

Housing Action Illinois is surveying housing counseling agencies to learn how COVID-19 is impacting their work & to respond to their needs through our capacity building program. Twenty-four out of 55 agencies responded to the second survey, which was conducted on April 6.

Most respondents were located in the Chicago & Chicago metro area (63%). 17% were based in southern Illinois, 8% in central Illinois, and 13% out-of state (Detroit, MI, Evansville, IN, and Saint Louis, MO).

## Are agencies open?



**100%** of respondents have closed their offices to the public & now provide counseling services over the phone & internet.



Housing counselors say they are **mostly comfortable** providing services remotely.



**46%**  
very comfortable



**50%**  
somewhat comfortable



**4%**  
not comfortable

**17%** would like to receive training & info on best practices.

## Clients are seeking out services

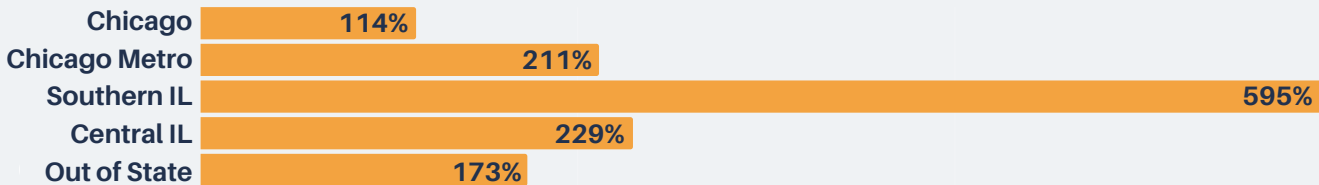


On March 16, housing counseling agencies were already reporting an **uptick in calls** from people concerned about their rent and mortgage payments.

By April 6, there was a

**206%**  
increase in calls.

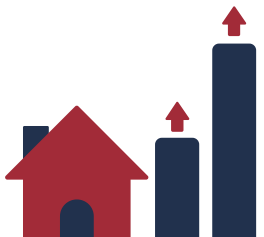
Across Illinois, agencies reported an increase in call volume.



Based on responses from 23 agencies that provided call data for both 3/9-3/20 and 3/21-4/6 periods.

While the Chicago metro area accounts for a higher **volume** of calls, downstate housing counseling agencies have seen the highest **increase** in calls.

## > ONLINE CAPACITY BUILDING TRAINING



**71%** of housing counseling agencies surveyed said they had seen an increase in calls for rental/eviction assistance. In addition, 69% of the 665 calls reported from 3/21-4/6 were requests for rental/eviction assistance. Housing Action will host an **online rental counseling training** to increase housing counseling agencies' capacity to meet this need. More details will be announced soon.

## Data security remains top technology concern for housing counselors



Housing counselors need more than the typical work-from-home resources. Counselors must have a secure method of handling sensitive documents, such as social security numbers & bank statements. Compared to the March 16 survey, a higher percentage of respondents said they had all or more of the technology they needed to do their jobs. Securely handling client data remained a top concern.

Survey respondents said they still don't have some of the technology they need to work effectively from home. ▼ Indicates the percentage of **change**\* from the previous survey's results.



**33%** (▼ 49%) still need a secure way (e.g., a VPN) to handle client data.



**13%** (▼ 73%) still need a laptop.



**17%** (▼ 45%) still need high speed internet access.

\* Change calculated as follows:  $([new\ result - previous\ result] / previous\ result)$ .

## Agencies will need greater staff capacity to meet increased demand for service



Compared to the March 16 survey results, more respondents said they had enough counselors to meet current demand for services. However, 21% needed more counselors to meet the current demand for foreclosure assistance, and 22% needed more counselors for rental/eviction assistance.

Capacity to meet rental/eviction client needs

52%

22%

26%

Capacity to meet foreclosure client needs

79%

21%

have enough counselors to meet needs
  need more counselors
  don't offer this service

### Additional Training & Resource Requests

- Best practices for data security & maintaining client privacy when working from home (where others in the house could overhear confidential information).
- Funding and resources to help renters.
- Resources for working with new influx of clients remotely, such as tools available online & how to use technology effectively from home.
- Access to funding.
- Guidance & best practices for accommodating clients, who might have limited digital literacy or lack access to the equipment needed to participate in sessions online. LMI households may be especially impacted by the tech divide.

### Questions or suggestions?

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