



Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Please note, this document will be updated on a regular basis. This document was last updated on November 10th, 2021. If you have any additional questions, please contact Natalie Siva (Natalie.siva@cchealth.org).

Application and Selection Process

Question: What is an Emergency Housing Voucher?

Answer: Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs) are tenant-based housing vouchers without supportive services. Similar to Section 8 or Shelter Plus Care, EHVs can be used to pay rent up to a specific amount in the unit of your choice.

Q: What is the eligibility criteria for the Emergency Housing Voucher Program?

A: EHV participants must be:

- Interested in the program
- Meet one of the HUD homelessness categories
- Be a U.S. citizen or have eligible immigration status
- Must meet one of the following criteria:
 - Currently staying in an emergency shelter program for 180 consecutive days or more, OR
 - Currently staying in a permanent supportive housing program for 36 consecutive months or more.

Participants cannot:

- Have past convictions of drug-related criminal activity for the manufacture or production of methamphetamine on the premises of federally assisted housing, or
- Be subject to lifetime registration under a State sex offender registration program.

Eligibility for the EHV Program will be assessed at the time of application. If your application is prioritized and approved for referral, the Housing Authority of Contra Costa County will also assess your eligibility.

Q: If I qualify, will I be required to participate in the EHV program?



A: Participation in the EHV program is completely voluntary! No one will be forced to participate.

Q: How many vouchers are available?

A: The Housing Authority of Contra Costa County was awarded 201 EHV's. As of November 1, 2021, there are 173 EHV's available. Of the remaining vouchers:

- 80 vouchers will be used for applicants currently in emergency shelter, and
- 121 vouchers will be used for applicants currently in permanent supportive housing.

Q: How will you decide which applicants receive the voucher?

A: Eligible applications will be prioritized by the length of time the household has been staying in their current emergency shelter or permanent supportive housing program.

Q: How will the Emergency Housing Voucher differ from a supportive housing program?

A: By contrast to supportive housing, the EHV program does not have on-going supportive services available. If you are currently accessing case management, please work with your case manager to understand what services and support you will be giving up by moving from your current program to EHV.

There are several benefits to participating in EHV:

- Select Your Own Unit: You can select your own unit in most of Contra Costa County (not the City of Pittsburg).
- More Housing Choices: Moving On EHV's are portable, meaning they can be used anywhere in the United States. The voucher stays with you.

Q: What happens if I decide to apply to the Emergency Housing Voucher program, but I change my mind?

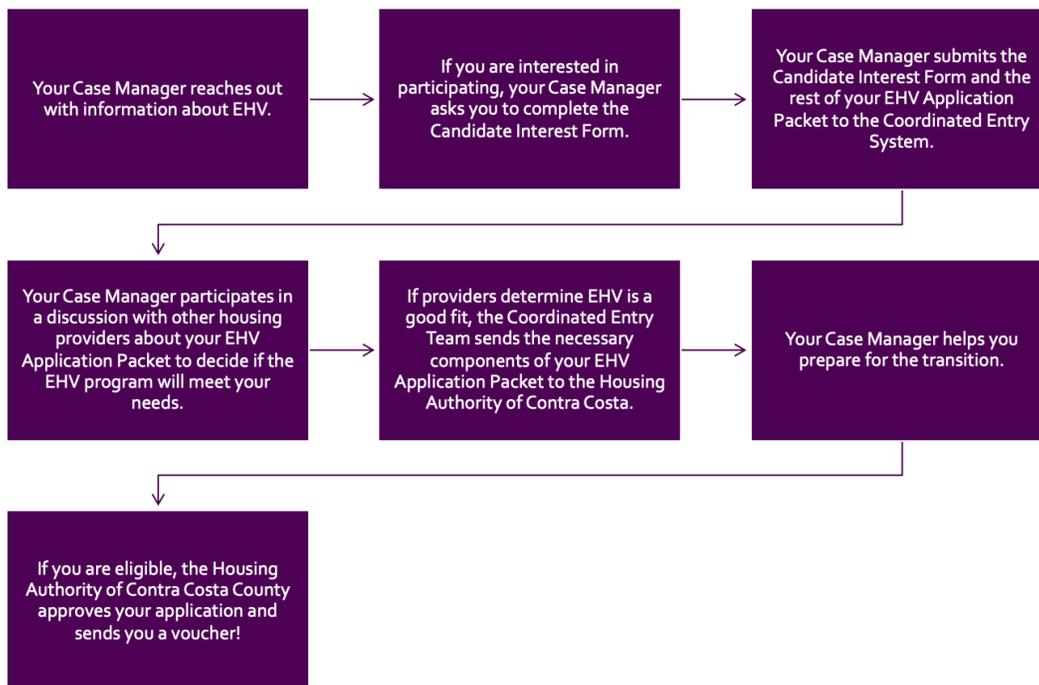
A: Once you sign a lease with the EHV program, you cannot change your mind and return to your current permanent supportive housing or emergency shelter program automatically. Instead, you will be required to go through the typical process for accessing and qualifying for these programs and your eligibility status may have changed. For permanent supportive housing, this process can take months or even years.



