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# Healthy Starts at Home: Cross-Sector Opportunities to Advance Maternal and Child Health through Housing

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June 2023

The Secretary's Advisory Committee on  
Infant and Maternal Mortality

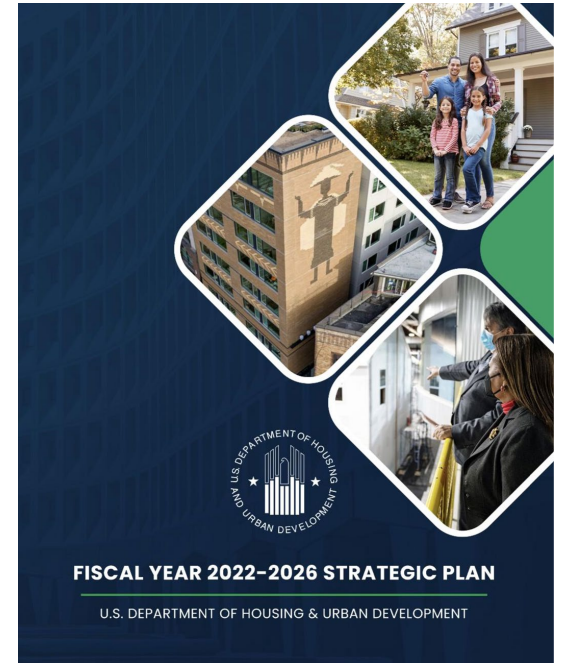


# US Dept Housing & Urban Development

MISSION: Create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all

## HUD'S FY22-FY26 STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

1. Support Underserved Communities
2. Ensure Access to and Increase the Production of Affordable Housing
3. Promote Homeownership
4. **Advance Sustainable Communities**
5. Strengthen HUD's Internal Capacity



# Goal 4: Advance Sustainable Communities

## 4A: Guide Investment in *Climate Resilience*

- [Climate Action Plan](#)
- Energy efficiency
- Renewable energy

## 4B: Strengthen *Environmental Justice*

- Reduce exposure to health risks
- Environmental hazards
- Reduce inequities



## 4C: Integrate *Health* and Housing

- Build stronger relationships
- **Improve maternal and child health**
- Better understand HUD-assisted persons
- Prioritize aging in place



# What is Housing Insecurity?



# Housing Security

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What is needed for persons of reproductive age and their infants?

## Housing that is...

- Safe
- Physically adequate
- Affordable
- Based on choice
- Certain



# Housing Insecurity Examples

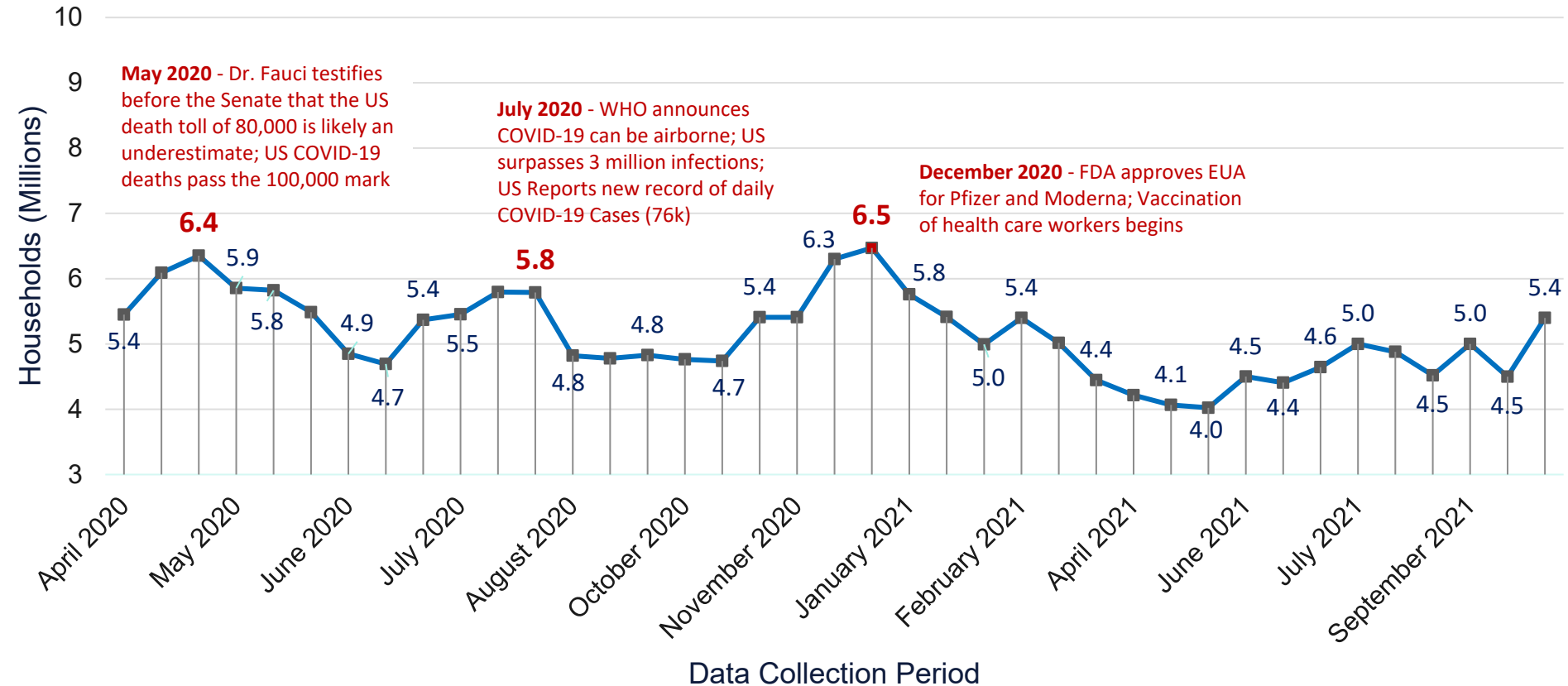
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- Rent burdened
- Behind on rental payments
- Eviction (formal or informal)
- Violence (internal or external)
- Overcrowding
- Couch surfing
- No shelter
- Displacement
- Car
- Poor housing quality



