

We Are In This Together: A Collective Response to COVID-19

**Georgia Department of Community Affairs/Georgia Housing and
Finance Authority**

Special Achievement: COVID-19 Response

HFA Staff Contact

Davia Rose Lassiter

communications@dca.ga.gov

2020 Program Excellence Award Submission

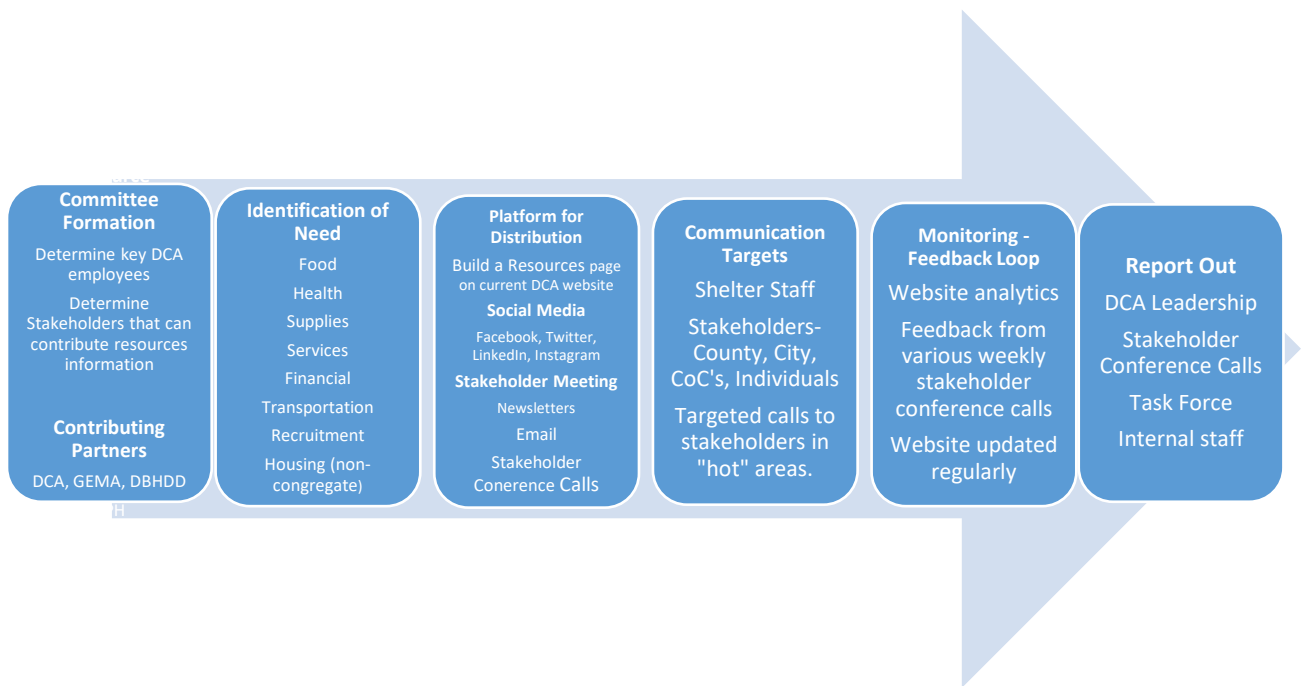
Special Achievement: COVID-19 Response

Georgia Department of Community Affairs

“We Are In This Together – A Collective Response to COVID-19”

The COVID-19 pandemic mandates that State governments cannot operate in silos in order to have an effective response. To assist more Georgians the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) is leveraging key partnerships, existing relationships, and resources for an ongoing and integrated, immediate response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has required DCA and its partners to think outside the box. DCA has engaged non-traditional partners to coordinate efforts and identify new resources. DCA has created an integrated COVID-19 Pandemic Response Model. This is collaboration at its best.

DCA COVID-19 Pandemic Response Model



- THE NEED

At the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, Shelters and Permanent Supportive providers experienced great difficulty in obtaining the needed personal protective equipment (PPE) to target and limit the spread of the virus among one of the most vulnerable populations – the homeless. This lack of access to the PPE, warranted the need a coordinated effort to ensure all providers had access to the necessary resources. The enormity of the crisis also revealed a greater need for state agencies to collaborate to ensure all critical resources were in place and available for Georgia communities.

Governor Kemp created a Task Force in early March 2020 to address the COVID-19 pandemic response in Georgia. This Task Force included several committees, including the Committee for the Homeless and Displaced, which was headed by Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance-Bottoms. By the end of March this Committee, which included private and public sector stakeholders, developed six objectives and sixteen recommendations to help ensure adequate shelter, resources and care for vulnerable populations.

