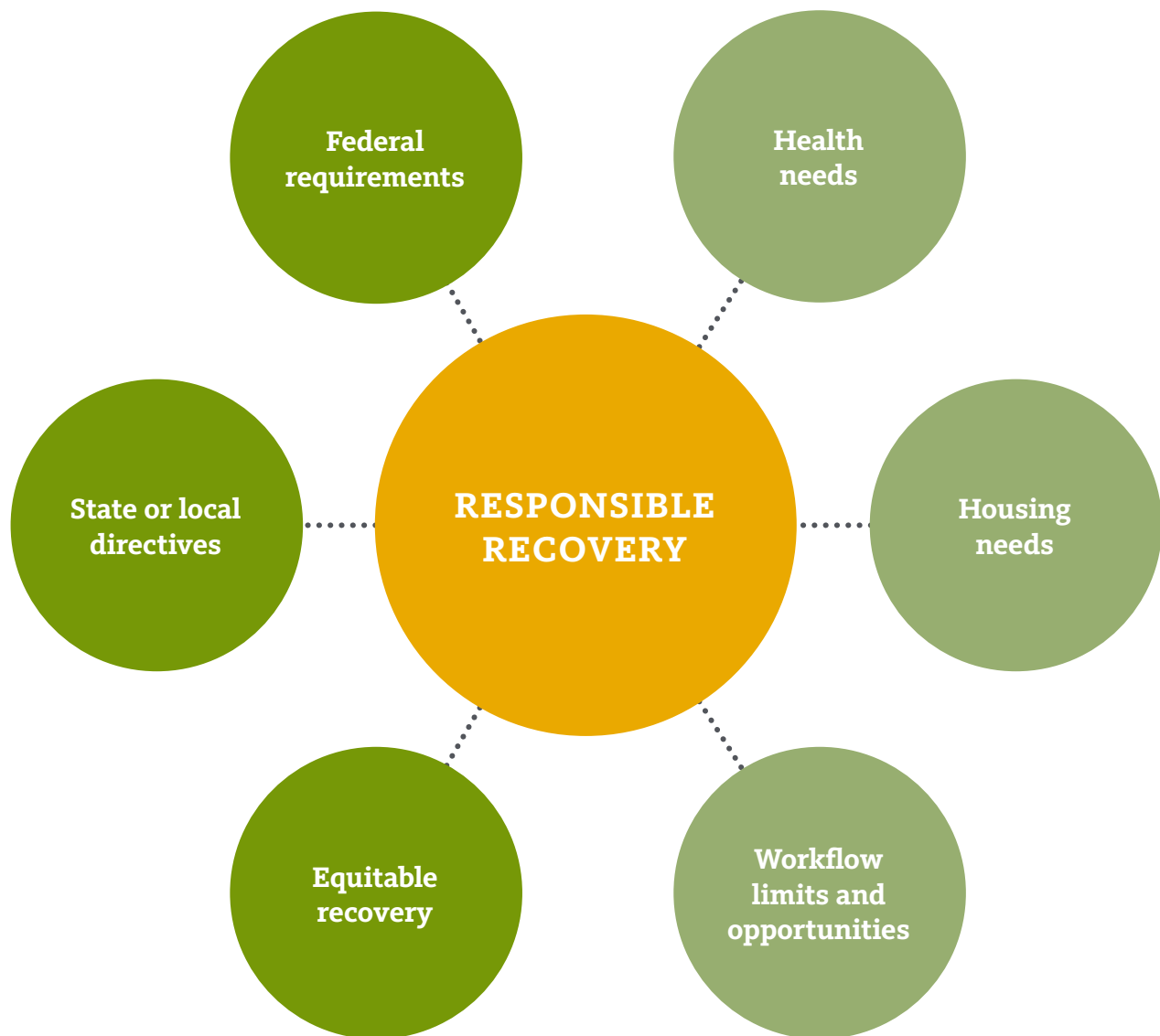# RECOVERY CONSIDERATIONS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVIDERS
DECISION MATRIX

Throughout the ongoing health crisis, affordable housing providers have had to adapt to the **new reality**.

As the country shifts toward the **recovery phase** of COVID-19, senior housing providers navigate community safety measures, state requirements, and property logistics.

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Federal requirements

Health needs

State or local directives

RESPONSIBLE RECOVERY

Housing needs

Equitable recovery

Workflow limits and opportunities

RECOVERY CONSIDERATIONS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVIDERS
OPERATIONAL ISSUES

During the next phases of the crisis, adapted housing community policies will require cautious evaluation and adjustment. Here are several operational issues to consider when shifting from crisis-management to recovery in affordable senior housing.

