

HÁBITAT HOUSING FIRST
HOUSING SUPPORT TEAM
(EAV)

GUIDELINES ON HOUSING SUPPORT DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

Version 2.0 - 19/03/2020



Provivienda

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the Royal Decree 463/2020, from 14th March, which declares the state of alarm for the management of the health crisis caused by COVID-19, the context of intervention of the Housing Support Team (hereafter EAV) in the Hábitat Housing First program has suffered significant, structural changes, especially because the content of the article 7, that limits the freedom of movement of people in Spain during the term of the state of alarm.

The Royal Decree states that people will be allowed to move in public spaces only for doing the following activities:

- a) Purchase of food, pharmaceutical products and essentials.
- b) Attendance to healthcare centres and services.
- c) Commute to work.
- d) Return to usual place of residence.
- e) Assistance and care to elderly people, dependent people, disabled people or vulnerable people.
- f) Commute to banking and insurance companies.
- g) Because of a force majeure event or situation of serious need.
- h) Any other similar activity that will have to be done individually, unless accompanying disabled people or due to other good cause.

Due to this situation of lockdown for the sake of public health, and taking into account the profile of our Housing First clients –former homeless people, COVID-19 high risk group-, the EAV's services portfolio has been deeply affected, decreasing dramatically its face-to-face intervention and delivering the most of its support through phone/smartphone-based solutions. Thus, COVID-19 crisis raises a major challenge for routine work as mediation between clients and neighbours, damage or loss of keys, fires and floods, electricity and water supplies malfunctions, etc.

This document aims to ensure that the EAV knows how to proceed in the several scenarios that may appear during this time, but we are fully aware that this crisis is changing every minute, so new versions of the document may be produced in order to update the information.

2. SUPPORT GUIDELINES

- **Fluent, direct contact:** EAV will make at least one call (or video call, or engage a Whatsapp conversation) per week to client, being especially consistent with the agreed timing (e.g. every Tuesday at 10am) in order to create a routine. Bear in mind that default service involves only one home visit per month, but during COVID-19 crisis, it is crucial that EAV increases its role.

Every contact will be previously planned by the team, including objectives and expected outcomes. Calls will content all the preventive measures developed in the chapter 4 of this document about EAV'S responses within COVID-19 crisis.

- **Quality of the call:** Firstly, EAV needs to be able to explore how the client is dealing with the anxiety that the lockdown may cause, so it is crucial to maintain a real conversation that goes beyond the housing support contingency plan and the specific service portfolio put in place in this crisis context. Secondly, EAV will explore alongside the client the existence of housing issues that may worry him/her and will offer alternatives that suit the client's needs.
- **Expectation management:** It is basic to explain the reasons of the lockdown, to show what kind of situations may occur, to be honest about what kind of support and timing is available, what resources complement every service and what is the best way to access them.
- **Neighbours' disputes prevention:** The current crisis context means a big opportunity to:
 - Encourage clients to develop a nice relationship with neighbours.
 - Identify with clients the steps to follow in case of conflict situations. EAV will work with clients the idea of joint responsibility: The effort in dealing with the lockdown is collective. It means to empower client as an increasing role of the neighbour community's welfare in collaborating with the de-escalation of the public health emergency and, of course, in taking care of him/herself.
- **Any intervention that implies work outside the home requires authorisation by you direct manager:** Make sure you bring with you the Provienda's certificate that allows you to move while doing your job. Use your own car if possible and follow the safety measures that you will find in the next section of this document.
- **Think outside the box:** COVID-19 crisis context requires an intervention framework that obliges us to adapt not only EAV's services portfolio, but also our available resources and the way we deliver the housing support. Therefore, EAV's creativity will play a key role in tailoring the Housing First program to the new needs of every client within the lockdown declared by the Royal Decree 463/2020.

3. HEALTH AND SAFETY

During COVID-19 lockdown, all the face-to-face interventions with clients or third parties will necessarily be delivered following the next safety measures:



Keep a safety distance of 2m between the parties involved in the intervention.



Zero physical contact



Use personal protective equipment (E.g. mask, gloves, etc.)



Follow strict personal hygiene practices washing frequently your hands with soap and hand sanitiser.



