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Alameda County Housing Authorities Collaborate to serve 875 Households through HUD's Emergency Housing Voucher Program.

Alameda County, CA – Over 70,000 Emergency Housing Vouchers were granted to public housing authorities across the country via the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, which was approved by the Federal Government and is administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). These vouchers help individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and those fleeing domestic violence. These vouchers offer long-lasting support that can help people remain stably housed as the economic recovery takes place in the wake the pandemic. The Berkeley Housing Authority, Housing Authority of the City of Alameda, Oakland Housing Authority, and the Housing Authority of the County of Alameda teamed up to serve 875 Alameda County households through the Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program.

The Housing Authority of the County of Alameda (HACA) worked closely with non-profit service providers within Alameda County to lease-up EHV families, including but not limited to, Abode Services and Building Futures for Women with Children. HACA designated a team of staff specifically to the success of the EHV program. HACA has 247 of its 252 EHV families housed, with the remaining five families searching for a rental unit. HACA's EHV program is serving families who were homeless, at risk of becoming homeless, include a person with a disability, and survivors of domestic violence.



The Housing Authority of the City of Oakland (OHA) was awarded 515 Emergency Housing Vouchers in May 2021. As required OHA, executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Alameda County Continuum of Care (CoC) to receive eligible referrals/applications for the vouchers. OHA went a step further than what was required, and initiated a multi-jurisdictional agreement with local Alameda County Public Housing Authorities (PHA) to collaborate with the CoC, create referral and portability efficiencies, and define specific roles and responsibilities to achieve project goals.

Through the implementation of the EHV project, OHA deployed several unique, replicable and creative strategies to work with housing providers, applicants, residents, County and PHA partners to streamline implementation and deployment of these critical voucher resources. To create efficiencies, OHA created an electronic referral/application process for County partners and worked with PHA partners to create a “common” application to facilitate ease of submission of referrals/applicants by County housing navigators. This included an extensive workflow guide to train and support staff and County Housing Navigation staff to learn and follow tightly developed processes to submit referrals, applications, and navigate portability for EHV’s.

To provide transparency and facilitate on-demand communication, OHA created the first publicly available EHV dashboard (which was updated daily) to allow the public, HUD and County partners to view the EHV project status and metrics. To generate interest, and support participants, OHA expanded on existing incentives for landlords and created new incentives for applicants and residents to incentivize speed leasing and support residents in achieving stable housing. To advertise benefits and incentives, OHA developed a unique marketing campaign and strategy to communicate benefits and incentives of being an OHA landlord and incentives available to residents. A few of the landlord incentives implemented were \$1,000 bonus per unit, reimbursement of up to \$2,250 for expenditures related to Housing Quality Standard inspection fails, speed leasing monetary bonuses for both landlords and residents to lease by HUD deadlines, and Welcome Kits delivered to new residents including many essential household items. All of these innovations have been replicated by OHA for subsequent special purpose voucher awards and are being expanded to the general voucher pool of families and landlords as needed. These innovations can be used as a model for other agencies to pioneer efficiencies and replicable processes, especially where partnerships with outside entities and direct referrals for applicants are required.

The Berkeley Housing Authority (BHA), in partnership with various community agencies, has successfully leased 92% of BHA’s 51 EHV’s as of September 30, 2023. BHA



continues to assist the seven remaining EHV voucher holders currently searching for units in Berkeley and other cities in the Bay Area. Primarily, EHV applicants were referred to BHA by the Alameda County Continuum of Care through the coordinated entry system. Regular meetings were held among different housing agencies to provide direct assistance to the EHV applicants to achieve optimum utilization of the Emergency Housing Vouchers. Concerted efforts have been put together by the different agencies to address various challenges encountered from the point of referral to actual move-in of clients to their new home.

The Housing Authority of the City of Alameda (AHA) was granted an allocation of 57 EHV's and to date 55 of those 57 households have been housed. The remaining two EHV holders were converted to stability vouchers to allow those households more time to continue their housing search. During the intake process, AHA utilized a "hands-on" approach to prevent any unnecessary barriers, which included AHA staff visiting temporary housing sites (hotels) to verify the program eligibility for EHV applicants. One of the components which greatly increased AHA's success rate with this process was the assignment of the Housing Navigator from Alameda County's Continuum of Care agencies to assist the applicants with gathering all required items so AHA staff could complete their eligibility requirements.

The collaboration amongst OHA, BHA, HACA, and AHA resulted in 875 Alameda County households securing (or in the final stages of securing) permanent housing. Many of these EHV households were homeless or at risk of homelessness and now enjoy the benefits of stable housing. Additionally, many best practices were developed and shared amongst the Housing Authorities, which can then be replicated for future special purpose voucher awards.



About BHA

<https://bha.berkeleyca.gov/>

Established in 1966, Berkeley Housing Authority (BHA) provides rental assistance to low-income household units through the Housing Choice Voucher, Project Based Voucher, Moderate Rehabilitation Program, and other special housing programs, without regard to race, ethnicity, religion, family status, national origin, gender, sexual orientation or disability status. Our mission is to enable clients to become self-sufficient and economically independent through delivery of assistance for a decent, safe and sanitary housing.



About HACA

www.haca.net

It is the Housing Authority of the County of Alameda's (HACA) mission to provide affordable, decent and safe housing in those portions of the county served by HACA, including the cities of Albany, Emeryville, San Leandro, Hayward, Union City, Newark, Fremont, Dublin, Pleasanton, and unincorporated Alameda County. HACA's programs include Housing Choice Vouchers, Project-Based Vouchers, specialized vouchers serving persons with disabilities, veterans, and foster youth leaving foster care, and management of HACA-owned properties in Emeryville, Union City, and Hayward.



About OHA

www.oakha.org

Celebrating its 85th year of service, the Oakland Housing Authority is the largest provider of affordable housing in the City of Oakland and proudly delivers diverse housing choices to almost 18,000 households in a service-oriented environment, while improving and expanding housing options for future generations. For more information about the OHA, please contact us at info@oakha.org, or call 510-874-1500.



About AHA

www.alamedahsg.org

For over 80 years, The Housing Authority of the City of Alameda (AHA) has provided a range of housing assistance to low-income households. The primary goal of the Housing Authority is to provide quality, affordable, and safe housing in the City of Alameda. Our programs include Housing Choice Vouchers, Project-Based Vouchers, specialized housing assistance, family self-sufficiency, affordable real estate development, resident services, and management of AHA owned property.

CONTACT: Joshua Altieri (Community Relations Manager)

PHONE: (510) 747-4321

EMAIL: jaltieri@alamedahsg.org

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