

Addition to Section IV(A2) – Establishing and Maintaining the Waiting List – “Special Admission”

When housing emergencies occur, HUD may request the Jacksonville Housing Authority (hereafter JHA) to administer Vouchers to “at risk” households. If JHA does accept the request, we will issue vouchers to those designated households. These are considered as “special admissions”, which are non-waiting list admissions, and they will be assisted ahead of the clients who are on our current waiting list. The order of the existing waiting list remains the same, unaffected by those admitted as a “special admission”.

New Section XXXVIII: Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs)

Please see the Notice PIH-2021-15 Subject: Emergency Housing Vouchers – Operating Requirements. While excerpts from the Notice are listed within this section, JHA is incorporating all pages of this Implementation Notice with attachments.

Emergency Housing Vouchers (hereafter EHV or EHVs) were granted under the American Plan Act of 2021. JHA received an allocation of EHVs and JHA subsequently entered into a MOU with the Continuum of Care, which was signed in July of 2021. Non-Disclosure Agreements were also signed by the Hubbard House, Mental Health Resource Center, and Changing Homelessness, Inc.

Families who are eligible for an EHV must be referred to JHA by the Continuum of Care. Direct referrals are not placed on the existing Housing Choice Voucher waitlists (PIH2021-15 p 24). If the number of direct referrals exceeds the number of EHVs available, JHA will establish a separate waitlist solely for EHV direct referrals (PIH2021-15 p 27).

In order to be eligible for an EHV, an individual or family must meet one of the four eligibility categories (Notice PIH2021-15 p 16):

- a. Homeless
- b. At risk of homelessness
- c. Fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking
- d. Recently homeless and for whom providing rental assistance will prevent the family’s homelessness or having high risk of housing instability.

The eligible uses are designed to prevent and respond to coronavirus by facilitating the leasing of the EHV, which will provide vulnerable individuals and families a much safer housing environment to minimize the risk of coronavirus exposure or spread. Individuals and families who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness are often living in conditions that significantly increase the risk of exposure to coronavirus in addition to other health risks.

JHA will provide the following assistance on an as-needed basis for EHV recipients to secure housing. The assistance falls into four main categories comprised of specific activities (Notice PIH2021-15 pp 11—14):

i. Housing Search Assistance.

As discussed in section 9.d below, the PHA is required to ensure housing search assistance is made available to EHV families during their initial housing search. The PHA may use the services fee funding to provide this required housing search assistance to EHV families during their initial housing search. Housing search assistance is a broad term that may include many activities such as but not limited to helping a family identify and visit potentially available units during their housing search, helping to find a unit that meets the household's disability-related needs, providing transportation and directions, assisting with the completion of rental applications, and PHA forms, and helping to expedite the EHV leasing process for the family. For specific information on the EHV housing search assistance requirement, please refer to section 9.d.

ii. Security Deposit/ Utility Deposit/Rental Application/ Housing Fee Uses.

A. Application fees/non-refundable administrative or processing fees/refundable application deposit assistance. The PHA may choose to assist the family with some or all these expenses.

B. Holding fees. In some markets, it is not uncommon for an owner to request a holding fee that is rolled into the security deposit after an application is accepted but before a lease is signed. The PHA may cover part or all the holding fee for units where the fee is required by the owner after a tenant's application has been accepted but before the lease signing. The PHA and owner must agree how the holding fee gets

rolled into the deposit and under what conditions the fee will be returned. In general, owners need to accept responsibility for making needed repairs to a unit required by the initial housing quality standards (HQS) inspections and can only keep the holding fee if the client is a fault for not entering into a lease.

- C. **Security deposit assistance.** The PHA may provide security deposit assistance for the family. The amount of the security deposit assistance may not exceed the lesser of two months' rent to owner, the maximum-security deposit allowed under applicable state and/or local law, or the actual security deposit required by the owner. The PHA may choose to pay the security deposit assistance directly to the owner or may pay the assistance to the family, provided the PHA verifies the family paid the security deposit. The PHA may place conditions on the security deposit assistance, such as requiring the owner or family to return the security deposit assistance to the PHA at the end of the family's tenancy (less any amounts retained by the owner in accordance with the lease). Security deposit assistance returned to the PHA must be used for either services fee eligible uses or other EHV administrative costs.
- D. **Utility deposit assistance/ utility arrears.** The PHA may provide utility deposit assistance for some or all the family's utility deposit expenses. Assistance can be provided for deposits (including connection fees) required for the utilities to be supplied by the tenant under the lease. The PHA may choose to pay the utility deposit assistance directly to the utility company or may pay the assistance to the family, provided the PHA verified the family paid the utility deposit. The PHA may place conditions on the utility deposit assistance, such as requiring the utility supplier or family to return the utility deposit assistance to the PHA at such time the deposit is returned by the utility supplier (less any amounts retained by the utility supplier). In addition, some families may have large balances with gas, electric, water, sewer, or trash companies that will make it difficult if not impossible to establish services for tenant-supplied utilities. The PHA may also provide the family with assistance to help address these utility arrears to facilitate leasing. Utility deposit assistance that is returned to the PHA must be

