URGENT MESSAGE ABOUT
PRIORITIZING PEOPLE FOR EMERGENCY HOUSING VOUCHERS

Dear Community Leaders Focused on Ending Homelessness:

We have, right now, an unprecedented opportunity to drive historic progress on reducing homelessness and toward racial equity and justice, through the resources made available by the American Rescue Plan, including Emergency Housing Vouchers.

Of urgent concern to our organizations, however, are the decisions community leaders are making, right now, regarding the implementation of those vouchers. Continuum of Care organizations and Public Housing Agencies across the country are negotiating MOUs regarding these vouchers, and we know you need to make decisions quickly regarding prioritized populations, so we’re going to keep our guidance simple and direct.

TOP GUIDANCE

**MOST IMPORTANTLY, DO** set priorities for who will receive Emergency Housing Vouchers that will have the greatest impact on the number of people experiencing homelessness and reduce racial inequities, such as:

- Unsheltered individuals and families with children, including people staying in encampments
- Long-term shelter stayers
- People who have already been assessed as needing permanent supportive housing
- Currently homeless families with children, and women who are pregnant
- People who are disabled
- People over the age of 55

FURTHER TIPS

**DO** ... Use these vouchers to reduce the number of people currently experiencing homelessness to the greatest extent possible.

**DO** ... Develop strategies and service partnerships to be able to serve as many people with the highest needs, and people with long experiences of homelessness, as you can.

**DO** ... Ensure the implementation of the vouchers will help reduce the disproportionate number of BIPOC populations who are homeless and will help address disparities in the homelessness system.

**DO** ... Create solid partnerships between CoCs and PHAs for both the development of your priorities and the implementation of the vouchers.

**DO** ... Work closely with people with lived experiences of homelessness and representing historically marginalized communities in the development of priorities and implementation strategies.

**DON’T** ... Use these vouchers to reach households at-risk of homelessness, who should be served with Emergency Rental Assistance, unless you have already reached everyone experiencing homelessness first, and **ONLY THEN DO** focus on at-risk households who have histories of homelessness.

**DON’T** ... Prioritize households with lower service needs or who could be served effectively through other available resources at the expense of serving people with higher service needs.

**DON’T** ... Prioritize households in rapid rehousing programs over people currently experiencing homelessness, unless they were placed in RRH as a bridge to PSH, or assessment processes have determined that the household needs a permanent subsidy in order to remain stably housed.

**DON’T** ... Automatically prioritize everyone who has been placed into non-congregate shelters for an Emergency Housing Voucher, **BUT DO** serve people in such programs who meet other prioritization criteria for permanent rental subsidies in your community.

We know that none of this is easy. But we also know that you are used to tackling tough challenges, together. The Framework for an Equitable COVID-19 Homelessness Response project partners will be working to provide more guidance and information in the weeks ahead to support your efforts.