

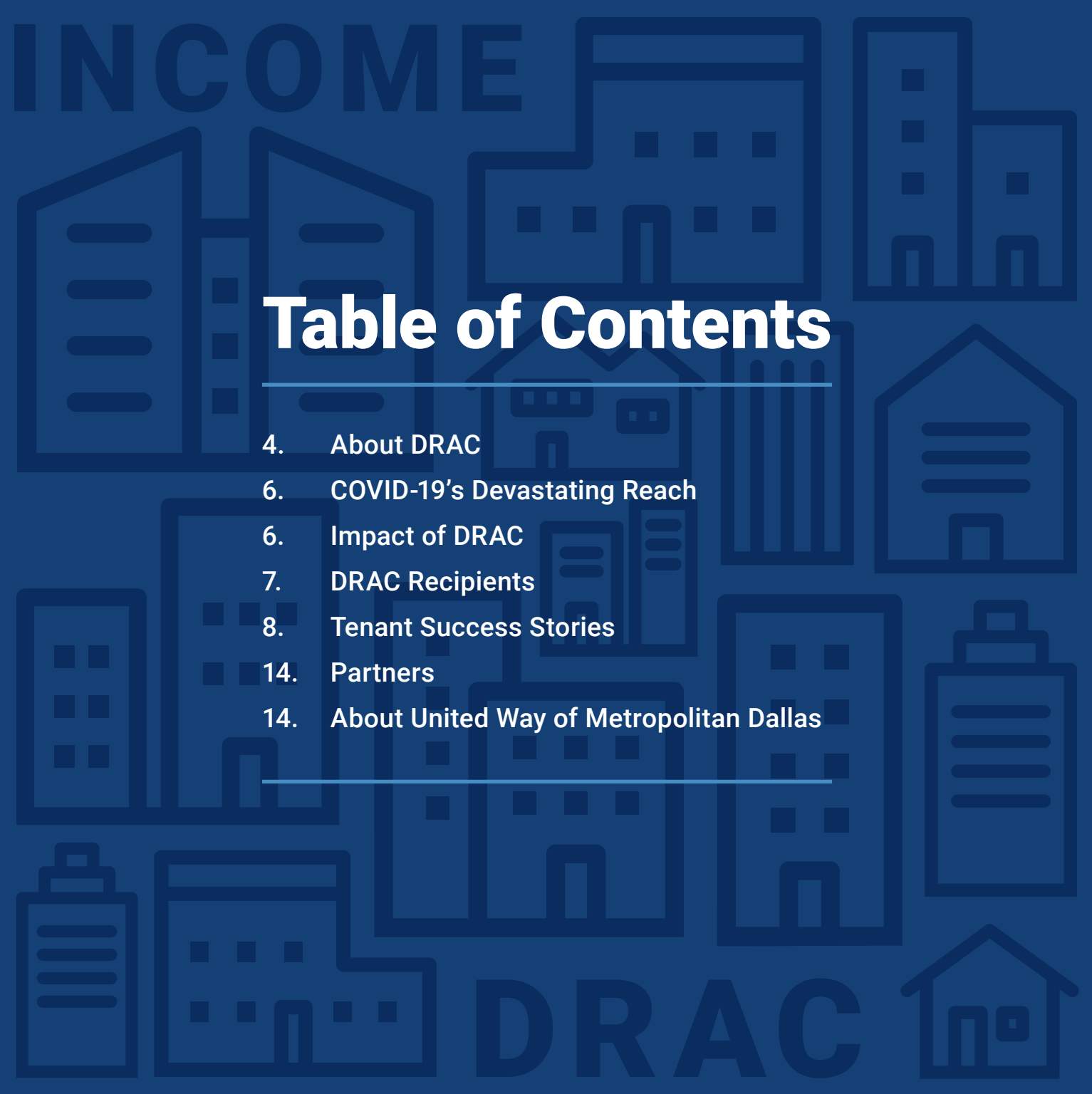


United Way  
Dallas Rental Assistance  
Collaborative



**A COMMUNITY-WIDE  
SUCCESS STORY**





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## Together, We Supported Our Neighbors Through COVID-19

When COVID-19 reached North Texas, it had a devastating effect on residents—especially those without a financial safety net. Suddenly tens of thousands of our neighbors were laid off or furloughed. With their income significantly reduced, many struggled to pay their bills and rent and still afford groceries, medication and other necessities. Suddenly, a huge percentage of our neighbors—up to 30% in some zip codes—faced the threat of eviction.

