

An aerial photograph of a residential neighborhood, showing houses, trees, and a street. The entire image is covered with a semi-transparent teal overlay. The text is positioned in the upper left quadrant.

SA2020

Guide to Strengthening

Crisis Response, Relief, & Recovery

February 2021

Overview

In February 2021, people in San Antonio, Bexar County, and across Texas faced freezing temperatures and utility outages. While the temperatures have warmed and power and water have largely returned, families are devastated. We know that this crisis, much like COVID-19, continues to affect community members differently due to long-standing inequities.

The purpose of this guide is to provide multi-sector organizations that control or influence emergency operations with the critical questions necessary to better meet the needs of the community in crisis and during relief and recovery. This requires understanding the full breadth of systemic inequities compounded in crisis, as we have experienced first with COVID-19 and now by the winter storm. These are broken up into six categories:

1. Critical Information Access (digital inclusion)
2. Safe Shelter Access (homelessness, family violence)
3. Housing Affordability
4. Food and Safe Water Access
5. Wage Recovery
6. Affordable and Reliable Transportation

These pervasive and long-standing inequities show that freezing temperatures alone put San Antonians at risk and should trigger emergency operations across multi-sector organizations. The freezing temperatures, already a crisis, were then compounded by utility outages. None of these inequities operate in isolation. Their interdependence produces disproportionate disparities, particularly in crisis.

SA2020's community data shows exactly which Council Districts are most negatively and disproportionately affected. SA2020 therefore utilizes its community data to identify "target populations" under each of the systemic inequities outlined in this guide. This includes Black and Brown San Antonians, San Antonians living in poverty, older San Antonians, children, people with disabilities, people who are homeless, and people who rely on public transportation.

San Antonians prioritized institutional accountability as part of a shared Community Vision ([SA2020.org/result/community](https://sa2020.org/result/community)). Institutions bear the responsibility of developing targeted solutions to reduce barriers and meet community needs. Leading this work, particularly among cross-sector collaborations, requires several agreements:

1. **Race matters.**
Race and place (i.e. zip code) affect people's life outcomes, yet race is often left out of the conversation. To agree that race matters is to be explicit, not exclusive, about race.
2. **Systems change is paramount.**
While people's individual behaviors are important to leading change, the large-scale change necessary to reach Community Results requires strengthening the impact of entire organizations and sectors.
3. **We are all responsible for leading change.**
We are all a part of the institutions we seek to change, and we have a shared responsibility to work toward San Antonio's Community Vision.

All of SA2020's community data can be found at [SA2020.org/data](https://sa2020.org/data).

Strengthening Institutional Emergency Operations

In four steps, the following critical questions are intended to support institutions that control or influence emergency operations. The purpose of these questions is to guide institutions to strengthen their processes and better meet the needs of the community during a crisis and throughout the relief and recovery period.

1. Identify

- Which institutions control or influence emergency preparedness?
- What is each institution's role?

2. Assess

- What performance-level data already exists by institution to understand how and why the emergency response failed to adequately meet the needs of the community?
- Is the data disaggregated by race, zip code, and/or Council District? If so, what does that data tell us about meeting the needs of San Antonians most affected?
- What additional data would be helpful?
- Who might serve as partners in collecting and/or analyzing this data?

3. Engage

- How are the San Antonians most negatively impacted by systemic inequities and further burdened by the winter storm and utility outages meaningfully involved in the process to strengthen emergency operations?
- How will they be compensated for their time and expertise?

4. Collaborate

- What additional resources (including, but not limited to: financial resources, technology, knowledge, and employees) are necessary to strengthen each institution's emergency operations to better meet community needs?
- Which existing partnerships held by the institutions might provide knowledge and expertise to this process?
- Which multi-sector organizations might serve as new partners in this process?
- What can each institution offer other multi-sector organizations that influence the systemic inequities compounded in crisis (i.e. access to data, funding)?

Community Data & Target Populations

Critical Information Updates (digital inclusion)

During the crisis, digital access served as a lifeline to critical information and ongoing updates from the City of San Antonio and Bexar County, as well as CPS Energy and SAWS. Disaggregated data shows that 81.4% of African American or Black households are provided computer & broadband internet access compared to 84.6% of Hispanic households and 89.7% of White households ([SA2020.org/indicator/digital-access](https://sa2020.org/indicator/digital-access)).

How will we ensure critical information about the crisis and recovery efforts reaches communities without digital access?

