

# Frequently Asked Questions from Philadelphia's 9/29/21 Emergency Housing Vouchers Provider Briefing

Issued 10/21/21

## A. Accessing presentation recording/slides

1. Will the recording be available? Where? Can this presentation be emailed to us?

The recording and the slides, along with all other materials except the HCV application, will soon be available on the Homeless Services website homepage under "Latest News":

<http://philadelphiaofficeofhomelessservices.org/>

## B. Basic Emergency Housing Voucher information

1. Here is the link to the HUD EHV Notice:

<https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/PIH2021-15.pdf>

2. If there is a federal government shutdown, would that affect the utilization of these vouchers?

No. PHA has adequate reserves to operate EHV in the event of a federal government shutdown.

3. Is this application on the City of Philadelphia Website?

PHA uses their standard Housing Choice Voucher application for the Emergency Housing Vouchers. That application and related forms will be made available via password-protected webpage to those who will need to use it.

4. Where can one find these processes in writing?

Homeless Services is posting all EHV-related materials except for the actual Housing Choice Voucher application and forms on its homepage under "Latest News".

<http://philadelphiaofficeofhomelessservices.org/>

## C. Eligibility

1. Does a household need to have a homeless history to be considered for this type of housing?

Not necessarily. The eligible categories are (1) literally homeless (street, shelter, transitional housing), (2) fleeing domestic violence or human trafficking, and (3) recently homeless (in Rapid Rehousing or Permanent Supportive Housing).

2. Are participants with families eligible for an EHV voucher or is it available to individuals only?

Yes, participants with families are eligible for this voucher.

3. What about families with children with shared custody? Will bedroom unit size change to accommodate bi-weekly visitation?

PHA will provide a bedroom for a child / children when the parent / guardian has custody more than 50% of the time. PHA will not provide an additional bedroom for visitation.

4. I am a case manager, and I complete referrals for clients to get into OAS (Office of Addiction Services) recovery housing. Once they are in the recovery house are they considered homeless and is it safe to say that the recovery house submits the housing referral?

There is an extensive recovery house network in Philadelphia, and not all of the recovery houses participate in our Continuum of Care / serve people considered literally homeless. For those RHs that do, their clients are considered homeless and the recovery house would submit the Housing Assessment and EHV screening tool.

5. Will those in Rapid Rehousing be eligible?

Yes, under the “Recently Homeless” category.

6. What is the timeframe for recently homeless? I.e Are individuals who have been in PSH for over a year still eligible for EHV?

Yes. If someone is in PSH and is already connected to services in the community or no longer needs services but still needs financial assistance, they are the ideal for EHV and to move on from PSH, regardless of how long they have been in PSH.

7. Is a person in PSH in a PHA home also eligible for EHV or is that considered double-dipping? Some of our PSH projects are PHA-funded, so tenants are already approved for PHA. Do they have to still complete a new HCV app for this program?

If the person is enrolled in PSH program in Philadelphia’s HMIS, then they are eligible to be considered for an EHV to move out of that PSH program, even if there is a PHA subsidy helping them pay the rent while in their current PSH program. The case manager in your program would complete the screening tool and refer the person to OHS for consideration. If invited to apply, the individual would need to complete the HCV application. However if the household is residing in PHA conventional / PHA owned housing (which would not be enrolled in HMIS), they are not eligible.

8. Does transitional housing include individuals in DBHIdS TIP housing?

No. Households residing in TIP housing are not eligible for EHV.

9. Are Philadelphians with ITINS (as opposed to SSN) eligible?

No, Individual Tax Identification Numbers (ITINs) are for federal tax reporting only and are not intended to serve any other purpose. ITINs are assigned to individuals who are required to have a U.S. taxpayer identification number but who do not have and are not eligible to obtain an SSN. The IRS issues ITINs to help individuals comply with the U.S. tax laws, and to

provide a means to efficiently process and account for tax returns and payments. The ITIN cannot be used in place of the SSN

10. What about those who are not US Citizens or LPR's (green card holders), but have other immigration status (such as VAWA, U-Visa, T-Visa)?

PHA's Declaration of Citizenship form (2<sup>nd</sup> page) lists the categories for eligible immigration status. The link to that form is below.

[http://www.pha.phila.gov/media/183625/2015\\_pha1019\\_ph\\_declaration\\_citizenship\\_.pdf](http://www.pha.phila.gov/media/183625/2015_pha1019_ph_declaration_citizenship_.pdf)

11. Is there an age limit to these vouchers like the Mainstream HCV program?

No. The head of household (whether it's a one-person household or more than one person in the household) simply needs to be age 18+. There is no maximum age for the head of household or household members.

12. What criminal charges does PHA deny people for?

The chart of criminal offenses that lead to denial at admission can be found in Appendix D of PHA's Administrative Plan. The Administrative Plan can be accessed using this URL:

[http://pha.phila.gov/media/193641/admin\\_plan\\_effective\\_5-1-2021\\_clean.pdf](http://pha.phila.gov/media/193641/admin_plan_effective_5-1-2021_clean.pdf)

13. Does PHA do eviction checks for EHV applicants?

No.