In the early days of the pandemic, federal relief dollars began flowing to our region to prevent an eviction crisis. The City of Dallas chose United Way of Metropolitan Dallas as a trusted partner to lead a new initiative called the Dallas Rental Assistance Collaborative (DRAC), providing rental and utility assistance so people can stay in their homes.

DRAC enabled the community to unite quickly and effectively around the issue of housing stability. At United Way of Metropolitan Dallas, we partnered with a variety of grassroots organizations that are trusted members of their communities and already have well-established relationships with their neighbors, enabling them to receive federal funding and serve their clients without delay.

Working with more than a dozen partner organizations, we served more than 7,000 households throughout the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. DRAC provided more than \$30 million in rental and utility assistance, helping to prevent an eviction crisis in our communities.

Thank you to our grassroots partners that made this incredible impact possible, and to the organizations whose generous private investments supplemented the federal funding provided through the City of Dallas: Hoblitzelle Foundation, The Rees-Jones Foundation, Hirsh Foundation, The Meadows Foundation and a special thank you to The University of Texas in Arlington (UTA) Internship Program. Together, we ensured thousands of our neighbors could maintain housing stability during one of the worst crises in North Texas history. And through this work, we supported each family's education, income and health for years to come.

Finally, to the Live United movement as a whole, thank you for stepping up for our neighbors throughout the pandemic. We appreciate your continued commitment to creating access and opportunity for all North Texans to thrive. Together, we're creating meaningful change right here at home.

With gratitude,

**Paola Martinez**  
Senior Manager of Housing Stability  
United Way of Metropolitan Dallas

# About the Dallas Rental Assistance Collaborative

In May 2020, United Way of Metropolitan Dallas led the creation of the Dallas Rental Assistance Collaborative (DRAC) to improve housing stability during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The key priority of the initiative was to prevent homelessness by quickly and efficiently providing emergency rental and utility assistance to individuals and families in hard-to-reach populations, with a focus on Spanish-speaking, immigrant and refugee populations, as well as communities in Southern Dallas.

## Preventing Evictions and Homelessness

DRAC was an important part of United Way of Metropolitan Dallas' Housing and Homeless Initiative, which provides a continuum of services to address the complex challenges faced by low-income families, which far too often result in homelessness. Funding for DRAC came primarily from the City of Dallas, which selected United Way as its trusted partner to lead and implement short-term rental and utility assistance to ensure Dallas did not fall into an eviction crisis.

The collaborative focused on rental and utility assistance because housing stability became a leading concern during COVID-19. As North Texans lost their income in record numbers, local students switched to remote learning and individuals faced increased financial strain from caring for sick or at-risk loved ones, many of our neighbors struggled to pay their bills. Within a matter of months, tens of thousands of North Texans were at risk of eviction and even homelessness.

## Vital Financial Support

DRAC allowed renters who were short on money to apply for up to 18 months of relief, provided that they earn below 50% of the area median income (no more than \$43,850 for a family of three) or if one or more family members had been unemployed for three months or longer.

United Way provided fiscal and administrative oversight and management of the 15 DRAC partners who provided direct rental and utility assistance. United Way also led the navigator program for the collaborative. Each DRAC partner had extensive experience serving hard-to-reach populations living in communities of concentrated poverty, ethnic minorities, senior citizens and at-risk populations.

## Navigating a Complex Process

Another important component of the initiative was United Way rental assistance navigators, who provided support to tenants at Justice of the Peace Courts and at locations in the community. While at court, navigators met with tenants at their eviction hearing to make them aware of available rent assistance and provided guidance on how to apply.



