

# MaineHousing's COVID-19 Response

MaineHousing has been central to Maine's response to keeping Mainers housed throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The flexibility of the State HOME Fund allowed MaineHousing to quickly repurpose funds to offer several COVID-19 response efforts, including the COVID-19 Rent Relief Program and additional funding to homeless service providers, including wellness shelters, operation grants, and access to hotel rooms for isolation and quarantine.

## COVID-19 Rent Relief Program

MaineHousing's COVID-19 Rent Relief Program, established at the request of Governor Mills and in partnership with Maine's Community Action Agencies, launched in April 2020 and continued through December 2020. We quickly repurposed \$5 million of State HOME Funds to start the program a month after Governor Mills declared a state of emergency.



\$33.4 million investment in rent relief:

State HOME Fund: \$5 million  
CDBG: \$2.2 million  
CRF: \$26.2 million

9,000+ households supported

Average household income	\$17,663
Average monthly rent	\$837
Average household size	2
Average payment made to landlord	\$1,919

A new rent relief program will launch at the end of January with a \$200 million allocation from the recent federal stimulus package.

## Homeless Services Support

To date, we have used nearly \$10 million of the State HOME Fund for shelter housing and operations, later reimbursed by the FEMA Public Assistance program and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Emergency Solutions Grant-CV.

The services outlined below are part of a continuum of measures intended to manage the significant and potentially life threatening public health risks associated with COVID-19, including health screening and testing to quickly identify potential exposures, quarantine and isolation to limit further exposure, and healthcare. As a result, Maine has experienced relatively few outbreaks among the populations served.

Our support of homeless services throughout the pandemic has included:



## 5 wellness shelters

Lewiston, Portland, Bangor, Warren, Presque Isle  
140 beds | 255 clients served | \$2,094,307

These extensions of local homeless shelters helped contain the spread of COVID-19 among people who are homeless at the beginning of the pandemic. MaineHousing, local homeless shelters, the Maine Department of Health & Human Services, the University of Maine System, and the Maine Emergency Management Agency united to create these temporary shelters.

## MaineHousing's COVID-19 Response, cont.



### 561 total hotel rooms secured<sup>1</sup>

Portland, Lewiston, Bangor, Augusta, Waterville, Presque Isle | 11 hotels  
\$4,412,420 for rooms | \$1,788,400 for operations

**Hotel costs:** Hotels provide shelter overflow to maintain social distancing at area homeless shelters. Hotels also provide quarantine and isolation space for many populations, including people who are homeless, immigrant families, agricultural workers, healthcare providers, and others in congregate living situations.

**Operating costs:** Onsite service coordination is key. This includes: handling guest intakes, daily checks on guest wellbeing and ability to maintain quarantine or isolation, coordinating healthcare and other services as needed, cultural support, translation services, and transportation.



### \$2,782,570 operating funds to homeless shelters

Statewide | 21 providers

To support homeless shelters in serving a particularly high risk population, we have provided funds to support their increased operating costs. This includes funding for reducing the census of congregate shelters to meet CDC guidance for social distancing by renting rooms at local hotels and adapting underused spaces. Funding also supports the purchase of personal protective equipment and provides resources to staff to prevent staffing shortfalls and continue high levels of engagement with the population they are serving.



### \$2 million in Rapid Rehousing Grants

Portland, Bangor, Knox County

4 grants to help homeless households secure permanent housing

### Changes to Homeless Services Delivery

Maine's emergency shelters see approximately 6,000 people per year; an estimated 10 percent of people who are homeless in Maine are unsheltered. Although Maine shelters receiving state and federal funding must meet certain standards, most operate differently from one another and independently within their communities. The COVID-19 crisis has shown how vital it is that MaineHousing, with support and direction from our homeless provider partners, adapt homeless services in a focused, far-sighted way. With the advice of the Statewide Homeless Council, we have launched a review and design process for a regional shelter system. We look forward to sharing our progress on those efforts.

<sup>1</sup> The number of hotel rooms and locations fluctuate based on need; here we have totaled the costs, number of rooms, and number of hotels for 2020. Some hotel costs include meals and services such as laundry.

