

# Homeless System Response: Emergency Housing Vouchers: Strategy for Targeting EHVs and Related Resources

## 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](#) provides information highlighting key elements of PIH Notice 2021-15 to help PHAs, CoCs, VSPs, and other community partners prepare for EHVs.

The [Strategies for Targeting EHVs and Related Resources webinar](#) provides information to communities about how to have inclusive conversations about the most strategic ways to target vouchers, services funding, and other resources based on local needs.

## Eligible Populations

As detailed in [PIH Notice 2021-15](#), EHV eligibility is limited to individuals and families who are:

- Homeless (utilizes the same [definition](#) as Emergency Solutions Grants [ESG] and CoC programs).
- At risk of homelessness (utilizes the same [definition](#) as ESG and CoC programs).
- Fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking (including to facilitate an emergency transfer in accordance with the Violence Against Women Act [VAWA] as outlined in the PHA's Emergency Transfer Plan).
- Recently homeless and for whom providing rental assistance will prevent the family's being homeless or having a high risk of housing instability (as determined by the CoC). May include participants in rapid rehousing (RRH) and permanent supportive housing (PSH).

## Racial Equity and Inclusive Planning

EHVs provide an opportunity to narrow the gap on current inequities driven by structural and systemic racism and drive for impact in a way that promotes racial equity. Communities should:

- [Utilize existing data](#), including an [analysis of Stella P data on race and ethnicity](#), to understand local inequities in rates of outcomes, such as homelessness, exits, referrals to permanent housing, success in leasing up vouchers, etc.
- Conduct a Racial Equity Impact Assessment to examine how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by proposed funding decisions, processes, programs, and policies, and identify ways to advance equity. See [Equity as the Foundation](#) for more.

The process for targeting EHVs (and other resources) should be inclusive, meaning the people who are most impacted by the decision, policy, program, etc. are involved in the planning. People who will have unique expertise to guide your planning and decision-making include Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) who are disproportionately impacted by homelessness and COVID-19, and people with lived experience (PWLE) who have experienced or are currently experiencing homelessness. Communities should consider:

- Tapping into existing groups—PHA Resident Advisory Boards, CoC Board and committee members with lived experience and expertise, and Youth Action Boards.
- Engaging diverse agencies and staff, including community-based and grassroots agencies with close and trusted relationships with people experiencing homelessness, culturally specific organizations, those with BIPOC and/or LGBTQ leadership.

- Creating new employment positions and paid opportunities for PWLE to support EHV planning and implementation.
- Organizing virtual town halls, focus groups, or surveys to share information and solicit feedback and engaging program participants from Emergency Shelter, RRH, PSH, and other relevant programs.

For more information, see [Integrating Persons with Lived Experience in our Efforts to Prevent and End Homelessness](#) and [Untapped Expertise: Strategies for Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement when Developing Your Coordinated Investment Plan](#).

## Key Considerations for Targeting EHV and Related Resources

### *Understand Gaps and Assess Local Needs.*

To make the best strategic decision about how to target resources, be sure to look at your data. The tools and guides listed can help you better understand local needs and how EHV can fit into the tapestry of available funding to meet local needs and improve outcomes.

### *Assess Community Priorities*

Review the priorities in your area's Consolidated Plan and any other key strategy documents and consider how priorities may have shifted or evolved throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Consider subpopulations within the eligible populations that may be prioritized for assistance and what prioritization factors and/or partnerships will be used to identify households for referral, including how people fleeing domestic violence will be prioritized and referred for assistance.

### *Create Balanced Timelines*

Acknowledge the tension between the need to rehouse families and lease units quickly with the need to create an inclusive process and ensure vouchers and other resources are being used strategically and equitably. Consider both the short- and long-term needs in the community and set realistic expectations for timelines for the target population(s).

### *Pairing EHV and Services*

Work in partnership with people with lived experience, front-line staff, community providers, and other stakeholders to understand the potential short-term and ongoing services needs of different potential priority populations. Identify services or resources that are available to meet these needs (whether from the PHA, CoC providers, or other community partners) and confirm any eligibility and referral requirements.

### *Bridging from RRH*

Many individuals and families in RRH programs need long-term rental assistance, but not intensive long-term services. Bridging to an EHV could stabilize those who do not need intensive services, but are most likely to return to homelessness or experience a high degree of housing instability when their RRH assistance ends. Keep in mind that people in RRH may wish to transition in place or move to a new home and that RRH case managers can provide short-term services to help with the move. Habitability standards used for RRH are slightly different from Housing Quality Standards (HQS), used for Housing Choice Vouchers, so some tenants that want to transition in place may not be able to do so unless the unit can be brought up to meet HQS criteria

### *Moving On from PSH*

PSH programs are not time-limited, but some tenants reach the point where they no longer want or need intensive services, but still require rental assistance. Helping such PSH tenants move on to an EHV can support independence and choice for tenants who are ready and desire to move on from PSH while freeing up space in PSH for people who would most benefit from it. Moving On initiatives connect tenants with affordable housing and other financial resources and provide transition supports to set them up for long-term stability and success after PSH. For more information, see [Moving On](#) and the [Moving On Webinar Series](#). Additional key considerations include:

- Be conservative in determining the size of the program.
- Use a [standardized, transparent assessment process](#) and work in partnership with interested tenants to help them make an informed decision about whether they would like to pursue Moving On.
- A voucher alone is not enough—flexible resources and robust [transition supports](#) are needed to set tenants up for long-term stability and success.

Next steps for communities that do not currently have a Moving On initiative may include consulting the [Project Plan Template](#) and its [User Guide](#); engaging PSH providers and tenants to better understand needs; and identifying [resources](#) for transition supports, flexible financial resources, and other programmatic needs.

Existing Moving On initiatives are well-positioned to use EHV to scale their programs. Next steps may include reviewing your waitlist (if you have one) and speaking with PSH providers to get an idea of the unmet needs for vouchers; engaging people who have moved on from PSH to learn about their experiences; and reviewing existing policies and procedures around assessment, referral, and transition supports and aftercare as well as financial support.

### ***Coordinated Entry Referrals and Prioritization***

PHAs must retain a separate waiting list for EHV referrals and applicants, accept direct referrals from coordinated entry, and work with the CoC and other referral agency partners to manage the number of referrals and the size of the EHV waiting list. In the MOU, PHAs and CoCs should outline the eligible populations for EHV as well as how eligible households will be prioritized for referral to the EHV program. Communities should assess who is represented and not represented in potential priority populations (e.g. people in non-congregate and other Emergency Shelter and RRH, people experiencing unsheltered homelessness, etc.) to promote an equitable approach. Possible prioritization factors may include (but are not limited to):

- People most at risk of and most impacted by COVID-19.
- People living in environments where practicing social distancing or taking other preventive measures may be particularly challenging.
- Households with zero or extremely low income.

For more information, see [Coordinated Entry and EHV](#)s.