During their office hours, navigators met with tenants at apartment complexes, churches, libraries and other locations, providing hands-on application assistance and ensuring case completion with our DRAC partners. The navigators also contacted landlords to advocate on behalf of the tenants. Afterward, they followed up with tenants to ensure assistance came through and they were still housed.

## Life-Changing Impact

Through our community partners and our navigators, we positively impacted more than 7,000 households, ensuring individuals and families could stay in their homes during a dangerous and challenging time.

Thanks to both federal and private funding, as well as the commitment of organizations that are doing important work in our communities, DRAC provided more than \$30 million in assistance and enabled many of our neighbors to make it through the worst of the pandemic without a catastrophic eviction.



*I reached out to United Way during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic because I knew they could quickly identify and bring together the resources and partners we needed to help our communities in a time of great need. This type of work is what United Way was built for."*

*-Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson*

## COVID-19's Devastating Reach

**30%**

Percent unemployment in some areas of North Texas in spring 2020

**600%**

Increase in job losses from February to March 2020

**461,000**

Number of Texans who lost their job in March 2020

## Hospitality & Retail

Top service positions eliminated or furloughed in spring 2020

## Impact of the Dallas Rental Assistance Collaborative

- **15** partner organizations
- **\$30,390,957.16** in rent and utility assistance distributed
- **\$4,200** median monthly assistance
- **7,173** households served

\*As of 10/2022

## DRAC Recipients

**75%**

QUALIFIED AS EXTREMELY LOW INCOME

**70%**

HAD A WOMAN HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

**71%**

WERE BLACK RESIDENTS

“



“United Way of Metropolitan Dallas is known for developing impactful strategies that tackle complex and interconnected issues. The COVID-19 pandemic became one of the most complex undertakings that we’ve witnessed in decades. It impacted the daily lives of all North Texans, especially those who had no financial safety net. To help prevent families from losing their homes, United Way took swift action. We established the Dallas Rental Assistance Collaborative—a collaborative of 15 trusted organizations working together to provide rent and utility assistance to Dallas residents who were unable to pay their bills due to the impact COVID had on their work or home life.”

- Ashley Brundage, Executive Director of Housing Stability and Senior Vice President of Community Impact, United Way of Metropolitan Dallas



## Tenant Success Stories

### Jasmine

#### A Terrifying Hospital Stay

"I unexpectedly went on maternity leave and was hospitalized. I was only 32 weeks along, and my son came early. It was a traumatic birth. My baby and I ended up catching COVID. I was only supposed to be out of work for 12 weeks, but I had to get more time off. Catching COVID caused us both to have more complications and had to stay in the hospital."

#### The Threat of Eviction

"Since I was not working [at my job as a Dallas ISD substitute teacher], I was without a paycheck for three weeks. I was getting notices to vacate at my door, but I wasn't seeing them because I was at the hospital. I was worried about my baby because he was in the NICU. I was also worried about my oldest child because she had to be taken care of by family. There was just a lot on my mind, and I couldn't imagine getting evicted while I was at the hospital."

#### Support from the Community

"When I finally was released from the hospital, I applied for rental assistance. I received over \$3,000 in rental assistance from Family Gateway in June 2021. Receiving assistance was a huge weight that was lifted off my shoulders. I was incredibly happy. If I had not received rental assistance, I would have been homeless with a newborn baby."







## Ivy

### Struggling to Pay Rent

"During COVID, I had a big reduction in my income. Plus, I was hospitalized three or four times. I had a stroke and congestive heart failure. Being that sick made it very hard to focus on making sure my rent was paid. I was just turning 70 at the time that I applied for rental assistance. I was very sick, and my apartment complex wasn't willing to work with me. My rent went up. It was so high that it was hard to try to get back on track. I felt desperate. My apartment was coming after me. It's a feeling that is very hard to describe."