14. Can Participants in PSH who could not find HCV Blueprint units apply for the EHV?

Yes, they can be referred. If they are invited to apply for EHV, they can proceed.

15. Will voucher holders need a Tenant Services Coordinator?

CSS services are not required but if a participant is eligible and interested, they can apply for them.

**D. Housing Assessment and Process of Referring Someone for Consideration**

1. How do I access HMIS?

If you work for an agency that already participates in Philadelphia's HMIS, but you yourself do not have login information, please reach out to [PhilaHMIS@phila.gov](mailto:PhilaHMIS@phila.gov). That team will screen your request and then connect you with the training required for user access.

2. Is the EHV tool / screener on the HUD website?

No. The EHV tool is a local tool. It will be provided to homeless services through Philadelphia's HMIS and DV / trafficking victim services providers via a separate process outside of HMIS.

3. Who would you contact if you're fleeing DV but NOT in OHS shelter system?

For people fleeing DV, call the DV hotline, 1-866-723-3014 or contact one of Philly's victim

service providers directly: Women Against Abuse, Congreso, Lutheran Settlement House, Women in Transition, and Salvation Army. We anticipate that all of those DV and trafficking partner agencies will make referrals for EHV.

4. Is the EHV screening tool done in conjunction with the VI-SPDAT?

It is not part of the VI-SPDAT. The EHV screening tool considers additional vulnerabilities that specifically affect our CoC.

5. By “housing assessment” do you mean a specific assessment, or do you mean that portion of a BSP (acronym not defined)?

The Housing Assessment referred to in this process is the Housing Assessment workflow in Philadelphia’s HMIS.

6. Is there a link for the housing assessment you’re talking about?

The Housing Assessment is a workflow in Philadelphia’s HMIS, submitted as part of a households’ HMIS record. There is no link to the workflow. It’s accessed via our HMIS.

7. I have a client who has been street homeless and living in abandoned houses for several years but she has limited contact with shelters/homeless outreach so she doesn't have extensive documented homeless hx. She is reluctant to go to a shelter because of safety concerns. How can we connect clients like that to this program?

Philadelphia’s mobile assessors assist people experiencing street homelessness connect to housing resources through the Housing Assessment. The mobile assessor could complete the EHV screening tool for her also, if an EHV would make sense for her.

8. How do we find out if an application was already submitted for an individual?

If the individual doesn’t know, you would ask that individual’s residential case manager – or mobile assessor if the individual is experiencing street homelessness.

<b>E. Matching process</b>
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1. Will OHS deem someone ineligible for an EHV based on the screening questions in HMIS. If so, what would make someone ineligible or not a "good fit"?

No, OHS will not deem someone ineligible, but it will be similar to the VISPDAT in that they will be prioritized based on their Housing Assessment, VISPDAT, and EHV Screening Tool.

2. Will the matches be made "first come first served" or will households be prioritized in some way?

Within the three eligible categories, households will be prioritized using the EHV screening tool and the highest priority will be offered the opportunity – “matched” – first. It will not be first come, first served.

3. You said that once someone is offered the opportunity to apply for an EHV, they have 15

business days to submit it to the Clearinghouse. If the application takes longer than 15 business days will that mean the match will be withdrawn?

Not at this time. We want everyone to work hard to get these vouchers issued so the impact is felt as quickly as possible, but at this point we will not be pulling back offers if that deadline is not met.

#### **F. Completing and submitting the EHV/HCV application**

1. If an individual currently resides in PSH, but project has submitted HCV voucher for individual for the project, will they have to submit a new application for EHV or will PHA use the information on file?

They will need to submit a new application for an EHV, but if they have issues obtaining documentation, PHA might be able to pull from their files on a case-by-case basis.

2. It is NEVER advisable to email sensitive information such as social security numbers. Is there a cyber-secure portal to send this information?

Those sending the HCV application materials to Homeless Services, can encrypt the emails they send. Homeless Services will be using a secure portal to submit applications to PHA.

3. Does PHA have any ID contingencies for non-binary clients who have govt issued documents that don't align with their identity?

PHA does NOT require that the Photo ID align with gender identity.

4. Once the EHV application is submitted to PHA, when should we anticipate a response from Clearinghouse as to whether the client's application is approved or denied?

PHA typically is able to make a decision on a complete application in less than two weeks.

#### **G. Social Security Administration Website demo**

1. One of the issues we have is that our participants have created logon profiles with SSA, but they no longer remember their credentials or their email addresses. Will the SSA allow to create a new account for someone who doesn't remember or have access to their profile?

For forgotten credentials, users can click Forgot Username? or Forgot password? on the login page. We do not know if the SSA will allow creating of a new account in the situation described. FYI, the office turnaround is not as long now, so the sooner they go and request the faster the documents will be returned. There is only a delay if there is a change needed.

