



**COVID-19 Housing Stability Task Force
Rental Assistance Recommendations
August 6, 2020**

The COVID-19 Housing Stability Task Force fully supports and endorses the provision of rental assistance payments as one critical component of an integrated and comprehensive strategy to stabilize tenants in their rental housing throughout the duration of the economic crisis due to COVID-19. These recommendations are intended as guiding principles that all rental assistance programs should follow.

- The Task Force recommends a combined, unified, and coordinated City of Houston - Harris County Rental Assistance Program.
- The Task Force recommends prioritizing rental assistance to the most vulnerable population, particularly very low income households with children under age 13 residing in the lowest-cost housing.
- The Task Force cautiously recommends prioritizing households at imminent risk of eviction with eviction notices filed before August 1st. However, the Task Force is concerned about the potential unintended effect of this prioritization, insofar as it may lead to incentivizing landlords to file eviction actions in order to get future allocations of rental assistance money.
- The Task Force recommends that the application and selection process be designed and implemented to ensure that funding is allocated in a manner to achieve equity and access among the most vulnerable residents irrespective of immigration status and with special concern for residents who are not English-speaking and face technology barriers.
- The Task Force recommends that a careful balance be achieved on the requirements imposed on landlords to ensure robust participation among landlords who provide housing to the targeted residents and comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws.
- The Task Force recommends that landlords commit not to evict tenants who receive rental assistance for a fixed period of time not earlier than the end of the month following the month in which rental assistance is provided.
- The Task Force recommends that, to the extent that the rental assistance does not eliminate all prior debt that the assisted tenants and landlords be required to execute a payment plan to reduce the possibility of a future eviction being filed.
- The Task Force recommends that the application process be designed and implemented to ensure a good user experience for both tenants and landlords and prioritize landlords that have worked with tenants in the crisis.
- The Task Force recommends that as long as the unemployment insurance benefits have not been extended by Congress, rental assistance be made available to support current and future rent payments, not only current debt to landlords.
- The Task Force recommends that a rigorous, independent evaluation be conducted of rental assistance programs to determine the impact and outcomes achieved. Furthermore, the results should be made widely available publicly and be used to inform improvements in future rental assistance program efforts.