### Rental Assistance Made All the Difference

"I applied for funding in December 2021, and I was approved for funding in February 2022 from Sharing Life. I felt so wonderful. It was a little over \$3,000. I didn't believe this would happen. I don't trust people and I had never really needed to ask for help before. I had always worked hard and paid my own bills. When I finally let go and started to trust people more, that was when the help came."

## Denise

### On the Front Lines of the Pandemic

"Working at a nonprofit health clinic, I got sick with COVID so many times. During my fourth time recovering from COVID with my two little ones, we all got sick, and I had to quarantine again and again. I had no one else to help me with my children. It was hard to be at home with no pay, so I applied for food stamps and for rental assistance. I was never unemployed, I just had to take so much time off from getting sick."

### An Uncertain Future

"One day a leasing manager knocked on my door and my son answered the door. The leasing person said to my young son, 'Tell your mom she needs to pay her rent, or else you guys will get kicked out of the apartment.' My son was scared, and he came to me crying."

### Relief for the Whole Family

"Not too long after that, we got a call from Brother Bill's Helping Hand. They approved us for over \$10,000 in rental assistance in April of 2022. When I received the email about the amount that they were going to give me ...you don't know how happy I got. I started crying. When I told my son we got approved, he started crying because he thought that we would lose the apartment and be evicted. He was just excited that we would be OK. I was too."

## Jerry

### Coping with Sudden Unemployment

"Things were tough. Like many others during the pandemic, I lost employment. My wife lost her job as well around the same time as me, so that added to the feeling of more stress. I applied [for rental assistance] in September and got approved in October and then the check was processed in November. It was a quick turnaround, which I am so grateful for."

### An Unexpected Silver Lining

"[But] instead of just applying for rental assistance, I clicked on the agency's career page to apply to work with them. I not only received rental assistance, but that exact same agency—a few months later—hired me. I am now able to assist others who are in similar situations to those that were once like me during the pandemic. I am going back to school now. I would not have been able to if I didn't get the help."

# Marlen

## From Two Household Incomes to One

"I got a divorce in 2020, and it was hard. When I applied for rental assistance, I had been unemployed for a while. I received a notice to vacate and went to court, but the case was dismissed, and I was given more time to pay the rent. It was a tough time for the family, and I cried a lot. Everything at the time seemed complicated, and I couldn't escape my sad mentality. I went from having everything paid for by my ex-husband to having to fend for my family. I didn't think we would be able to make it."

## Support in the Knick of Time

"I applied for rental assistance in February, and within a month, I was approved. The Salvation Army helped pay for a few months, which included future rent payments."

## Ready to Move Forward

"When I found out I was approved, I couldn't stop crying. It felt like God had answered my prayers, and I could finally stand up from that dark place I was in. I could tell that the Salvation Army was doing God's work. I am from Honduras and still struggle to learn the language. The Salvation Army was welcoming and honestly care about people who were in need."

# Senora

## Depriving Herself to Get By

"I was unemployed and having trouble finding a job. It seemed like businesses were only hiring young people. I fell behind on rent and depended on my adult children to help me with utilities and with my phone bill. While on a low budget, I deprived myself of necessities like food and warmth. I would use the stove twice a week, have one light on in the apartment, and have my heater off even when the weather was cold. During this challenging time, I couldn't sleep most nights from the stress I had in my life. I didn't even have enough money to afford my medications for my high blood pressure."

## Facing the Stress of Eviction

"My children helped as much as they could, but it still resulted in me falling behind on rent and going to court for an eviction. I applied for rental assistance in November 2021 and did not believe I would be approved."

## Finding Wraparound Support

"Four months after applying for assistance, my application was approved by the MINT Foundation for seven months of rent. The MINT Foundation helped me to get my rent and utilities paid and see a doctor to get the medications I needed. I found a job as an attendance clerk at a high school, and it is going very well. I plan on moving to a better apartment once the time is right. I'm grateful to the MINT Foundation for helping me."

