

## *Episode Two: Being Smart and Strategic with Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs)*

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

#### 1. Build Strong Partnerships with PHAs

The CoC/PHA partnership will be critical to using EHVs for the greatest impact. CoCs and PHAs share a mission to get people into housing, so start from that common ground. Best practices for a successful partnership include:

- **Clearly define each partner's strengths:** Identify skills, experience, and relationships that each party brings to the table.
- **Identify each partner's roles:** Who will handle housing navigation? Who handles connections to services?
- **Address concerns:** Be direct, honest, and willing to listen to areas of concern, such as risk of losing landlords, the ability to connect people with services, and alignment with best practices in housing navigation. You will need to constructively work together to overcome different work styles, processes, and obstacles.
- **Leverage health care partnerships to ensure long-term stability services for households that need them.** These may include partnerships with hospitals and managed-care organizations (MCOs), local Veterans Administration (VA) agencies, and/or behavioral health and other SAMHSA-funded programs.

#### 2. Integrate EHVs into Your Community's Systemic Response to Homelessness

Each community's homeless response system should align all its interventions and resources around the goals to (1) house people experiencing homelessness as quickly as possible and (2) to divert people from imminent homelessness whenever possible. EHVs must be integrated into that mix of resources and strategically allocated to increase your ability to meet those goals.

#### 3. Use EHVs to Address Racial Inequities

Racial inequities exist not only among those who experience homelessness, but also within the systems that serve them and the outcomes they achieve. EHVs should be allocated intentionally through a racial equity lens, so as not to further disparities.

#### 4. Focus on System Performance Measures

High-performing homelessness systems constantly monitor performance metrics. Consider how the correct use of EHVs can support better performance towards these measures. For example, you can reduce the overall number of people experiencing homelessness by prioritizing unsheltered people for EHVs. You can reduce the length of time people experience homelessness by prioritizing EHVs for long-stayers in shelters. And you can improve system flow by using EHVs to create “move-on” opportunities for people living in PSH who no longer need intensive services.

#### 5. Think of Groups of People You Can Serve

Don't force your entire community to wait in a single line to receive EHVs. Instead, consider grouping households into vulnerable categories, such as:

- People who are unsheltered or in encampments
- People with disabilities
- Long-term shelter stayers
- People over the age of 55
- Families with very young children

This will allow you to flexibly help a broad population of people with high needs. It will also help you work faster and have the greatest impact on reducing homelessness.

#### 6. Act with Urgency

Given the scope of the nation's homelessness crisis, it is inexcusable not to put EHVs to good and immediate use. Navigate bureaucratic requirements with purpose while building strong partnerships with agencies and jurisdictions that can help with that task. Streamline processes so that relevant documentation is in place and prioritized households can be leased up quickly when PHAs have openings. Create and strengthen partnerships with service providers (especially healthcare providers) to ensure a seamless transition into and stable stay in housing. Stay creative and determined to work around the common obstacles faced in tight rental markets.

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The resources in this series are aligned around a set of core values and priorities to guide implementation.

### ALLIANCE RESOURCE SERIES

Using COVID-19 Federal Funding to End Homelessness

CORE VALUES

FUNDING PRIORITIES