

**Governor’s Office Report
Federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program**

**Need among Wyoming Residents
for Rental and Utility Assistance
February 2021**

The need for rental and utility assistance has increased across the State due to the pandemic.



In 2020, Wyoming 2-1-1 saw a 285% increase in rental assistance requests and a 95% increase in utility assistance requests, compared to 2019. This spike in demand has further increased in 2021, with requests received by 2-1-1 in the first six weeks of 2021 amounting to more than double the six-week average of requests received in 2020.

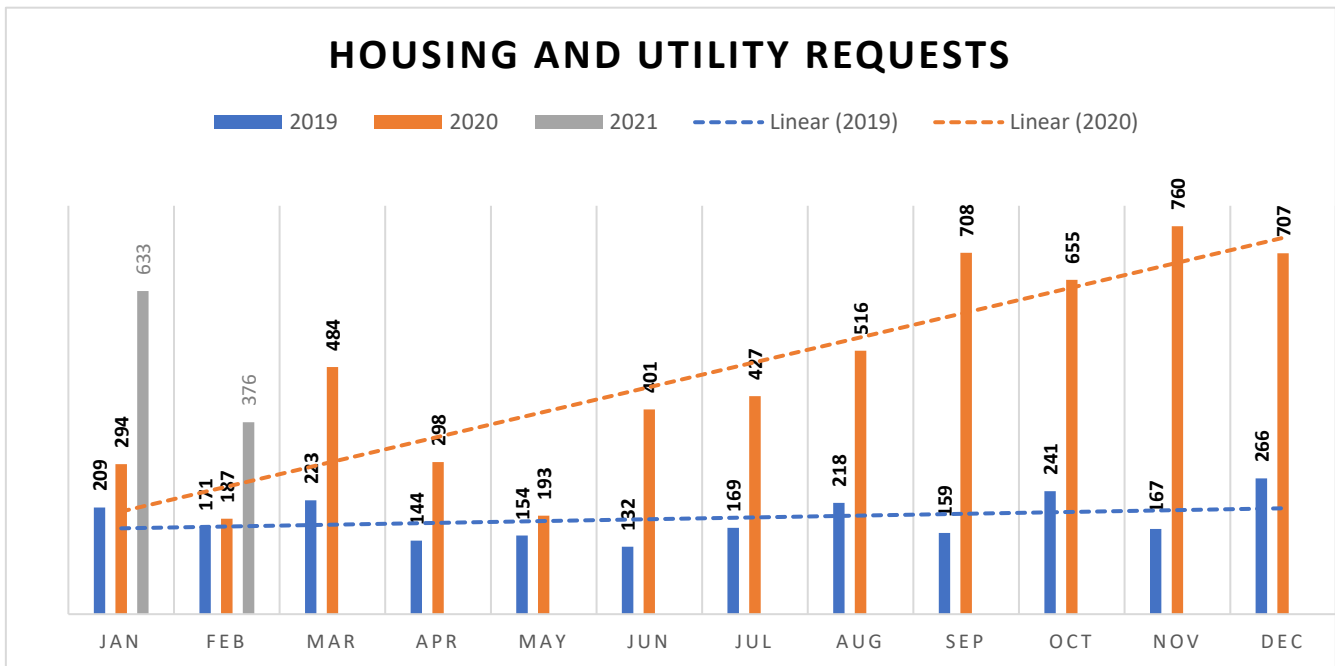
Requests to 2-1-1	2019	2020	2021
Rental Assistance	732	2,717	668
Utility Assistance	1,521	2,913	678

The level of need for rental assistance increased each month of 2020, even while the state rental assistance program was in place.



Wyoming residents’ need for rental assistance continued to increase in 2020 while the state rental assistance program was in place. The below chart demonstrates that requests to Wyoming 2-1-1 increased as 2020 progressed, although request volume maintained a steady rate in 2019.

Notably, 899 – or approximately 40% – of applicants to the state rental assistance program were denied. We believe that the federal program will apply to a wider net of families in need.



Landlords and utility companies are suffering losses.



