

## URGENT MESSAGE ABOUT PRIORITIZING PEOPLE FOR EMERGENCY HOUSING VOUCHERS



The Framework for an  
Equitable COVID-19  
Homelessness Response  
#HousingEquity

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.