

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 2, 2020



To: National Governors Association
National Conference of State Legislatures
National Association of Counties
United States Conference of Mayors
National League of Cities

From: [Linda Couch](#), VP, Housing Policy
[Juliana Bilowich](#), Director, Housing Operations and Policy

Re: COVID-19 and Affordable Senior Housing Communities

On behalf of LeadingAge, a national organization representing more than 5,000 aging-focused providers, thank you for your tireless work to serve and protect our nation's states, counties, and cities during the pandemic. We know that your organizations are eager to assist older adults through this crisis. To that end, we offer two broad suggestions.

The first is a recommendation to ensure the people work in HUD-assisted communities, and who provide a wide range of services to help residents age in community, are supported as "essential" parts of the workforce. The second is a tool to help your members connect HUD-assisted senior housing communities to critical support and relief as state and local governments implement response plans.

Identifying Affordable Housing Stakeholders as Essential

The nation has several thousand HUD-assisted Section 202 Housing for the Elderly communities. The staff employed by these non-profit housing providers are critical to the health and economic wellbeing of affordable housing residents and to the broader community. As states, counties, and cities take action to protect citizens while ensuring critical functions continue, we urge you to identify staff working in and supporting HUD-assisted senior housing as an essential workforce.

In determining lists of essential business and workers, we recommend utilizing the advisory list developed by the Department of Homeland Security on March 28, 2020, for critical infrastructure workers. The categories related to residential/shelter facilities and services include service coordinators who support food and social services access for elderly populations; property managers responsible for leasing, operations, and services on-site; and maintenance technicians and cleaning staff who support service calls for residents. A complete list is available in the DHS memo [here](#).

Including HUD-Assisted Senior Housing Communities in Response Efforts

About 400,000 older adults call these communities home. Nationally, their average annual household income is less than \$14,000 a year, and many rely on community- and home-based services to meet daily needs. Medically, HUD-assisted seniors have more chronic conditions than non-HUD-assisted and equally poor seniors who live in the same neighborhoods, which puts them at a higher risk for flu-like viruses like COVID-19.

We urge you to use [this HUD database of HUD Section 202 communities](#) when thinking about getting masks, gloves, and cleaning supplies to in-need organizations in your states, counties, and cities. We also know that these communities are generally in need of food, meals, internet, and any other supports and services your governments may be able to provide them. We hope this database helps you prioritize low-income older adults in your crisis response.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if we can help you connect to older adults. More information is available on our [affordable housing providers and COVID-19 website](#).