#### **H. Housing search, unit availability, landlord participation in the HCV program, and PHA's landlord incentives**

1. If HCV awardees encounter emergencies (medical or other) that interfere with their search and their voucher is going to expire, can they apply to PHA for an extension beyond the

expiration date (beyond the 30 day grace period)? How would they do that?

Providers should contact OHS for voucher extension requests, not PHA.

2. If the 120 days plus 30 days pass and still no unit has been secured, can someone reapply for a voucher or is that it?

Providers should contact OHS for voucher extension requests, not PHA. If the voucher is not extended, OHS will review the circumstances and make a determination regarding whether they can apply again. If yes, an updated referral will be needed.

3. Since there is no credit check done by PHA, does this mean the 3rd party could do a credit check affecting the EHV?

There is no "3<sup>rd</sup> party" contributing to PHA's decision about whether or not to issue a voucher. However, once a household is issued a voucher and is applying to property owners to rent apartments, the property owners may do credit checks and could use that information to deny the applicant for that unit.

4. Will there be an updated housing availability list on the PHA site?

No, Instead, PHA partners with AffordableHousing.com (formerly GoSection8.com) to provide information on owners and apartments that will take Housing Choice Vouchers.

5. Concerns with the [www.AffordableHousing.com](http://www.AffordableHousing.com) website have been expressed in this chat: scams, landlords who never respond, etc. and a request for heightened screening. Please address.

To lodge complaints about landlords found on affordablehousing.com (formerly gosection8.com), please visit the affordablehousing.com Scam Alert page:

<https://www.affordablehousing.com/scam-alert/> The website is run by a third party and without complaints being filed, they are not aware of and therefore cannot address the issues.

6. Recently, participants and providers repeatedly tried to obtain HCV units with the Blueprint 2021 HCVs and many vouchers expired due to a lack of available units. What is expected to be different with this upcoming process?

Is there a plan to make more apartments available? Some folks end up with expired vouchers due to difficulty locating apartments, or landlords who take these vouchers.

There is not a lack of available units and less than 10 have expired. Over 50% of the Blueprint voucher holders have already secured units. Providers must ensure applicants are searching for units and contacting landlords through various means described in our Housing Search Guide.

7. Is PHA's payment standard the SAFMR or FMR?

PHA's payment standards are based on HUD's published SAFMRs.

8. How much will PHA pay for security deposit for EHV tenants?

PHA will pay the equivalent of one month's contract rent (aka full rent).

9. Has the New HCV Landlord training been re-established to offer evening sessions?

Should potential landlords go the PHA site for instructions on getting certified as approved landlord?

Up-to-date information on how to become an HCV landlord can be found here:

<http://www.pha.phila.gov/housing/housing-choice-voucher/landlord-information/how-to-become-an-hcv-landlord.aspx>

10. Do property owners get a sign on bonus from PHA for every unit?

Yes, if a RFTA is submitted within the time frames listed on the Landlord Incentives Flyer

11. Will the landlords who have already received PHA's recent incentives be recruited to put new units into PADmission?

OHS doesn't have access to that information, but OHS is looking to recruit all landlords who meet quality criteria to post their units on PADmission. The OHS contact person is [Ebonye.Williams@Phila.gov](mailto:Ebonye.Williams@Phila.gov).

12. Could information on the landlords who have already received PHA's recent incentives be made available to EHV voucher holders looking for units?

No, PHA cannot share landlord information for units already leased, however the majority of units that have been leased were found on affordablehousing.com (formerly GoSection8.com). We know this because PHA's Owner Services team cross-references units leased vs. what was advertised on the website.

13. Are the landlord incentives provided up front, or after the landlord leases up a unit?

Landlords get the incentives when they lease up.

14. What dollar amount would an industry acceptable "holding" fee be?

The average holding fee is \$100 to \$400 depending on the size of the unit and is generally later applied to the security deposit.

## **I. Other questions**

1. Will consumers be able to afford the rent after a year or will it go up?

The initial lease is for 2 years and the tenant portion stays the same during those two years. Near the end of the lease, there is a review/recertification of tenant income. If the tenant's income has increased, their portion of the rental may increase. If the landlord is seeking to increase the total unit rent after 2 years, PHA must approve.

2. If you are transitioning people from PBV to EHV vouchers, and PSH vouchers to EHV, do you expect some of the waitlist times for PHA PBV units to go down?

Yes.

3. What is the PHA link to apply for senior housing?

<http://www.pha.phila.gov/housing/admissions.aspx>

4. What is the link to the HCV tenant portal?

This portal is only available to tenants after they have leased up. It can be accessed via the “Contact HCV Client Portal” button on their homepage [www.pha.phila.gov](http://www.pha.phila.gov), or via this link:

[https://awe.pha.phila.gov/psc/awe/CUSTOMER/CRM/c/PHA\\_SELF\\_SERV.PHA\\_SS\\_USER\\_REGCMP.GBL?&](https://awe.pha.phila.gov/psc/awe/CUSTOMER/CRM/c/PHA_SELF_SERV.PHA_SS_USER_REGCMP.GBL?&)