

TRHAP to the Rescue

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As the COVID-19 pandemic systematically shut down businesses and caused many people to lose their jobs, the consequence of mass eviction loomed larger each month.

“With the severity of the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Temporary Rental Housing Assistance Program (TRHAP), administered by the Department of Housing (DOH), was a critically needed tool to address a catastrophic need,” Managing Director of the HomeOwnership Center, Bridgette Russell, explained, “Renters facing job loss and furloughs were suddenly unable to pay their rent, and TRHAP, along with the Governor’s mandated eviction moratorium, provided a short-term solution to quell an impending eviction tsunami.”

With the assistance of selected administrators, NHS of New Haven’s HomeOwnership Center (HOC) included, the state got to work distributing the funds. The Governor first set aside \$10 million that grew in short order to \$40 million by the end of the temporary assistance program in December.

The HOC began to work with individuals assigned to their department to bring them up to \$4,000 in order to help them with back rent and forward-facing rent. In total, NHS assisted 448 families with over \$1,415,000 in assistance. “After COVID-19 shut down my work, I was in a panic,” Monika C. shared. The program came at the perfect time, helping with her rent, and she was grateful to be accepted. “A huge thank you to NHS of New Haven and the Department of Housing for helping me through the process!”

“Helping tenants and landlords submit applications for the Temporary Rental Housing Assistance Program was deeply meaningful and often very moving work,” HOC Coordinator, Robin Ladouceur, reflected. “The range of applicants with whom I worked was broad – from the older man who lost his job and could not find a new one in a job market that privileges youth to the single mom of two who received a cancer diagnosis in the midst of the pandemic to a young new mother faced with raising her daughter alone to all the countless families touched by COVID-19.”

The prolonged nature of the pandemic means that the scale of need for rental assistance was and continues to be staggering. “At least 3-5 times per week I receive inquiries from individuals who passed through the TRHAP program asking if there are other ways to receive assistance, Robin said. “I am grateful to be able to say that a new State of Connecticut Department of Housing Rental Assistance Program will be commencing in March and everyone who went through TRHAP may be eligible to apply. More help is on the way!”