All applicants should be confident that they understand the risks associated with participating in the EHV program before applying and signing a lease with the EHV program. Please read this FAQ document carefully and ask your case manager if you have any additional questions.

Q: What is the process for accessing an Emergency Housing Voucher?

A: Applying for the EHV program will likely take a few months and require a few steps:



Q: Is there any help available for applying to receive an EHV?

A: Yes! To be eligible for an Emergency Housing Voucher, households must be currently residing in an emergency shelter or permanent supportive housing program. If you are eligible and prioritized for this opportunity, your current Case Manager from emergency shelter or permanent supportive housing will help you apply for the EHV program.

Q: Why didn't I get a voucher?

A: Great question! All households who were referred for an Emergency Housing Voucher were prioritized based on their length of enrollment in permanent support housing or emergency



shelter and their eligibility criteria. There were not enough vouchers to go to everyone who was interested, but please work with your case manager to identify other housing options.

Locating a Unit

Q: Is there any help available for locating an apartment?

A: Yes! The Emergency Housing Voucher program has two navigators (“EHV Navigators”) that will:

- Provide housing navigation or location assistance to EHV program participants,
- Cultivate relationships with landlords and provide housing search support for EHV clients,
- Support lease negotiation, signing, and move in logistics, and
- Provide expedited access to flexible housing funds to support move-in (i.e., funds may be used for security deposits, application fees, credit checks, etc.).

Q: What if a landlord tells me they are no longer accepting vouchers?

A: As of January 2020, landlords in Contra Costa County cannot say that they do not accept vouchers. Your voucher should not affect your ability to remain in your unit. If you feel that a landlord is discriminating against you for having a voucher, please take the following steps:

1. Send a letter to the landlord letting them know it’s illegal to discriminate against those with vouchers and demand they retract their decision and allow you to move forward.
 - Please reference this website for suggested language:
https://www.dfeh.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2020/02/SourceofIncomeFAQ_ENG.pdf
2. If the landlord continues to discriminate, file a DFEH complaint online at:
<https://www.dfeh.ca.gov/complaintprocess/#fileComplaintBody>

If you need assistance with this process, please reach out to your EHV Navigator or HACCC Case Manager.

Q: How long do I have to find an apartment? Is there a deadline?

A: Yes. There is a deadline. From the time you receive your voucher, you have 120 days to sign and execute a lease. You may request a 30-day extension as a reasonable accommodation.



Please refer to your HACCC Briefing Packet with your specific deadline and reach out to your Housing Authority Representative if you have questions.

Q: How do I get an extension if I can't find a place?

A: Extensions are granted on a case-by-case basis and are NOT guaranteed. Should you need an extension, please contact your Housing Authority Representative. You will need to submit a signed letter stating why you need an extension as well as proof you have been looking for units and why they have not worked out.

Q: Can I use it for a shared or private room with landlords?

A: You can use your voucher for a “room for rent” should you want or need roommates. You will submit an RTA (Request for Tenancy Approval) found in your voucher packet for any unit and landlord you are applying for and indicate it is for a room. Housing Authority and your prospective landlord will determine the amount Housing Authority pays on your behalf and how much your monthly rent will be.

Q: Can I get a 2 bedroom even though the voucher clearly states 1 bedroom?

A: Maybe. If you come across a 2-bedroom unit in the 1-bedroom price range (refer to HACCC Payment Standard), you may submit an RTA for that unit and Housing Authority will let you know if approved.

Q: When will my rent increase?

A: If you are transitioning to a new unit in the EHV program, your rent may increase. The EHV will set an acceptable range for your rent (based on bedroom size and Payment Standard). While your rent may increase, you will never pay more than 30% of your total income towards rent if the total gross rent is below the Payment Standard for your household size or unit bedroom size, whichever is lower.

