

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 Homeless Assistance programs provide \$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"

The "CARES Act" provided \$4 billion for homeless assistance, through the Emergency Solutions Grants – CV program. 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. 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 has 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 this funding to rent empty hotel rooms in order to avoid overcrowded congregate shelters or street encampments.

Some communities have used this funding for eviction prevention. The CDC's eviction moratorium, however, has meant that the immediate danger of homelessness required for this use is no longer present, and a number of these communities are revising their plans to focus on the needs of people who are already homeless, especially in the light of new, larger sources of funding for Emergency Rental Assistance.

FORECAST FOR 2021

The Biden Administration has proposed additional Homeless Assistance CV funding as part of its "American Rescue Plan Act of 2021." At present, Congress has included an additional \$5 billion in the bill that it is considering. This funding would be run through the HOME program, largely because many communities would like funding to acquire property to use for permanent housing for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and that is an eligible use of HOME funds but not of ESG funds.

If there is another, larger bill later in the year, focused more on economic recovery, there will be continuing need for additional Homeless Assistance funding, since it is likely that the number of people homeless has been growing and there will be a need for money for shelter and permanent housing.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

NLIHC, 202-662-1530, www.nlihc.org.

NAEH, www.endhomelessness.org.

Materials for outreach to Congress on COVID-19 "Rescue" bill, <https://endhomelessness.org/actions/urge-congress-fund-emergency-homeless-services-and-rental-assistance-now/>.

The Framework for an Equitable COVID-19 Homeless Response, <https://housingequityframework.org/>, including help for communities on using "CARES Act" funding.