Recommended Target Populations:

- Seniors
- Black and Latino/a working-age people
- With a focus in City Council Districts 5, 3, 1, and 2

Safe Shelter Access (homelessness, family violence)

In a community that has seen an increase in family violence over the last several years, up 23% in 2020 from 2015 with 30 deaths in 2020 alone, the COVID-19 crisis and the winter storm and utility crisis exacerbate an environment of stress, isolation, and loss of income, leading to an increase in violence at home ([SA2020.org/indicator/family-assaults](https://sa2020.org/indicator/family-assaults) and [SA2020.org/indicator/child-abuse](https://sa2020.org/indicator/child-abuse)). More recent numbers of our homeless population are hard to determine, as the COVID-19 crisis curbed the annual Point-In-Time Count. In 2020, 2,932 people were homeless, 388 of whom were survivors of domestic violence ([SA2020.org/indicator/homelessness](https://sa2020.org/indicator/homelessness)).

How will we ensure the safety of people who have experienced, or are at high risk of experiencing, homelessness and violence?

Recommended Target Populations (domestic violence):

- Women of color
- Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) people
- People with disabilities
- With a focus in City Council Districts 5, 2, 3 and 1

Recommended Target Populations (child abuse):

- Children under the age 5 with a focus in City Council Districts 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10

How will the safety of people who have experienced, or are at high risk of experiencing, homelessness be especially ensured during a crisis and throughout the relief and recovery period?

Recommended Target Populations (homelessness):

- Women
- LGBTQIA+ youth
- With a focus in City Council Districts 1, 2, and 5

Housing Affordability

In San Antonio, one in three people are burdened by housing costs, and affordability is most burdensome for people who rent their homes ([SA2020.org/indicator/affordable-housing](https://sa2020.org/indicator/affordable-housing)). Housing affordability includes the cost of utilities.

How will we ensure people who are burdened by costs that are more than 30% of their income have emergency assistance to pay their rent or mortgage, utility bills, and any other expenses incurred as a result of the crisis?

Recommended Target Populations (housing):

- Seniors
- Black San Antonians
- People who rent
- With a focus in City Council Districts 2, 1, 5, and 7

Food and Safe Water Access

Food insecurity describes a household's inability to provide enough food for every person to live an active, healthy life. Research shows that unemployment and poverty, as well as other demographics and household characteristics influence food insecurity. In San Antonio, 14.1% of the population is food insecure, while 20% of children are ([SA2020.org/indicator/food-insecurity](https://sa2020.org/indicator/food-insecurity)).

How will we ensure that people who are already burdened by food insecurity, and especially those who rely on public transportation (see below), have access to food and water?

Recommended Target Populations (food security):

- Children with a focus in City Council Districts 4, 2, 5, 3, and 6
- Seniors with a focus in City Council Districts in 1, 9, 7, 5, and 10

Wage Recovery

During the winter storm, as businesses across the city, closed, many San Antonians lost wages that they would not recover. The COVID-19 crisis is already disproportionately affecting the employment of women of color ([SA2020.org/indicator/unemployment](https://sa2020.org/indicator/unemployment)), and nearly 1 in 4 working San Antonians make \$1,250 per month or less ([SA2020.org/indicator/underemployment](https://sa2020.org/indicator/underemployment)).

How will we ensure hourly wage workers who have lost work due to the crisis recover their wages?

Recommended Target Populations (workforce development):

- Women of color with a focus in City Council Districts 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10
- Black and Latino/a San Antonians of working age in City Council Districts 8, 6, 4, 2, & 5

Affordable and Reliable Transportation

Transportation is the second highest expense after housing costs, with San Antonians spending, on average, upwards of \$12,000 per year on transportation ([SA2020.org/indicator/alternative-transit](https://sa2020.org/indicator/alternative-transit)). Like digital access, public transportation is a lifeline for San Antonians who rely on it to get to and from school, work, the grocery store, and more. In their Keep SA Moving Plan, VIA Metropolitan Transit notes that 58% of their riders do not have a motor vehicle, and VIA riders use their services between 5 and 7 days a week (keepsamoving.com).

How will we ensure San Antonians who rely on public transportation connect safely to their destinations during a crisis and in the relief and recovery period?

Recommended Target Populations:

- Black and Latino/a San Antonians and people with disabilities with a focus on Council Districts 5, 2, 3, and 4. These four City Council Districts have the highest rates of public transit use and the highest number of people of working age with disabilities.

SA2020

We drive progress toward a shared Community Vision for San Antonio through research, storytelling, and practice.

We produce broadly accessible and actionable research.

We tell stories that broaden perspectives and reshape narratives.

We grow leadership across the community.

We engage organizations and institutions across sectors to affect change.