Use your own car

4. EAV PERFORMANCE WITHIN COVID-19 CRISIS CONTEXT

ISSUE	RESPONSE	
<p>Lost keys</p>	<p>PREVENTIVE MEASURES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To remind clients during default calls of the good use of the keys • To share strategies: E.g <i>key ring attached to clothing, necklace, etc.)</i> • To create habits and routines: <i>To take keys before leaving your home, to open the door with the key, to leave your keys always in the same place, etc.</i> • To help client to strength his/her support network: <i>To leave a backup copy to your closest neighbours, etc.</i> • To check locksmith providers' services portfolio 	<p>REACTIVE MEASURES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To call home insurance to open the door • To train client in opening the door with a x-ray, a cut plastic bottle or a card • Ultimately, to go to the unit and open the door with the backup copy held in the office. • If making key copies gets challenging, be creative!
<p>Supply malfunctions (water, electricity, heating, etc.)</p>	<p>PREVENTIVE MEASURES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make sure all the rent contracts and service providers are uploaded on the cloud and H�abitat database • To check the good use of supplies and equipment during call to client • To go over FAQ with clients about housing maintenance • To support in exploring potential support networks in their communities, e.g., citizen community projects, etc. 	<p>REACTIVE MEASURES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To brief clients over the phone or to show them how to find useful resources on the Internet: <i>YouTube, Wikihow, etc.</i> • To contact with the maintenance services from the building. • To offer phone-based management of the issue with providers and home insurance. • To decide whether is necessary to go to the unit to fix the issue or to send directly a provider.

Fires, floods or similar

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- To check supplies' status and client's habits
- To explain guidelines on good use and to help clients to engage routines. *E.g. It's necessary to be in the kitchen: while you cook, while the tap is open, etc.*
- To inform clients about the place and the functioning of differential switches, water valves, heating ,etc.

REACTIVE MEASURES

- To call immediately 112 and to go to the unit
- To assess situation and potential evacuation
- After the event, to check whether the unit meets the criteria for a liveable home, or otherwise it is necessary to look for an emergency accommodation

Neighbour disputes

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- To facilitate clients information related to the community
- To provide clients with community regulations if available
- To approach clients on good habits to coexist in a peaceful way, to help clients to build the relation they want to keep with neighbours.
- To help clients to understand the joint responsibility needed to keep the harmony in the community: We are going through the lockdown for the greater good, we can empower clients as an increasing role for the welfare of his/her neighbours.
- To invite clients to participate in projects within the community to strength the relationship with neighbours and potential support networks. *E.g. Daily applause to healthcare staff, Whatsapp groups, community activities, etc.*

REACTIVE MEASURES

- To phone up clients, to explore difficulties that they may be going through, to highlight the joint responsibility in the importance of keeping a nice coexistence for the greater good, so the lockdown is nicer for everyone.
- To focus on positions, interests and needs of clients in the dispute. Knowing what clients ultimately need might clarify what is the best way to help them.
- To use mediation techniques to understand clients better and enable them to find agreements with neighbours: Active listening, open questions (*e.g. How do you feel about this situation?*), look to the future (*e.g. How would you like to solve the conflict? How do you see yourself in 6 months? What would be for you the best scenario?*), standardisation (*to help clients realise that disputes are common and therefore have a solution in most of the cases*), empowerment (*to help them realise they are part of the solution*), etc.
- To explore distraction strategies or other ways to

Squatting

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- To identify risks according to context (e.g. quarter crime rate)
- To install anti-bumping plates or security doors.
- To seek for help from neighbours or landlord to watch out for squatters.
- To leave signs as if the unit were occupied (*e.g. lights on, rolling shutters open, mailbox with a name, etc.*)

make use their spare time. *E.g. Do not insist on “do not play the music loud”; instead, try to help clients to look for an alternative such as using headphones, to listen to the music in another room, to try to listen in a different moment of the day, to explore other spare time activities, etc.*

- To identify the existence of conflict trigger factors, *e.g. withdrawal syndrome, mental health issues, etc..* If so, to set up a joint action plan with Socio-educative Support Team (EAS)
- To answer phone calls from landlords or neighbours on time (*responding immediately or calling back in less than 24 hours*) and properly (*actively listening to them, validating emotions, ensuring the rights of all parties involved in the conflict, setting up a follow-up call*), to explore complaints, to frame them in the context of the lockdown, to place value on the support we deliver to clients and communities
- If the situation persists, to advise to call the police

REACTIVE MEASURES

- To call the police
- To inform about the situation to your direct manager and the legal team
- To go to the unit and make an assessment without taking any risk
- To perform a quick follow-up of the situation
- Once we get the possession back, to secure all the accesses to the unit, so it can be used for Housing First programme purposes.

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PROVIVIENDA is a non-profit organisation that has worked to improve socio-residential reality in Spain since 1989 from a stressed *right to housing* approach. Our mission is to develop actions in order to improve people's quality of life, providing them with a decent and adequate housing to their needs and possibilities.

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