

TALKING POINTS ON HOUSING AS HEALTHCARE

TALKING POINTS FOR HEALTHCARE ADVOCATES

Now more than ever, housing is healthcare. Congress must take immediate action to ensure housing stability for people experiencing homelessness and renters with the lowest incomes during and after the coronavirus pandemic. Unless Congress acts quickly to provide emergency housing resources and protections, our nation will see a spike in housing instability, evictions, and homelessness, with a direct impact on the health and well-being of low-income people and their communities.

Housing instability and homelessness threaten our collective public health during and after the pandemic.

- Renters who are evicted from their homes and are forced to double or triple up with other families with low incomes face challenges in practicing social distancing. This challenge is heightened for people experiencing homelessness - whether in shelters or encampments - who often sleep 1 to 2 feet apart from other individuals.
- Because of underlying health issues, 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 others in the general public. If unchecked, as many as 20,000 homeless people could require hospitalization and 3,500 could die.

Congress should enact emergency rental assistance and other resources and protections for low-income renters. These investments can be a “vaccine” to prevent long-term health problems and promote healthy, productive lives.

- Young children in families who live in unstable housing are 20% more likely to be hospitalized than those who do not worry about frequent moves or making rent.
- Families behind on rent are more likely than families with stable housing to compromise living expenses to pay medical bills and vice versa and have greater food insecurities. In 2011, families living in affordable housing spent nearly 5 times more on healthcare and one-third more on food compared to their severely housing cost-burdened peers.

Congressional inaction may cause and perpetuate health disparities while also ballooning healthcare costs.

- Children’s HealthWatch estimates the nation spends \$111 billion on avoidable health costs over ten years because of housing instability.
- Research shows that for people that have access to good, affordable housing, primary care visits increase 20%, emergency room visits decrease 18%, and total Medicaid expenses drop 12%.

For more information on the intersection between housing and health, see the Opportunity Starts at Home campaign [factsheet](#).