For the pandemic, however, FEMA determined that certain non-congregate sheltering costs will be reimbursable under the PA program to protect public health and save lives.

Since the start of the pandemic, state, local, and non-profit organizations have used FEMA PA funds in tandem with other federal and state funding streams to move individuals experiencing homelessness living in congregate settings – either in shelters or encampments – who have been exposed to COVID-19 or are medically at-risk into hotel rooms and other non-congregate shelters to quarantine. Given the heavy usage and strain on the current shelter system, the program has allowed many areas experiencing COVID-19 spikes to slow the spread

of the disease among individuals experiencing homelessness.

## COVID-19 NATIONAL EMERGENCY DECLARATION AND MAJOR DISASTER DECLARATIONS

On March 13, 2020, President Donald Trump issued an Emergency Declaration under Section 501(b) of the “Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act,” 42 U.S.C. 5121-5207 (the “Stafford Act”), making available critical resources from FEMA to help address public health needs in states and localities. The 501(b) declaration allows state, territorial, tribal, and local government entities and certain private non-profit organizations to apply for the FEMA PA Category A (debris removal) and Category B (emergency protective measures).

This is the first time a national disaster has been declared under this section. Unlike a Major Disaster Declaration, this national declaration does not require a request from a governor or tribal government in order to be issued. The president need only determine that the emergency exists. In the case of the pandemic, the disaster is defined by the spread of an infectious disease, which is recognized as an area of federal primary responsibility.

Typically, when a major disaster occurs, the state or territorial governor or a tribal government will demonstrate to the White House that the disaster exceeds the ability of their jurisdiction and request a Major Disaster Declaration under Section 401 of the “Stafford Act.” A Major Disaster Declaration permits the activation of the full suite of FEMA's assistance programs. This assistance must be specified in the request made by the state's governor. FEMA will then approve the forms of specified aid the federal government is willing to provide.

President Trump declared major disasters for all 50 states, five territories, the District of Columbia, and the Seminole Tribe of Florida.



President Biden later approved the major disaster declaration requests of the Navajo Nation and the Poarch Band of Creek Indians for the COVID-19 pandemic, further expanding the type of government assistance available.

All Major Disaster Declarations made in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic authorized public assistance grants but did not include any major assistance programs targeting individuals. This is in direct conflict with the requests of many governors who have asked FEMA to activate additional disaster assistance programs for their states. The president, FEMA, and Congress authorized select forms of Individual Assistance, including FEMA's Crisis Counseling Program, the Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) Program, and COVID-19 Funeral Assistance.

While FEMA has indicated that it is concentrating its COVID-19 efforts on public assistance, it is important for policymakers, service providers, and advocates working during the pandemic to understand the scope of FEMA assistance programs should advocates, governors, and tribal governments successfully petition a change in policy at FEMA. For more information about FEMA's disaster housing assistance programs, see *Disaster Housing Programs* in chapter 6 of this *Advocates' Guide*.

See the Congressional Research Service's [report](#) for more information on federal emergency and major disaster declarations and authorized assistance for the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **FEMA PUBLIC ASSISTANCE: NON-CONGREGATE SHELTERING**

The FEMA PA program provides resources to allow communities to respond quickly to and recover from major disasters or emergencies. Given the lack of structural damage and debris caused by a pandemic, PA Category B: Emergency Protective Measures resources have been used during the current crisis. Under Category B, state and local governments can receive reimbursement for eligible emergency protective measures taken to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the [FEMA PA Program](#)

[and Policy Guide](#), emergency protective measures include “activities taken to eliminate or reduce an immediate threat to life, public health or safety, or significant damage to improved public or private property in a cost-effective manner.” Such measures include personal protective equipment, certain types of logistical and administrative costs, and “evacuation and sheltering.”

It is well-established that during pandemics congregate sheltering poses a severe risk to individuals experiencing homelessness and people with disabilities, who are more likely to have pre-existing medical conditions than the general public. People experiencing homelessness and people with disabilities who live in congregate settings are among those individuals who have been hardest hit by the pandemic, suffering from high rates of severe illness and death from coronavirus.

Recognizing that non-congregate sheltering may be necessary to protect public health and save lives, FEMA applied its statutory flexibility during the pandemic to offer reimbursements for non-congregate medical sheltering costs under the PA program. The term “medical sheltering” is meant to address the specific needs directly resulting from the public health emergency. For purposes of eligibility under the COVID-19 declarations, FEMA may approve reimbursement for some non-congregate sheltering for health and medical-related needs, such as isolation and quarantine resulting from the public health emergency.

All non-congregate sheltering must be approved by the FEMA Regional Administrator for such costs to be reimbursed. FEMA funding through the PA program typically covers 75% of eligible costs, leaving governments and nonprofits to cover the remaining 25%. President Biden signed an [executive order](#) on January 21 directing FEMA to provide 100% reimbursement for the cost of approved non-congregate sheltering in hotel and motels across the country through September 2021, including for people experiencing homelessness and residents of congregate living facilities. President Biden extended his directive allowing 100% reimbursement two additional times through [December 31, 2021](#) and [April 1,](#)

2022. FEMA [announced](#) that President Biden's [directive](#) allows FEMA to fully cover the costs of moving certain individuals experiencing homelessness into hotels and motels and apply full funding retroactively. For projects that have already been approved, FEMA will amend the existing awards to adjust the federal funding amounts. State and local governments will receive 100% reimbursement for all approved non-congregate sheltering costs they have incurred since the start of the pandemic in January 2020 to April 1, 2022. Read [NLIHC's memorandum](#) to learn more about the changes to the federal cost-share for approved non-congregate sheltering expenses for the COVID-19 pandemic.

As of this writing, the target population for FEMA-funded non-congregate sheltering is 1) individuals that tested positive for COVID-19 that do not require hospitalization but need isolation, 2) people who have been exposed to COVID-19 and need isolation, or 3) high-risk individuals that need social distancing as a precautionary measure. In order to be eligible for FEMA reimbursement, the CDC or state/local public health officials must require the non-congregate sheltering through an official order, or it must otherwise be done at the direction of health officials. To learn more, see NLIHC's comprehensive [toolkit](#) on FEMA's role in COVID-19 response.

## **NON-CONGREGATE SHELTERING CHALLENGES AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Homeless service providers and community leaders have worked tirelessly to use FEMA PA funds to address the urgent health and housing needs of people experiencing homelessness and others living in congregate settings during the pandemic, often encountering multiple challenges and employing various strategies to overcome these hurdles. While some of these challenges reflect the unprecedented nature of using federal funds for this purpose, others mirror persistent barriers to using FEMA resources seen in past disasters.

State and local officials and homeless service providers reported challenges related to FEMA's narrow eligibility criteria for non-congregate sheltering reimbursement, the agency's lack of clear guidance and transparency, and the federal cost-share requirement, among others. FEMA limited reimbursements for Category B expenses to only cover individuals experiencing homelessness that have been exposed to or tested positive for COVID-19 or are medically at-risk. The agency's narrow eligibility criteria prevented individuals from accessing much-needed FEMA resources, further strained our nation's overstretched homeless shelter systems, and created a significant administrative burden on the part of municipalities and states to track FEMA-eligible non-congregate shelter residents separately from those funded through other programs. NLIHC urged Congress and the White House to expand eligibility for FEMA non-congregate sheltering reimbursements to all individuals experiencing homelessness. This would help ensure that everyone has access to safe, non-congregate shelter during the pandemic and lower the administrative burden on municipalities and states when submitting reimbursement requests.

During the pandemic, homeless shelter and service providers often lacked critical information needed from FEMA to plan and interface with the PA program, such as application processes and expiration dates. While FEMA issued additional guidance on non-congregate sheltering as the pandemic progressed, state and local officials continued to report challenges in accessing clear guidance on basic program rules. These include questions on who is eligible for non-congregate sheltering, whether the direct conversion of hotels into long-term non-congregate shelter can be reimbursed under the PA program, the extent to which administrative costs accrued running non-congregate shelter programs are eligible for reimbursement, and whether RVs or manufactured housing units fit with the definition of non-congregate shelter. FEMA should issue broad, clarifying guidance on non-congregate sheltering to enable states and localities to better utilize the program. The agency should

ensure that regional offices consistently apply this guidance to reduce interregional variations in application decisions and program utilization. Additionally, FEMA should make publicly available online and in a timely manner all documentation surrounding the request, approval, and justification of non-congregate sheltering reimbursement. Full transparency would enable housing and homeless service providers to utilize the PA program to the most effective extent possible and help policymakers and service providers better understand FEMA's role in providing non-congregate shelter.

Until mid-December 2020, FEMA required state and local officials to request extensions for non-congregate sheltering reimbursement in short, 30 to 60-day increments. Time extension requests require substantial information gathering, reporting, and local or state level public health declarations from public health officials, constituting a substantial administrative lift for multiple sectors of state and local government – which are already under stress from the ongoing pandemic. Additionally, FEMA often refrained from granting extension requests until the last moment, creating confusion and concern among non-congregate shelter residents and advocates that the agency will abruptly stop reimbursing hotel rooms. Despite the ongoing public health emergency, some states and municipalities started to phase out their programs under the assumption that FEMA would stop reimbursing hotel rooms, forcing officials to abruptly shut down hotels before the pandemic is over and before they had the opportunity to move residents into permanent housing. NLIHC urged policymakers to announce that non-congregate sheltering will continue to be approved under the PA Program through six months after the expiration of the Department of Health and Human Service's COVID-19 Emergency Declaration. This would enable state and local officials to continue offering these critical programs needed to prevent and respond to outbreaks among people experiencing homelessness and to ensure non-congregate shelter residents can transition to permanent housing solutions when the programs eventually

end. In December 2020, FEMA announced that the agency will approve reimbursement for non-congregate sheltering for the “duration of the [COVID-19] emergency.” The policy change, announced in an [internal memo](#) sent to FEMA Regional Administrators, did not specify when the approval for non-congregate sheltering reimbursement will expire. The memo stated that FEMA will direct its Regional Administrators to provide a 30-day notice of termination when the agency determines the need for non-congregate sheltering no longer exists. There will be an option for recipients to continue receiving funding for 30 days after the program ends. While the agency waived the requirement that recipients request and receive approval every 30 days, recipients are still required to send reporting data to FEMA every 30 days. NLIHC also urged FEMA to activate the [Disaster Housing Assistance Program \(DHAP\)](#), which plays a critical role in providing safe, decent, and affordable homes to individuals with the greatest needs after a disaster by providing longer-term rental assistance and wrap-around services. DHAP could be used to help transition individuals residing in FEMA-funded non-congregate shelters into permanent housing when the programs eventually end.

The federal-cost share requirement places significant strain on state and local budgets already depleted from COVID-19 response, resulting in some areas being unable to take advantage of this critical program. In many cash-strapped communities, the resources needed to keep people experiencing homelessness safe during the public health emergency exceeded the response and funding capabilities of state and local governments. NLIHC and the NLIHC-led Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition [urged](#) FEMA to fully cover the costs to move individuals experiencing homelessness and living in congregate settings or encampments to safer living spaces in hotels and motels. In a major win for individuals who are homeless, advocates, and state and local officials, President Biden [directed](#) FEMA to cover 100% of these costs.

For additional information on steps FEMA can

take to address the urgent housing needs of people experiencing homelessness during the pandemic, see the NLIHC-led Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition’s (DHRC) [memorandum](#) to President Biden’s FEMA transition team.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

While the national emergency declaration activated FEMA’s PA program and created opportunities for collaboration and funding at all levels of government, ensuring that these resources reached individuals with the greatest needs requires concerted effort and advocacy at the local, state, and national levels. Utilizing FEMA funds to address the urgent health and housing needs of people experiencing homelessness and others living in congregate settings during the pandemic represents an unprecedented use of federal funds, and advocates should continue to encourage policymakers to fully utilize FEMA funds to house the most people possible in non-congregate shelters.

Additionally, advocates should make note of the best practices and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to apply to the later stages of this pandemic and future disasters. Such best practices include, among others, collaborating with public health officials to ensure the broadest eligibility for FEMA resources and coordinating with emergency managers and elected officials to ensure that the needs of people experiencing homelessness are included in the scope of their disaster planning. For more information, see NLIHC’s [guidance](#) on working with FEMA to fund non-congregate shelter and our [brief report](#) on challenges, best practices, and policy recommendations to improve FEMA programs to house people experiencing homelessness in non-congregate shelters. See NLIHC’s [memorandum](#) to learn more about the FEMA policy changes enacted by the Biden Administration and key recommendations for advocates seeking to ensure their states and localities take advantage of this federal funding opportunity.

In past disasters, FEMA has often interpreted current law to deny assistance to people who

were experiencing homelessness prior to a disaster. During the COVID-19 pandemic, however, FEMA has interpreted the law much more broadly, determining that people who were homeless prior to the disaster are eligible for non-congregate sheltering. This demonstrates that FEMA can interpret the law much more broadly to serve people experiencing homelessness during other major disasters. In future disasters, advocates should urge FEMA to use the same creativity and broad eligibility utilized during this pandemic to ensure that people experiencing homelessness can access needed resources.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

FEMA COVID-19 Public Assistance Guidance Documents: <https://bit.ly/39S5l85>.

FEMA Public Assistance Program and Policy Guide: <https://bit.ly/3nGHdMh>.

NLIHC Toolkit, “Working with FEMA to Address COVID-19 Housing and Homelessness Needs:” <https://bit.ly/3m1PcjT>.

NLIHC Guidance, “Working with FEMA to Fund Non-Congregate Shelter During COVID-19:” <https://bit.ly/2UZmiVu>.

NLIHC Brief Report, “Housing is Healthcare: Challenges, Best Practices, and Policy Recommendations to Improve FEMA Programs to House People Experiencing Homelessness in Non-Congregate Shelters During the Pandemic:” <https://bit.ly/2UZ97E8>.

NLIHC Memorandum, “FEMA Non-Congregate Sheltering During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Policy Changes and New Opportunity to Address the Needs of People Experiencing Homelessness:” <https://bit.ly/3kU4WH5>.

NLIHC’s DHRC Pandemic and Disaster Recovery Recommendations to President Biden: <https://bit.ly/37aJlUh>.

NLIHC, *Advocates Guide*, Disaster Housing Programs, chapter 6.

# COVID-19 Relief Legislation

---

By Alayna Calabro, Housing Policy Analyst, NLIHC

Congress enacted three major bills to provide essential resources and protections to address the health and housing needs of America's lowest-income renters and people experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic: the "Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act" enacted in March 2020, additional relief enacted through the "Consolidated Appropriations Act" in December 2020, and the "American Rescue Plan" enacted in March 2021. The legislation provides urgently needed COVID-19 relief resources to help prevent millions of low-income people from losing their homes during the pandemic and provide cities and states with the resources they need to help people experiencing homelessness be safely housed during and after the pandemic.

## "CARES ACT"

Overall, the "CARES Act" provided more than \$12 billion in funding for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs, including: \$4 billion for Emergency Solutions Grants-CARES (ESG-CV) for homelessness assistance, \$5 billion in Community Development Block Grants-CARES (CDBG-CV), \$1.25 billion for the Housing Choice Voucher program, \$1 billion for project-based rental assistance, \$685 million for public housing, \$300 million for tribal nations, \$65 million for Housing for Persons with AIDS, \$50 million for Section 202 Housing for the Elderly, and \$15 million for Section 811 Housing for Persons with Disabilities.

ESG-CV funds were provided to help prevent and respond to outbreaks among sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness. The funds could be used for eviction prevention assistance, including rapid rehousing, housing counseling, and rental deposit assistance to help mitigate the adverse impacts of the pandemic.

Of the \$5 billion provided for CDBG-CV, \$2 billion was allocated to states and units of local governments that received an allocation under the FY20 formula. Another \$1 billion went directly to states and insular areas based on public health needs, the risk of transmission, the number of coronavirus cases, and economic and housing market disruptions. The remaining \$2 billion were allocated to states and units of local government based on the prevalence and risk of COVID-19 and related economic and housing disruptions resulting from coronavirus. Some jurisdictions used CDBG-CV funds to provide emergency rental assistance.

Congress provided in the legislation a \$150 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) for state, tribal, and local governments to help broadly cover any "necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency" created by COVID-19. Many cities and states used these funds to provide emergency rental assistance.

In addition to resources, the bill instituted a temporary moratorium on evictions for residents of federally subsidized apartments, including those supported by HUD or the U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) or Treasury.

## "CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT OF 2021"

Congressional leaders reached a deal on an emergency COVID-19 relief bill in December 2020, the "Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021," that included \$25 billion in emergency rental assistance and an extension of the federal eviction moratorium issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through January 31. President Biden further extended the federal eviction moratorium three additional times through March, June, and July.

The "Consolidated Appropriations Act" established a \$25 billion emergency rental assistance (ERA) program administered by the U.S. Department of the Treasury. At least 90%

of the funds must be used to provide financial assistance, including back and forward rent and utility payments, and other housing expenses. Assistance can be provided for up to 15 months. Funds must be used for households with incomes below 80% of area median income (AMI), and states and localities must prioritize households below 50% of AMI or those who are unemployed and have been unemployed for 90-days.

The bill also extended the deadline from December 30, 2020 to December 31, 2021 for funds provided by Congress in the “CARES Act” through the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF).

## “AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT”

Congress enacted and President Biden signed into law the “American Rescue Plan Act” (ARP) in March 2021. The legislation includes nearly \$50 billion in essential housing and homelessness assistance, including over \$27 billion for rental assistance and \$5 billion in new funding for states and cities to provide housing stability for tens of thousands of people experiencing homelessness.

The relief package includes:

- \$27.4 billion for rental housing assistance, including \$21.55 billion for emergency rental assistance (ERA), \$750 million for tribal housing needs, \$100 million for rural housing, and \$5 billion in emergency housing vouchers.
- \$5 billion to assist people experiencing homelessness with immediate and longer-term assistance through HUD’s HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME-ARP).
- \$9.96 billion for homeowner assistance.
- \$120 million for housing counseling and fair housing.
- \$5 billion in utility and water assistance.
- \$1,400 individual stimulus checks.
- \$350 billion in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, which can be used for affordable housing.
- Other critical resources for states, communities, and people.

## OTHER NEEDED MEASURES

NLIHC urged the Administration and Congress to extend, strengthen, and enforce the federal eviction moratorium issued by the CDC and extended by Congress in the December 2020 COVID relief package. President Biden extended the moratorium three additional times through March, June, and July. While advocates urged the Biden Administration to improve and extend these vital protections for renters through the duration of the public health emergency, the eviction moratorium expired on July 31. As a result of the extraordinary advocacy of congressional champions and advocates, the Biden Administration announced on August 3 a new limited eviction moratorium through October 3 that covered renters living in communities experiencing a substantial or high level of COVID-19 transmission. The moratorium continued to face legal challenges, however, and the Supreme Court ruled on August 26 to end the temporary stay on a lower court ruling seeking to overturn it. In doing so, the ruling invalidated the federal eviction moratorium, eliminating vital protections that kept millions of households in their homes during the pandemic. Legislation to enact a federal eviction moratorium and failed to garner the congressional support needed.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout underscore the need for a stronger housing safety net in the U.S. Beyond addressing and averting the immediate eviction crisis, Congress must address the underlying and long-standing shortage of affordable, accessible homes and insufficient renter protections for the lowest-income people. NLIHC launched the HoUsed campaign in March 2021 to advance anti-racist policies and achieve the large-scale, sustained investments and reforms necessary to ensure renters with the lowest incomes have an affordable and accessible place to call home. The HoUsed campaign advocates for four solutions to America’s housing crisis:

1. Bridge the gap between incomes and housing costs by expanding rental assistance to every eligible household.

2. Expand and preserve the supply of rental homes affordable and accessible to people with the lowest incomes.
3. Provide emergency rental assistance to households in crisis by creating a national housing stabilization fund.
4. Strengthen and enforce renter protections.

The first and best opportunity to advance the HoUSed campaign's priorities is through the "Build Back Better Act." The House-approved bill includes historic resources to expand rental assistance, preserve public housing, and increase the supply of homes affordable to people with the lowest incomes by expanding the national Housing Trust Fund. At the time of publication, however, the fate of the bill and its investments in affordable housing are unclear. For more information about long-term solutions to the housing crisis, see *HoUSed Campaign* in chapter 2 of this *Advocates' Guide*.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

The "Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act" (Pub. L. No. 116-136), <https://bit.ly/36HqwrX>.

NLIHC's Analysis of the "CARES Act," <https://bit.ly/2JODPxe>.

The "Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021" (Pub. L. No. 116-260), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/133>.

NLIHC's Fact Sheet on the December 2020 COVID-19 Relief Package, <https://bit.ly/30BCn6H>.

The "American Rescue Plan Act of 2021" (Pub. L. No: 117-2), <https://bit.ly/30BD8wz>.

NLIHC's Fact Sheet on the "American Rescue Plan Act," <https://bit.ly/2PMf08b>.

NLIHC's HoUSed Campaign, <https://nlihc.org/housed>.

# Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA-CV) (“CARES Act”)

---

By Russell L. Bennett, LMSW, Ph.D., and Bianca Hannon, Collaborative Solutions, Inc.

**Administering Agency:** Office of HIV/AIDS Housing (OHH) in HUD’s Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD)

**Law:** “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act),” Public Law 116-136

**Year Started:** 2020

**Population Targeted:** Low-income people with HIV/AIDS and their families

**Funding:** \$65 Million

The “Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS CARES Act “(HOPWA-CV) supplemental provides funding to eligible recipients to address the housing needs of persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families related to coronavirus disease.

