



Berkeley Housing Authority

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Item 7B
NEW BUSINESS
September 8, 2022

Office of the Executive Director

To: Honorable Chair and Members of the Berkeley Housing Authority Board

From: Rachel Gonzales-Levine, Acting Executive Director

Subject: Monthly Report

Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs) As of the writing of this report, BHA now has received 53 referrals of the 51 EHV's awarded, from the County Homeless Program.

- Of those 53 referrals, 46 have been processed by staff for intake, and have participated in a Briefing, and in receipt of their vouchers; 10 have been removed because the applicants passed away before being housed, or absorbed by another housing authority not administering EHV program.
- 24 formerly homeless clients are now leased up in Berkeley and in other jurisdiction via portability utilizing their EHV.
- The remaining 1 referral is being reviewed by staff, and once paperwork is complete/background checks cleared, BHA will schedule this applicant for a Briefing.
- The County is still gathering documentation for the remaining 7 EHV referrals for BHA.

As reported previously to the Board, HUD has offered 32 hours of technical assistance on the EHV program; a kick off meeting occurred in August to meet the tech. assistance team, which is provided by the Center for Supportive Housing (CSH). Staff provided a summary of BHA's activities as it relates to the EHV program, including our collaboration with the CES and other homeless housing providers, our financial incentives, and challenges posed by some of our EHV clients to landlords. Staff also expressed an interest in seeking help with marketing materials. A determination was made to invite the technical assistance providers to the next bi-monthly meeting to meet the collaborative partners and discuss ways in which some of the 32 hours may be of use in housing retention strategies.

Additionally, staff provided a training to new (and refresher training to existing) Berkeley Food and Housing Staff on the EHV program/lease up process, on August 9.

Mainstream Vouchers

BHA has leased up 73 of the 91 Mainstream Vouchers; 16 have been issued MS vouchers and are searching for a unit; and is processing referrals for the remaining 2.

HUD has informed BHA that we are awarded \$45,500 in extraordinary funding to be utilized for expenses related to retention, recruitment, and support of participating owners in the Mainstream Voucher program.

BHA was not awarded any new Mainstream Vouchers, however. Management Team will be meeting shortly to identify the best use of these funds to retain and recruit landlords.

Waitlist Project Report

The Waitlist opening in July was successfully completed. We received a total of 22,105 applications over the 8 day period. Of those, 513 were duplicate applications. The total of non-duplicated applications received was 21,592. Emphasys Software performed the online opening process, and our community partners were of tremendous assistance. Some interesting figures:

- a. Over 7,000 applications were received on the first day
- b. 88 paper applications were received on time
- c. 21 paper applications were received after the extended deadline and were not included in the random draw
- d. 358 voicemails were receiving during the eight days the waitlist was opened
- e. Over 50 reasonable accommodation requests were made, but they were actually not applicable to the waitlist application process– they were requests such as needing “a service animal, a live in aide and needing a unit downstairs”
- f. Over 100 emails were received inquiring about how to apply
- g. 12,131 one person households applied
- h. 9,974 families applied
- i. 2,553 head of households that applied are elderly
- j. 2,670 with Hispanic ethnicity applied
- k. 19,435 with non-Hispanic ethnicity applied
- l. 605 applicants claimed veteran status
- m. 5,383 claimed disabled status
- n. 21,902 English applications were received
- o. 34 Spanish applications were received
- p. 168 Mandarin applications were received.

The response from the public was overwhelmingly positive.

- a. Individuals wanting to apply arrived daily to the office requesting to fill out an application. The security guard and staff did an outstanding job of empowering many with information on how to apply online. There were 88 applicants who completed paper applications that staff input for them.
- b. Our community partners reported no large crowds or lengthy delays at any of the locations where computers were available for people to apply. All reported enthusiastically about being able to actively assist the general public, and their clients in particular.
- c. In response to concerns from the Libraries that they would receive an overwhelming amount of applicants, staff and Commissioner Rodriguez were available to assist those who went to the main Library.
- d. People trickled into BHA throughout the week, but again left without incident after receiving information about applying on line.
- e. BHA staff was challenged to deal with the volume of telephone calls and emails throughout the opening of the waitlist. Outgoing voice mail messages were used to provide information, and minimize disruption to staff.

Discrepancies. There are two major categories of issues that need to be addressed.

- a. There were a small handful of callers who reported getting an “error” message when trying to apply. Staff reached out to Emphasys Software and were advised that this was occurring because of the overwhelming amount of applicants trying to apply at the same time. Callers were advised to keep trying to submit until a confirmation number was provided by the system.

- b. There were others that reported “an error” made on their behalf, in their application that they submitted (such as wrong phone number or email or forgetting to input a household member). These individuals were advised to await the lottery to see if they are selected for placement on the wait list. If so, a correction will be processed.

This information has been posted on our website and conveyed to the various community locations that assisted with the application process.

A master, un-editable file has been created that includes every application submitted for the Section 8-Tenant Based program. The process used to conduct the random draw, and the applications that will comprise the wait list, is as follows: as part of the vendor contract, Emphasys Software conducted a lottery to randomly select 2,000 names for the Section 8 Tenant-Based Wait List, with software technology ensuring the integrity of the data.

All applicants can confirm if they were selected by visiting BHA’s website, <https://bha.berkeleyca.gov> and entering their year of birth and social security number or confirmation number. There they will find a message confirming their status as either accepted or not accepted for placement on the wait list. If they were selected, they will be able to register for the WebApp so that they will be able to make any updates to their information. Staff will check the Web App on a daily basis to accept changes, which will automatically be updated into BHA’s database “Elite.”

A letter will be mailed to those applicants who were selected in the lottery advising them that they have been selected. Information on the next steps and instructions on registering for the WebApp will be provided in the letter. No written notice is being provided to the families that were not selected for the respective wait lists, as they will be able to check online to see if their application was selected in the lottery.

Dashboard- to be presented at the meeting.