Initial responses to a statewide survey to landlords indicate that landlords are owed an average of \$6,800 in past-due rent across the state, with a total of \$458,000 in past due rent owed to 72 survey respondents. Respondents also reported being owed an average of \$583 in past-due utilities by tenants, with respondents reporting a total of \$34,000 owed.

One utility company reported \$1.6 million in past-due utility bills for tenants since April 2020.

Nonprofit organizations, churches, healthcare centers, and landlords shared the following sentiments regarding the needs they are seeing in their communities:

“Past due rent is extremely high. Stress is extremely high.” - *Landlord*

“[We have had] a 270% increase in [requests for housing and rental assistance] over last year. 10 of those individuals were either already homeless or were within 24 hours of being evicted onto the street [...] I have had patients freeze to death in their vehicles in Wyoming during the winter due to homelessness and it is heartbreaking.” – *Sheridan Health Center and Community Connections*

“Rent is piling up for families during the eviction moratorium and will need higher dollar amounts to keep them in their homes once the moratorium is lifted. Because people are waiting weeks on unemployment benefits, have to take unpaid time for quarantines and illness, and the loss of employment and hours, we have a lot of families who are terrified of losing their homes.” - *Council of Community Services, serving Campbell, Crook, and Weston counties*

“[The number of rental assistance requests in 2020] are an 800% increase over the year before.” – *Campbell County Salvation Army*

“Poverty is a concern for all of our clients and although we don't deal directly with housing usually, we have seen a growing need since the holidays. Some of these clients have exhausted the resources of other local non-profits and we have tried to help where we could. As you might imagine, our clinic has very limited resources (we fundraise our entire budget) but we were uncomfortable leaving people without shelter in the winter months. [...] One Mom came in 3 times in one day before she could build up the courage to ask for our help. She has been a client of ours for some time and we later became aware that she had reduced the number of meals she consumed so that her kids would have enough to eat. The idea that we don't have the ability to continue this support is heartbreaking.” – *Downtown Clinic of Albany County*

“Just today [we] had 3 landlords say they were selling their properties because they couldn't afford to continue. When mentioning the potential program to come they did express how helpful that would be as many haven't received rent and have had to even pay the utilities in order to keep the home safe” – *Goshen HELP, serving Carbon, Crook, Goshen, Niobrara, Washakie, and Weston Counties*

“[R]esidents continue to struggle with the effects of the pandemic and emergency rent assistance needs. At this time, there appears to be insufficient assistance available to these residents and this may, unfortunately, create even greater challenges to their well-being.” – *High Country Behavioral Health, serving Sublette and Lincoln counties*

“[I cannot pay rent because] I have cancer and cannot continue my work due to the high risk I would be at having direct contact with the community.” – *Client of One22, serving Teton county*

“We helped over 50 families [...] I imagine many of our local churches have done the same. These funds come from our congregations.” – *First Presbyterian Church in Laramie county*

“Our Rental Counselor is contacted almost daily by renters across the entire state who are in need of assistance. [...] We have seen a second surge in requests for assistance in January of this year with the delay in the unemployment roll out. [...] This is a statewide challenge. Right now, we have contacts for Natrona, Laramie, Converse, Park, and Washakie counties. [...] The urgency to get these funds available to the those in need cannot be overstated.” – *Wyoming Housing Network*

“Laramie Interfaith funded \$207,773 in rental and utility assistance requests during 2020. This was roughly 50% of the requested \$408,958 – and probably more. [...] Our capacity, both fiscal and physical, limited our operations. While this figure does include some level of emergency shelter need, it is not inclusive of any requests for this aid as Interfaith does not have the capacity to support shelter requests or track them. Since the beginning of the calendar year 2021, we have received roughly \$54,000 in requests for aid and shelter. But, we have only been able to fund about \$18,000 ...” – *Laramie Interfaith*

“The pandemic drastically impacted the current picture of homelessness. More families fell into homelessness...[our organizations] have seen consistent stagnation with the population being unable to transition out of the shelter as efficiently due to the pandemic. [...] Along with struggling to establish substantial income, our clients have met increased gaps in obtaining mental health services. Without having access to technology and the inability to meet in person the need for counseling/treatment has been detrimental.” – *COMEIA Inc., Family Promise, and Unaccompanied Students Initiative*