## THE “CARES ACT”

The “CARES Act” provided a total of \$65 million in one-time supplemental grant awards to existing HOPWA grantees. Of the \$65 million, \$53.7 million was allocated to existing HOPWA formula grantees including eligible states and localities, \$10 million to competitive HOPWA grantees providing permanent supportive housing, and \$1.3 million in additional HOPWA technical assistance to address immediate capacity building and technical assistance needs of HOPWA grantees. Funding was made available through the “CARES Act,” Public Law 116-136.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

HOPWA was created by the “AIDS Housing Opportunities Act,” a part of the “Cranston-Gonzales National Affordable Housing Act of 1990,” to provide housing assistance and related supportive services for low-income people living with HIV/AIDS and their families. Funding under the HOPWA program is distributed through

formula to eligible municipalities and states and through a competitive process. The one-time HOPWA-CV supplemental funding was awarded proportionally to existing HOPWA formula and competitive grantees. The funding was intended to provide funding for additional housing and supportive services to prevent, prepare, and respond to COVID-19. In addition to the HOPWA-CV funds, HUD has allowed grantees with approved Annual Action Plans to use FY2020 formula funds for this same purpose.

Grantees were required to amend their FY19 Action Plans describing how they anticipated using HOPWA-CV funding to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19. Grantees with approved Action Plans could use HOPWA-CV funds to provide eligible HOPWA activities as outlined in 24 CFR Part 574. HUD has allowed grantees to cover or reimburse COVID-19 preparedness and response costs incurred no earlier than January 21, 2020. Such costs may include formal planning meetings, assistance to self-isolate or quarantine, transportation, assistance in accessing essential services, and providing education on COVID prevention, and services to provide heightened cleaning for staff and assisted households.

The “CARES Act” authorized greater flexibility in the use of HOPWA eligible activities funded through HOPWA-CV including:

1. Short Term Rent, Mortgage, and Utility Payment (STRMU) use was extended to a 24-month limit;
2. Hotel/motel stays for HIV negative household members to isolate and/or quarantine, limited to 60 days in a six-month period; and
3. Increased administrative costs to six percent for grantees and ten percent for project sponsors. In addition, the Office of HIV/AIDS Housing has allowed for programmatic flexibility under the “CARES Act,” especially in



the use of supportive services.

The [HOPWA/COVID-19 Activity/Cost Eligibility](#) chart provides a side-by-side comparison of eligible activities and associated requirements funded through HOPWA -CV, FY2020 HOPWA, or through standard HOPWA program funds.

## HUD GUIDANCE AND WAIVERS

The HOPWA-CV supplemental funding and HUD waivers allow for greater flexibility in the use of HOPWA funds. HUD's [HOPWA Guidance for COVID-19 Resource Page](#) contains information regarding waivers, FAQs, and other guidance. Resources of note include:

The May 4, 2020 [memo](#) granted a waiver for Consolidated Plan amendments with instructions on how a grantee may submit an amendment for allocated ESG-CV and HOPWA-CV funds. The expedited process allows a grantee to incorporate ESG-CV and HOPWA-CV funds within the most recent annual action plan, including a 2019 annual action plan.

On May 19, 2020, a [memo](#) authorized and explained a waiver of the regulatory requirement at 24 CFR 91.520(a), that within 90-days of the end of a jurisdiction's program year a grantee shall submit to HUD a performance report known as the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER).

To further support communities, HUD offered several waivers to regulatory requirements for HOPWA grantees. Grantees were required to inform HUD as to which waivers they were choosing to implement and then create policies and procedures for implementation. The available waivers can be found at the links below:

**Mega-Waiver 1:** [CPD Memo: Availability of Waivers of CPD Program and Consolidated Plan Requirements to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 and Mitigate Economic Impacts Caused by Covid-19 for CoC, ESG, and HOPWA](#)

- Self-Certification of Income and Credible Information on HIV Status.
- Fair Market Rent (FMR) Standard for Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA).

- Property Standards for TBRA (relates to initial inspections).
- HOPWA Space and Security.

**Mega-Waiver 2:** [CPD Memo: Availability of Additional Waivers for CPD Grant Programs to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 and Mitigate Economic Impacts Cause by COVID-19](#)

- FMR Rent Standard – HOPWA Rental Assistance (covers TBRA + all rental).
- Property Standards – HOPWA (covers TBRA AND all rental housing; relates to initial inspections).
- Time Limits for Short-Term Supported Housing Facilities and STRMU.

Additionally, on June 4, 2020, an [FAQ](#) was released to provide guidance on Section 4024 of the CARES Act, which imposed a temporary moratorium on evictions, and its effect on the HOPWA program.

Other resources and guidance released by HUD [includes HOPWA IDIS Set-Up and Draw Instructions for "CARES Act" Grant, HOPWA/COVID-19: STRMU Funding Options, and COVID-19 Related Policy Development for HOPWA Grantees.](#)

To address the expected surge of COVID-19 rates in the 2021 winter season, HUD released the [Responding to COVID-19 Surges: A 2021 HOPWA Program Resource Guide](#). This guide highlights best practices, updated HOPWA guidance, and COVID-19 resources.

In March ([CPD Memo: Availability of Additional Waivers for Community Planning and Development \(CPD\) Grant Programs to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 and Mitigate Economic Impacts Caused by COVID-19](#)) and June 2021 ([CPD Memo: Availability of Additional Waivers for CPD Grant Programs to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 and Mitigate Economic Impacts Caused by COVID-19](#)) HUD released additional waivers for CPD programs, including the HOPWA program. The waivers include flexibility in documentation of income, housing quality inspections, recertification, case management,

lease requirements, among other provisions.

In December 2021, HUD also released [CPD Memo: Availability of Additional Waivers for Community Planning and Development \(CPD\) Grant Programs to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 and Mitigate Economic Impacts Caused by COVID-19](#). The memo further extends regulatory flexibility approval in meeting property standards requirements, Fair Market Rent (FMR) standards, and space and security requirements.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

National HIV & AIDS Housing Technical Assistance and Capacity Building, Collaborative Solutions 205-939-0411, [www.collaborative-solutions.net](http://www.collaborative-solutions.net).

National HIV & AIDS Housing Advocacy, National AIDS Housing Coalition (NAHC), 202-377-0333, [www.nationalaidshousing.org](http://www.nationalaidshousing.org).

Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA), HUD Exchange, <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hopwa/>.

HOPWA Guidance for COVID-19. <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hopwa/covid-19/#resources-and-guidance>.

HUD Ask a Question (AAQ). <https://www.hudexchange.info/program-support/my-question/>.

# Homeless Assistance, Coronavirus (Homeless Assistance-CV)

---

By Steve Berg, National Alliance to End Homelessness

**Administering Agency:** HUD's Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD)

**Population Targeted:** Households that are homeless or at immediate risk of homelessness

**Funding:** \$4 billion CARES Act, \$5 billion proposed in the "American Rescue Plan Act of 2021"

HUD's regular Homeless Assistance programs provide approximately \$3 billion annually to fund state and local government and nonprofit agencies to do outreach to people who are homeless, keep them safe, and help them move into housing. Because of the danger posed by COVID-19 to people who are homeless, Congress has provided additional emergency funding for this purpose, and is considering providing more.

## THE "CARES ACT" AND THE "AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT"

The "CARES Act" provided \$4 billion for homeless assistance, through the Emergency Solutions Grants – CV program. The "American Rescue Plan Act" added an additional \$5 billion through HUD's HOME program, largely for purchasing and renovating buildings that can become housing for homeless people. This funding goes to state and local government, which can subgrant to other government agencies or to nonprofit organizations. It can pay for capital and operating costs of emergency shelters, and services (including outreach) to people who are homeless, as well as temporary rental assistance to move people into permanent housing. It can also pay for homelessness prevention, for people in immediate danger of homelessness.

All the money has been allocated, and nearly all the government grantees have funding agreements in place with HUD including a plan for using the funding. Substantial amounts of

the funding, however, have not yet been spent. A challenge for HUD and for communities is to ensure that people are getting the help they need if they are homeless. Many communities have used ESG-CV to rent empty hotel rooms in order to avoid overcrowded congregate shelters or street encampments and are using the ARP HOME money to purchase and convert them into permanent housing. Any funding for ESG-CV that is not spent by September 30, 2022 will be recaptured. HOME Homelessness funds must be obligated by 2025 and expended by 2030.

Some communities have used ESG-CV funding for eviction prevention. The much larger fund for Emergency Rental Assistance is better suited to that, and many leaders including the Alliance recommend that communities use the ESG-CV funding for people who are already homeless.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

The Build Back Better legislation that passed the House and is being considered by the Senate includes substantial new funding for permanent housing, much of it targeted to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. If this passes it will provide an unprecedented opportunity for communities to move people from the streets to housing.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

NLIHC, 202-662-1530, [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org).

NAEH, [www.endhomelessness.org](http://www.endhomelessness.org).

Summary of relevant provisions in House Build Back Better legislation: <https://endhomelessness.org/legislation/summary/>.

The Framework for an Equitable COVID-19 Homeless Response, <https://housingequityframework.org/>, including help for communities on using "CARES Act" funding.

# Treasury Emergency Rental Assistance

---

By Alayna Calabro, Housing Policy Analyst & Emma Foley, Research Analyst, NLIHC

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress established an [Emergency Rental Assistance \(ERA\) program](#) administered by the U.S. Department of the Treasury to distribute critically needed emergency rent and utility assistance to millions of households at risk of losing their homes. Congress appropriated an historic \$46.5 billion for the Treasury ERA program, including \$25 billion through the “[Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021](#)” (ERA1) and \$21.6 billion through the “[American Rescue Plan Act of 2021](#)” (ERA2). State and local governments have worked to design, scale up, and distribute aid to renters and landlords, though as some programs have developed innovations and disbursed aid swiftly, others have failed to quickly scale up, leaving renters in need without adequate aid.

## FEDERAL ENACTMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE

In April 2020, after passage of the “CARES Act,” NLIHC launched and led a national campaign for “Rent Relief Now.” The campaign, comprised of over 2,300 organizations from across the country, called for a national moratorium on evictions for nonpayment of rent, and sufficient emergency rental assistance funds to assist low-income tenants and small landlords.

By the end of 2020, renters had accrued an estimated [\\$50 billion](#) in rent and utility arrears. In December 2020, Congress passed an initial \$25 billion (ERA1) in the “Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.” The ability of state and localities to distribute critical ERA funds was hindered early on by [harmful guidance](#) released by the Trump Administration on its last day in office, January 19, 2021. The Trump Administration’s FAQ created unnecessary

barriers that increased application times, discouraged eligible households from seeking assistance, and prevented states and localities from spending resources in a timely manner.

The U.S. Department of the Treasury (Treasury) rescinded the Trump Administration’s harmful FAQ and released a new [FAQ in February 2021](#) that directly addressed the [significant flaws](#) in the previous Administration’s guidance. The revised guidance clarified that renters may self-attest to meeting most eligibility criteria, including COVID-related hardships, income, housing stability, and the amount of back rent owed; shortened the timeframe from 21 days to as little as 10 days before ERA could be provided directly to tenants when landlords refuse to participate in the program or are unresponsive; and clarified that home Internet costs and legal assistance for renters facing eviction are eligible uses of ERA.

Congress appropriated an additional \$21.6 billion for ERA in March 2021 through the American Rescue Plan, establishing ERA2. Guidance for ERA2 addressed several of the ongoing challenges of ERA1. Treasury’s revised guidance required program administrators distributing ERA2 to provide assistance directly to renters if landlords refuse to participate or are unresponsive and allowed ERA2 programs to offer direct-to-tenant assistance first and immediately, rather than requiring programs to conduct outreach to landlords beforehand. The FAQ also expanded eligibility criteria for eligible renters to those that experienced a financial hardship during COVID-19 rather than as a result of COVID-19. The updated FAQ also encouraged grantees to avoid establishing burdensome documentation requirements that would reduce participation and allowed programs to verify eligibility based on readily available information, such as the average income of the neighborhood in which renters live.

The improved guidance expanded renter protections by prohibiting landlords from evicting tenants for nonpayment while ERA payments

are being made on their behalf; prohibited ERA2 programs from denying aid to eligible households solely because they live in federally assisted housing, noting that failure to do so may violate civil rights laws; and increased access for people experiencing homelessness by reinforcing that ERA can be used for moving expenses, security deposits, future rents and utilities, and the costs of transitional hotel or motel stays.

Treasury has continued to make improvements and revisions to their guidance throughout 2021, issuing [revised FAQs](#) on August 25 to support state and local governments in expediting the distribution of ERA. The revised guidance provides even more explicit permission for ERA grantees to rely on self-attestations without further documentation to demonstrate every aspect of a household's eligibility for ERA, including financial hardship, the risk of homelessness or housing instability, and income.

## PROGRAM PROGRESS

Treasury's improvements to ERA guidance resulted in real-time changes and improvements to ERA programs. After a slow start to getting funds out the door, many programs were able to accelerate their spending after the first several months of implementation. Through the end of November 2021, \$15.9 billion from ERA1 and ERA2 has been disbursed to households, reaching over 3.2 million renter households.

Despite this, programs have experienced uneven success in getting funds disbursed to renters in need. In November alone, programs disbursed \$1.5 billion in ERA1 and \$1.35 billion in ERA2 funding. After steady increases in monthly ERA1 spending since the program's start, October marked the first month where ERA1 spending decreased, and this decrease continued into November. Despite these decreases, ERA2 spending has increased significantly, more than doubling between October and November. While over 100 grantees have spent most of their ERA1 allocation and are transitioning to ERA2, approximately 70 grantees have still spent less than one-third of their ERA1 allocation.

State grantees, whose allocations account for

\$17.7 billion of ERA1, spent 54% of their funding by November 30. Eighteen states have spent more than 50% of their ERA1 allocation, with New York, California, New Jersey, and Minnesota all spending over 90% of their allocations. Many other states continue to fall behind, with 14 states having spent less than 20% of their allocation by the end of November. Several states have also begun spending their ERA2 funds. By the end of November, the state of New Jersey reported spending 82% of their total ERA2 allocation, followed by the District of Columbia at 66%, and Texas at 47%.

Local grantees spent 74% of their total ERA1 allocations by the end of November 2021. Nearly 100 localities have spent more than 90% of their ERA1 funding and over two-thirds have spent more than 50%. Nearly 150 local grantees have started spending ERA2 as well, with many large cities and counties already spending a significant portion of their allocation. NLIHC tracks ERA spending on the [ERA Dashboard](#) and [Spending Tracker](#), integrating Treasury data with data from real-time program dashboards to provide a closer estimate of how much ERA funding has been obligated to date.

Spending is just one measure of program performance, however. NLIHC has also [assessed](#) the number of households served by ERA programs as a share of cost-burdened, low-income renters, which provides insight on the reach of ERA programs. States that are particularly concerning are those that have spent very little and have a high number of low-income renter households, such as Ohio, Georgia, Arizona, and Tennessee. This analysis also points to the disproportionality of the ERA1 allocation formula, which determined allocations based on a state's total population instead of potentially eligible households. For example, New York received \$824 in ERA1 funds per cost-burdened low-income renter household, while Wyoming received \$8,188. As a result, states that received disproportionately high allocations will be able to serve a much higher share of their cost-burdened, low-income renter households than states that received disproportionately low allocations.

## PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Since the start of ERA, NLIHC has closely tracked how ERA programs are being implemented nationwide. As of February 2022, NLIHC identified 511 Treasury ERA programs set up by state and local grantees, 201 of which are now administering ERA2 funds. Treasury's changing guidance and programs' course corrections have resulted in ERA programs that look significantly different in early 2022 compared to when they first opened.

For example, in April 2021, only 27% of ERA programs explicitly allowed for self-attestation for some eligibility criteria instead of asking for source documentation. By February 2022, 63% of programs allowed self-attestation for at least one eligibility criteria. The most common form of self-attestation was COVID hardship, with 51% of programs allowing applicants to self-attest to experiencing hardship due to COVID-19. Twenty-one percent of programs allowed applicants to self-attest to their income, and 17% of programs allowed applicants to self-attest to experiencing housing instability. Similarly, the share of programs explicitly allowing payments to be made directly to tenants increased from 15% in April 2021 to 33% by February 2022. This is expected to continue to rise, as programs administering ERA2 funds are required to provide assistance directly to tenants if landlords refuse to participate.

Additional guidance from Treasury also clarified allowable "other housing expenses" that programs may cover, such as relocation assistance and hotel or motel stays to assist those who are at risk of or have already experienced eviction. This clarification has increased the number of programs funding these additional services. As of February 2022, 53% of ERA programs fund at least one "other housing expense." Twenty-seven percent cover internet expenses and relocation expenses, 22% cover late fees, and 11% cover hotel and motel stays.

## PROMISING PRACTICES

Many programs that have demonstrated strong ERA approval or distribution rates have implemented program flexibilities, simplified their application, conducted robust outreach, and increased capacity and infrastructure to improve program performance. The following details how some of these promising practices have been implemented on the ground.

### **Robust & Equitable Outreach with Trusted Community Partners:**

High-performing programs have relied on robust partnerships with trusted community organizations to reach the most marginalized communities and support renters through the application process. For example, the State of Virginia partners with and funds organizations to reach households and landlords with limited access to the internet or otherwise unable to complete online applications due to accessibility and language barriers. In Richland, SC, ERA program administrators work with public libraries to provide access to the application and offer application support. Honolulu's ERA program similarly works with a network of nonprofit partners and target specific populations, such as the Micronesian community, or neighborhoods with high need, like the Leeward Coast of Oahu. San Antonio has been effective at reaching Latino households by conducting door-knocking campaigns in such neighborhoods, advertising on Spanish-speaking local radio, and offering support with the application process at libraries in Latino neighborhoods.

### **Increasing Capacity & Infrastructure:**

To disburse funding efficiently, program administrators also had to increase staffing and develop more advanced technological infrastructure to handle the influx of applications and program requests from renter households in need. Programs that attempt to administer ERA with the same staffing and internal systems they used prior to COVID-19 will likely suffer from major backlogs, limited visibility, and staff burnout. Many high-spending programs increased internal staff through permanent hires, temporary workers, and interns, or they

subcontracted to community-based organizations and other contractors to bolster program capacity.

**Simple & Accessible Applications:** Local programs, such as in Caddo Parish, LA; New Hanover County, NC; and Honolulu, HI, use a very simple, low-barrier screening application. Once applications are selected, program administrators follow up with tenants to request any necessary information or documents. To reduce burden on tenants, the City of Houston and Harris County’s joint program requests that landlords share information as part of their landlord directory; tenants can select their landlord from a dropdown and, if their landlord is participating in the directory, tenants will find information prefilled so that there is less information for tenants to collect and input as part of the application.

High-performing program administrators take intentional steps to ensure applications are accessible to a wide audience, via multiple methods such as online, in person, and on the phone, as well as in multiple languages. In San Antonio, ERA program administrators ensure that all people, regardless of immigration status, know they can access the program by explicitly accepting Consular IDs as a form of identification. The State of Connecticut’s program brings the ERA application to towns and neighborhoods, leveraging a mobile technology bus with staff and volunteers, to help renters apply for assistance on the spot.

**Using Proxies and Categorical Eligibility to Decrease Documentation Burden:** Many high-spending programs have implemented various flexibilities to reduce documentation for program applicants. Among state programs, Kentucky, Virginia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Connecticut have implemented fact-specific proxies for income so that households residing in low-income ZIP codes or Qualified Census Tracts do not have to provide income documentation, easing the application process. Some programs have also integrated categorical eligibility into their programs, utilizing administrative data from other federal, state, or local assistance programs

to verify a household’s income. As of December 2021, 24% of all programs have implemented this flexibility by either allowing households to provide a benefit letter rather than income documentation or integrating their application software with administrative data sources from SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, and other programs.

**Landlord Engagement & Tenant Protections:** Several high-spending state and local ERA programs have adopted notable strategies to engage landlords, implement tenant protections, and ensure tenants do not fall through the cracks. Several programs actively engaged landlords to increase their program buy-in and participation. The State of Texas held meetings with landlord groups to hear their concerns about the program and to get feedback on what additional resources would be helpful. As a result of these meetings, the state decreased documentation requirements for landlords and created resources, such as an application process flow-chart, that landlords requested.

Several programs also developed strong tenant protections and eviction-diversion strategies in coordination with their ERA programs. Philadelphia’s Municipal Court issued an order stating that after applying for emergency rental assistance and participating in landlord/tenant mediation, landlords must wait 45 days to file for eviction. Philadelphia has created an eviction-diversion program as another facet of its ERA program, and the ERA program administrators regularly check in with the courts to keep the courts up to date on pending applications and to ensure tenants are not evicted during this time. Louisville/Jefferson County, KY, has formed a strong relationship with the courts to ensure households applying to ERA are protected from eviction and to inform households about ERA as soon as they receive an eviction notice. In New York State, once tenants apply for ERA, they cannot be evicted because the lease has expired or due to non-payment of rent during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## REALLOCATION AND THE FUTURE OF ERA

In late 2021, Treasury began the process of reallocating ERA1 money from grantees with “excess” funds to grantees in need of additional resources, as required by the statute establishing the ERA program. Grantees which have not obligated 65% of their funds and have also not met a 30% expenditure ratio by September 30 are determined to have “excess funds.” The expenditure ratio is the amount grantees have distributed divided by 90% of their total allocation, and the amount of funds recaptured will be based on the difference between a grantee’s expenditure ratio and the 30% threshold. The expenditure ratio required of grantees to avoid recapture will increase by 5% each month and by the end of March 2022, Treasury will conduct a final assessment of each grantee’s spending. At that time, Treasury may determine any unobligated ERA1 funds to be “excess funds.”

Treasury completed the first round of reallocation in January 2022 and released documents detailing which grantees had funds recaptured and which grantees voluntarily gave up funding, as well as where this funding went. More than \$1 billion was voluntarily reallocated, with \$875 million going to grantees in the same state and \$162 million going toward general reallocation. Another \$91 million was recaptured from grantees who did not meet the required expenditure threshold and did not voluntarily reallocate funds, for a total reallocation pool of \$1.1 billion. Wisconsin, North Dakota, Indiana, Louisiana, and Tennessee all voluntarily gave up more than \$100 million of their allocations. Idaho, Montana, and Delaware had the largest amount of funds recaptured involuntarily, with \$33 million, \$22 million, and \$11 million being returned, respectively.

Because the majority of reallocated funds were given up voluntarily during the first round, most stayed within the same state. Only \$209 million of the more than \$1 billion in reallocated funds crossed state lines, making up 19% of the available funds. The small amount of

funds available for reallocation across state lines, however, meant that some places with significant needs received far less than they requested. The state of New York, for example, received only \$27 million despite requesting \$1 billion, and the state of Texas received nothing despite requesting \$3 billion. Other large ERA programs have also indicated they do not have enough funds to meet the need of their low-income renters, including California, New Jersey, Oregon, Austin, TX, and Philadelphia, PA. These examples illustrate the continued widespread need for emergency rental assistance among low-income renters and highlight the need for swift reallocation by Treasury to jurisdictions with overwhelming demand.

Congress should build on the successes and lessons learned from Treasury’s ERA program by creating a permanent emergency rental assistance program to cover the gaps between income and rental costs during a financial crisis. The bipartisan “Eviction Crisis Act” (S. 2182) introduced by Senators Michael Bennet (D-CO) and Rob Portman (R-OH) would establish a permanent national housing stabilization fund – funded at \$3 billion annually – to help stabilize households experiencing an economic shock before it causes housing instability and homelessness. Congress should pass the “Eviction Crisis Act” to establish a permanent emergency rental assistance program using the ERA infrastructure communities are building now.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Treasury’s ERA Program webpage: <https://bit.ly/3rJengP>.

NLIHC ERA Rental Assistance Look-Up: <https://nlihc.org/rental-assistance>.

NLIHC ERA Dashboard: <https://nlihc.org/era-dashboard>.

NLIHC ERA Resource Hub: <https://nlihc.org/resource-hub>.

NLIHC ERA Spending Tracking: <https://bit.ly/ERA-spending>.



# Emergency Housing Voucher Program

---

By Steve Berg, Vice President for Programs and Policy, National Alliance to End Homelessness,

**Administering Agency:** HUD’s Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) in consultation with Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD)

**Population Targeted:** Households that are homeless or at risk of homelessness

**Funding:** \$5 billion “CARES Act” in the “American Rescue Plan Act of 2021”

HUD’s Housing Choice Voucher program has for decades been funded only enough to meet the needs of about one quarter of eligible households, frustrating attempts to reduce homelessness. The “American Rescue Plan Act” provides \$5 billion for additional vouchers for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Communities need to ensure coordination between housing authorities and homelessness systems to ensure an impact on homelessness. These relationships will be important when more vouchers are provided in the future.

## THE EHV PROGRAM AND THE “AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT”

The “American Rescue Plan Act” added an additional \$5 billion for tenant-based rental assistance through HUD’s Housing Choice Voucher program. The new resource is called the Emergency Housing Voucher program. Eligible people are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including people trying to escape domestic violence. HUD has required that PHAs receiving these vouchers coordinate with their local Continuums of Care to determine which households should receive the vouchers and mechanisms for ensuring these households have access to additional services.

## FORECAST FOR 2022

The Build Back Better legislation that passed the House and is being considered by the Senate includes substantial new funding for vouchers, some of the specifically targeted to address homelessness. If targeted properly, the resources would be enough to end homelessness for people with severe disabilities in many communities, or to completely stop domestic violence survivors from becoming homeless.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

NLIHC, 202-662-1530, [www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org).

NAEH, [www.endhomelessness.org](http://www.endhomelessness.org).

Summary of relevant provisions in House Build Back Better legislation: <https://endhomelessness.org/legislation/summary/>.

The Framework for an Equitable COVID-19 Homeless Response, <https://housingequityframework.org/>, including help for communities on using vouchers.

HUD landing page for EHV: <https://www.hud.gov/EHV>.

# NLIHC ERASE Project to Ensure Unprecedented Rental Assistance Reaches Renters Most in Need

---

By Sarah Gallagher, ERASE Senior Project Director, NLIHC

## PROJECT SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused two unprecedented developments affecting low-income renters. *The first* is ominous and potentially catastrophic: it has caused many millions of people to fall behind in their rent, placing them at risk of ultimate eviction. *The second* is more promising: unprecedented emergency rental assistance to eliminate and avoid rental arrears.

End Rental Arrears to Stop Evictions (ERASE), led and coordinated by NLIHC, is designed to ensure that the historic aid enacted by Congress reaches the lowest-income and most marginalized renters it is intended to help. ERASE seeks to eliminate rental indebtedness caused by the pandemic and to prevent evictions by: tracking and analyzing emergency rental assistance utilization; documenting and sharing best practices and toolkits; influencing and shaping program design at federal, state, local levels; developing key partnerships for outreach and education; and assessing the remaining needs to inform advocacy for long-term investments to end housing instability and homelessness in the United States.

## BACKGROUND

Nearly one in five renters are behind in their rent. Up to 30 million people live in households that are behind on their rent. Overwhelmingly, they are low-income tenants and disproportionately people of color who have borne the economic brunt of the pandemic. According to the U.S. Census Pulse Survey, 29 percent of Black renters and 26 percent of Latino renters – compared to 14 percent of white renters – are behind on their rent.

Throughout 2020 and early 2021, NLIHC led a national campaign for rent relief now. Our successful campaign resulted in Congress providing an historic \$46.5 billion in Emergency Rental (ERA) the bulk of which will soon be available to states, localities, tribes, and territories.

Appropriating the ERA, however, does not guarantee that meaningful help will reach the people who need it the most: history shows that positive legislation for low-income people is not the same thing as truly delivering needed aid. Two implementation-related ERA concerns exist: first, ERA is administered by the U.S. Treasury Department, which has little experience and expertise with rental aid; second, the ultimate provision of aid is diffuse, through over 700 state and local agencies implementing more than 500 state and local ERA programs, many with their own sets of rules and procedures added on by state legislatures or city councils and sometimes restricting the use of funds to the people most in need.

To meet this need, NLIHC expanded its ERA tracking to a broader national project encompassing national, state and local advocacy, research, communications, tracking and outreach to ensure that these funds reach the renters most in need. It is critical that these funds be used successfully, both for the immediate need to keep renters stably housed and for our long-term efforts to achieve sustained investments in solutions to end housing instability and homelessness in the United States.

## THE LEAD-UP TO, AND STRUCTURE OF, THE CAMPAIGN

Throughout the pandemic, NLIHC coordinated successful efforts to ensure low-income households are protected from rental indebtedness and potential eviction. These

emergency efforts secured broad collaboration among NLIHC's many state partners, thousands of housing activists across the country, policy and think-tank researchers and analysts, Congressional allies and over 2,300 national and state organizations. The efforts were catalyzed through weekly national calls as well as weekly work group meetings designed to promote and achieve needed federal and state policy.

Our efforts led to the national eviction moratorium and the provision of \$46.5 billion in emergency rental assistance. In the process of securing these crucial policy resources, NLIHC tracked, analyzed, and received significant input from local housing leaders about how to make these historic policies truly effective. We have tracked and analyzed over 700 emergency rental assistance programs created or expanded during the pandemic, with in-depth tracking, outreach analysis, and sharing of best practices. We have supported and coordinated a cohort of eight state partners in their efforts to research and shape ERA programs. The ERASE project builds off these relationships, movement building, successful advocacy, state and local feedback and analyses of existing rental assistance programs.

### **ERASE Framework: A State and Local Call to Action**

Central to ERASE is the ERASE Framework. While many states and localities are developing model programs utilizing Treasury guidance, not all programs are getting money out fast enough or to those most in need. Data shows that those communities most at risk for eviction are also the communities with the lowest vaccination rates thus a greater risk for COVID 19.<sup>1</sup> Through the ERASE Framework, NLIHC is asking state partners, local jurisdictions, and Emergency Rental Assistance Program administrators to ensure that ERAP is **visible, accessible, and preventive**. The ERASE Check List provides concrete actions that programs can take to implement this framework. Program

administrators, policy makers, state and local organizations can utilize the check list to assess programs and make program improvements.

- 1. Visible:** Conduct equitable and robust marketing and outreach efforts to ensure that all landlords and low-income renters know about the Emergency Rental Arrears Program (ERAP) and how to access it in their community.
- 2. Accessible:** Support access to and disbursement of financial support to landlords and tenants by ensuring an accessible, streamlined, and low-barrier ERAP application process.
- 3. Preventive:** Prevent housing displacement by creating formal partnerships with your state and/or local court to support eviction prevention and eviction diversion in coordination with ERAP.

Building off this framework, ERASE is structured in three parts – ERA Research and Resource Hub, ERASE Learning Network, and Federal Advocacy and Field Outreach.

**ERA Research and Resource Hub.** Our ERA Research builds upon NLIHC's existing systems and partners to continue tracking all ERA programs throughout the country and conducting original qualitative and quantitative research to analyze how programs are working. We prepare and broadly disseminate materials designed to ensure that emergency rental assistance advances racial equity and reaches the lowest-income and most marginalized renters.

NLIHC has partnered with the University of Pennsylvania's Housing Initiative at Penn (HIP) and NYU's Furman Center to study the design and implementation of emergency rental assistance programs resulting in four reports published four reports. The first survey in 2020 of 220 CARES Act-funded programs identified challenges administrators faced and design features correlated with programs' ability to serve a greater number of households. This was followed-up with in-depth interviews of administrators of 15 programs to learn more about their challenges and how they adapted their programs to meet

---

1 Jin, Olivia, Lemmerman, Emily, Hepburn, Peter, and Desmond, Matthew. Eviction Lab. June 11, 2021. [Neighborhoods with Highest Eviction Filing Rates have Lowest Levels of COVID-19 Vaccination \(evictionlab.org\)](https://www.evictionlab.org/neighborhoods-with-highest-eviction-filing-rates-have-lowest-levels-of-covid-19-vaccination/)

those challenges. A third research brief by the partnership highlighted how programs could advance racial equity through their programs. The fourth report is based on a survey of 64 early implementers of Treasury ERA-funded programs. The findings highlight the continued challenge of inadequate staff and technological capacity, as well as tenant and landlord responsiveness. The partnership recently distributed a survey to more than 200 Treasury ERA programs to learn more about their successes and challenges, as well as measure their outcomes.

NLIHC partnered with the Center on Law and Social Policy (CLASP) to identify prioritization methods in use by emergency rental assistance programs. Based on interviews with program administrators and previous research, the report identifies strategies at six key decision points for prioritizing specific populations.

The National Emergency Rental Assistance Database and Resource Hub is where people in need of rental assistance, advocates, and program administrators can access up-to-date information on more than 500 state and local ERA program as well as resources to support model design and implementation, case studies highlighting model ERA programs and their components, early stage research including surveys of ERA program administrators, and weekly national webinars and national knowledge sharing calls, all of which have contributed to program design, knowledge-sharing, federal guidance, and state and local advocacy efforts.

The ERASE Resource Hub provides concrete resources to assist with state and local program design, implementation, and course correction. NLIHC has been tracking ERA program implementation and spending, conducting research, facilitating a cohort of 9 state partners as well as hosting weekly State and Local Partners Implementation Calls to gather themes and lessons learned from early implementation. NLIHC has utilized these learnings to develop case studies, implementation resources and the most recent ERASE Check Lists. An up-to-date catalogue of resources, including example forms, outreach materials, fact sheets, research reports

and program dashboards, can be found on the [ERASE Resource Hub](#).

The Treasury ERA program includes an unprecedented amount of funding for emergency rental assistance to help renters stay stably housed. [The NLIHC ERA Dashboard](#) shares information about programs and key design and implementation features that enable them to serve the lowest-income and most marginalized renters in need of housing assistance. The latest **Treasury guidance** strongly encourages flexible program design so that grantees may extend this emergency assistance to vulnerable populations without imposing undue documentation burdens.

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF ERA PROGRAMS WITH HIGH DISTRIBUTION RATES

- Adequate Capacity and Infrastructure
- Robust and Equitable Outreach with trusted Community Partners
- Simple and Accessible Applications
- Utilization of Proxies, Categorical Eligibility, and Self Attestation to Decrease Documentation Burden
- Real Time Evaluation and Course Correction
- Landlord Engagement and Tenant Protections Associated with ERA

The [ERA Spending Tracker](#) provides data on ERA1 funds approved or paid to households from all 50 state ERA programs the District of Columbia's ERA program, and nearly 300 local ERA programs. The tracker includes information from the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Emergency Rental Assistance Program Monthly Compliance Report and Quarterly Reports, publicly available data from program dashboards, data from communications with program administrators and advocates, and news articles.

**ERASE Learning Network.** NLIHC convenes program administrators, CBOs, representative tenant organizer networks and impacted people to assist with design of toolkits, model forms, model programs and case studies on program

design including tenant outreach, distribution methods, landlord participation, intake support, recertification, and more. These materials are broadly disseminated to program administrators, as well as state and local housing organizations and activists so they can promote the utilization of user-friendly applications and systems by the administering agencies in their communities. They also build the capacity of state-based partner organizations to influence, track, and assist with outreach and aid sign-up efforts.

Additionally, ERASE creates opportunities for peer-to-peer learning, through a listserv, the ERASE Cohort, ERA Office Hours and other mechanisms, to allow for program administrators to share lessons learned and useful tools/information with each other. We also organized and host webinars and other trainings for activists and non-profit organization leaders as well as relevant state and local agency officials. Illustrative of these webinars is the three-part series on visible, accessible, and preventive ERA programs that covers such topics as “How to Use Data to Prioritize and Target Households in Need,” “How to Streamline Application Processes,” and “How to Develop State and Local Court Partnerships.”

**Federal Advocacy and Field Outreach.** Since the launch of Treasury’s ERA program, NLIHC has closely analyzed federal guidance and developed resources to help state and local program administrators and advocates better understand and implement the federal guidelines.

Based on NLIHC’s ongoing tracking and analysis of state and local ERA programs and with direct input from local stakeholders and our ERASE cohort, we have continued to identify needed program improvements, policy changes, and tenant protections needed to ensure ERA is distributed efficiently, effectively, and equitably. As a result, NLIHC has provided letters to the Biden Administration and testified in front of Congress on improvements that can be made to ERA. NLIHC Testimony to Congress as well as letters to the Treasury and Biden Administration can be found here: <https://nlihc.org/erase-advocacy>.

A challenge with the existing ERA funding is that state legislatures and city councils can explicitly restrict eligible populations to receive the funds and/or add burdensome documentation requirements that have the same effect. Robust advocacy at the state and local level is needed to ensure these funds are utilized effectively and efficiently and assist the lowest-income people in need.

Similarly, effective outreach and sign-up efforts of low-income households, especially for programs or assistance that did not exist before, benefit from direct outreach by people and organizations with meaningful roots in their communities. This axiom is clearly applicable to the unprecedented emergency rental assistance program established by Congress. Such relationships will undoubtedly be critical to ensuring low-income renters learn about, and apply for, the newly available assistance.

NLIHC’s state and local partners are well equipped to provide such a “boots-on-the-ground” infrastructure. Their existing community relationships and familiarity with the needs of the lowest-income renters makes them ideally situated to ensure the outreach and sign-up campaigns operate effectively.

Critical to these field efforts, is **the ERASE Cohort** where NLIHC is working with 38 state and local organizational partners to conduct local advocacy, ensure that application processes for emergency rental assistance are as user-friendly as possible, and develop state and local court partnerships that support eviction prevention and diversion. They are also working with state and local agency administrators to track and monitor ERA implementation and to ensure that ERA funds reach renters and small landlords with the greatest need for assistance, especially Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and other marginalized people and communities and that landlords helpfully enable the process to move promptly.

**Looking Ahead: The Future of Emergency Rental Assistance.** NLIHC continues to push for long-term solutions to the eviction crisis,

including working with a bipartisan group of Senators (Senators Rob Portman, Michael Bennet, Sherrod Brown, and Todd Young) to re-introduce the “Eviction Crisis Act,” which would establish a permanent emergency rental assistance program. The bill includes \$3 billion annually and incorporates lessons learned through ERA implementation including the use of self-attestation to meet eligibility requirements and removes the requirement for tenants to produce a written lease to receive assistance.



---

# **Chapter 10:** ABOUT NLIHC

---





# Make a Difference: Ways to Engage with and Support the National Low Income Housing Coalition

---

By Courtney Cooperman, Housing Advocacy Organizer, NLIHC and Catherine Reeves, Development Coordinator, NLIHC

## BECOME A MEMBER OF THE COALITION

The best way to demonstrate your commitment to ensuring that people with the lowest incomes in the United States have quality, affordable, accessible homes in communities of their choice is to become a member of the Coalition. NLIHC's power to influence policy is rooted in the active engagement of our members. NLIHC has been a membership organization since our earliest days, and it is our large and involved membership that sets us apart from other organizations.

Anyone can be an NLIHC member. Our broad and diverse membership base includes low-income renters; professionals who work in the housing field; tenant associations; state, local, and tribal housing advocacy organizations; community development corporations; housing authorities; and individuals who believe in NLIHC's mission and want to support our work. Our members care about a broad array of affordable housing issues, such as accessibility and affordability for people with disabilities, the preservation of resources for homelessness prevention and affordable housing programs, veterans' housing, fair housing, community development, and more.

## WHY OUR MEMBERS ARE CRUCIAL

The modest membership contributions from each individual and organization, when multiplied by our more than 1,000 members, are important sources of revenue for NLIHC. Members provide invaluable feedback about the housing issues that low-income renters and people experiencing homelessness face every day in cities, towns, and

rural areas across the country. Our members' on-the-ground experiences inform NLIHC's policy priorities, and members are sometimes consulted before NLIHC takes a position on a particular issue. Most importantly, our members are our advocates—the people we count on to mobilize their networks, build relationships with local elected officials, speak with local media, and reach out to Members of Congress about the affordable housing needs of low-income people. A geographically wide and sizeable membership base brings true power to NLIHC's advocacy efforts.

## MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Through membership contributions and engagement with our priorities, NLIHC's members deepen our capacity to expand affordable housing access for extremely low-income individuals and families. Many NLIHC members value the opportunity to be identified publicly with the affordable housing movement and to participate in a nationwide network of dedicated advocates. In addition, NLIHC members receive:

- *Memo to Members and Partners*, NLIHC's acclaimed weekly newsletter on federal housing issues.
- Discounted rates to NLIHC's annual Housing Policy Forum and Leadership Awards Reception.
- Free or discounted access to our research publications like *Out of Reach: The High Cost of Housing* and *The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes*, educational resources like the *Advocates' Guide*, frequent informational and capacity-building webinars, and tenant resources like the *Tenant Talk* magazine.
- Consultations with NLIHC staff on how to most effectively use NLIHC research data.

- Periodic NLIHC Calls to Action and updates alerting members to urgent changes on Capitol Hill, often requiring quick attention from advocates.
- Telephone resource referrals with links to state and regional networks.
- The opportunity to participate in NLIHC’s policy-setting decisions.
- Resources and support for participation in such efforts as National Housing Week of Action, *Our Homes, Our Votes* nonpartisan voter engagement project, the *Opportunity Starts at Home* multi-sector affordable housing campaign, and the Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition, among many others.

## BECOME A MEMBER TODAY

Joining NLIHC is easy. Our membership rates are flexible and tiered by member type. All rates are suggested—you can join at any contribution amount affordable to you. Join at: [www.nlihc.org/membership](http://www.nlihc.org/membership).

You can also contact a housing advocacy organizer to learn more about membership by emailing [outreach@nlihc.org](mailto:outreach@nlihc.org).

## JOIN A WEBINAR OR WORKING GROUP CALL

NLIHC provides many opportunities for advocates at the local, state, and national levels to dive deeper into the critical issues facing our communities and participate in NLIHC’s work. As the COVID-19 pandemic presents new challenges, our weekly convenings create space for NLIHC partners across the country to learn from each other’s experiences and develop shared solutions. NLIHC’s webinars and working group calls also offer detailed insight into the latest happenings on Capitol Hill and empower participants to understand the nuances of federal policy and advocate more strategically. NLIHC’s current campaign calls and working groups include:

- **National Call on HoUsed: Universal, Stable, Affordable Housing:** Each week, hundreds of advocates across the country join NLIHC’s HoUsed campaign call. Focused on long-term solutions to the housing crisis, the HoUsed campaign advances anti-racist policies and large-scale, sustained investments and reforms necessary to ensure that renters with the lowest incomes have an affordable place to call home. The call features affordable housing champions from Congress and the executive branch, in-depth legislative updates and research briefings from NLIHC staff and other organizations, analyses of the latest Treasury data on emergency rental assistance distribution, and field updates from NLIHC’s state and local partners. [Join the HoUsed national call every Monday from 2:30-4 pm ET.](#)
- **HoUsed Campaign Legislative Working Group.** The legislative working group discusses and responds to the latest news from Capitol Hill related to the HoUsed campaign’s priority legislation. Participants exchange feedback from their interactions with congressional offices, brainstorm strategy to pursue the goals of the HoUsed campaign, and develop tactics that meet the needs of the current political moment. [Join the HoUsed legislative working group meetings every Tuesday at 12:30 pm ET.](#)
- **Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC) Working Group.** The Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC) is a group of over 850 local, state, and national organizations working in disaster recovery and housing to ensure that all disaster survivors—especially people with the lowest incomes—receive the assistance they need to fully recover. The DHRC holds weekly calls to hear updates from members on disaster recovery efforts taking place throughout the country, share best practices, and stay up to date on the latest federal changes to the disaster recovery response framework. Working group conversations identify and guide federal policy reform needed to improve

FEMA's disaster homelessness and housing recovery efforts. [Join the DHRC working group every Tuesday at 3pm ET.](#)

- **State & Local Implementation Working Group.** The state and local implementation working group provides opportunities to share lessons learned and best practices as organizations respond to the housing needs of people experiencing homelessness and the lowest-income renters during the COVID-19 pandemic. This working group tracks the spending of federal resources provided under the “CARES Act” and the “American Rescue Plan Act”—including Emergency Rental Assistance and fiscal recovery funds—and how states, local governments, and nonprofit organizations can ensure equitable distribution of these resources. [Join the State & Local Implementation Working Group calls every other Wednesday at 3pm ET.](#)
- **Puerto Rico Working Group.** The Puerto Rico working group has been meeting since Hurricanes Irma and Maria devastated the island and has continued through the recent earthquakes and now the pandemic. This working group is facilitated by the DHRC, but it is led by advocates and organizations working in Puerto Rico. Email Noah Patton at [npatton@nlihc.org](mailto:npatton@nlihc.org) and Sidney Betancourt at [sbetancourt@nlihc.org](mailto:sbetancourt@nlihc.org) to join the Puerto Rico Working Group.
- **Tenant Talk Live.** Geared towards low-income renters, Tenant Talk Live provides opportunities for tenant leaders to connect with NLIHC and each other, to share their experiences, and to engage in federal advocacy. Each session of Tenant Talk Live features presentations on a different topic that affects the lives of low-income renters, offers tenant leaders the chance to offer their own perspectives on policy issues, and mobilizes participants to take action. [Join Tenant Talk Live webinars on the first Monday of every month from 6-7pm ET.](#)

## SUBSCRIBE TO OUR PUBLICATIONS

NLIHC's weekly newsletter, *Memo to Members and Partners*, gives a succinct breakdown of relevant federal legislation and administrative actions, summarizes the latest research from NLIHC and other institutions, and highlights our partners' activities at the state and local levels. Subscribing to *Memo* is one of the best ways to keep up with NLIHC's activities and stay informed about housing policy.

*Tenant Talk* is a biannual publication that focuses on the issues affecting low-income renters, spotlights their perspectives, and mobilizes them to take part in federal advocacy. Themes for recent editions of *Tenant Talk* have included: disability justice, election engagement, racial justice, public housing, gentrification, and the housing obstacles that returning citizens face. The Editorial Board of *Tenant Talk* approves the selection of each theme and offers essential input into the publication, ensuring that the magazine addresses the concerns and reflects the experiences of those most directly affected by housing policy.

NLIHC produces some of the most well-respected, widely cited research in the housing field, most notably the annual *Out of Reach* report on the intersection of wages and housing costs, and *The Gap*, which calculates housing shortages and cost burdens for low-income renters. Advocates harness our signature research reports to educate their policymakers and local media about the impact of the affordable housing crisis in their own communities. *The Gap* documents the stark disparities between the needs of renter households and the number of units that are affordable and available to them, as well as housing cost burdens, at each income level; *Out of Reach* calculates the hourly “housing wage” that a renter must earn to afford a modest rental home in each community in the United States. NLIHC's research team also produces specialized analyses of other topic such as housing preservation, disaster recovery, foreclosures, and emergency rental assistance distribution. Research reports contain extensive local data, and NLIHC provides annual Congressional District Profiles with

detailed affordability statistics at the district, state, and regional levels.

## ATTEND NLIHC'S ANNUAL POLICY FORUM

The annual NLIHC Housing Policy Forum and Capitol Hill Day convenes affordable housing advocates, thought-leaders, policy experts, researchers, housing providers, low-income renters, and elected officials to explore the latest frontiers in affordable housing policy and the housing justice movement. The forum creates space for attendees to build relationships, expand their networks, interact with prominent national figures, and learn more about NLIHC's work. NLIHC's Policy Forum also features the recipients of the annual State and Local Organizing Awards, which recognize two NLIHC member organizations that achieved significant affordable housing victories in the preceding year. The event concludes with an annual Capitol Hill Day, which provides the opportunity for constituents to meet directly with their own congressional offices and advocate for federal policies to support the lowest-income renters.

The NLIHC 2022 Housing Policy Forum will be held virtually on March 22 and 23, 2022 from 12:30-5:30pm ET. Attendees can [register online](#), or email [outreach@nlihc.org](mailto:outreach@nlihc.org) with questions.

## DONATE TO NLIHC

NLIHC is unique in that it solely focuses on the housing needs of extremely low-income people, including those who are experiencing homelessness. We represent no segment of the housing or affordable housing industry; rather, we advocate for proven housing solutions that support the lowest-income individuals and families, grounded in the findings of our research reports and our members' input. As a nonprofit organization that accepts no government funding of any kind, we rely on our partners to support us in our work to pursue solutions to housing poverty and homelessness. Contributions to NLIHC directly support our research, education, organizing, policy analysis and advocacy efforts. The financial support we receive through

donations is crucial to helping us achieve our mission.

## WHAT CAN YOU DONATE TO NLIHC?

A contribution at any level makes a difference. You can support our work by making an end-of-year gift, a general contribution, or a donation in honor of our annual Housing Leadership Awards recipients. NLIHC also accepts donations of stocks and participates in the [Amazon Smile](#) donation program.

Your contributions are critical to helping NLIHC end housing poverty and homelessness in America. Individual donations to NLIHC are tax deductible.

## YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

The generosity of our donors makes it possible for NLIHC staff to produce and distribute our acclaimed weekly e-newsletter *Memo to Members and Partners*, conduct and publish important research like that presented in *Out of Reach* and *The Gap*, and produce valuable publications like *Tenant Talk* and the *Advocates' Guide*. Your contributions subsidize discounted membership rates and scholarships for low-income renters who otherwise would not be able to attend our annual Policy Forum. Donations support our efforts to make policymakers and the general public aware of our nation's affordable housing crisis and to enact much-needed solutions; to work with Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle and with each Administration on policies to address homelessness and the shortage of affordable housing; to conduct our annual Housing Policy Forum and Capitol Hill Day; to ensure the success of the national Housing Trust Fund and build support for increased funding to the program; to pursue large-scale, sustained investments and anti-racist policies through the HoUSed campaign; to prevent evictions and ensure that federal aid keeps the lowest-income renters stably housed through the ERASE Project; to coordinate the and the *Our Homes, Our Votes* nonpartisan candidate and voter engagement

project; to lead the *Opportunity Starts at Home* multi-sector affordable housing campaign; to work for equitable and comprehensive disaster housing recovery for those most in need; to ensure that fair housing laws are enforced; and to keep our members informed about the federal budget and appropriations, changing federal regulations, policy developments, and much more. Each contribution makes a meaningful difference. Please donate to NLIHC today at [www.nlihc.org/donate](http://www.nlihc.org/donate).

Contact NLIHC Development Coordinator Catherine Reeves at [creeves@nlihc.org](mailto:creeves@nlihc.org) for donation questions or assistance.

# NLIHC Resources

---

In addition to the Advocates' Guide, NLIHC offers many other resources for advocates, policymakers, students, and others providing information on the most relevant housing and housing-related programs and issues. Here are ways to get the most out of your relationship with NLIHC.

## FIELD

Your first point of contact at NLIHC is your Housing Advocacy Organizer. Housing Advocacy Organizers are NLIHC members' best direct resource for questions regarding federal policy or NLIHC membership. The organizers also mobilize advocates from NLIHC's field when there is a federal housing issue that needs attention. NLIHC's Housing Advocacy Organizers are assigned specific states. Find the contact information for your state's Housing Advocacy Organizer at [nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NLIHC\\_Field-Team-Map.pdf](https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NLIHC_Field-Team-Map.pdf) or e-mail [outreach@nlihc.org](mailto:outreach@nlihc.org).

### Tenant Talk

*Tenant Talk* is NLIHC's periodic newsletter geared toward low-income renters and their allies. *Tenant Talk* provides NLIHC's low-income resident members and others with updates about the policies affecting them, ways to take action and get involved, tips for effective organizing, local tenant victories, and other resources. *Tenant Talk* is distributed through email and mail. To be added to the mailing list and to view past issues of *Tenant Talk*, visit [www.nlihc.org/explore-issues/publications-research/tenant-talk](https://www.nlihc.org/explore-issues/publications-research/tenant-talk).

## OUR HOMES, OUR VOTES

A non-partisan campaign to register, educate, and mobilize more low-income renters in elections. Our Homes, Our Votes provides tools and training to make it simple for affordable housing advocates to be involved in voting. Renters, especially low-income renters, are underrepresented among voters. To ensure low-income housing interests are a priority for

policy makers, it is critical that organizations engage renters, who make up a large and growing electorate. More information can be found at <https://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/>

## POLICY

NLIHC's policy team tracks, analyzes, and advocates for NLIHC's policy priorities. The policy team updates fact sheets on NLIHC's policy initiatives and priority legislation on a monthly basis. NLIHC's policy priorities can be found at <https://nlihc.org/explore-issues/policy-priorities>.

NLIHC also convenes a Policy Advisory Committee, comprised of NLIHC members and members of the Board of Directors. The Policy Advisory Committee informs NLIHC's policy agenda. Committee information is available online at <https://nlihc.org/take-action/policy-engagement>.

## RESEARCH

NLIHC's research team publishes research on housing-related topics throughout the year. Access the latest research and reports at <https://nlihc.org/explore-issues/publications-research/research>.

### The Gap

NLIHC's other annual research publication, *The Gap*, documents the shortage of housing for extremely low-income renter households. For the nation, each state, and the 50 largest metropolitan areas, this yearly report estimates the deficit/surplus of rental homes, cost burdens (households spending more than 30% of their income on housing), and severe cost burdens (households spending more than 50% of their income on housing) for extremely low-income, very low-income and low-income renter households. The report documents the number of additional affordable and available rental homes that are needed for the lowest-income renters. *The Gap* is available on NLIHC's website at <https://reports.nlihc.org/gap>.

## Out of Reach

NLIHC's annual research publication, *Out of Reach*, offers a side-by-side comparison of wages and rents for every county, metropolitan area [Metropolitan Statistical Area or HUD Metro Fair Market Rent (FMR) Area], combined state nonmetropolitan area, and state in the United States. Advocates across the country use the data in this report to show the lack of housing affordability in their communities for low and minimum wage workers, and other low-income households. For each jurisdiction, the report calculates the Housing Wage, which is the hourly wage a full-time worker must earn to afford a rental home priced at the area's FMR, based on the generally accepted affordability standard of paying no more than 30% of income for housing costs. The Housing Wage is available for a range of apartment sizes. *Out of Reach* is available on NLIHC's website at [www.nlihc.org/oor](http://www.nlihc.org/oor). The Housing Wage for metropolitan area ZIP codes is also available online.

## State Housing Profiles

NLIHC's State Housing Profiles illustrate the housing needs of low-income renter households for each state in the country. The profiles include visual representations of housing affordability issues as well as key facts about housing in each state. The profiles can be found at <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state> by selecting the state and then clicking on the Resources tab.

## Congressional District Housing Profiles

NLIHC's Congressional District Housing Profiles offer a snapshot of housing needs for each congressional district in the country. Each profile pulls data from a variety of sources and illuminates several dimensions of housing affordability for renter households in each district, the surrounding area, and the state. The profiles can be found at <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state> by selecting the state and then clicking on the Resources tab.

## Treasury Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) Programs Database

NLIHC provides up-to-date information on Treasury ERA programs through its Treasury ERA Programs Database at <https://nlihc.org/rental-assistance>. This database only includes programs that are part of the federal Treasury ERA program; a more extensive database of emergency rental assistance programs can be found at <https://bit.ly/3HBqfGM>. NLIHC also tracks the rollout and implementation of Treasury ERA programs. Visit the ERA Dashboard at <https://nlihc.org/era-dashboard> for more information on key program features that enable programs to equitably serve the lowest-income households. The ERA Dashboard also reports on spending progress for the \$46.55 billion available for emergency rental assistance, based on NLIHC's more detailed ERA Spending Tracking at <https://bit.ly/3371FB3>. NLIHC's ERA Resource Hub at <https://nlihc.org/resource-hub> provides examples from the field to help programs implement practices for an equitable distribution of assistance.

## National Housing Preservation Database

NLIHC and the Public and Affordable Housing Research Corporation maintain an online database of nearly all federally assisted multifamily housing in the country. It includes information on properties subsidized by HUD, the USDA, and the Treasury Department. Advocates can use this database to get a clear picture of the subsidized stock of housing in their community and to identify properties that might be at risk of being lost from the affordable housing stock. The National Housing Preservation Database (NHPD) is the only de-duplicated, geo-coded, extractable, national inventory of federally subsidized properties which links all of a property's subsidies to its main address. The database can be found at [www.preservationdatabase.org](http://www.preservationdatabase.org). Users can also access "Preservation Profiles" on the NHPD website, which provide national and state-level snapshots of preservation needs. The Preservation Profiles are available at <https://preservationdatabase.org/reports/preservation-profiles/>.



For more information on the database, visit [www.preservationdatabase.org](http://www.preservationdatabase.org) or email [aurand@nlihc.org](mailto:aurand@nlihc.org) or [kmcelwain@housingcenter.com](mailto:kmcelwain@housingcenter.com).

## CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

To find contact information for your federal elected officials there are numerous template emails and factsheets that can be found on NLIHC's Legislative Action Center at [www.nlihc.org/take-action](http://www.nlihc.org/take-action). Most pieces of legislation include emails that advocates can modify and send directly through the NLIHC website. If you want to look up the contact information for your Member of Congress, visit [www.govtrack.org](http://www.govtrack.org), then enter your address in the search box.

## NLIHC STATE COALITION PARTNERS

NLIHC maintains close ties with our State Partners, housing and homeless advocacy organizations who serve statewide or regional areas. To find a list of State Coalition Partners and for information on becoming a State Partner, visit [www.nlihc.org/explore-issues/projects-campaigns/state-partner-project](http://www.nlihc.org/explore-issues/projects-campaigns/state-partner-project) or email [outreach@nlihc.org](mailto:outreach@nlihc.org).

## ANNUAL HOUSING POLICY FORUM

NLIHC hosts a forum every spring in Washington, DC. The forum offers federal housing policy plenary sessions and keynote speakers, as well as a Capitol Hill Day, during which advocates have the opportunity to meet with Members of Congress and their staff. For more information, visit [www.nlihcforum.org](http://www.nlihcforum.org).

## NLIHC ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: Like NLIHC on Facebook and get instant updates on the latest housing news and information at <https://www.facebook.com/NLIHCDC/>.

Twitter: Follow @NLIHC on Twitter for daily updates at <https://twitter.com/NLIHC?lang=en>.

Instagram: Follow @nlihc on Instagram for quick snapshots of information at <https://www.instagram.com/nlihc/?hl=en>.

[instagram.com/nlihc/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/nlihc/?hl=en).

Blog: NLIHC's blog, *On the Home Front*, features news and analysis from our staff, guest posts from state and national partners, and opinions on the latest developments in housing policy. Join the discussion at [www.hfront.org](http://www.hfront.org).

# NLIHC State Coalition Partners

---

**N**LIHC's state coalition project seeks to improve and expand the capacity of state housing and homeless coalitions to advocate for change and promote effective solutions that will end the shortage of affordable and available rental homes in America. NLIHC convenes state partners for twice-monthly meetings through Zoom, where statewide advocates share new ideas, campaigns, and strategies with one another and stay current on information about efforts at the federal level.

NLIHC's 63 state coalition partners in 43 states and the District of Columbia are an integral part of the work we do. Our state partners are housing and homeless advocacy organizations serving statewide or regional areas and are the organizations with which we work most closely. Please become a member or an active advocate with the partner organizations where you live, as well as NLIHC, in order to strengthen state and national advocacy for more affordable housing.

## **Alabama**

Low Income Housing Coalition of Alabama (c/o Collaborative Solutions)

205-939-0411

[www.lihca.org](http://www.lihca.org)

Alabama Arise

334-832-9060

[www.alarise.org](http://www.alarise.org)

## **Alaska**

Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness

907-523-0660

[www.alaskahousing-homeless.org](http://www.alaskahousing-homeless.org)

## **Arizona**

Arizona Housing Coalition

602-340-9393

<http://www.azhousingcoalition.org>

## **Arkansas**

Arkansas Coalition of Housing and Neighborhood Growth for Empowerment

501-558-3102

[www.achange.org](http://www.achange.org)

## **California**

California Coalition for Rural Housing

916-443-4448

[www.calruralhousing.org](http://www.calruralhousing.org)

California Housing Partnership

415-433-6804

[www.chpc.net](http://www.chpc.net)

Housing California

916-447-0503

[www.housingca.org](http://www.housingca.org)

Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California

415-989-8160

[www.nonprofithousing.org](http://www.nonprofithousing.org)

Southern California Association of Non Profit Housing

213-480-1249

[www.scanph.org](http://www.scanph.org)

## **Colorado**

Colorado Coalition for the Homeless

303-293-2217

[www.coloradocoalition.org](http://www.coloradocoalition.org)

Housing Colorado

303-863-0123

[www.housingcolorado.org](http://www.housingcolorado.org)

## **Connecticut**

Partnerships for Strong Communities

860-244-0066

[www.pschoosing.org](http://www.pschoosing.org)

## **Delaware**

Housing Alliance Delaware

302-654-0126

[www.housingalliancede.org](http://www.housingalliancede.org)

## **District of Columbia**

Coalition for Nonprofit Housing & Economic Development

202-745-0902

[www.cnhed.org](http://www.cnhed.org)

## **Florida**

Florida Housing Coalition, Inc.  
850-878-4219  
[www.flhousing.org](http://www.flhousing.org)

Florida Supportive Housing Coalition  
[www.fshc.org](http://www.fshc.org)

## **Georgia**

Georgia Advancing Communities Together, Inc.  
(Georgia ACT)  
404-586-0740  
[www.georgiaact.org](http://www.georgiaact.org)

## **Hawaii**

Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law & Economic  
Justice  
808-587-7605  
[www.hiappleseed.org](http://www.hiappleseed.org)

## **Illinois**

Housing Action Illinois  
312-939-6074  
[www.housingactionil.org](http://www.housingactionil.org)

## **Indiana**

Prosperity Indiana  
317-222-1221  
[www.prosperityindiana.org](http://www.prosperityindiana.org)

## **Iowa**

Iowa Housing Partnership  
515-333-2537  
[www.iowahousingpartnership.org](http://www.iowahousingpartnership.org)

## **Kansas**

Kansas Statewide Homeless Coalition  
785-856-4960  
[www.kshomeless.com](http://www.kshomeless.com)

## **Kentucky**

Homeless and Housing Coalition of Kentucky  
502-223-1834  
[www.hhck.org](http://www.hhck.org)

## **Louisiana**

HousingLOUISIANA  
504-224-8300  
[www.housinglouisiana.org](http://www.housinglouisiana.org)

## **Maine**

Maine Affordable Housing Coalition  
207-245-3341  
[www.mainehousingcoalition.org](http://www.mainehousingcoalition.org)

## **Maryland**

Maryland Affordable Housing Coalition  
443-758-6270  
[www.mdahc.org](http://www.mdahc.org)

## **Massachusetts**

Citizens' Housing and Planning Association  
617-742-0820  
[www.chapa.org](http://www.chapa.org)

## **Michigan**

Community Economic Development Association  
of Michigan  
517-485-3588  
[www.cedamichigan.org](http://www.cedamichigan.org)

Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness  
517-485-6536  
[www.mihomeless.org](http://www.mihomeless.org)

## **Minnesota**

Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless  
651-645-7332  
[www.mnhomelesscoalition.org](http://www.mnhomelesscoalition.org)

Minnesota Housing Partnership  
651-649-1710  
[www.mhponline.org](http://www.mhponline.org)

## **Missouri**

Empower Missouri  
573-416-0760  
[www.empowermissouri.org](http://www.empowermissouri.org)

## **Nebraska**

Nebraska Housing Developers Association  
402-435-0315  
[www.housingdevelopers.org](http://www.housingdevelopers.org)

## **New Hampshire**

Housing Action NH  
603-828-5916  
[www.housingactionnh.org](http://www.housingactionnh.org)

**New Jersey**

Housing and Community Development Network  
of New Jersey  
609-393-3752  
[www.hcdnnj.org](http://www.hcdnnj.org)

**New Mexico**

New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness  
505-982-9000  
[www.nmceh.org](http://www.nmceh.org)

**New York**

Coalition for the Homeless  
212-776-2000  
[www.coalitionforthehomeless.org](http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org)

Neighborhood Preservation Coalition of New York  
State  
518-432-6757  
[www.npcnys.org](http://www.npcnys.org)

New York Housing Conference  
212-697-1640  
[www.thenyh.org](http://www.thenyh.org)

New York State Rural Housing Coalition  
518-458-8696  
[www.ruralhousing.org](http://www.ruralhousing.org)

Supportive Housing Network of New York  
646-619-9640  
[www.shnny.org](http://www.shnny.org)

Tenants & Neighbors  
212-608-4320  
[www.tandn.org](http://www.tandn.org)

**North Carolina**

North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness  
919-755-4393  
[www.ncceh.org](http://www.ncceh.org)

North Carolina Housing Coalition  
919-881-0707  
[www.nchousing.org](http://www.nchousing.org)

**North Dakota**

North Dakota Coalition for Homeless People  
701-428-2481  
[www.jointhemission.org](http://www.jointhemission.org)

**Ohio**

Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio  
614-280-1984  
[www.cohhio.org](http://www.cohhio.org)

**Oklahoma**

Oklahoma Coalition for Affordable Housing  
405-418-6224  
[www.affordablehousingcoalition.org](http://www.affordablehousingcoalition.org)

**Oregon**

Oregon Housing Alliance c/o Neighborhood  
Partnerships  
503-226-3001  
[www.oregonhousingalliance.org](http://www.oregonhousingalliance.org)

Housing Oregon  
503-475-6056  
[www.housingoregon.org](http://www.housingoregon.org)

**Pennsylvania**

Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania  
215-576-7044  
[www.housingalliancepa.org](http://www.housingalliancepa.org)

**Rhode Island**

Housing Network of Rhode Island  
401-721-5680  
[www.housingnetworkri.org](http://www.housingnetworkri.org)

Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness  
401-721-5685  
[www.rihomeless.org](http://www.rihomeless.org)

**South Carolina**

Affordable Housing Coalition of South Carolina  
803-808-2980  
[www.affordablehousingsc.org](http://www.affordablehousingsc.org)

## **Texas**

Texas Association of Community Development  
Corporations (TACDC)  
512-916-0508  
[www.tacdc.org](http://www.tacdc.org)

Texas Homeless Network  
512-482-8270  
[www.thn.org](http://www.thn.org)

Texas Housers (Texas Low Income Housing  
Information Service)  
512-477-8910  
[www.texas housers.net](http://www.texas housers.net)

## **Utah**

Utah Housing Coalition  
801-364-0077  
[www.utahhousing.org](http://www.utahhousing.org)

## **Vermont**

Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition  
802-660-9484  
[www.vtaffordablehousing.org](http://www.vtaffordablehousing.org)

## **Virginia**

Virginia Housing Alliance  
804-840-8185  
[www.vahousingalliance.org](http://www.vahousingalliance.org)

## **Washington**

Washington Low Income Housing Alliance  
206-442-9455  
[www.wliha.org](http://www.wliha.org)

## **West Virginia**

West Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness  
304-842-9522  
[www.wvceh.org](http://www.wvceh.org)

## **Wisconsin**

Wisconsin Partnership for Housing Development,  
Inc.  
608-258-5560  
[www.wphd.org](http://www.wphd.org)



---

# Appendix

---





# List of Abbreviated Statutory References

---

Section 3, “Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968,” 12 U.S.C. 1701u, economic opportunities for low- and very low-income persons.

