

When the workday ends, the calls and text messages keep coming.

There's the pregnant woman who is not sure how she will pay next month's rent and a despondent father who recently lost his only child and who doesn't know how he will go on. Another call is from someone who has fallen behind on rent but is also terrified about keeping her son safe from the gang in the neighborhood.

Our housing counselors are trained to assess clients' needs, collect documentation and process financial assistance to those who qualify. But they are also bearing witness to the many struggles marginalized people living in the Bay Area are experiencing each and every day.

"We have to understand that so many people are in crisis right now," said one of our housing counselors. The lack of affordable housing in the Bay Area, combined with months of lost income during the height of the pandemic along with growing inflation and gas prices, has put many families further in debt. According to PolicyLink, [13% of renter households were behind on rent in May 2021](#), totaling an average of \$5,500 per family.

To respond to this crisis, Catholic Charities East Bay has stepped up its response, last year distributing nearly \$4 million in housing assistance. All in all, we helped more than 22,000 East Bay families, who in addition to rental assistance, received grocery and gas gift cards, food assistance and case management for mental health issues.

But the challenge remains.

"Many of our clients are highly anxious. They're worried about not being able to pay rent or feed their families and the stress just permeates into their life," says another housing Catholic Charities counselor. "The disparity levels are through the roof."

Yet even when the situation seems dire, our staff listen to people's concerns and try their best to offer hope. "I had a client who told me 'I'm going crazy. I don't know what to do,'" recalled one housing counselor. His son had committed suicide and he owed a lot of money in back rent. We were able to give him rental assistance and, who knows, potentially stop another tragedy."

[**Learn more about and support our housing work**](#)