# Passia

## Compounding Challenges

"I moved from Illinois to Dallas at the beginning of the pandemic. At the time, I was asked to work remotely from home. After I moved and settled in, I got a call and was asked to start working in person again. I could no longer go into the office because I had moved to Dallas. They fired me. Amid all that, I suffered a car accident where I was hit by a semi-truck and lost my means of transportation."

## A Sudden Slide into Homelessness

"Having no transportation made it more difficult for me to find employment. I quickly started to fall behind on rent, utilities and other household expenses. I applied for the rental assistance program. The landlord got tired of waiting, so he filed for eviction. The rental assistance took longer than expected, but eventually, The Concilio paid \$6,396.63 in rent arrears. My landlord took the money and still evicted me from the apartment. I became homeless."

## Life-Changing Support

"I reached back out to The Concilio and told them what happened. They came back to my rescue and helped me get a storage unit to put my belongings in and paid for a hotel room for my family and me to stay in. They even got me a U-Haul to help me move back to Illinois with my family. They helped me so much I couldn't believe it. It was a BIG, BIG blessing. This experience unlocked new opportunities for me. I was able to get ahead."





# Ongoing Housing Stability Recommendations

Developed by the Child Poverty Action Lab, United Way of Metropolitan Dallas and Dallas-area partners

Affordable, stable, and accessible housing and a continuum of housing options are the foundation upon which equitable communities are built. COVID-19 gravely impacted the financial and housing stability of thousands of families in Dallas and Dallas Counties.

In response to this housing instability and the millions of dollars released by the federal government to address this crisis, the City of Dallas, Dallas County, United Way of Metropolitan Dallas, the Child Poverty Action Lab and many other partners quickly built an eviction prevention infrastructure—consisting of rental assistance, legal assistance, case management and more—to efficiently and effectively provide resources that allowed tenants to stay in their homes.

As federal funding for emergency rental assistance is depleted, this newly created and critically important eviction prevention infrastructure is at risk. Our community must take collective action to preserve the gains made in creating an infrastructure to provide emergency assistance and prevent evictions.

The recommendations that follow are meant to ensure that this infrastructure becomes a permanent part of our community’s support for low-income renters facing sudden financial crises. The recommendations

do not include a designated owner or cost. Next steps include the launch of small working groups to design a plan for implementation. Please contact United Way of Metropolitan Dallas if you’re interested in learning how you can support this important next step.

### Establishing a Permanent Eviction Prevention Infrastructure

1. Create a permanent rent relief fund.
2. Increase access to legal aid for tenants facing evictions.
3. Fund a centralized navigation team and resource-sharing website.
4. Publish, and make public, data on the full lifecycle of eviction cases.
5. Implement policies that provide long-term protections for tenants.
6. Provide ongoing education and documents that clearly explain tenants’ rights and responsibilities as a renter and during an eviction.

Interested in learning more? Email us at [RentalAssistance@UnitedWayDallas.org](mailto:RentalAssistance@UnitedWayDallas.org).

# Thank You to Our Partners

Brother Bill’s Helping Hand	Harmony CDC	Services of Hope
Catholic Charities Dallas	Housing Crisis Center	Sharing Life
Chocolate MINT Foundation	Housing Forward	The Concilio
CitySquare	Interfaith Family Services	Turnaround Agenda
Community Council	Jewish Family Services	Under1Roof
Dallas College	Literacy Achieves	Wilkinson Center
Family Gateway	Metrocrest Services	
Gateway of Grace	Salvation Army	

## About United Way of Metropolitan Dallas

United Way of Metropolitan Dallas is a social change organization that unites the community to create opportunity and access for all North Texans to thrive. We are committed to being a fully inclusive, multicultural, antiracist movement so that we can drive transformative change and advance racial equity in the areas of education, income and health—the building blocks of opportunity. We encourage every North Texan to join this movement and Live United.





**Let's create opportunity and access for all North Texans to thrive.**



**Give.  
Advocate.  
Volunteer.  
Live United**

[www.unitedwaydallas.org](http://www.unitedwaydallas.org)



**Metropolitan Dallas**