Section 8, “United States Housing Act of 1937,” 42 U.S.C. 1437f, low-income rental housing assistance.

Section 9, “United States Housing Act of 1937,” 42 U.S.C. 1437g, funding for public housing.

Section 18, “United States Housing Act of 1937,” 42 U.S.C. 1437p, demolition and disposition of public housing.

Section 34, “United States Housing Act of 1937,” 42 U.S.C. 1437z-6, Resident Opportunity and Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) Service Coordinators Program.

Section 42, Internal Revenue Code of 1986, 26 U.S.C. 42, low-income housing tax credit.

Section 104(d), Title I, “Housing and Community Development Act of 1974,” 42 U.S.C. 5304(d), anti-displacement provisions for Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs) and Home Investment Partnerships.

Section 108, “Housing and Community Development Act of 1974,” 42 U.S.C. 5308, CDBG loan guarantees.

Section 202, “Housing Act of 1959,” 12 U.S.C. 1701q, housing for the elderly.

Section 203, “National Housing Act,” 12 U.S.C. 1709, single-family mortgage insurance.

Section 203k, “National Housing Act,” 12 U.S.C. 1709(k), single-family mortgage insurance for rehabilitation.

Section 207, “National Housing Act,” 12 U.S.C. 1713, multifamily mortgage insurance.

Section 221, “National Housing Act,” 12 U.S.C. 1715, multifamily mortgage insurance.

Section 221(d)(3), “National Housing Act,” 12 U.S.C. 1715(d)(3), below-market interest rate rental housing mortgage insurance.

Section 221(d)(4), “National Housing Act,” 12 U.S.C. 1715(d)(4), mortgage insurance refinancing.

Section 221(g)(4), “National Housing Act,” 12 U.S.C. 1715(g)(4), assignment of mortgages to HUD.

Section 223(a)(7), “National Housing Act,” 12 U.S.C. 1715n(a)(7), insurance for refinancing.

Section 223(d), “National Housing Act,” 12 U.S.C. 1715n(d), insurance for multifamily operating loss loans.

Section 223(f), “National Housing Act,” 12 U.S.C. 1715n(f), mortgage insurance for multifamily refinancing.

Section 231, “National Housing Act,” 12 U.S.C. 1715v, mortgage insurance for elderly and handicapped rental housing.

Section 235, “National Housing Act,” 12 U.S.C. 1715z, home mortgage interest reduction payments.

Section 236, “National Housing Act,” 12 U.S.C. 1715z-1, rental and cooperative housing interest reduction payments.

Section 241, “National Housing Act,” 12 U.S.C. 1715z-6, multifamily supplemental loans.

Section 502, “Housing Act of 1949,” 42 U.S.C. 1472, rural, direct, and guaranteed single-family housing loans.

Section 504, “Housing Act of 1949,” 42 U.S.C. 1474, rural, very low-income home repair loans and grants.

Section 504, “Rehabilitation Act of 1973,” 29 U.S.C. 794, prohibits disability discrimination, requires accessibility standards.

Section 514, “Housing Act of 1949,” 42 U.S.C. 1484, farm labor housing loans.

Section 515, “Housing Act of 1949,” 42 U.S.C. 1485, rural rental and cooperative housing.

Section 516, “Housing Act of 1949,” 42 U.S.C.

1486, farm labor housing grants.

Section 521, “Housing Act of 1949,” 42 U.S.C. 1490a, rural rental assistance.

Section 533, “Housing Act of 1949,” 42 U.S.C. 1490m, rural housing preservation grants.

Section 538, “Housing Act of 1949,” 42 U.S.C. 1490p-2, guaranteed rural rental housing loans.

Section 811, “Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act,” 42 U.S.C. 8013, supportive housing for persons with disabilities.

Section 1338, “Federal Housing Enterprises Financial Safety and Soundness Act of 1992,” 12 U.S.C. 4568, Housing Trust Fund program.

Subtitle B, Title III, “American Rescue Plan Act,” P.L. 117-2, 135 Stat. 4, Housing Provisions.

Subtitle B, Title IV, “McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act,” 42 U.S.C. 11371-11378, Emergency Solutions Grant program.

Subtitle C, Title IV, “McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act,” 42 U.S.C. 11381-11389, Continuum of Care program.

Subtitle D, Title VIII, “Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act,” 42 U.S.C. 12901, AIDS Housing Opportunity Act and Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) program.

Title V, “McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act,” 42 U.S.C. 11411-11412, excess federal properties available to assist the homeless.

Title XII, “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act,” P.L. 116-136, 134 Stat. 281, additional housing and homelessness resources to help communities respond to the coronavirus pandemic.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

HUD’s list of programs frequently identified by statute: <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/Main/documents/HUDPrograms2018.pdf>.

# Select List of Major Housing and Housing-Related Laws

---

- “Age Discrimination Act of 1975,” P.L. 101-336.
- “AIDS Housing Opportunity Act” (Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS), title VIII, subtitle D of the “Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act,” P.L. 101-625, 104 Stat. 4079.
- “Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990,” P.L. 110-325.
- “American Rescue Plan Act,” P.L. 117-2.
- “American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009,” P.L. 111-5, 123 Stat. 115.
- “Civil Rights Act of 1964,” P.L. 88-352, 78 Stat. 241.
- “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act,” P.L. 116-136, 134 Stat. 281
- “Fair Housing Act,” title VIII, “Civil Rights Act of 1968,” P.L. 90-284, 82 Stat. 81.
- “Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act,” P.L. 101-625, 104 Stat. 4079.
- “Department of Housing and Urban Development Act,” P.L. 89-117, 79 Stat. 667.
- “Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010,” P.L. 111-203, 124 Stat. 1376.
- “Emergency Low-Income Housing Preservation Act of 1987” (ELIHPA), P.L. 100-242, 101 Stat. 1877.
- “Frank Melville Supportive Housing Investment Act of 2010,” P.L. 111-374.
- “HOME Investment Partnerships Act,” title II, “Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act,” P.L. 101-625, 104 Stat. 4079.
- “Home Mortgage Disclosure Act,” P.L. 94-200, 89 Stat. 1125.
- “Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act of 2009,” Division B.
- “Helping Families Save Their Homes Act of 2009,” P.L. 111-222, 123 Stat. 1633.
- “Housing Act of 1949,” P.L. 81-171, 63 Stat. 413.
- “Housing Act of 1959,” P.L. 86-372, 73 Stat. 654.
- “Housing and Community Development Act of 1974,” P.L. 93-383, 88 Stat. 633.
- “Housing and Community Development Act of 1987,” P.L. 100-242, 101 Stat. 1815.
- “Housing and Community Development Act of 1992,” P.L. 102-550, 106 Stat. 3672.
- “Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008,” P.L. 110-289, 122 Stat. 2654.
- “Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965,” P.L. 89-117, 79 Stat. 451.
- “Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968,” P.L. 90-448, 82 Stat. 476.
- “Housing and Urban Development Reform Act of 1989,” P.L. 101-235, 103 Stat. 1987.
- “Housing and Urban-Rural Recovery Act of 1983,” P.L. 98-181, 97 Stat. 1153.
- “Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act of 2016,” P.L. 114-201, 130 Stat. 782.
- “Lead-Based Paint Poisoning Prevention Act,” P.L. 91-695, 84 Stat. 2078.
- “Low Income Housing Preservation and Resident Homeownership Act of 1990,” P.L. 101-625, 104 Stat. 4249.
- “Multifamily Assistance and Housing Reform and Affordability Act of 1997,” P.L. 105-65, 111 Stat. 1384.
- “Multifamily Housing Property Disposition Reform Act of 1994,” P.L. 103-233, 108 Stat. 342.
- “National Housing Act,” P.L. 73-479, 48 Stat. 1246.
- National Housing Trust Fund, §1338 to the “Federal Housing Enterprises Financial Safety and Soundness Act of 1992,” P.L. 102-550,

as amended by §1131 of the “Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008,” P.L. 110-289, 122 Stat. 2654.

“Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act,” Division A, title VII, “Helping Families Save Their Homes Act of 2009,” P.L. 111-22, 123 Stat. 1633.

“Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998,” P.L. 105-276, 112 Stat. 2461.

“Rehabilitation Act of 1973,” P.L. 93-112, 87 Stat. 355.

Section 202 “Supportive Housing for the Elderly Act of 2010,” P.L. 111-372, 124 Stat. 4077.

“Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act,” P.L. 100-707, 102 Stat. 4689.

“Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act,” P.L. 100-77, 101 Stat. 482.

Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities, Section 811, “Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act,” P.L. 101-625, 104 Stat. 4079.

“Uniform Relocation Act,” P.L. 91-644, 84 Stat. 1895.

“United States Housing Act of 1937,” P.L. 75-412, 50 Stat. 888.

“Violence Against Women Act,” P.L. 109-162, 119 Stat. 2960.

“Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013,” P.L. 113-4, 127 Stat. 54.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Key HUD Statutes: <https://www.hud.gov/hudprograms/keystatutes>.

# Glossary

---

**ADVANCE APPROPRIATION.** Budget authority or appropriation that becomes available in one or more fiscal years after the fiscal year for which the appropriation was enacted. For example, an advance appropriation in the “FY19 Appropriations Act” would become available for programs in FY20 or beyond. The amount is not included in the budget totals of the year for which the appropriation act is enacted but rather in those for the fiscal year in which the amount will become available for obligation.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING.** Housing that costs an owner or renter no more than 30% of household income.

**AMORTIZE.** Decrease an amount gradually or in installments, especially in order to write off an expenditure or liquidate a debt.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAM (AHP).** A program of the Federal Home Loan Bank system, AHP provides subsidized cash advances to member institutions to permit them to make below-market loans for eligible housing activities.

**ANNUAL ADJUSTMENT FACTOR.** The mechanism for adjusting rents in certain types of Section 8-assisted properties, including Section 8 New Construction/Substantial Rehab. HUD publishes annual percentage factors by unit type and region.

**“ANTI-DEFICIENCY ACT.”** A federal law forbidding federal employees from spending money or incurring obligations that have not been provided for in an appropriation.

**APPROPRIATION.** A provision of law providing budget authority that enables an agency to incur obligations and to make payments out of the U.S. Department of the Treasury for specified purposes. Non-entitlement programs are funded through annual appropriations.

**AREA MEDIAN INCOME (AMI).** The midpoint in the income distribution within a specific geographic area. By definition, 50% of households, families, or individuals earn less

than the median income, and 50% earn more. HUD calculates family AMI levels for different communities annually, with adjustments for family size. AMI is used to determine the eligibility of applicants for both federally and locally funded housing programs.

**ASSISTED HOUSING.** Housing where the monthly costs to the tenant are subsidized by federal or other programs.

**AUTHORIZATION.** Legislation that establishes or continues operation of a federal program or agency either indefinitely or for a specific period of time, or that sanctions a particular type of obligation or expenditure within a program.

**BELOW MARKET INTEREST RATE (BMIR).** See Section 221(d)(3) BMIR.

**BLOCK GRANTS.** Grants made by the federal government on a formula basis, usually to a state or local government.

**BORROWING AUTHORITY.** The authority to incur indebtedness for which the federal government is liable, which is granted in advance of the provision of appropriations to repay such debts. Borrowing authority may take the form of authority to borrow from the Treasury or authority to borrow from the public by means of the sale of federal agency obligations. Borrowing authority is not an appropriation since it provides a federal agency only with the authority to incur a debt, and not the authority to make payments from Treasury under the debt. Appropriations are required to liquidate the borrowing authority.

**BROOKE RULE.** Federal housing policy that limits a tenant’s contribution to rent in public housing and under the Section 8 program to 30% of income. This amount is considered to be the maximum that one should have to pay for rent without becoming ‘burdened.’ The rule is based on an amendment sponsored by then Senator Edward Brooke (R-MA) to the public housing program in 1971. The original Brooke amendment limited tenant contributions to 25%.

The limit was increased from 25% to 30% in 1981.

**BUDGET AUTHORITY.** The legal authority to enter into obligations that will result in immediate or future outlays of federal funds. Budget authority is provided in appropriations acts.

**“BUDGET ENFORCEMENT ACT” (BEA).** An expired 1990 act of Congress credited in part with creating a budget surplus by establishing limits on discretionary spending, maximum deficit amounts, pay-as-you-go rules for revenue and direct spending, new credit budgeting procedures, and other changes in budget practices. Congress has debated the re-establishment of pay-as-you-go rules and whether such rules should apply to both spending and taxation or only to spending.

**BUDGET RESOLUTION.** A concurrent resolution passed by both houses of Congress that does not require the signature of the president. The budget resolution sets forth various budget totals and functional allocations and may include reconciliation instructions to specific House or Senate committees.

**COLONIAS.** The rural, mostly unincorporated communities located in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas along the U.S.-Mexico border. *Colonias* are characterized by high poverty rates and substandard living conditions and are defined primarily by what they lack, such as potable drinking water, water and wastewater systems, paved streets, and standard mortgage financing.

**COMMUNITY HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (CHDO).** A federally defined type of nonprofit housing provider that must receive a minimum of 15% of all federal HOME Investment Partnership Funds.

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG).** The annual formula grants administered by HUD that are distributed to states, cities with populations of 50,000 or more and counties with populations of 200,000 or more. CDBG funds are to be used for housing and community development activities, principally benefiting

low- and moderate-income people. The CDBG program is authorized by Title I of the “Housing and Community Development Act of 1974.”

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS (CDCs).** Nonprofit, community-based organizations that work to revitalize the neighborhoods in which they are located by building and rehabilitating housing, providing services, developing community facilities, and promoting or undertaking economic development.

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTION (CDFI).** A specialized financial institution that works in market niches that have not been adequately served by traditional financial institutions. CDFIs provide a wide range of financial products and services, including mortgage financing, commercial loans, financing for community facilities, and financial services needed by low-income households. Some CDFIs also provide technical assistance. To be certified as a CDFI by the CDFI Fund of Treasury, an institution must engage in community development, serve a targeted population, provide financing, have community representatives on its board, and be a non-governmental organization.

**“COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT ACT” (CRA).** The act prohibits lending institutions from discriminating against low- and moderate-income and minority neighborhoods. CRA also imposes an affirmative obligation on banks to serve these communities. Banks must proactively assess community needs, conduct marketing and outreach campaigns in all communities, and consult with community stakeholders in developing financing options for affordable housing and economic development activities. CRA has formal mechanisms for banks and regulators to seriously consider community needs and input. Community members can comment at any time on a bank’s CRA performance in a formal or informal manner. When federal agencies conduct CRA examinations of banks’ lending, investing, and service activities in low- and moderate-income communities, federal agencies are required

to consider the comments of members of the public concerning bank performance. Likewise, federal agencies are required to consider public comments when deciding whether to approve a bank's application to merge or open and relocate branches.

**CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE (CBO).** An organization created by Congress that provides staff assistance to Congress on the federal budget.

**CONSOLIDATED PLAN (ConPlan).** The ConPlan merges into one process and one document all the planning and application requirements of four HUD block grants: Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships, Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG), and Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) grants.

**CONTINUING RESOLUTION (CR).** A spending bill that provides funds for government operations for a short period of time until Congress and the president agree on an appropriations bill.

**"Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act)."** A Federal relief bill passed in March 2020 in response to the coronavirus pandemic. The "CARES Act" provided roughly \$2 trillion in assistance to individuals, businesses, state and local governments, healthcare systems, and safety net programs.

**Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF).** Emergency funds passed in the "CARES Act" providing \$150 billion to state, local, territorial, and tribal governments to address to coronavirus-related needs.

**CREDIT UNION.** A nonprofit financial institution typically formed by employees of a company, labor union, or religious group and operated as a cooperative. Credit unions may offer a full range of financial services and pay higher rates on deposits and charge lower rates on loans than commercial banks. Federally chartered credit unions are regulated and insured by the National Credit Union Administration.

**DISCRETIONARY SPENDING.** Budget authority, other than for entitlements, and ensuing

outlays provided in annual appropriations acts. The Budget Resolution sets limits or caps on discretionary budget authority and outlays.

**EARMARKS.** Appropriations that are dedicated for a specific, particular purpose. The funding of the Community Development Fund typically has earmarks as part of the Economic Development Initiative.

**"EMERGENCY LOW-INCOME HOUSING PRESERVATION ACT" (ELIHPA).** The 1987 statute authorizing the original federal program to preserve federally assisted multifamily housing. The program was active from 1987 to 1992.

**ENHANCED VOUCHERS.** The tenant-based Section 8 assistance provided to eligible residents when owners prepay their subsidized mortgages or opt out of project-based Section 8 contracts. Rents are set at market comparable levels, instead of the regular voucher payment standard, as long as the tenant elects to remain in the housing.

**ENTITLEMENT JURISDICTION.** Under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), cities with populations of 50,000 or more and counties with populations of 200,000 or more are 'entitled' to receive funding under the program.

**ENTITLEMENTS.** Entitlements are benefits available to people if they meet a certain set of criteria. Entitlement programs, such as Social Security, are not constrained by the appropriations process.

**EXIT TAX.** The taxes paid on the recapture of depreciation and other deductions experienced upon sale of a property. In some affordable housing transactions, sellers may face a significant exit tax even when they do not receive net cash at sale.

**EXPIRING USE RESTRICTIONS.** The low- and moderate-income affordability requirements associated with subsidized mortgages under Section 221(d)3 BMIR and Section 236, which terminate when the mortgage is prepaid.

**EXTREMELY LOW INCOME (ELI).** A household income below 30% of area median income (AMI), as defined by HUD.

FAIR MARKET RENTS (FMR). HUD's estimate of the actual market rent for a modest apartment in the conventional marketplace. FMRs include utility costs (except for telephones). Every year, HUD develops and publishes FMRs for every MSA and apartment type. FMRs are currently established at the 40th percentile rent, the top of the range that renters pay for 40% of the apartments being surveyed, with the exception of some high-cost jurisdictions, where it is set at the 50th percentile.

FANNIE MAE (FEDERAL NATIONAL MORTGAGE ASSOCIATION). A federally chartered government-sponsored enterprise that purchases mortgages from originators to facilitate new mortgage lending. Similar to Freddie Mac.

FARMERS HOME ADMINISTRATION (FmHA). The former name of the Rural Housing Service.

FEDERAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION (FDIC). The federal agency established in 1933 that guarantees (within limits) funds on deposits in member banks and thrift institution, and that performs other functions such as making loans to or buying assets from member institutions to facilitate mergers or prevent failures.

FEDERAL HOUSING ADMINISTRATION (FHA). A part of HUD that insures lenders against loss on residential mortgages. It was founded in 1934 to execute the provisions of the "National Housing Act" in response to the Great Depression.

FEDERAL HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY (FHFA). Created in 2008 to take over the functions of the Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight (OFHEO) and the Federal Housing Finance Board (FHFB). OFHEO was the regulator for Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae, and the FHFB regulated the Federal Home Loan Banks.

FEDERAL HOUSING FINANCE BOARD (FHFB). Federal agency created by Congress in 1989 to assume oversight of the Federal Home Loan Bank System from the dismantled Federal Home Loan Bank Board. The FHFB was merged into the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) in 2008. The FHFA also regulates Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae.

FEDERAL RESERVE BOARD (FRB). The governing board of the Federal Reserve System. Its seven members are appointed by the president, subject to Senate confirmation, and serve 14-year terms. The board establishes Federal Reserve System policies on such key matters as reserve requirements and other bank regulations, sets the discount rates, and tightens or loosens the availability of credit in the economy.

FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM. The system established by the "Federal Reserve Act of 1913" to regulate the U.S. monetary and banking systems. The Federal Reserve System ('the Fed') consists of 12 regional Federal Reserve Banks, their 24 branches, and all national and state banks that are part of the system. National banks are stockholders of the Federal Reserve Bank in their region. The Federal Reserve System's main functions are to regulate the national money supply, set reserve requirements for member banks, supervise the printing of currency at the mint, act as clearinghouse for the transfer of funds throughout the banking system, and examine member banks' compliance with Federal Reserve regulations.

FINANCIAL INSTITUTION. An institution that collects funds from the public to place in financial assets such as stocks, bonds, money market instruments, bank deposits, or loans. Depository institutions (banks, savings and loans, saving banks, credit unions) pay interest on deposits and invest the deposit money, mostly in loans. Non-depository institutions (insurance companies, pension plans) collect money by selling insurance policies or receiving employer contributions and pay it out for legitimate claims or for retirement benefits. Increasingly, many institutions are performing both depository and non-depository functions.

FISCAL YEAR (FY). The accounting period for the federal government. The fiscal year for the federal government begins on October 1 and ends the next September 30. It is designated by the calendar year in which it ends; for example, FY16 began on October 1, 2015, and ends on September 30, 2016.



**FLEXIBLE SUBSIDY.** A direct HUD loan or grant for rehabilitation or operating losses, available to eligible owners of certain HUD-subsidized properties. Owners must continue to operate the project as low- and moderate-income housing for the original mortgage term. Not currently active.

**FORECLOSURE.** The process by which a mortgage holder who has not made timely payments of principal and interest on a mortgage loses title to the home. The holder of the mortgage, whether it is a bank, a savings and loan, or an individual, uses the foreclosure process to satisfy the mortgage debt either by obtaining the proceeds from the sale of the property at foreclosure or taking the title to the property and selling it at a later date. Foreclosure processes vary from state to state and can be either judicial or non-judicial.

**FORMULA ALLOCATION.** The method by which certain programs distribute appropriated funds to state and local governments. The parameters for the formula are established by statute and are generally based on demographics (poverty) and housing conditions (overcrowding) in the jurisdiction. CDBG and HOME are formula allocation programs.

**FREDDIE MAC (FEDERAL HOME LOAN MORTGAGE CORPORATION).** A federally chartered government-sponsored enterprise that purchases mortgages from originators to facilitate new mortgage lending. Similar to Fannie Mae.

**“FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT” (FOIA).** The law providing for a means of public access to documents from HUD or other federal agencies.

**GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE (GAO).** Formerly known as the General Accounting Office, the GAO is a Congressional agency that monitors the programs and expenditures of the federal government.

**GINNIE MAE (GOVERNMENT NATIONAL MORTGAGE ASSOCIATION).** An agency of HUD, Ginnie Mae guarantees payment on mortgage-backed securities, which represent pools of residential mortgages insured or guaranteed by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), the

Veterans Administration, or the Rural Housing Service (RHS).

**GOVERNMENT SPONSORED ENTERPRISE (GSE).** An enterprise established by the federal government but privately owned and operated. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are GSEs, as are the Federal Home Loan Banks.

**GUARANTEED LOAN.** A loan in which a private lender is assured repayment by the federal government of part or all of the principal, interest, or both, in the event of a default by the borrower.

**HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM (HOME).** Administered by HUD’s Office of Community Planning and Development, this program provides formula grants to states and localities (see also PARTICIPATING JURISDICTIONS) to fund a wide range of activities that build, buy, and/or rehabilitate affordable housing for rent or homeownership, or to provide direct rental assistance to low-income people. The HOME program is authorized by Title II of the 1990 “Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act.”

**“HOME MORTGAGE DISCLOSURE ACT” (HMDA).** Created in 1975, HMDA requires most financial institutions that make mortgage loans, home improvement loans, or home refinance loans to collect and disclose information about their lending practices.

**“HOMELESS EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE AND RAPID TRANSITION TO HOUSING (HEARTH) Act of 2009.”** This law revises the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grant programs and provides communities with new resources and better tools to prevent and end homelessness. The legislation increases priority on homeless families with children, significantly increases resources to prevent homelessness, provides incentives for developing permanent supportive housing, and creates new tools to address homelessness in rural areas.

**HOUSING ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS (HAP).** HAP is the payment made according to a HAP contract between HUD and an owner to provide Section 8 rental assistance. The term applies to both

the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program and Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance Program. The local voucher program is administered by a public housing agency (PHA), whereas a Section 8 contract administrator makes payments in the Multifamily Housing Programs.

**HOUSING BONDS.** Bonds that are generally issued by states and secured by mortgages on homes or rental properties. Although homeowner housing financed by bonds are typically targeted to families or individuals with incomes below the median for the area or the state, rental housing is targeted to lower income families or individuals.

**HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHERS (HCV).** Also known as Section 8 or Section 8 vouchers, this is a rental assistance program funded by HUD. The program helps some families, primarily extremely low-income (ELI) families, rent private housing. Families pay a percentage of their monthly adjusted income toward monthly rent and utilities (generally not more than 30%); the balance of the rent to the owner is paid with the federal subsidy.

**HOUSING COSTS.** Essentially, they are the costs of occupying housing. Calculated on a monthly basis, housing costs for renters include items such as contract rent, utilities, property insurance, and mobile home park fees. For homeowners, monthly housing costs include monthly payments for all mortgages or installment loans or contracts, as well as real estate taxes, property insurance, utilities, and homeowner association, cooperative, condominium, or manufactured housing park fees. Utilities include electricity, gas, fuels, water, sewage disposal, garbage, and trash collection.

**HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY (HFA).** The state agency responsible for allocating and administering federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) as well as other federal and state housing financing sources.

**HOUSING FIRST.** A proven model for addressing homelessness that prioritizes access to permanent, stable housing as a prerequisite for effective psychiatric and substance abuse

treatment and for improving quality of life.

**HOUSING STARTS.** An indicator of residential construction activity, housing starts represent the start of construction of a house or apartment building, which means the digging of the foundation. Other measures of construction activity include housing permits, housing completions, and new home sales.

**HOUSING TRUST FUNDS.** Distinct funds, usually established by state or local governments that receive ongoing public revenues that can only be spent on affordable housing initiatives, including new construction, preservation of existing housing, emergency repairs, homeless shelters, and housing-related services.

**HUD INSPECTOR GENERAL.** The HUD official appointed by the president who is responsible for conducting audits and investigations of HUD's programs and operations.

**INCLUSIONARY ZONING.** A requirement or incentive to reserve a specific percentage of units in new residential developments for moderate income households.

**INDEPENDENT AGENCY.** An agency of the United States government that is created by an act of Congress and is independent of the executive departments. The Securities and Exchange Commission is an example of an independent agency.

**LEVERAGING.** The maximization of the effects of federal assistance for a project by obtaining additional project funding from non-federal sources.

**“LOW-INCOME HOUSING PRESERVATION AND RESIDENT HOMEOWNERSHIP ACT” (LIHPRHA).** The 1990 statute prohibiting the sale of older HUD-assisted properties for market rate use, compensating the owners with financial incentives. The program was active from 1990 to 1996.

**LOW-INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDITS (LIHTC).** Enacted by Congress in 1986 to provide the private market with an incentive to invest in affordable rental housing. Federal housing tax credits are awarded to developers of qualified

projects. Developers then sell these credits to investors to raise capital (equity) for their projects, which reduces the debt that the developer would otherwise have to borrow. Because the debt is lower, a tax credit property can in turn offer lower, more affordable rents. Provided the property maintains compliance with the program requirements, investors receive a dollar-for-dollar credit against their federal tax liability each year throughout a period of 10 years. The amount of the annual credit is based on the amount invested in the affordable housing.

**LOW INCOME.** As applied to most housing programs, household income below 80% of metropolitan area median, as defined by HUD, is classified as low income. See also **EXTREMELY LOW INCOME (ELI)**, **VERY LOW INCOME (VLI)**.

**MARK-TO-MARKET.** HUD program that reduces above-market rents to market levels at certain HUD-insured properties that have project-based Section 8 contracts. Existing debt is restructured so that the property may continue to be financially viable with the reduced Section 8 rents.

**MARK-UP-TO-MARKET.** A federal program to adjust rents on Section 8 assisted housing up to the market rate.

**METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA (MSA).** The basic census unit for defining urban areas and rental markets.

**MORTGAGE INTEREST DEDUCTION.** The federal tax deduction for mortgage interest paid in a taxable year. Interest on a mortgage to acquire, construct, or substantially improve a residence is deductible for indebtedness of up to \$1 million.

**MORTGAGE.** The debt instrument by which the borrower (mortgagor) gives the lender (mortgagee) a lien on the property as security for the repayment of a loan. The borrower has use of the property, and the lien is removed when the obligation is fully paid.

**MOVING TO WORK (MTW).** A demonstration program for public housing agencies (PHAs) that provides them with enormous flexibility from most HUD statutory and regulatory requirements.

The flexibilities, regarding key programmatic features such as rent affordability and income targeting requirements, can impact residents in both the public housing and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Programs. Authorized in 1996, the demonstration program continues even though it has not been evaluated on a broad scale.

**“MULTIFAMILY ASSISTED HOUSING REFORM AND AFFORDABILITY ACT” (MAHRA).** The 1997 statute authorizing the Mark-to-Market program and renewals of expiring Section 8 contracts.

**MULTIFAMILY.** A building with five or more residential units.

**NON-ELDERLY DISABLED (NED) VOUCHERS.** Since 1997, Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) have been awarded under different special purpose voucher program types to serve non-elderly persons with disabilities (NED). NED HCVs enable non-elderly disabled families to lease affordable private housing of their choice. NED vouchers also assist persons with disabilities who often face difficulties in locating suitable and accessible housing on the private market.

**NEW CONSTRUCTION/SUBSTANTIAL REHAB.** A form of project-based Section 8 assistance used in the original development and financing of some multifamily housing. Projects could be both insured and uninsured (with conventional or state/local bond financing). These contracts were long-term (20-40 years). Active from 1976 to 1985.

**NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY (NOFA).** A notice by a federal agency, including HUD, used to inform potential applicants that program funding is available.

**OFFICE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING PRESERVATION.** Formerly the Office of Multifamily Housing Assistance Restructuring (OMHAR), HUD established this office to oversee the continuation of the Mark-to-Market program and provide assistance in the oversight and preservation of a wide spectrum of affordable housing programs.

**OUTLAYS.** Payments made (usually through the issuance of checks or disbursement of cash) to

liquidate obligations. Outlays during a fiscal year (FY) may be for payment of obligations incurred in the previous year or in the same year.

**PARTICIPATING JURISDICTION (PJ).** A HUD-recognized entity that is an eligible recipient of HOME funding.

**PAY-AS-YOU-GO or PAYGO.** A requirement that Congress offset the costs of tax cuts or increases in entitlement spending with increased revenue or savings elsewhere in the budget.

**PAYMENT STANDARD.** Payment standards are used to calculate the housing assistance payment (HAP) that a public housing agency (PHA) pays to an owner on behalf of a family leasing a unit. Each PHA has latitude in establishing its schedule of payment standard amounts by bedroom size. The range of possible payment standard amounts is based on HUD's published fair market rent (FMR) for the area in which the PHA has jurisdiction. A PHA may set its payment standard amounts from 90% to 110% of the published FMRs and may set them higher or lower with HUD approval.

**PERFORMANCE FUNDING SYSTEM.** Developed by HUD to analyze costs of operating public housing developments, used as the basis for calculating the need for operating subsidies.

**PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING.** Decent, safe, and affordable permanent community-based housing targeted to vulnerable very low-income (VLI) households with serious and long term disabilities that is linked with an array of voluntary and flexible services to support successful tenancies.

**PREPAYMENT PENALTY.** A fee that may be levied for repayment of a loan before it falls due.

**PROJECT-BASED VOUCHERS (PBVs).** A component of a public housing agency's (PHAs) housing choice voucher program. A PHA can attach up to 20% of its voucher assistance to specific housing units if the owner agrees to either rehabilitate or construct the units, or the owner agrees to set-aside a portion of the units in an existing development for lower income families. In general, no more than 25% of the

units in a property can be subsidized with PBVs.

**RENTAL ASSISTANCE DEMONSTRATION (RAD).** Congress authorized RAD as part of its FY12 and FY15 HUD appropriations bills. There are two RAD components. The first component allows HUD to approve the conversion of up to 185,000 public housing and moderate rehabilitation (Mod Rehab) units into either project-based Section 8 rental assistance (PBRA) contracts or project-based vouchers (PBVs) by September 30, 2018. The second component allows an unlimited number of units in three smaller programs administered by HUD's Office of Multifamily Housing Programs to convert tenant protection vouchers to PBVs or PBRAs. There is no deadline for the three second component programs – Rent Supplement (Rent Supp), Rental Assistance Program (RAP), and Mod Rehab.

**REAL ESTATE ASSESSMENT CENTER (REAC).** The office within HUD responsible for assessing the condition of HUD's portfolio, both public housing and private, HUD-assisted multifamily housing. REAC oversees physical inspections and analysis of the financial soundness of all HUD housing, and REAC scores reflect physical and financial condition.

**REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT TRUST (REIT).** A business trust or corporation that combines the capital of many investors to acquire or finance real estate, which may include assisted housing. Cash flow generated by the properties is distributed to investors in the form of stock dividends. The REIT can also provide an attractive tax deferral mechanism by enabling investors to exchange their partnership shares for interests in the REIT, a nontaxable transfer.

**"REAL ESTATE SETTLEMENT PROCEDURES ACT" (RESPA).** A statute that prohibits kickbacks and referral fees that unnecessarily increase the costs of certain settlement services in connection with real estate transactions and provides for disclosures in connection with such transactions. HUD enforces RESPA.

**RECONCILIATION BILL.** A bill containing changes in law recommended by House or Senate committees pursuant to reconciliation

instructions in a budget resolution.

**RENT SUPPLEMENT (Rent Supp).** An older HUD project-based rental subsidy program used for some Section 221(d)(3) and Section 236 properties. The subsidy contract is coterminous with the mortgage. Most rent supplement contracts in HUD-insured projects were converted to Section 8 in the 1970s.

**RESIDUAL RECEIPTS.** Cash accounts maintained under joint control of the owner and HUD [or Housing Finance Agency (HFA)] into which is deposited all surplus cash generated in excess of the allowable limited dividend or profit. The disposition of residual receipts at the end of the Section 8 contract and/or mortgage is governed by the Regulatory Agreement.

**RIGHT OF FIRST REFUSAL.** The right of first refusal means the right to match the terms and conditions of a third-party offer to purchase a property, within a specified time period.

**RURAL DEVELOPMENT (RD).** A mission area of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), RD administers grant and loan programs to promote and support housing, public facilities and services such as water and sewer systems, health clinics, emergency service facilities, and electric and telephone service in rural communities. RD also promotes economic development by supporting loans to businesses and provides technical assistance to help agricultural producers and cooperatives.

**RURAL HOUSING SERVICE (RHS).** An agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development (RD), RHS is responsible for administering a number of rural housing and community facilities programs, such as providing loans and grants for single-family homes, apartments for low-income people, housing for farm workers, child care centers, fire and police stations, hospitals, libraries, nursing homes, and schools.

**RURAL.** As used in this Guide, areas that are not urbanized. The Census Bureau defines an urbanized area as "an incorporated place and adjacent densely settled (1.6 or more people per acre) surrounding area that together have

a minimum population of 50,000." The Census Bureau defines rural as an area with a population of less than 2,500. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) definition of rural has several factors, including population: under 20,000 in non-metro areas, under 10,000 in metro areas, or under 35,000 if the area was at one time defined as rural but the populations has grown (a "grandfathered" area).

**SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATION (S&L).** A depository financial institution, federally or state chartered, that obtains the bulk of its deposits from consumers and holds the majority of its assets as home mortgage loans. In 1989, responding to a massive wave of insolvencies caused by mismanagement, corruption, and economic factors, Congress passed a savings and loan "bailout bill" that revamped the regulatory structure of the industry under a newly created agency, the Office of Thrift Supervision.

**SAVINGS BANK.** A depository financial institution that primarily accepts consumer deposits and makes home mortgage loans. Historically, savings banks were of the mutual (depositor-owned) form and chartered in only 16 states; the majority of savings banks were located in the New England states, New York, and New Jersey.

**SECONDARY MARKET.** The term secondary market refers to the market in which loans and other financial instruments are bought and sold. Fannie Mae (the Federal National Mortgage Association) and Freddie Mac (the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation), for example, operate in the secondary market because they do not deal directly with the borrower, but instead purchase loans from lenders.

**SECTION 202.** A HUD program created in 1959 to provide direct government loans or grants to nonprofits to develop housing for the elderly and handicapped. Currently, the program provides capital grants and project rental assistance contracts.

**SECTION 221(d)(3) BELOW MARKET INTEREST RATES (BMIR).** A HUD program under which the federal government provided direct loans at a BMIR (3%) and Federal Housing Administration

(FHA) mortgage insurance to private developers of low and moderate-income housing. Active from 1963 to 1970.

SECTION 236. A program under which HUD provided interest subsidies (known as Interest Reduction Payments or IRP subsidies) and mortgage insurance to private developers of low- and moderate-income housing. The interest subsidy effectively reduced the interest rate on the loan to 1%. Active from 1968 to 1975.

SECTION 514 LOANS AND SECTION 516 GRANTS. Administered by USDA RD's Rural Housing Service (RHS) and may be used to buy, build, improve or repair housing for farm laborers. Authorized by the "Housing Act of 1949."

SECTION 515 RURAL RENTAL HOUSING PROGRAM. Provides funds for loans made by USDA RD's Rural Housing Service (RHS) to nonprofit, for profit, cooperatives, and public entities for the construction of rental or cooperative housing in rural areas for families, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, or for congregate living facilities. Authorized by the "Housing Act of 1949."

SECTION 533 HOUSING PRESERVATION GRANT PROGRAM (HPG). This program, administered by USDA RD's Rural Housing Service (RHS), provides grants to promote preservation of Section 515 properties. Authorized by the "Housing Act of 1949."

SECTION 538 RENTAL HOUSING LOAN GUARANTEES. U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development (RD) Rural Housing Service (RHS) may guarantee loans made by private lenders for the development of affordable rural rental housing. This program serves a higher income population than that served by the Section 515 program. Authorized the "Housing Act of 1949."

SECTION 8 PROJECT-BASED RENTAL ASSISTANCE (PBRA). Administered by HUD's Office of Multifamily Housing, Section 8 PBRA takes the form of a contract between HUD and building owners who agree to provide housing to eligible tenants in exchange for long-term

subsidies. Project-Based Assistance limits tenant contributions to 30% of the household's adjusted income. Assistance may be provided to some or all of the units in a project occupied by eligible tenants. Assistance is attached to the unit and stays with the unit after the tenant moves.

SECTION 8 PROJECT-BASED VOUCHERS (PBV). Public housing agencies (PHAs) are allowed to use up to 20% of their housing choice voucher funding allocation to project base, or tie, vouchers to a property. PHAs may contract with property owners to project base vouchers to up to 25% of the units in a property. These vouchers remain with the project even if the assisted tenant moves. The effect is similar to the project-based section 8 program in that the place-based funding helps preserve the affordability of the units. One difference between the two programs is the mobility feature of the project-based voucher program that allows a tenant to move with continued assistance in the form of a housing choice voucher. This program is administered by HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) and local PHAs.

SECTION 8 VOUCHERS. Administered by HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) and local public housing agencies (PHAs), housing choice vouchers (HCVs) are allocated to individual households, providing a rent subsidy that generally limits tenant contribution to rent to 30% of adjusted household income. PHAs can attach a limited number of their housing choice vouchers to individual units, thereby 'project basing' them. See Section 8 project-based vouchers (PBVs).

SECTION 811. The Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities is a federal program that assists the lowest income people with the most significant and long-term disabilities to live independently in the community by providing affordable housing linked with voluntary services and supports. The program provides funds to nonprofit organizations to develop rental housing, with supportive services, for very low-income (VLI) adults with disabilities, and it provides rent subsidies for the projects to help make them

affordable. Two new approaches to creating integrated permanent supportive housing were recently introduced: the Modernized Capital Advance/Project Rental Assistance Contract (PRAC) multi-family option and the Project Rental Assistance (PRA) option. Both options require that properties receiving Section 811 assistance limit the total number of units with permanent supportive housing use restrictions to 25% or less. Congress directed that all FY12, FY13, and FY14 funding for new Section 811 units be provided solely through the PRA option.

**SEVERE HOUSING PROBLEMS.** As used by HUD in defining priorities, severe housing problems are homelessness, displacement, housing cost burden above 50% of income, and occupancy of housing with serious physical problems. Data on severe housing problems drawn from the American Housing Survey measures only cost burden and physical problems.

**SINGLE-FAMILY.** A single-family property is a residential property with fewer than five units.

**“STAFFORD DISASTER RELIEF AND EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE ACT” (STAFFORD ACT, P.L. 100-707).** Provides a systemic means of supplying federal natural disaster assistance to state and local governments. The act establishes the presidential declaration process for major emergencies, provides for the implementation of disaster assistance, and sets forth the various disaster assistance programs.

**“STEWART B. MCKINNEY HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT.”** Enacted in July 1987, the “McKinney Act,” P.L. 100-77, established distinct assistance programs for the growing numbers of homeless persons. Recognizing the variety of causes of homelessness, the original “McKinney Act” authorized 20 programs offering a multitude of services, including emergency food and shelter, transitional and permanent housing, education, job training, mental health care, primary health care services, substance abuse treatment, and veterans’ assistance services. The act was renamed the “McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act” in 2000 to reflect the late Representative Bruce Vento’s (D-MN) work

to improve housing for the poor and homeless. The act was revised in 2002 and again in 2009. See “Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009.”

**TAX CREDIT.** A provision of the tax code that specifies an amount by which a taxpayer’s taxes will be reduced in return for some specific behavior or action.

**TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF).** Provides block grants to states administered under the “Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996,” which established a new welfare system. The TANF block grant replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). The chief feature of TANF was the abolition of a federal entitlement to cash assistance.

**THRIFT.** See SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATION (S&L).

**VERY LOW INCOME (VLI).** A household with income is at or below 50% of area median income (AMI), as defined by HUD.

**VOUCHER.** A government payment to, or on behalf of, a household to be used solely to pay a portion of the household’s housing costs in the private market. Vouchers are considered tenant-based assistance because they are not typically connected to a particular property or unit (although they may be ‘project based’ in some cases) but are issued to a tenant.

**WORST CASE HOUSING PROBLEMS.** Unsubsidized very low-income renter households with severe housing problems. HUD is required to submit a periodic report to Congress on worst case housing problems.

# Advocates' Guide Authors

---

## MICHAEL ANDERSON

Michael Anderson is the Director of the Community Change's Housing Trust Fund Project. For more than 35 years, the Housing Trust Fund Project has operated as a strategic hub for state and local housing trust fund campaigns and a clearinghouse for information on housing trust funds. The Project provides strategic and technical assistance to organizations, agencies, and elected officials working to create or implement these funds. The Project also builds power to advance housing policy at the state level through organizing networks of residents of affordable housing and others with lived experience of housing injustice. The Project is working with partners to grow networks in California, Louisiana, Oregon, and Washington State.

## ANDREW AURAND

Andrew Aurand joined the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) in July 2015 as Vice President for Research. Andrew leads NLIHC's research team, conducting research that informs housing policy and documenting the housing needs of low-income renters in annual publications like *The Gap* and *Out of Reach*. Andrew has extensive experience in research and affordable housing. He previously served as a faculty member in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Florida State University, where he taught graduate courses in research methods and housing policy and where he completed research on the impact of comprehensive planning and land use principles on the supply of affordable housing for low-income households. Andrew received his PhD and MSW from the University of Pittsburgh.

## OLIVIA BARROW

Olivia Barrow is the Policy Manager for the Low-Income Investment Fund (LIIF), where she leads the organization's affordable housing and community development federal policy

and advocacy work. Prior to joining LIIF, Olivia served as a Senior Policy Analyst at Enterprise Community Partners, where she advocated for programs like the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, New Markets Tax Credit, and Community Reinvestment Act. At both LIIF and Enterprise, Olivia has provided rigorous analysis of complex policy issues and built coalitions of diverse stakeholders. Olivia earned a bachelor's degree in public policy and a master's degree in public administration from the George Washington University in Washington, DC.

## TRISTIA BAUMAN

Tristia Bauman combines litigation, legal education, and legislative advocacy strategies to prevent and end homelessness. As a senior attorney with the National Homelessness Law Center, she focuses on combating the criminalization of homelessness and advocating for laws that protect the civil and human rights of homeless people. Tristia also conducts legal trainings around the country, writes reports and other publications related to housing, and serves as a legal resource for homeless advocates. Tristia began her legal career at Legal Services of Greater Miami, Inc. as a housing attorney working with low-income tenants in federally subsidized housing. She later served for several years as an assistant public defender in Miami-Dade County.

## SPENCER BELL

Spencer Bell is Policy Analyst at the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. He is responsible for developing and implementing NCHV's strategic policies, representing NCHV's interests before Congress and the Biden administration through collaborative policy analysis, and carrying out shoe-leather advocacy on Capitol Hill. Spencer has spent over a decade in government affairs, working to elevate issue-driven dialogues and promote pragmatic, bipartisan solutions across a myriad of stakeholders. Prior to joining NCHV, he



worked in issue advocacy for the U.S. House of Representatives and education firms, as well as on campaigns and in political management. Spencer is an Eagle Scout and has a long history of serving veterans in a legislative capacity for a Member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. He earned his bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Florida.

## **RUSTY BENNETT**

Dr. Russell Bennett, LGSW, PhD, serves as the Chief Executive Officer of Collaborative Solutions, Inc. (CS), a national non-profit organization with an administrative office in Birmingham, Alabama, that provides organizational management and program implementation services. He has also served as the Executive Director of the National AIDS Housing Coalition and Executive Director of the Professional Association of Social Workers in HIV & AIDS since Collaborative Solutions became management agent for the two organizations. As CEO and founding director of CS, Rusty oversees the organization's work as a designated technical assistance (TA) provider for HUD, providing national assistance in the areas of HIV/AIDS, housing, homelessness, and behavioral health. In addition to his national TA work, he runs CS's Rural Supportive Housing Initiative, as well as other national initiatives integrating housing and health. He is also an adjunct faculty member at the University of Alabama School of Social Work, where he teaches in the areas of social work research, program evaluation, and nonprofit management. Rusty received his doctorate from the University of Alabama's School of Social Work in 2009.

## **STEVE BERG**

Steve Berg serves as Vice President for Programs and Policy with the National Alliance to End Homelessness. He specializes in employment, economic development, and human services, focusing on the intersections between those issues and housing. Prior to joining the Alliance, Steve worked with the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities on state-level welfare reform and employment. Before arriving in Washington, DC, Steve spent 14 years as a legal services

attorney in California and Connecticut, working on housing, government benefits, employment, and family integrity. Steve's experience includes nonprofit management and staff training and development.

## **SIDNEY BETANCOURT**

Sidney Betancourt is a housing advocacy organizer on the National Low Income Housing Coalition's (NLIHC) field team. Sidney works with the field team to expand NLIHC membership and engage advocates on federal policy priorities to advance the Coalition's mission. Prior to joining NLIHC, Sidney was the 2020-2021 Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) housing graduate fellow. During her time as a fellow, Sidney worked with the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) on legislative research aimed at preparing the agency for a governance restructure. She spent the last half of her fellowship with the U.S. House Committee on Financial Services' Subcommittee on Housing, Community Development and Insurance. As a committee fellow, Sidney supported staff in drafting important legislation related to public housing, infrastructure, and homelessness. Sidney is a graduate of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where she earned a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in social work. During her field placement as a social work student, she worked at a homeless outreach agency in downtown Las Vegas, collaborating with a legal aid agency to quash unjust warrants for individuals experiencing homelessness.

## **VICTORIA BOURRET**

Victoria Bourret serves as the National Low Income Housing Coalition's (NLIHC) ERASE Project Coordinator. Prior to joining NLIHC, Tori served as a communications and project manager at the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania, a state partner of NLIHC, where she provided management and outreach assistance for policy campaigns and specialized projects. Victoria was also in charge of communications activities at the Housing Alliance, including running social media, publishing the organization's newsletter, and managing the website. Prior to her role at

the Housing Alliance, Victoria served two terms in AmeriCorps, one with AmeriCorps NCCC in Denver, Colorado, and the other with Public Allies in Delaware. Tori earned her BA in women's studies and psychology from the University of Delaware and her MSW from the University of Pennsylvania.

## JEN BUTLER

Jen Butler is the National Low Income Housing Coalition's (NLIHC) Senior Director of Media Relations and Communications. In this role, Jen is responsible for conducting effective and efficient media and communications efforts in support of the Coalition's mission, vision, goals, and objectives. Jen's work in marketing and communications has included management of a diverse portfolio of campaigns for both local and national brands. Jen's experience includes work in entertainment, media, and non-profits. In previous roles, she has worked extensively in branding, programming, and marketing strategy. Jen is a graduate of Georgia State University, where she earned her BA in journalism with a concentration in public and political communications.

## ALAYNA CALABRO

Alayna Calabro serves on the National Low Income Housing Coalition's (NLIHC) policy team, where she identifies, analyzes, and advocates for federal COVID-19 relief policies that address the urgent needs of low-income renters and people experiencing homelessness. Previously, Alayna worked for NLIHC as a field intern while completing her graduate studies. She also worked as a case manager intern with Catholic Charities, where she witnessed the detrimental effects of housing instability on her clients and became interested in the broader systems that impact access to safe and affordable housing. She is a graduate of the University of Maryland, where she earned her MSW with a concentration in community action and social policy. Alayna has a BA in English and psychology from the University of Notre Dame.

## MICHAEL CALHOUN

Mike Calhoun is President of the Center for Responsible Lending (CRL), the policy affiliate of Self-Help, the nation's largest community development lender. For more than 30 years, Mike has been on the front lines of the fight for economic justice. At CRL, he provides management and policy leadership. Based in DC, he often testifies in Congress and appears frequently in national media as an expert on financial issues. Prior to joining CRL in 2002, Mike led several lending divisions at Self-Help, providing responsible consumer loans, mortgages, and small business loans, as well as heading an innovative program to provide national capital for affordable home loans. He has represented families in efforts to secure civil rights and consumer protections, including working for ten years as a legal aid attorney. He is also a former member and chair of the Federal Reserve Consumer Advisory Committee. Mike received his BA in economics from Duke University and his JD from the University of North Carolina.

## COURTNEY COOPERMAN

Courtney Cooperman is a housing advocacy organizer on the National Low Income Housing Coalition's (NLIHC) field team. Prior to joining NLIHC, Courtney was an Eisendrath Legislative Assistant at the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC), the social justice arm of the Reform Jewish Movement. With a policy portfolio that included housing, nutrition, labor, and other economic justice issues, Courtney spearheaded the RAC's advocacy on behalf of COVID-19 relief and recovery legislation. She also wrote blog posts and social media content, created resources for advocates, supported grassroots lobbying, and launched virtual programming to teach high school students about social justice. Courtney graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Stanford University, where she earned a BA in political science, minored in Spanish, and received interdisciplinary honors in Ethics in Society. Her honors thesis, "Loss of Place, Loss of Voice: How Homelessness Impedes Political Equality,"

explored homelessness as a source of political disenfranchisement. Courtney also served on the board of Heart and Home Collaborative, a seasonal shelter for women experiencing homelessness in the greater Palo Alto area.

## **LINDA COUCH**

Linda Couch is the Vice President of Housing Policy for LeadingAge, an organization of more than 6,000 nonprofits representing the field of aging services. In her work, Linda focuses on expanding and preserving affordable housing options for very low-income seniors. After 12 years with the National Low Income Housing Coalition, Linda rejoined LeadingAge in 2016 to identify and advocate for solutions for problems facing America's aging population, which is rapidly growing and becoming poorer. Linda has testified before House and Senate committees and has abiding interests in the federal budget and appropriations processes. She received her BA in philosophy from the George Washington University and a master's degree in public administration from the University of Connecticut.

## **BRUCE DORPALEN**

Bruce Dorpalen is the Executive Director of the National Housing Resource Center (NHRC), which brings together the nonprofit housing counseling community on policy, program, and funding issues. NHRC has been active in increasing funding for housing counseling, bringing housing counseling agencies to the policy table, integrating housing counseling into the mortgage origination and servicing process, and improving communication with HUD and other federal agencies. Bruce has directed housing counseling programs since 1985, negotiated community reinvestment partnerships with over 40 banks, developed models for low-income mortgage underwriting that were used extensively by the industry, and created community-based outreach and education programs for minority, lower-income, single parent, immigrant, and other underserved populations. These programs have provided affordable mortgages to over 110,000

families in 30 cities across the country. During the foreclosure crisis, he designed counseling programs that assisted over 75,000 delinquent homeowners and increased communication between housing counselors and mortgage servicers. He has also developed programs for homeowners impacted by the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, as well as anti-predatory-lending programs, refinance programs, and homeowners-insurance programs. Earlier in his career, Bruce worked as a community organizer in Philadelphia; Atlanta; Greensboro, Raleigh, and Durham, NC; and Providence, RI; and as a tenant organizer in Brockton, MA. He also spent a year as a public interest lobbyist and advocate on housing and utility reform issues for Connecticut Citizen Action Group. Bruce graduated with honors from Brown University with a BA in urban studies in 1974.

## **DAN EMMANUEL**

Dan Emmanuel is a senior research analyst with the National Low Income Housing Coalition. He has worked in a range of housing and community development contexts since 2008 with a particular focus on program evaluation and community needs assessment. Dan earned his BA in philosophy and psychology from the College of William & Mary and his MSW with a concentration in community and organization practice from Saint Louis University.

## **WILL FISCHER**

Will Fischer is Senior Director for Housing Policy and Research and Interim Program Area Lead at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. In his research, Will focuses on federal low-income housing programs, including Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers and public housing, and on tax policy related to affordable housing. Since joining the Center in 2002, he has designed and advanced several policy changes to improve and expand federal rental assistance and help low-income people afford housing. Earlier in his career, he served as an analyst at Berkeley Policy Associates, where he evaluated state TANF programs and U.S. Department of

Labor workforce development initiatives. He also worked on economic development and other issues at the International City/County Management Association. Will holds a master's degree in public policy from the University of California, Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy.

## **EMMA FOLEY**

Emma Foley is a research analyst with the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC). She received her master's degree in public policy from Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy, where she concentrated in social policy. While completing her graduate studies, Emma worked as a research intern at NLIHC, tracking and monitoring the rollout of COVID-19 emergency rental assistance programs. Emma became passionate about equitable housing policy following several years of work with organizations that advocate for affordable, accessible, and fair housing in Charlotte, Poughkeepsie, and New Orleans. Prior to graduate school, Emma served as an AmeriCorps member at a disaster recovery organization and worked at a social science research firm evaluating the efficacy of social programs. Emma received her BA in urban studies from Vassar College.

## **DEBBIE FOX**

Debbie Fox is Deputy Director of Policy and Practice at the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), where she oversees national domestic violence-related housing policy and provides technical assistance and training to NNEDV's coalition membership and as a part of the Domestic Violence Housing and Technical Assistance Consortium. Debbie has more than 20 years of experience in the field with a focus on fundraising, organizational development, nonprofit administration, and population-specific domestic violence, housing, and economic justice programming. Prior to joining NNEDV, she provided community leadership in the systems planning and implementation process for the domestic violence system in Portland, Oregon,

where she worked with the city's 13 domestic violence victim service providers to create a coordinated entry process enabling survivors to access housing, shelter, and eviction prevention and shelter diversion programs.

## **SARAH GALLAGHER**

Sarah Gallagher is Senior Project Director for the National Low Income Housing Coalition's (NLIHC) ERASE (End Rental Arrears to Stop Evictions) project. In this role, Sarah works with NLIHC staff and with state and local partners to support efforts to ensure that emergency rental assistance reaches the lowest-income and most marginalized renters. Sarah has more than 25 years of experience advancing innovative, equitable housing and social service policies and programs at the local, state, and national levels, with expertise in health and housing collaborations, cross-systems data matching, interagency collaboration, homeless programs, and reentry. Prior to joining NLIHC, Sarah was Eastern Region Managing Director at the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), where she oversaw CSH's training, lending, technical assistance, and systems change work in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. She also served as CSH's Director of Strategic Initiatives and the director of CSH's Connecticut program. Sarah served as the first executive director of Journey Home, the local planning body for the Capitol Region Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness; as the executive director for discharge planning at the New York City Department of Correction, where she oversaw discharge planning programs on Rikers Island and worked with city agencies to overcome barriers faced by people leaving jail; and as a housing case manager in Boston. Sarah holds a master's degree in urban policy and management from the New School and a BA in sociology from the University of Connecticut.

## KODY GLAZER

Kody Glazer is the Legal Director of the Florida Housing Coalition. Kody is an expert on inclusionary housing policies, community land trusts, fair housing, land use, environment law, and the law as it relates to housing. He plays a lead role in the Coalition's advocacy efforts at all levels of government and has expertise in drafting state legislation and local housing ordinances and policies. Kody provides technical assistance to local governments and community-based organizations on a variety of issues relating to affordable housing development. He is also a co-author of the Coalition's *Accessory Dwelling Unit Guidebook*. Prior to joining the Florida Housing Coalition, Kody clerked for the National Fair Housing Alliance on issues related to fair housing and equitable opportunity.

## SARAH GOODWIN

Sarah Goodwin is a policy analyst at the National Center for Healthy Housing, where she supports the organization's policy and programmatic work and coordinates the National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition. Previously, she served as a policy intern at NCHH, helping establish and run Find It, Fix It, Fund It: A Lead Elimination Action Drive and its workgroups. She holds a BA in interdisciplinary studies: communications, legal institutions, economics, and government from American University.

## ED GRAMLICH

Ed Gramlich has been with the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) since 2005. During his first two years, Ed staffed the RegWatch Project, an endeavor to expand the Coalition's capacity to monitor federal regulatory and administrative actions, with a focus on preserving the affordable housing stock, both public and assisted. From 2007 to 2010, he was Director of Outreach. Since 2010, he has served as Senior Advisor, leading NLIHC's efforts related to affordable housing regulations and providing expertise on regulations related to the national Housing Trust Fund and Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing. Prior to

joining NLIHC, he worked for 26 years at the Center for Community Change (CCC), where his primary role was to provide technical assistance concerning the CDBG program to low-income, community-based groups. While at CCC, Ed also devoted considerable time to providing technical assistance to groups worried about the negative impacts of UDAGs in their communities. Ed holds a BS and an MBA from Washington University.

## BIANCA HANNON

Bianca Hannon is a program associate at Collaborative Solutions, Inc, and works primarily with the Professional Association of Social Workers in HIV/AIDS and the Low-Income Housing Coalition of Alabama. Bianca holds a master's degree in social work from Kennesaw State University and has worked extensively with homeless populations.

## MELISSA HARRIS

Melissa Harris serves as Director of Government Affairs for the American Association of Service Coordinators (AASC), where she tracks public policies that impact members, advocates for positive policy outcomes, provides news updates, and educates members on service coordination standards and practices. She also has a decade of experience working in journalism and communications. In her previous role as an Ohio Statehouse reporter, she closely monitored policies and politics with a focus on education and health. She has served as a board member of the Ohio Legislative Correspondents Association, and her work has been recognized by the Society of Professional Journalists and the Cleveland Press Club. Melissa holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from Kent State University.

## DAVID JACOBS

Dr. David Jacobs is Chief Scientist at the National Center for Healthy Housing. He also serves as Director of the U.S. Collaborating Center for Research and Training on Housing Related Disease and Injury for the World Health Organization/Pan American Health Organization and is an adjunct associate professor at the

University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health and a faculty associate at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. He is one of the nation's foremost authorities on childhood lead poisoning prevention and was principal author of the President's Task Force Report on the subject in 2000 and the Healthy Homes Report to Congress in 1999. He has testified before Congress and other legislative bodies and has published many peer-reviewed articles. David is also a former director of HUD's Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes, where he was responsible for program evaluations, grants, contracts, public education, enforcement, regulation, and policy related to lead and healthy homes. His current research focuses on asthma, international healthy housing guidelines, lead poisoning prevention, and green sustainable building design. He is a Certified Industrial Hygienist and holds degrees in political science, environmental health, and technology and science policy, as well as a doctorate in environmental engineering.

## PRIYA JAYACHANDRAN

Priya Jayachandran is Chief Operating Officer at the National Housing Trust (NHT), where she oversees public policy engagement, lending, and energy sustainability efforts. Priya previously led Housing Development at Volunteers of America (VOA), managing the strategic direction and acquisition and development of rental housing for the organization. From 2014 to 2017, Priya served at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), first as Senior Policy Advisor, then as Director of the Front Office of Multifamily Housing, and finally as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Multifamily Housing Programs. Prior to joining HUD, she spent more than 15 years in community development real estate banking in New York and Washington, DC. During that time, she led client teams delivering debt and tax credit equity for affordable housing programs and charter schools. A recognized industry expert on affordable finance deal structuring, Priya has worked as a consultant to microcredit organizations for women in La Paz, Bolivia; as an investment banking analyst

for Credit Suisse; and as a Capital Fellow for California State Treasurer Kathleen Brown. Priya earned her BA from the University of California and her master's degree in public affairs from the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs.

## KIMBERLY JOHNSON

Kimberly Johnson is a policy analyst at the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), where she is responsible for identifying, analyzing, and advocating for federal policy and regulatory activities related to NLIHC's policy priorities. Her work at the Coalition focuses on housing protections in the Violence Against Women Act, criminal justice reform, and evictions. Before joining NLIHC in 2019, Kimberly earned her master's degree in public policy from George Washington University. During her graduate program, she interned with Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future and with the Senate Minority Health Committee. She also held a fellowship with the National Network to End Domestic Violence. Before graduate school, Kimberly resided in Harrisonburg, VA, working as an advocate for survivors of sexual and domestic violence. In 2014, she served on an advisory committee to the Obama Administration's White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault. She received a BS in psychology and an MA in psychological sciences from James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA.

