



MEMORANDUM

Date: March 8, 2022

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Leshner 
Acting County Administrator

Re: **Update on Emergency Rental Assistance Program**

The attached memorandum from Community & Workforce Development (CWD) Director Dan Sullivan highlights the County's efforts regarding the distribution of Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funds and preventing eviction and homelessness. These funds were provided to Pima County by the federal government to assist COVID-19 impacted households in need of rent and utility assistance.

The memorandum notes that since March 2021 CWD's Community Assistance and Emergency Eviction Legal Services divisions:

- Provided more than \$29 million in rent and utility assistance to more than 10,000 households;
- Remain national leaders in getting the funds into the hands of household and landlords;
- Recently received or anticipate receiving \$17 million in additional funding due to the success of the programs during the first round, of which over \$1 million has already been distributed;
- Offer appointments with the community at nights and on the weekends, and took their services directly to the community at the Pima County Cares Resource Fair;
- Feature a Quality Assurance unit to ensure all funding is spent in accordance with federal regulations;
- Coordinate with community partners such as the Community Food Bank and Pima Animal Care Center;
- Through legal services and court navigation, helped hundreds of households avoid eviction during the first five months alone; and

The Honorable Chair and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors
Re: Update on Emergency Rental Assistance Program
March 8, 2022
Page 2

- Established a low-barrier shelter at the Comfort Suites to offer short-term stability for recently evicted families and other vulnerable households;

We will continue to provide you updates on this vital and successful program.

Attachment

c: Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer,
Health and Community Services
Dan Sullivan, Director, Community & Workforce Development
Andrew Flagg, Deputy Director, Community & Workforce Development

Date: February 22, 2022

To: Jan Leshar
Acting County Administrator

From: Dan Sullivan, Director 
Community & Workforce Development

RE: **Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) Update**

Background

Pima County was awarded Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) funds from the US Department of Treasury to assist COVID-impacted households in need of rent and utility assistance. Since the award and implementation in March 2021, Community & Workforce Development's (CWD) Community Assistance Division (CAD) and Emergency Eviction Legal Services (EELS) continue to provide much needed assistance and resource navigation to individuals and households in Pima County. According to most recent reports, more than \$52 million has been spent communitywide through the joint efforts of Pima County and the City of Tucson.

Community Assistance Division

Since the beginning of the pandemic, CWD has provided more than \$29 million in rent and utility assistance to more than 10,000 households in Pima County from a variety of sources. CAD continues to lead the charge nationally in spending down these federal dollars and getting funds into the hands of households and landlords across the county. CAD expended its first ERAP-1 allocation far before federal deadlines and well before any funds were in jeopardy of recapture. The division continues to provide assistance through ERAP-2 funding, which total more than \$12 million.

Pima County is one of just 55 local areas across the country to spend all of its ERAP-1 allocation by December. Treasury began to recapture and reallocate funds from underspent local areas in September. The State of Arizona received \$289 million in ERAP funds, but only spent \$14 million, for the year. We requested \$11 million be reallocated to Pima County to ensure community needs are met and the funds stay locally and supported the reallocation time to convey the current rate of spending. In January, Treasury granted the request. Still, at the rate of spending and the volume of applications, CWD requested an additional \$6 million from DES and the City of Tucson requested \$13 million to meet the demand and are pending a response.

Although the division is processing applications and issuing payment at a record and urgent pace, they continue to uphold the responsibility of being stewards of public funds. The division's Quality Assurance unit provides checks and balances to ensure that funding is being spent and all applications comply with federal regulations. CAD continues to hire and onboard staff at a record pace. The division is also meeting community needs by offering flexible schedules including nights and weekend for its staff so that County residents can submit appropriate documentation. Division staff are also taking

advantage of overtime opportunities, which has contributed greatly to the overall excellent morale among the team.

CWD staff go above and beyond their assigned duties on a daily basis which includes finding other housing options when a landlord elects not to participate in the rental assistance program, connecting with Pima Animal Care Center in finding foster placements for animals that are displaced during the rehousing of individuals, and coordinating with the Community Food Bank to ensure that they have food on their tables. The staff are truly passionate about helping those in need and offer a depth of navigation services that cuts through conventional red tape, strengthens partnership and affords individuals the benefits of their collaboration. Essentially the team sees a need and connects individuals and families to resources and services to ensure those needs are met. The quality of service and dedication to the community and the individuals they serve throughout their days shows by the mitigation efforts, national spotlight, and overall program outcomes.