used for either services for eligible uses or other EHV administrative costs.

III. Owner-related uses.

- A. **Owner recruitment and outreach.** The PHA may use the service fee funding to conduct owner recruitment and outreach specifically for EHV. In addition to traditional owner recruitment and outreach, activities may include conducting pre-inspections (see section 9.1 below) or otherwise expediting the inspection process, providing enhanced customer service, and offering owner incentive and/or retention payments (see paragraph B that follows below).

- B. **Owner incentive and/or retention payments.** The PHA may make incentive or retention payments to owners that agree to initially lease their unit to an EHV family and/or renew the lease of an EHV family. The PHA may design the owner incentive payment to meet its specific needs (such as, for example, limiting the incentive payments to new owners or owners in high opportunity neighborhoods or structuring all or part of the payment as a damages or unpaid rent mitigation fund, where the owner receives the mitigation payment only if the security deposit is insufficient to cover damages and other amounts owed under the lease). The PHA may condition the offer of the owner incentive payment on the owner's agreement to abide by certain terms and conditions. For example, the PHA could require the owner to agree to contact and work with the family's Continuum of Care case manager or other intervention services (assuming such services are available) should lease violations or other tenant-related issues arise during the assisted tenancy before taking action to evict the tenant.

HUD anticipates that owner incentive/retention payments would typically be made as a single payment at the beginning of the assisted lease term (or lease renewal if a retention payment). However, regardless of the frequency that the PHA chooses to make such payments, owner incentive/retentions payments are not housing assistance payments and are not part of the rent to owner. Owner incentive/retention payments are not taken into

consideration when determining whether the rent for the unit is reasonable.

IV. Other eligible uses.

- A. **Moving expense (including move-in fees and deposits).** The PHA may provide assistance for some or all the family's reasonable moving expenses when they initially lease a unit with the EHV. The PHA may not provide moving expenses assistance for subsequent moves unless the family is required to move for reasons other than something the family did or failed to do (e.g., the PHA is terminating the HAP contract because the owner did not fulfill the owner responsibilities under the HAP contract or the owner is refusing to offer the family the opportunity to enter a new lease after the initial lease term, as opposed to the family choosing to terminate the tenancy in order to move to another unit), or a family has to move due to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, for example.
- B. **Tenant-readiness services.** The PHA may use the services fee funding to help create customized plans to address or mitigate barriers that individual families may face in renting a unit with an EHV, such as negative credit, lack of credit, negative rental or utility history, or to connect the family to other community resources (including COVID-related resources) that can assist with rental arrears.
- C. **Essential household items.** The PHA may use the services fee funding to assist the family with some or all the costs of acquiring essential household items as defined by the PHA (e.g., tableware, bedding, etc.).
- D. **Renter's insurance if required by the lease.** The PHA may use the services fee funding to assist the family with some or all the cost of renter's insurance, but only in cases where the purchase of renter's insurance is a condition of the lease.

EHV families are subject to the same screening eligibility standards described elsewhere in this Plan, except that an EHV applicant may not be denied admission due to whether (PIH2021-15 pp 30—31):

1. Any member of the family has been evicted from federally assisted housing in the last five years or the PHA has ever terminated assistance under the program for any member of the family.
2. The family currently owes rent or other amounts to the PHA or to another PHA in connection with Section 8 or public housing assistance under the 1937 Act.
3. The family has not reimbursed any PHA for amounts paid to an owner under a HAP contract for rent, damages to the unit, or other amounts owed by the family under the lease.
4. The family breached an agreement with the PHA to pay amounts owed to a PHA, or amounts paid to an owner by a PHA.
5. The family would otherwise be prohibited admission under alcohol abuse standards established by the PHA in accordance with §982.553(a)(3).
6. The PHA determines that any household member is currently engaged in or has engaged in during a reasonable time before the admission, drug-related criminal activity.