## MIKE KOPROWSKI

Mike Koprowski is the National Campaign Director of the *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign with the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC). Before joining NLIHC, Mike was the executive director of Opportunity Dallas, an organization focused on building local coalitions to promote greater economic mobility by tackling concentrated poverty and segregation through housing policy. Prior to his time at Opportunity Dallas, Mike was the chief of transformation and innovation in the Dallas school system, where he led the development and execution of the district's Public School Choice initiative focused on socioeconomic school

integration. Earlier in his career, Mike served in the U.S. Air Force as the chief of intelligence for an F-15E fighter squadron while it was deployed to Afghanistan. He holds degrees from the University of Notre Dame, Duke University, and Harvard University.

## **MARK KUDLOWITZ**

Mark Kudlowitz is Senior Policy Director at the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and advocates for federal policies that support LISC's national priorities, including affordable housing, rural development, community development financial institutions, and equitable transit-oriented development. Before joining LISC, Mark was Policy Director at the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Multifamily Housing Programs and worked for over seven years at the Department of the Treasury's Community Development Financial Institutions Fund. Mark has also managed affordable housing and community development programs at the District of Columbia's Department of Housing and Community Development and held different positions at the Housing Assistance Council, a national rural affordable housing organization. Mark holds a BA from the University of Florida and a master's degree from the University of Michigan.

## **SHERRY LERCH**

Sherry Lerch is Director of the Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC). She has over 30 years of experience in the mental health and substance abuse service systems, ranging from direct service provision to system administration. Her public sector experience includes developing and implementing approaches that meet the needs of individuals with mental illness and co-occurring disorders, justice system involvement, and homelessness; providing holistic care for individuals with high risks/high needs, with a focus on addressing social determinants of health; assessing compliance with Olmstead; and identifying inter-agency and cross-systems approaches and solutions to resolve complex issues. Sherry's areas of expertise include

systems assessment, strategic planning, group facilitation, program development, and financing strategies. Prior to joining TAC, Sherry served as Acting Deputy Secretary at the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services for Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services. Her other roles have included Director of Policy, Planning, and Program Development; Director of Operations; Special Assistant for Substance Abuse Services; and Chief of Care Management.

## **JOSEPH LINDSTROM**

Joseph Lindstrom is the Director for Field Organizing at the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC). Joseph joined NLIHC in 2000 while organizing Wisconsin advocates in support of the National Housing Trust Fund Campaign. He led campaigns in Madison, WI, focused on issues such as the local minimum wage, funding for homeless services, and eliminating housing discrimination against Housing Choice Voucher recipients. In addition to his advocacy and campaign work, Joseph has also worked in various direct service capacities, including as a homeless outreach coordinator, tenants' rights counselor, and workforce development professional. Joseph received his bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin with majors in political science and religious studies.

## **MONICA MCLAUGHLIN**

Monica McLaughlin is the Director of Public Policy at the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), where she works to improve federal legislation and increase resources to address and prevent domestic violence. She leads and co-chairs various national coalitions, educates Congress, implements grassroots strategies, and engages various government agencies to ensure that addressing domestic violence is a national priority. Monica has led national appropriations efforts to secure record federal investments in programs that address domestic violence and sexual assault. Monica also directs housing policy at NNEDV, where her achievements have included leading successful efforts to secure life-saving housing protections in the Violence Against Women Act of 2013;

advocating for domestic violence survivors' access to housing and homelessness resources in the McKinney-Vento Reauthorization Act of 2009; and drafting housing protections for immigrant survivors in the Senate-passed bill, S. 744. Building on her housing policy work, Monica leads NNEDV's Collaborative Approaches to Housing for Survivors, a multi-agency technical assistance consortium designed to improve survivors' access to safe, affordable housing.

## **SHEILA OWENS**

Sheila Owens is Vice President of External Communications for the Council of Federal Home Loan Banks. In this role, Owens oversees national strategy for media outreach and public affairs through the development, integration, and implementation of communications activities that support the strategic direction and position of the Council. Prior to joining the Council, Owens served as Vice President of Communications and Marketing at the National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors (NAIFA), in Falls Church, VA, where she managed media relations, communications, and marketing on behalf of the association's 30,000 members, who serve Main Street consumers by providing sound financial plans. Before joining NAIFA, she held positions at organizations including the Newspaper Association of America, the Freedom Forum/Newseum, Airports Council International, and Gannett Company/*USA Today*.

## **NOAH PATTON**

Noah Patton is a housing policy analyst at the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC). Prior to joining NLIHC, Noah worked at the Homeless Persons Representation Project, Inc. (HPRP), helping to advocate for policies to expand public benefit programs and protecting Housing Choice Voucher holders. After working as a campaign and state house staffer in Maryland, Noah received a JD from the University of Baltimore School of Law. While in law school, Noah was involved in coordinating Legal Observers of the National Lawyers Guild to protect the legal rights of Baltimore-area political

protestors and served as a Kellogg's Law Fellow at the NAACP Office of the General Counsel, where he worked on transit equity and educational policy. Noah received his BA in political science from McDaniel College in Westminster, MD. He has been a member of the Maryland State Bar Association since 2018.

## **STEPHANIE REYES**

Stephanie Reyes was formerly the State & Local Policy Manager for Grounded Solutions Network, where she supported municipalities and community organizations across the country in implementing effective affordable housing policies. Stephanie has over 10 years of experience in policy research, program design, and advocacy in the housing and environmental fields. Prior to joining Grounded Solutions, Stephanie held different roles at Greenbelt Alliance, where she led the organization's efforts to ensure that San Francisco Bay Area jurisdictions provide sufficient homes at all income levels in sustainable locations. Before that, she held positions in communications and advocacy at HomeFirst, an affordable housing and homeless services provider in Santa Clara County, California. Stephanie received her BS from Brown University.

## **JAIMIE ROSS**

Jaimie Ross is President and CEO of the Florida Housing Coalition. Her work includes all forms of legislative and administrative advocacy and education related to the planning and financing of affordable housing. From 1991 to 2015, Jaimie served as the Affordable Housing Director at 1000 Friends of Florida, a statewide nonprofit smart growth organization. Prior to her tenure at 1000 Friends of Florida, Jaimie was a land use and real property lawyer representing for-profit and nonprofit developers and financial institutions. She founded the Florida Community Land Trust Institute in 2000 and the Center for Racial Equity in 2021. Nationally, Jaimie has served as an executive officer on the Founding Board of Grounded Solutions Network and on the boards of the Innovative Housing Institute



and the National Low Income Housing Coalition. She is also a nationally recognized expert in avoiding and overcoming the NIMBY syndrome. Jaimie is former Chair of the Affordable Housing Committee of the Real Property Probate & Trust Law Section of the Florida Bar and a former Fannie Mae Foundation James A. Johnson Community Fellow.

## **DOUG RYAN**

Doug Ryan is the Interim Vice President of Policy & Applied Research at Prosperity Now. Prior to joining Prosperity Now, Doug served as Assistant Director of Federal Programs at the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County, Maryland, a multifaceted housing provider. Earlier, he worked as a legislative assistant in the U.S. Senate, as a program analyst with the Federal Housing Finance Board, and as a project manager for the Housing Development Institute, the housing development arm of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York. He is an adjunct instructor at American University's School of Public Affairs and a graduate advisor and instructor at the Georgetown School of Continuing Studies. He also served for five years on the Montgomery County Commission on Human Rights and is currently a board member for Up for Growth Action, a national effort to improve equity through better local housing policy. Doug is a graduate of Achieving Excellence, a joint program of the Harvard Kennedy School and NeighborWorks America.

## **SARAH SAADIAN**

Sarah Saadian is Senior Vice President of Public Policy with the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), where she oversees NLIHC's broad congressional portfolio. Sarah previously worked with Enterprise Community Partners as a senior analyst, focusing on appropriations for federal housing and community development programs. Prior to Enterprise, Sarah served as Policy Counsel at Rapoza Associates, where she worked largely on rural development issues, and as a legislative and policy analyst at the National

Community Reinvestment Coalition, where her portfolio included expanding access to mortgage and small business credit. Sarah holds a JD from the University of Connecticut School of Law and a bachelor's degree from the University of Virginia. She has been a member of the Virginia State Bar Association since 2009.

## **BARBARA SARD**

Barbara Sard led the housing team at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) for more than 20 years until retiring in 2019. During this time, she also served as Senior Advisor for Rental Assistance to former HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan for 18 months. Before joining CBPP, she was a legal services attorney in Boston. For much of her career, Barbara focused on improving the federal Housing Choice Voucher program, with the goal of expanding families' access to neighborhoods where their children could thrive.

## **GINA SCHAAK**

Gina Schaak is a senior consultant with the Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC). Gina has over 20 years of experience helping local governments, communities, and nonprofit housing and service agencies navigate federal, state, and local programs in order to access and create permanent supportive housing and improve, expand, and evaluate local homeless crisis response systems. Gina has overseen project management on several statewide contracts at TAC and has worked directly with local communities on capacity-building activities, including strategic planning, coordinated entry evaluation, systems mapping, and program design. In addition to being a skilled technical assistance and training provider with extensive experience providing consultation to units of local government and Continuums of Care, Gina serves as TAC's national policy researcher and public liaison. In this role, she tracks federal congressional activity related to relevant homeless and housing legislation and disseminates information to the public. Prior to joining TAC, Gina worked for Boston's Department of Neighborhood Development,

where she managed many different federal homeless and permanent supportive housing programs.

## **BROOKE SCHIPPOREIT**

Brooke Schipporeit serves as a housing advocacy organizer with the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC). Prior to joining NLIHC, Brooke spent years supporting state and local coalitions in their efforts to achieve solutions to housing poverty. She has worked as an MSW intern with the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania, informing and mobilizing coalition members to advance equitable housing policy. She also worked as Philadelphia's regional housing coordinator for the Self-Determination Housing Project of Pennsylvania, focusing on expanding affordable and accessible housing options for people with disabilities and older adults. Prior to her career in affordable housing, Brooke worked in direct services for the Head Start program and for a domestic violence shelter in Nebraska. She holds a master's degree in social work from the University of Pennsylvania and a BS in social work from Nebraska Wesleyan University.

## **KRISTI SCHULENBERG**

Kristi Schulenberg is the Director of the Center for Capacity Building at the National Alliance to End Homelessness, where she oversees the Capacity Building team's efforts to help communities implement solutions to end homelessness by providing training, technical assistance, and tools to providers and public agencies nationwide. Prior to this role, Kristi served as a senior technical assistance specialist at the Alliance, where she developed and delivered training and technical assistance on best practices for ending homelessness, including re-designing emergency shelter, diversion, rapid rehousing, system performance measures, and redesigning and building capacity for coordinated crisis response systems. Before joining the Alliance, Kristi served as the Staff Attorney/Project Manager for the Veterans Legal Assistance Project at the Neighborhood Legal Services Program in Washington, DC, where she provided legal services to veterans experiencing

homelessness or at-risk of homelessness. From 2014 to 2016, she was Deputy Director of Federal Programs and a staff attorney at HomeBase/The Center for Common Concerns, a national nonprofit public interest law firm dedicated to combating and ending homelessness. She holds a BA in religious studies from the University of Dayton and a JD from Golden Gate University School of Law.

## **JOSH SILVER**

Josh Silver has more than 25 years of experience in the housing and community development fields. He is a senior advisor at the National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC), where he produces white papers on the Community Reinvestment Act, as well as fair lending policy and associated issues, and provides expertise, advice, and resources internally and externally. He also served as Vice President of Research and Policy at NCRC for 19 years. Before joining NCRC, he was a development manager engaged in fundraising and research at Manna, Inc., a housing nonprofit developer and counseling agency serving the District of Columbia, and he worked for five years at the Urban Institute. Josh holds a master's degree in public affairs from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas in Austin and a bachelor's degree in economics from Columbia University in New York City.

## **LISA SLOANE**

Lisa Sloane (she, her, hers) is Director of the Housing Group at the Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC). Lisa has over 35 years of experience working with federal, state, and local governments, as well as nonprofit agencies, to address the supportive housing needs of people with disabilities and of individuals and families experiencing homelessness. At TAC, she manages complex consulting projects for state and federal government agencies. She has also worked with the states of Virginia, Massachusetts, Oregon, Louisiana, and Maryland to develop and implement permanent supportive housing programs for people with disabilities and people

who are homeless. In Massachusetts, she played a key role in the development of innovative cross-disability housing programs, including a housing locator system, a state housing bond fund, and a state home modification loan program. Prior to joining TAC, Lisa was principal of Sloane Associates, a woman-owned business that provided affordable housing and human services consultation and specialized in the development of housing programs and policies for persons with disabilities, including those experiencing homelessness.

## **JORGE ANDRES SOTO**

Jorge Andres Soto is Associate Vice President of Advocacy and Government Affairs with the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA), where he is responsible for advancing NFHA's public policy priorities and directing the organization's federal and congressional advocacy. Through local and national coalition-building, Jorge designs strategies to advocate for policies that help protect individuals from housing discrimination, strengthen access to justice for victims of housing discrimination, and remove obstacles to housing opportunity. He leads NFHA's efforts on issues concerning the federal budget and appropriations, housing and housing-related legislation, and executive nominations. He also staffs the Fair Housing Task Force of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, which NFHA co-chairs with NAACP LDF. Prior to joining NFHA, Jorge was a civil rights paralegal at Relman, Dane & Colfax PLLC, where he worked on the development and litigation of several housing, lending, and public accommodations cases involving discrimination, as well as on public policy matters concerning employment and contracting diversity in federal financial regulatory agencies. Jorge also previously worked as a labor organizer at Service Employees International Union and a community organizer with CRECEN/American Para Todos in Houston, Texas. Jorge earned his BA in history and American studies from Wesleyan University.

## **LESLIE STRAUSS**

Leslie Strauss is a senior policy analyst at the Housing Assistance Council (HAC). She began working at HAC in 1991 as Research and Information Director and has also served as HAC's Communications Director. Currently, she is responsible for a variety of policy and information activities, including much of HAC's work on rental housing preservation. She holds a JD and practiced real estate law for several years before joining HAC. She serves on the board of the National Rural Housing Coalition.

## **ERIC TARS**

Eric Tars is Legal Director at the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty. Before joining the Law Center, he was a fellow with Global Rights' U.S. Racial Discrimination Program and consulted for Columbia University Law School's Human Rights Institute and the U.S. Human Rights Network. Eric currently serves on the Board of the U.S. Human Rights Network, as an adjunct professor at Drexel University's Kline School of Law, and as a field supervisor for the Howard University School of Social Work. He was a Global Law Scholar at the Georgetown University Law Center, where he received his JD, and he holds a BA in political science from Haverford College. He has also studied international human rights at the Institute for European Studies, Vienna, and at the University of Vienna.

## **JOHN THRELKELD**

John Threlkeld is the Senior Congressional Affairs Manager at the National Alliance to End Homelessness. For almost 25 years, John was the assistant legislative director of a labor union representing federal employees. He worked on a wide spectrum of issues of interest to the working- and middle-class Americans comprising the federal civil service – from childcare and health care to depot maintenance of planes, tanks, and ships – but specialized in outsourcing/insourcing. Despite significant opposition, John was ultimately successful in securing the enactment of a series of landmark

reforms and safeguards to protect the interests of taxpayers, workers, and all Americans who depend on the federal government for efficient and effective performance of services. Because his union represented federal employees in 70 different agencies, John can credibly claim to have worked on programmatic, personnel, procurement, and funding issues arising in all 12 appropriations bills. John holds a BA in political science from Columbia University and a JD from the UCLA School of Law.

## ANTHONY WALTERS

Anthony Walters is the Executive Director of the National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC). Since 1974, NAIHC has provided training and technical assistance to hundreds of Native American Housing Authorities throughout the country. The organization also advocates on behalf of tribal housing issues and initiatives, working with Congress, federal agencies, nonprofits, and industry partners. Before joining NAIHC in 2017, Anthony served as Staff Director and General Counsel of the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. He was also a policy advisor to the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs at the U.S. Department of the Interior.

## OLIVIA WEIN

Olivia Wein has served as an attorney at the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC) for over 20 years. NCLC is a non-profit focused on using consumer law to promote economic security for low-income and other disadvantaged people. Olivia focuses on policies and programs that protect low-income consumers' access to essential utility services, including energy, water, and telecommunications. With NCLC's Energy and Utilities team, she has been advocating for emergency COVID-19 utility consumer programs and protections for energy, water, and broadband service. Olivia works on the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), as well as Weatherization and Lifeline programs, and intervenes in federal and state utility commission proceedings in matters affecting low-income utility consumer programs and

protections. She is co-author of the fifth edition of NCLC's manual, *Access to Utility Service*, and co-author of *The Rights of Utility Consumers*. Olivia serves on the boards of the Universal Service Administrative Company and the National Energy and Utility Affordability Coalition and serves on the Federal Communication Commission's Consumer Advisory Committee as well.

## RUTH ANNE WHITE

Ruth White is one of the nation's leading experts on the intersection of housing policy and child welfare. She is co-founder and Executive Director of the National Center for Housing and Child Welfare and former director of Housing and Homelessness for the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA). At the Child Welfare League, she co-edited the landmark issue of the League's journal, *Child Welfare*, documenting the extent to which children are needlessly held in foster care because their parents lack decent housing. Her advocacy has helped ensure more than \$100 million in new funding for the Family Unification Program for families and youth in child welfare since 2009. Prior to working at CWLA, she managed the front-door family shelter and redesigned the homeless coordinated entry system in Columbus, OH, reducing shelter entries by over 60 percent. She is also certified as an assisted housing manager. She holds an MS in social administration from Case Western Reserve University and a BS in social work from Ohio State University. She is currently a Furfey Scholar, doctoral candidate, and professor of social work at the Catholic University of America.

## CHANTELLE WILKINSON

Chantelle Wilkinson is National Campaign Manager of the *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign with the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC). Prior to joining NLIHC, Chantelle worked as a budget analyst for the New York State Legislature, where she assisted efforts to enact housing and transportation policies. In 2016, she worked on the *Breathing Lights* Campaign with the Center for Women in Government and Civil Society. The campaign

highlighted the problem of vacant and dilapidated housing in the capital region of New York State and spurred collaboration between many stakeholders, including artists, community organizers, neighborhood ambassadors, project administrators, and government officials. Chantelle received both her BA in political science (with minors in Latin American and Caribbean studies and Spanish) and her MA in public administration from the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy at the University at Albany.

## RENEE M. WILLIS

Renee M. Willis is the National Low Income Housing Coalition's (NLIHC) senior vice president for racial equity, diversity, and inclusion. In this role, Renee works to ensure that NLIHC's commitment to racial equity, diversity, and inclusion is woven through its culture, policies, programs, and practices. She also leads NLIHC's intensified engagement of renters with low-incomes and people with lived-experience with homelessness and housing instability. From 2015 to 2021, Renee served as NLIHC's Vice President for Field and Communications. In 2020, she served as a fellow with the Shriver Center's Racial Justice Institute and joined a network of advocates working on race equity issues across the country. Renee has more than 20 years of experience in affordable housing, including establishing and leading successful community and region-wide initiatives. She also has extensive experience in strategic planning, financial management, marketing, organizational development, staff management, and program operations. Before joining NLIHC, Renee served as housing services chief with Arlington County, VA; as an administrator in the Office of Landlord-Tenant Affairs for Montgomery County, MD; and as advocate and manager for the Public Justice Center's Tenant Advocacy Project. Renee earned a dual BA in English and Spanish from the University of Maryland. She also holds a certificate in public management from George Washington University.

## DIANE YENTEL

Diane is the President and CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC). She is a veteran affordable housing policy expert and an advocate with nearly two decades of experience working on affordable housing and community development issues. Before rejoining NLIHC – where she had previously worked as a policy analyst – Diane was Vice President of Public Policy and Government Affairs at Enterprise Community Partners, where she led federal, state, and local policy, research, and advocacy programs. Prior to her time at Enterprise, Diane was the director of the Public Housing Management and Occupancy Division of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, where she managed a team overseeing the development and implementation of nationwide public housing policies, procedures, and guidelines. She also worked to advance affordable housing policies with Oxfam America and the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless and served for three years as a community development Peace Corps volunteer in Zambia. Diane is frequently cited in media outlets, including the *Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Politico*, *Mother Jones*, NPR and *The Guardian*. She serves on the Board of Directors at the National Housing Conference, Homes for America, and the Coalition on Human Needs. Diane holds a master's degree in social work from the University of Texas at Austin.

## GREG ZAGORSKI

Greg Zagorski is Senior Homeownership Policy Specialist with the National Council of State Housing Agencies (NCSHA), where he focuses on issues related to affordable homeownership and housing finance. Prior to joining NCSHA in 2012, Greg worked as a legislative assistant for Senator Joe Lieberman (I-CT), advising the Senator on housing and other economic issues. He holds a BA in political science and history from the University of Connecticut and a master's degree from George Washington University.



Thank you for  
making today  
the day that  
makes a world  
of difference.



PNC is proud to support the National Low Income Housing Coalition and the 2022 Advocates' Guide. Thank you for the work you do every day to make our community a better place.





The PNC Financial Services Group



NATIONAL LOW INCOME  
HOUSING COALITION

1000 VERMONT AVENUE, NW  
SUITE 500  
WASHINGTON DC, 20005  
202-662-1530  
<https://nlihc.org>