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	Operational Issues	Federal Guidance	Consideration for Providers
Unit Turnover	**Move-ins & move-outs** Out of concern for both residents and staff at affordable senior housing properties, or in response to state or local travel restrictions, many housing providers chose to temporarily suspend, or freeze, new admissions to the community (with exceptions for certain scenarios). Other providers continued move-ins throughout the crisis under modified safety protocols.	**HUD stance & flexibility** HUD has acknowledged the need to adjust policies based on local needs or directives, and has maintained their policy of reviewing vacancy claims on a case by case basis. In its May 1st COVID-19 FAQs for multifamily housing providers, HUD continued to encourage owners to lease-up units where safely possible; some LeadingAge members have reported flexibility on vacancy claims from their HUD Multifamily Housing regions.	**Cashflow, logistics, & community need** Adjusting new move-ins limits virus exposure for senior housing communities, but impacts cash flow at properties with extended vacancies, as well as affordable housing needs in the broader community. When considering whether to adjust this policy moving forward, providers across the country are weighing options for controlled adaptations to move-ins — such as electronic processing of applicants or restricted move-in timing and reserved paths into the building — and are evaluating the associated risks for staff and residents.
Limited Access	**Visitor restrictions** Limiting access to senior housing communities was one of the first – and most important – changes that housing providers put in place at the start of the pandemic. Many properties have had to hire or reassign staff to monitor building entrances, and residents are anxious to visit with family members and friends; however, restricted property access is seen by many housing providers as being a critical effort in slowing the spread of the virus for an at-risk population, especially as surrounding communities loosen restrictions.	**Federal cautions & deferrals** Affordable housing visitation policies are set at the property level by owners, and HUD defers to local or state requirements, or to directives by health officials on what those policies should entail. The White House guidelines for "Opening Up America Again" lay out a three-phase approach to adjusting protocols that advises continued risk-aversion for older adults. HUD's May 1st COVID-19 FAQs encourage multifamily housing providers to adjust visitation policies as they deem necessary, to keep access open for essential services providers, and to be mindful of fair housing and civil rights.	**Transparency & communication** Despite the logistical and emotional challenges of limiting access to affordable housing communities, providers likely won't lift access restrictions without deliberate planning. As providers evaluate community access policies for the next phases of the crisis, communication with residents and staff remains key. On-site teams at both small and large properties have navigated frustrated or non-compliant residents with increased transparency and by emphasizing common goals.
Remote Workforce	**Off-site operations** Throughout the height of the crisis, many providers adjusted staff and service coordination workflows to off-site where possible. This approach has limited exposure risk for staff and residents and is one of the more flexible arrangements of affordable housing properties.	**Management office** Regarding management office hours at affordable communities, HUD has said in its May 1st FAQs that multifamily housing providers will not incur penalties for curbing hours as needed for safety reasons during the pandemic. This puts the provider in charge of assessing what works for housing staff and residents, and presents an opportunity for housing properties to innovate for a new reality of increased caution	**Challenges & opportunities** In some cases, work flow at housing communities has been impacted by productivity levels or limitations; for example, school closures may have increased childcare demands on remote staff and limited their output; similarly, the limited remote access to resident files or HIPAA compliant software may have reduced capacity of property management teams. In other cases, remote work systems may have demonstrated opportunities for teams to reduce overhead costs, provide the benefits of flex schedules, or connect colleagues with new platforms. Service Coordinators may have implemented new virtual systems that worked for resident wellness checks — or solidified their belief that in-person connections work best.

RECOVERY CONSIDERATIONS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVIDERS
THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

For both providers and residents, COVID-19 upended many aspects of daily life at affordable housing communities. As some providers shift from crisis-management to recovery, HUD has encouraged the use of capacity building tools to help adapt operations and learn from the crisis.

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IDENTIFY LESSONS

Hotwash question template

A tool for staff to focus on deliberate and cooperative restarting of operations, with an eye toward identifying and applying lessons from the crisis. The worksheet guides teams to identify what worked, what to maintain, and what to adapt.

ASSESS CAPACITY

ADA-compliant employee survey

An ADA-compliant sample survey to help organizations plan for employee absenteeism during a pandemic. This helps employers identify non-medical reasons (that are on equal footing with medical reasons) that an employee may miss work during a crisis.

PRIORITIZE WORKFLOW

Job continuity planning

A worksheet to plan for continued operations during emergency and recovery phases. The chart helps staff identify job functions that can and should be continued and how they should be modified or prioritized in response to a crisis.

ADJUST SYSTEM

Risk assessment table

A tool for assessing risks in your operations. The table identifies vulnerabilities or weaknesses by creating an "Overall Hazard Rating" for various operations, which will help prioritize and plan for emergencies and recovery.

RECOVERY CONSIDERATIONS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVIDERS
BUILDING RESILIENCY

Disaster preparedness and response are key for every housing provider. As communities learn from the ongoing emergency, providers can adapt emergency plans and adjust workflows to improve resilience. Practical answers to these questions can be reflected in property emergency operations plans to help with future crisis scenarios.

RESILIENT OPERATIONS

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

RESILIENT RESIDENTS

What systems need to be adapted to overcome disruptions?

What does resiliency look like for my community?

What would help my residents become resilient to emergencies?

Operational considerations for emergency preparedness and incident response:

» **Remote workflow supports:** technology, connectivity, remote file systems

» **Flexible staffing:** pay and schedule adjustments, moral support, task reassignments

» **Reserves:** funds, equipment, personnel

Community considerations for emergency preparedness and incident response:

» **Flexible programming:** adaptations for virtual connections and events, adjustments to property policies

» **Rapid response to community needs:** adaptive service coordination models, staff supports

» **Supply chain support:** contingency plans for uninterrupted access to services and supplies)

Human considerations for emergency preparedness and incident response:

» **Community connections:** partnerships with community organizations

» **Support networks:** access to wellness services and family or community support

» **Connectivity:** technology capacity, telehealth access, and buddy systems