Once you move into your EHV unit, your rent may increase; however, your landlord must provide you and the Housing Authority proper notice of that increase. The increase must stay within the price range set on your voucher (by bedroom size and Payment Standard).

Q: Can I use my voucher anywhere in the county?



A: No. You can use your voucher in any city EXCEPT Pittsburg.

Q: What is Portability?

A: Portability is the term used to describe Section 8 participants who move into or out of the Housing Authority of Contra Costa jurisdiction using their Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV). You can use your EHV to move from Contra Costa County to a Housing Authority (anywhere in the United States) that will accept their voucher and will agree to the terms set forth by the HACCC contract.

Q: Do I qualify to Port with my EHV?

A: Yes, all EHV participants qualify to port immediately upon receiving the voucher. Just tell your HACCC Case Manager, whether at intake or after, that you want to port your EHV to a specific city and complete the [Request for Portability](#) form.

Q: Can I get help with security deposit and first month's rent?

A: Yes. If you need help with your security deposit and/or first month's rent, please contact your case manager at the hotel/shelter or your EHV Navigator for assistance.

Q: Are the utilities in my name when I sign a lease, and will I be responsible for paying them?

A: Most of the time, yes. Utilities will be in your name and you will be responsible for paying them. The only time utilities will not be in your name and you will not be responsible for paying for them is when the landlord has included the utilities in the rent. When looking for units, please make sure to ask if utilities are included or if you, the tenant, are responsible for utilities.

Q: I have my voucher, I found a unit, now what?

A: Once you find a unit you like, please submit the Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA) in your Briefing Packet to the EHV Navigator who can help get that to the Housing Authority Representative.

Q: Okay, I've done all that, now what?



A: Once the Housing Authority has received your RTA, they will contact the landlord directly and work to set up an inspection. Please be patient as inspections can take longer due to COVID-19. Once your unit passes inspection, Contra Costa County Housing Authority will let you know the unit is cleared for moving in and let you know what your rent portion will be.

After Move In

Q: Once I'm housed, are there any supportive services available?

A: Depending on your location directly before moving into the EHV Program, there will be different services available:

- For households that were living in an emergency shelter directly before moving into the EHV program, there will be at least 3 months of aftercare services available. A portion of these services will be provided by the emergency shelter and another portion will be provided by EHV Navigators.
- For households that were living in permanent supportive housing directly before moving into the EHV program, there will be at least 1 month of aftercare services available. A portion of these services will be provided by the emergency shelter and another portion will be provided by EHV Navigators.

Q: Once I'm housed, is there anything else Housing Authority needs from me?

A: Yes. Every year, Contra Costa County Housing Authority will require you to submit an annual recertification to determine you are still eligible for the Emergency Housing Voucher. They will send notification of this recertification via mail and you may receive notice by phone as well.

Please note, this is REQUIRED to maintain your voucher. Failure to recertify may result in your termination from the Emergency Housing Voucher program.

Q: How often will Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspections happen?

A: HACCC conducts initial inspections in response to an RTA. The unit must pass the HQS inspection on or before the effective date of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract.

HUD requires HACCC to inspect each unit under lease at least every 24 months to confirm that the unit still meets HQS.



A special inspection may be requested by the owner, the family or a third party as a result of problems identified with the unit between biennial inspections.

Q: Do I have to report if something changes like my household size or income?

A: YES. You MUST report all changes to household size and income to the Contra Costa County Housing Authority when they occur. Please do not wait until your annual recertification as you could be jeopardizing your voucher. All changes should be reported to your worker assigned to you through the Contra Costa County Housing Authority.

Q: If I leave the program or county what do I do? Can I keep the voucher and use it on my own?

A: If you need to leave your unit or relocate for any reason, please contact your Housing Authority Representative. You must communicate if you are going to relocate and there is a process for moving units and a separate process for moving out of the county (called “porting” your voucher).

Q: What happens if I have a crisis that may cause me to lose my housing?

A: If you are in a housing-related crisis, please contact your HACCC Case Manager.

Additional Resources:

- Housing Authority of Contra Costa County [Housing Choice Voucher Briefing Packet](#)
- Housing Authority of Contra Costa County [Family Briefing Handbook - Housing Choice Vouchers](#)
- Housing Authority of Contra Costa County [Payment Standard Guidance](#)