

Fact Sheet: Myths vs. Facts - FEMA's Transitional Sheltering Assistance Program

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Myth: FEMA sent survivors from Puerto Rico to areas with high rental rates in the continental United States.

Fact: FEMA did not send or pay for any disaster survivors to travel from Puerto Rico to the states. FEMA has helped survivors who voluntarily left for the states by providing eligible applicants with federal assistance and by connecting them with local and state agencies for remaining needs.

FEMA provides an initial two-months Rental Assistance at the Fair Market Rate (FMR) in Puerto Rico that is set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. For those who are approved for additional rental assistance (past the initial two-months), FEMA may provide it based on the FMR for the location of their temporary rental unit. If a survivor has a concern about the rental rate in their area, they can contact FEMA and provide a copy of their lease agreement. FEMA has approved more than \$123 million in rental assistance to over 135,000 Puerto Rico households impacted by hurricanes Irma and Maria.

Myth: FEMA does not help survivors find temporary housing before their Transitional Sheltering Assistance eligibility ends.

Fact: FEMA is providing case management services for survivors in the Transitional Sheltering Assistance program. The program provides one-on-one help with assessing disaster-related needs, guiding survivors through the appeals process, developing personal recovery plans, and connecting survivors with housing, employment, financial, healthcare and many other resources. Need help? Call the Immediate Disaster Case Management hotline at 855-742-5993. Case managers speak English and Spanish and are available 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. EDT. For TTY, visit www.PuertoRicoRelay.com/TTY.



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Myth: FEMA offers Direct Lease Assistance to survivors in the continental U.S.

Fact: Less than one percent of evacuees who are in the continental U.S. are eligible for Direct Lease Assistance because sufficient housing resources are available to them. FEMA–provided financial rental assistance can be used to rent housing. Financial rental assistance is the fastest, most efficient form of temporary housing assistance offered by FEMA. Other housing options are used only in areas where rental resources are scarce. In Puerto Rico, FEMA is providing eligible survivors with a variety of housing options.

Myth: FEMA does not grant temporary housing assistance to survivors who are in hotels participating in FEMA’s Transitional Sheltering Assistance program.

Fact: Transitional Sheltering Assistance is not a housing program. It is a sheltering program designed to provide survivors with short-term hotel stays after a disaster until they can move back into their homes or into other temporary or permanent housing. TSA eligibility does not prevent survivors from receiving assistance through FEMA’s temporary housing programs such as financial rental assistance, home repair grants and other options.

Myth: FEMA forced large families to live in one hotel room.

Fact: FEMA provides one hotel room per 4 people in a household. Survivor households using Transitional Sheltering Assistance are provided the necessary number of hotel rooms to comfortably and safely accommodate their sheltering needs.

Myth: FEMA did not properly notify survivors of their checkout dates from hotels participating in the Transitional Sheltering Assistance program.

Fact: When survivors check into a hotel participating in the Transitional Sheltering Assistance program or when they receive an extension, they sign an agreement that lists the date they need to check out. FEMA provides reminder notifications via phone calls, emails and text messages (based on survivors’ indicated preferences) 5-7 days prior to the checkout date.

Myth: FEMA evicts survivors from hotels once their eligibility for Transitional Sheltering Assistance ends.



Fact: FEMA does not evict survivors from hotels. FEMA notifies survivors and the corresponding hotels of their eligibility status. While FEMA no longer pays the hotel bill, FEMA provides support in identifying temporary housing to meet their needs.

Myth: FEMA forces survivors to move from one hotel to another.

Fact: FEMA provides survivors with a list of participating hotels in the area of their preference. FEMA has no control over hotel availability and the number of rooms each individual hotel sets aside for disaster survivors at the U.S. General Services Administration rate.

Myth: FEMA doesn't offer enough temporary housing options.

Fact: To address the complex needs of Hurricane Maria survivors in Puerto Rico, FEMA is working closely with the Government of Puerto Rico, other federal agencies and voluntary organizations to provide a variety of housing resources and options that best fit each eligible survivor household's situation. These include:

- Individual Assistance grants to pay pre-disaster homeowners for essential home repairs.
- Voluntary Agencies Leading and Organizing Repair (VALOR) Program – FEMA pays for materials and volunteers perform repairs to homes.
- Tu Hogar Renace – A Government of Puerto Rico program funded by FEMA to provide up to \$20,000 in essential temporary repairs to make homes safe, habitable and functional so survivors can live in them while permanent repairs are made.
- Direct Lease – FEMA leases rental properties Puerto Rico for displaced survivors to live until their homes are repaired or they secure other permanent housing.
- Multi-Family Lease and Repair – FEMA provides funding for repairs to damaged rental housing units in Puerto Rico to make them habitable and available for FEMA to lease for survivors.
- Permanent Housing Construction and Repair – FEMA has authorized assistance for homeowners whose pre-disaster primary residence was destroyed or incurred major damage in Puerto Rico. Repairs provided under this program are limited to real property components eligible under FEMA



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Housing Assistance such as heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC), walls, floors, ceilings, etc.

Additionally, FEMA has distributed more than \$1 billion in grants to survivors to help them recover. Other federal agency help includes more than \$1.5 billion in low-interest disaster loans through the U.S. Small Business Administration, and more than 59,000 professionally installed temporary roofs through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' "Operation Blue Roof" program.

Myth: HUD's Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP) is necessary to address the housing needs of Puerto Rico survivors.

Fact: DHAP is not necessary to house displaced disaster survivors and in fact has been cited as inefficient and not cost effective. FEMA collaborates directly with HUD to find housing solutions for survivors affected by Hurricane Maria. FEMA is providing a variety of housing programs to adequately meet the unique needs of disaster survivors that are more timely and effective than DHAP. For instance, FEMA's Direct Lease Assistance program is being implemented in Puerto Rico and provides immediate housing to displaced survivors.

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