



Rental Housing Resource Center

Embargoed for release until November 30, 2020

Groundbreaking Rental Housing Collaborative to Launch in Milwaukee County

MILWAUKEE, WIS., November 30, 2020. On December 1, nine organizations in Milwaukee County will formally launch the **Milwaukee Rental Housing Resource Center**, a one-stop shop for tenants and landlords in need of assistance to maintain or provide stable rental housing. The mission of the Milwaukee Rental Housing Resource Center (MKE RHRC) is to serve as a trusted convener for the rental housing system and to connect people to resources, education, and services that help prevent eviction, regardless of age, family situation, or housing status. The MKE RHRC will exist in both a physical and virtual form, with a physical office located at 728 N. James Lovell Street, Milwaukee, WI 53233, and a website and central telephone hotline to direct people to services.

A preview of the website RentHelpMKE.org will launch December 1, with the full site available by year-end. The website will provide tenants and landlords with resources to avoid evictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and will be a central clearinghouse for information on rental housing. A decision tree will help direct website visitors to the appropriate information or partner organization for assistance, and a central intake form will allow people to submit their information to get help quickly. The website will be mobile friendly, accessible to people with disabilities, and available in English and Spanish.

Concurrent with the website, the MKE RHRC will launch a central telephone help line, (414) 895-RENT (414-895-7368). The MKE RHRC help line will direct people to the appropriate organization for the type of assistance they seek and lessen confusion for people during a stressful time. Help line services will be available in English or Spanish. The email address info@renthelpmke.org will also be available for those who prefer to communicate electronically or avoid using minutes on a mobile phone plan.

The physical MKE RHRC, located at 728 N. James Lovell Street, Milwaukee, WI 53233 will be a socially distanced, trauma-informed space where people can meet with a partner organization and apply for a variety of rental assistance programs through computer kiosks with dedicated printers. Soundproofed “Zoom Rooms” will address digital equity, providing private spaces with high quality webcams to allow people to virtually attend eviction hearings. A children’s play area will allow parents to focus on addressing their housing needs. The physical space is currently being built out and will open in January 2021.

The MKE RHRC resulted from the 2018 [Wisconsin Policy Forum](#) Report “[No Place Like Home](#)” and the collaborative work of a broader group of stakeholders that formed an Eviction Prevention Task Force and began meeting in 2019 to identify next steps, the first being the formation of a tenant-landlord resource center. The MKE RHRC will also increase access to rental assistance, legal and mediation services, and homeless prevention resources, as well as providing consistent, trusted information on tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities.

The organizations that form the MKE RHRC began meeting regularly at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to coordinate their response efforts. They include [Community Advocates](#), [IMPACT, Inc.](#), [Mediate Wisconsin](#), [Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee](#), [Legal Action Wisconsin](#), [Apartment Association of Southeastern Wisconsin](#), [Hope House](#), the [City of Milwaukee Department of Neighborhood Services](#), and [Milwaukee County Housing Division](#). The [Urban Economic Development Association of Wisconsin \(UEDA\)](#) is providing project management. UEDA is also the coordinating intermediary behind [Take Root Milwaukee](#), a consortium of over 40 community organizations working to promote sustainable homeownership in the City of Milwaukee that launched in response to the foreclosure crisis in 2008. UEDA has engaged [Sarah Greenberg from Greenberg Strategies LLC](#) for additional project support.

The MKE RHRC broke new ground by including a coordinated entry provider from the Continuum of Care (CoC) for homeless services (IMPACT, Inc.). The CoC is a regional planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals. In another groundbreaking move, the Apartment Association of Southeastern Wisconsin (AASEW) – the largest rental property owner trade association in the state – is also a partner in the MKE RHRC, consistent with their mission to advocate for sustainable rental housing. As of November 6, the MKE RHRC and its partner organizations have collectively provided more than \$13 million in emergency rental assistance to over 6,900 clients, as well as working with landlords to coordinate planned moves as an eviction prevention strategy. Large Milwaukee-area landlords have also agreed to utilize Mediate Wisconsin’s mediation services before filing for eviction and to coordinate with rental assistance providers to reduce their eviction filings.

Early funding support for the MKE RHRC has been provided by the [Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment](#) at the Medical College of Wisconsin, [American Endowment Foundation](#), [Brady Foundation](#), [City of Milwaukee Community Development Grants Administration](#), [Herb Kohl Philanthropies](#), [LISC Milwaukee](#), [Milwaukee County Housing Division](#), [United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County](#), [Wisconsin Partnership Program](#) at University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, [Wells Fargo](#), and [Zilber Family Foundation](#).

MKE RHRC partner organizations will be seeking additional funding support to operate the Center and its associated rental assistance programs for the first three years and will be hosting a “friend-raiser” funding campaign for [Giving Tuesday](#) on December 1. **Wells Fargo is providing a \$5,000 challenge grant** for the campaign, which will include video vignettes from each of the partner organizations as well as a social media campaign using the hashtag **#RENTHelpMKE**.

For more details or to make a contribution to support the launch of the MKE RHRC, please contact Kristi Luzar, UEDA executive director, at kristi@uedawi.org.

Milwaukee Rental Housing Resource Center partner organizations:

Community Advocates

Hope House

IMPACT, Inc.

Mediate Wisconsin

Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee

Legal Action Wisconsin

Apartment Association of Southeastern Wisconsin

City of Milwaukee Department of Neighborhood Services

Milwaukee County Housing Division

Urban Economic Development Association of Wisconsin (UEDA)



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