Emergency Eviction Legal Services

When the Board of Supervisors authorized the creation of the Emergency Eviction Legal Services (EELS) division within CWD to provide legal and navigation services to people facing eviction, we knew that there were many partnerships and collaborations necessary to successfully launch the program. EELS is pioneering an innovative and holistic approach to prevent evictions and keep families in their homes. We have a team of dedicated professionals who work with tenants, landlords, and the Court to find solutions to keep people housed. Their work has been so impactful that Maricopa County has created its own program modeled from EELS and it has garnered national attention. Because of their steadfastness and passion in serving others, this has been one of the smoothest and impactful program roll outs in CWD history.

The EELS team has ensured that eligible tenants are connected with counsel and due to their efforts a lawyer was on call every court day from August through December 2021 and with a new database system they will be able to more efficiently assign individual cases on a daily basis. In the first five months, our lawyers helped 578 households and provided full representation in 115 cases.

Beginning January 2022, EELS team members will be stationed within the CAD to expedite direct aid to cases where the landlord is willing to participate and receive ERAP funds for back rent, rather than pursuing eviction proceedings. By having EELS staff stationed within CAD, eligible tenants facing evictions will have more direct access to rent and utility assistance. Evictions are caused by countless factors, but to provide seamless and well-rounded services to EELS participants, CWD is also imbedding a seasoned case manager on the team who specializes in workforce development services. The intent is to provide pathways to household-sustaining careers to ensure brushes with eviction are not reoccurring.

Shelter Services

There are unfortunate instances where households are evicted and have no place to stay and face the possibility of having to reside in their car or on the streets. The community continues to see an overall reduction in affordable housing options and a rise in individuals experiencing homelessness, which impacts the community's inventory of shelter beds. In order to combat this, CWD is opening and

staffing a low-barrier homeless shelter by leasing a block of room at the Comfort Suites. Assimilating best practices in stabilization services, CWD Staff will administer the program offering an array of resources available through the workforce division as well as other county departments.

The shelter program will offer short-term, 60 to 90 day, stays for people experiencing homelessness or facing losing their home in order to stabilize and plan for longer-term success in permanent housing. CWD has contracts in place with Our Family Services, Compass Affordable Housing, and Community Bridges to provide permanent housing and supportive services to community members who have recently lost their homes or who have found themselves without hosting options in the near future. The overarching intent of the shelter is to prevent a rise in street homelessness.

This will be a complement to the City of Tucson who is also in the process of opening its own shelters. We are working with City of Tucson staff to coordinate our program and create a low-barrier shelter system to afford more individuals experiencing or about to be homeless an opportunity to stabilize in a safe and proactive environment that aligns to evidence-based best practices.

Stories of Success and Impact

TC is a 47-year-old vulnerable adult on social security disability with a payee. He owns the trailer he lives in, but owes lot fees. He had unexpected fees from the property and got behind on payments. Also, the landlord complained about the exterior maintenance of the trailer. The landlord threatened eviction, but with EELS involvement, the landlord agreed to work with the tenant on the exterior and accept rent assistance of \$3,800.

“Mom” and two children returned from a visit with an ailing grandmother in Douglas to find they had been locked out of their apartment. Rent assistance was pending, but there was miscommunication between the landlord and property manager which resulted in the lockout. EELS staff connected her with Southern Arizona Legal Aid (SALA) and they were able to contact the attorney. The family returned to their apartment that night. SALA was able to negotiate time to get the rent assistance paid. The landlord received rent assistance for \$7,600, the back utilities were paid, and the family remains housed. The mother wrote a note of thanks: “You have given me the gift of encouragement and hope in a difficult time for my family.”

The YB family has four children, all under age six, and they were facing an eviction. Since the pandemic hit, the father had employment disruptions and no steady income. With support from EELS, they were able to get their case dismissed so there is no eviction record since CAD staff provided \$6,000 in rent assistance just before Christmas. With rent paid through March, the family can get back on their feet. The father was referred to One Stop staff to assist him in finding steady employment. The family sent pictures from Christmas with a note of sincere thanks.

Moving Forward

The department is hosting the Pima County Cares Resource Fair at Freedom Park on March 5, 2022. This event is targeting an area within metropolitan Pima County with a high poverty and eviction rate to showcase available community resources. This will include the services offered by CAD and EELS along with various county departments and community based organizations.

Jan Leshner, Acting County Administrator
RE: Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) Update
February 22, 2022
Page 4

CWD will continue to provide vital services to Pima County residents urgently, with heart, and dedication. Community needs continue to evolve and our response will continue to adapt to provide easily navigable services in a people-center and holistic manner.

Initials: DPS

Concur:



Francisco García, Deputy County Administrator &
Chief Medical Officer

23 February 2022
Date