# Housing Insecurity During the Covid-19 Pandemic: Estimated Number of U.S. Renters Not Confident in Their Ability to Pay Next Rental Payment On Time

*April 2020-October 2021, Census Household Pulse Survey*



# What is the current state of housing insecurity for women and children?





# Scope – HUD-Assisted Families

## Women and Children Living in Public and Assisted Housing

- Women represent approximately **70% of all HUD-assisted adults** (*4.2 million women*)
- **77%** of HUD-assisted women identify with a racial or ethnic minority group
- Approximately **50,000 new babies** are born every year to HUD-assisted women
- Children comprise **35.5% of all HUD-assisted persons** (*3.3 million children, including nearly 900,000 children aged 0-5*)

## Health Status of HUD-Assisted Women and Children

### Women

- 36% self-reported fair or poor health
- 24% had 2+ emergency room visits during the prior year
- 12% had serious psychological distress
- 35% had unmet medical needs due to cost

### Children

- 5.2% had fair or poor health
- 14% had 2+ emergency room visits during the prior year
- 21% had current asthma
- 27% had a learning disability



# Scope – Unstably Housed Families

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## Infancy is the period of life when a person is *most likely* to live in a homeless shelter

- In 2015, approximately half of families experiencing homelessness had a child aged 0-5
- Approximately 10% of homeless families had an infant under 12 months of age

## Strong link between housing stability and maternal and child health

- Prenatal homelessness associated with higher odds of low birth weight and preterm delivery
- Homelessness during infancy is associated with higher odds of poor infant health
- Compared with consistently housed mothers, mothers with a history of homelessness had worse physical and mental health outcomes



# Promising MCH + Housing Efforts



# Promising Housing + MCH Efforts

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**Emerging research shows that when housing assistance is paired with health services, there are striking results for MCH outcomes.**

## **Ohio Healthy Beginnings at Home (HBAH) Study**

- Assessed the impact of providing rental assistance to unstably-housed, pregnant women
- Significantly more newborns in the intervention group were full-term and healthy weight
- Babies in the intervention group were less likely to be admitted to the NICU
- When NICU required, average days spent in NICU was much lower for intervention group



# Promising Housing + MCH Efforts (2)

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## Family Options Study (RCT)

- Experiment for homeless families with young children that introduced four possible interventions, including receipt of a housing voucher
- Families offered vouchers reported less child separations, decreased maternal psychological distress, decreased economic stress, fewer child behavior problems, and less household food insecurity

## Boston's Healthy Start in Housing Program (HSiH)

- Collaboration: Boston Public Health Commission & Boston Housing Authority
- Prioritizes access to public housing for homeless and housing-insecure pregnant women who have medical risks associated with poor birth outcomes
- Home visitors identify housing insecurity as social determinant of health
- Evaluation shows participants experienced improved mental health status and reduced stress

# Moving Forward



# Opportunities

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## What is HUD doing?

- Commitment to improving outcomes for women, children, and families
- Strategically examine emerging evidence on housing's role in improving MCH outcomes
- Facilitate cross-agency research to better understand MCH outcomes and housing status
- Build partnerships with MCH stakeholders at the federal, state, and local level

## What can HHS do?

- Include HUD at the table
- Incorporate housing screening into existing programs
- Help build stronger health and housing partnerships at the state and local level
- Help prevent eviction by connecting clients to resources
- Explore shared programming and funding opportunities

# Resources

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[Boston Uses Public Housing to Promote Healthy Birth Outcomes](#) *The Health Equity Guide*

[Opinion: Housing stability can lead to better health for pregnant women and their babies.](#) *The Columbus Dispatch, May 2021*

[Associations With Infant and Maternal Health and Hardship Outcomes.](#) *Cityscape, 2018*

[Landmark Family Options Study Has Clear Policy Implications.](#) *HUD Edge Article, 2016*

[Healthy Start in Housing: A Case Study of a Public Health and Housing Partnership To Improve Birth Outcomes.](#) *Cityscape, 2014*

[Bringing life course home: a pilot to reduce pregnancy risk through housing access and family support.](#) *The Maternal and Child Health Journal, 2013*





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# Thank You! Questions?

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