

Homeless System Response: Emergency Housing Vouchers: Making the Most of EHV Waivers

Purpose

The Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program (see [Notice PIH 2021-15](#) for details) is a new housing voucher program that is funded by the American Rescue Plan (ARP) and provides 70,000 housing vouchers through Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) to assist people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness; are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking; or were recently homeless. Implementation of these vouchers must be done in partnership with the Continuum of Care (CoC) and Victim Services Providers (VSP). The [Emergency Housing Vouchers Webinar Series](#) provided information highlighting key elements of PIH Notice 2021-15 to help PHAs, CoCs, VSPs, and other community partners prepare for EHV.

The [Making the Most of EHV Waivers](#) webinar helped participants to understand how to use waivers allowable per the EHV notice to expedite lease-ups, serve people that they not have been able to connect with PHA resources before, and ensure that EHV are successful in serving the priority populations identified by the community.

Background

The Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCV) has rules and procedures that PHAs must follow to be in compliance. The EHV Notice allows the use of [COVID-19 waivers](#) and also outlines additional waivers/alternative requirements applicable to the program. These waivers or alternative requirements are exceptions to the normal HCV requirements, which otherwise apply to the administration of the EHV. Some waiver/alternative requirements are mandatory while others are optional. The full use of waivers and alternative requirements will help PHAs to:

- Expedite lease ups and facilitate the use of the EHV funding.
- Serve people that may not have been able to connect to PHA resources before.
- Advance racial equity by addressing barriers that disproportionately impact people of color, who experience higher rates of homelessness, housing insecurity, incarceration, and health inequities due to structural racism.

Available Waivers and Alternative Requirements

The following waivers and alternative requirements are available in the administration of EHV (page location in [Notice PIH 2021-15](#) indicated for each):

- COVID-19 waivers (Pg. 20–21).
- Separate waiting list for EHV referrals/applicants (Pg. 25).
- Local preferences established by the PHA for HCV admissions do not apply to EHV (Pg. 25).
- Restrictions on PHA denial of assistance to an EHV applicant (Pgs. 25–28).
- Income verifications at admission (Pg. 29).
- Eligibility determination: social security number and citizenship verification (Pg. 30).
- Inapplicability of income-targeting requirements (Pg. 31).
- Use of recently conducted initial income determinations and verification at admissions (Pg. 31).
- Pre-inspection of HQS units (Pg. 32).
- Initial search term (Pg. 32).
- Initial lease term (Pg. 32).
- Portability (Pg. 32, 34–35).
- Payment standard amount (Pg. 35).

Community Spotlight: Orange County Housing and Community Development Department

- Blake Rosser, Housing Choice Program Manager for Orange County Housing and Community Development, shared an overview of the key [COVID-19 waivers](#) being used locally by the PHA (NC104) to help facilitate a referral partnership with the local CoC for people experiencing homelessness:
 - Housing Quality Standards-3 Initial Inspection: Non-Life Threatening Deficiencies (NLT) Option.
 - HCV-1 Administrative Plan.
 - HCV-2 Information When Family is Selected: PHA Oral Briefing.
 - HCV-3 Term of Voucher: Extensions of Term.
 - Public Housing and HCV-3 Family Income and Composition: Annual Examination; Income Verification Requirements.
 - HCV Eligibility Determination: Social Security Card and Citizenship Verification.
- Since launching the partnership in October, NC104 has issued vouchers to over 150 households experiencing homelessness and leased up about 70 through June 2021. Other issues not covered by waivers but resolved with creative use of supplemental funding awarded in 2020 included:
 - Lack of security deposits, applications fees, and first month's rent—addressed using Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Community Development Block Grant funds (CDBG-CV), and local funding, and will use the EHV services fee moving forward.
 - Landlords screening tenants out due to no or low income or having a voucher—being addressed by hiring a Housing Access Coordinator to serve as a landlord liaison and maintaining a list of available units, and with a landlord incentive program involving bonuses for new and past landlords and landlords renewing current HCV tenants.
 - Identified mental health, substance use, and other challenges and needs for tenants. These needs are being addressed through partnerships with the Street Outreach, Harm Reduction and Diversion team, which is funded with CARES Act Emergency Solutions Grant funds (ESG-CV) that helps households during the lease-up period. In addition, a Housing Stability Case Manager (also funded with ESG-CV) is available to provide supportive services after lease-up.