

# ACCESSING EMERGENCY HOUSING VOUCHERS FOR TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS

## What are Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs)?

The American Rescue Plan Act provided \$5 billion dollars for rental assistance in the form of Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs) that will be administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through local public housing agencies (PHAs). HUD estimates that there will be about 70,000 EHVs over the course of the program. HUD published a [list of PHAs](#) that have been awarded the EHVs. These PHAs have until May 24, 2021 to decide whether to take all, some, or none of the EHVs. These vouchers identify survivors of trafficking as one of the eligible categories. In addition, anti-trafficking programs have a unique and meaningful opportunity to collaborate with PHAs and Continuums of Care (CoCs) to ensure that trafficking survivors have access to, and benefit from, these vouchers.

## Who is eligible to receive the vouchers?

To be eligible for the EHVs, individuals and families must be:

- Fleeing or attempting to flee human trafficking, domestic violence, sexual assault, or dating violence;
- Homeless;
- At risk of homelessness; or
- Recently homeless and providing the voucher would prevent the individual's or family's homelessness or having a high risk of housing instability.

HUD published [a notice](#) (EHV Notice) detailing the operating requirements for the EHVs. In the EHV Notice, HUD indicates that the definition of "human trafficking" includes sex and labor trafficking as provided by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act:

- Sex trafficking means the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of 21 age; [and]
- Labor trafficking means the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

Anti-trafficking programs working with survivors of trafficking who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are strongly encouraged to partner with their local CoC and PHA to ensure that survivors in their community are accessing this resource.

## How are these vouchers administered?

HUD is requiring PHAs that administer EHVs to work with their area Continuums of Care (CoCs) as well as homeless services and victim service provider organizations as referral partners. This includes anti-trafficking organizations. Together, the PHAs and referral partners determine how to best use and target the EHVs in each community. PHAs must accept referrals from the CoCs' Coordinated Entry systems.

Eligibility of the four categories mentioned above is determined by the referral partners, including anti-trafficking programs. These relationships between the local PHA, area CoC, and other referral partners must be memorialized in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). A template for the MOU is available in the [EHV Notice](#). Additionally, the [EHV Notice](#) contains a sample human trafficking certification form. This certification can be completed by the anti-trafficking service provider, in order to certify that the individual is considered a trafficking survivor.

HUD strongly encourages PHAs to consult with CoCs and victim service provider referral partners to determine what activities are needed to support equitable access to EHV. A \$3,500 services fee comes with each EHV that PHAs must use to help individuals and families access housing. PHAs must use the services fee in part to make housing search assistance available to EHV participants. Housing search assistance is a broad term that can include many activities, such as help for survivors to find appropriate housing; conduct owner outreach; provide transportation assistance; help with completing rental and PHA forms; and help to expedite the EHV leasing process.

#### **Additionally, the services fee can be used to pay for:**

- Security deposits, utility deposits and arrears, rental application fees, and holding fees;
- Owner recruitment, owner outreach, owner incentive, and owner retention payments;
- Moving expenses;
- Tenant-readiness services (where PHAs can create customized plans to address barriers to renting, such as bad credit/lack of credit, bad rental/utility history);
- Essential household items; and
- Renter's insurance.

Anti-trafficking programs that can provide any of these types of services to survivors should offer them to PHAs and CoCs, and make sure that these roles and related compensation to support the anti-trafficking organization are memorialized in the MOUs.

Furthermore, the EHV Notice provides a series of waivers and alternative requirements that create flexibility and increase access for individuals and families that desperately need the EHV. For more information on these requirements, see the [EHV Notice](#).

#### **How can anti-trafficking programs partner with PHAs and CoCs?**

Since HUD is requiring that PHAs work with CoCs and victim service providers to provide referrals for EHV, anti-trafficking programs, if they haven't already, should contact their area CoCs, to see how they can partner with the CoCs to make EHV referrals to PHAs. Local CoCs and PHAs can be located through [the HUD Resource Locator](#). Additionally, anti-trafficking programs should discuss with PHAs and CoCs about how they can provide referrals, supportive services to survivors, housing search assistance, and related services to survivors who receive the EHV. HUD has provided contact information for CoCs and PHAs on [the EHV website](#), to help folks identify and contact their local CoCs and PHAs. PHA deadlines for the EHV program are happening quickly, so anti-trafficking programs should contact their local PHAs and CoCs immediately. HUD's expectation is that PHAs will enter into an MOU as soon as possible, ideally by July 1, 2021.

#### **Where can I find more resources?**

You can find more information about the EHV at HUD's website: <https://www.hud.gov/ehv>.