As a part of these objectives and recommendations the DCA was tasked with creating a unique partnership among other state agencies and local Continua of Care (CoCs) to collaboratively address the six objectives outlined by the Committee and to strategize about how to most effectively distribute CARES Act funding to mesh efforts of local HUD Entitlements with the DCA Non-Entitlement. State agencies, including some that have not historically collaborated on a large scale, include the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Department of Public Health, and the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency, in addition to the nine CoCs. The Department of Corrections, Department of Community Supervision, and Supportive Services for Veteran Families providers have also contributed to the effort. DCA has been facilitating weekly meetings with all stakeholders since the beginning of April 2020.

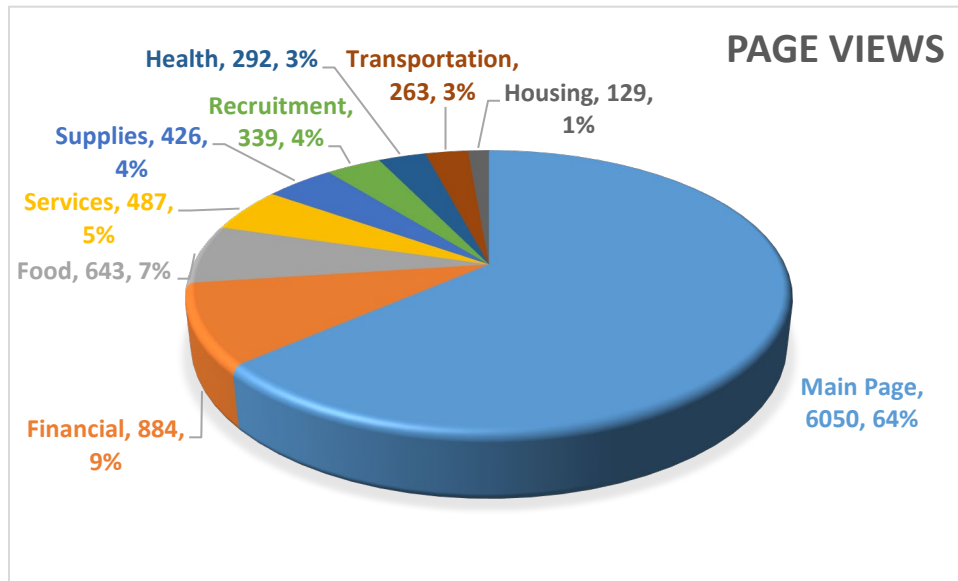
The objectives identified by the Governor's Task Force Committee include preventing additional people from becoming homeless; supporting enhanced cleaning, screening, and referral efforts; expanding testing for high-risk individuals and areas; establishing a reporting process specific to homeless and displaced persons; ensuring appropriate options for quarantine and isolation are available; and ensuring that appropriate transportation options are available. The DCA Resource Committee has been able to provide support that crosses over nearly all of the six objectives and all of the collaborative partners have utilized those resources as a part of the overall response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Georgia.

The DCA Resource Committee is spearheading the efforts to gather resources for supplies and services that is anticipated will be needed by Georgia communities allowing agencies to focus on their on the ground COVID-19 response and not spend unnecessary time searching for limited resources. The resources are broken into the seven categories that are further broken down by county. The categories cover Transportation, Food, Health, Supplies, Services, Recruitment, and Financial resources. Links to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Georgia Department of Public Health and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is also listed as a resource. These categories have been determined to target the greatest needs throughout Georgia. The Resource Committee team of ten collects information obtained from the various stakeholder meetings that occur on a weekly basis. Members from the Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), Housing Opportunity for People with Aids (HOPWA) stakeholder meetings as well as the GEMA team share resources with the Committee. The Committee then contacts the vendor(s) getting additional details, such as contact information, and pricing (where applicable). This information is then posted to the most appropriate category on the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) website.

This website continues to be shared with community stakeholders and agencies, as well as highlighted on the DCA social media platforms, (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram). This collaboration with our partners, community stakeholders and GA Continua's of Care, has allowed us to not only support the communities in Georgia but also to implement solutions identified by the Governor's Task Force.

- **THE DATA**

The DCA Analytics from April 15 through June 24 reveal the Resource website had 9,850 page views. The graph below indicates the breakdown of views per page view.



- **BENEFITS REALIZED**

Time is the greatest cost savings to the agencies/individuals that access these resources that have been vetted for accuracy and legitimacy. Additional benefits are intangible such as the strengthened relationships built amongst the state agencies throughout Georgia.

- **IMPACT**

The continued coordination and collaboration with local and state partners has afforded agencies such as the Reentry Cognitive Programs with the Department of Corrections, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) and countless individuals access to a resource hub that all have found invaluable. GEMA and DCA have utilized the resources to procure the necessary supplies they are in greatest need of to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus.