

EHV Evaluation Follow-up Phone/Virtual Interview Protocol for PHAs

Interviewer Preparation

Please customize the protocol below for your PHA, including all materials in brackets. Prior to the interview, review PHA and CoC survey responses and prepare a short summary of answers and tables relevant to the interview questions below. This can serve as a reference during the discussion. For example, when asking about optional waivers, please look at the related table from the survey where the PHA indicated which were used. If a respondent gives a response that differs from what was answered in the survey, this will serve as a prompt for the interviewer to probe more. A template of this summary memo, and guidance on how to use it, will be shared at the data collector training.

Introduction

Thank you for participating in this important study. My name is [Name] and I am from a company called Social Policy Research Associates, or SPR, which is an evaluation, research, and technical assistance firm based in Oakland, California. Together with our partner, Abt Global, we were contracted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Office of Policy Development and Research (PD&R), to learn about the implementation and outcomes of the Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program.

PRA Burden Statement: The public reporting burden for this collection of information relating to the Evaluation of Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) Program is estimated to average 90 minutes per respondent for phone and virtual interviews with CoC and non-CoC partner organization staff. These burden estimates include the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Comments regarding the accuracy of this burden estimate and any suggestions for reducing this burden can be sent to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of the Chief Data Officer, R, 451 7th St SW, Room 8210, Washington, DC 20410-5000 or email: PaperworkReductionActOffice@hud.gov. Do not send completed forms to this address. This agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless the collection displays a valid OMB control number. HUD collects this information to examine the implementation and outcomes associated with the Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program, which was created under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. HUD may use this information to help guide any future emergency housing voucher programs and the data could also inform possible changes to the HCV program to serve households who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. This information is voluntary. This information collected will be held confidential pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552 (Freedom of Information Act), 5 U.S.C 552a (Privacy Act of 1974), and OMB Circular No. A-130.

Before we get started, I want to make sure that this interview is accessible for you.

This means we will provide reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities. We will also use translation services as needed for individuals with Limited English Proficiency. We will also provide other accommodations, including closed captioning and/or a sign language interpreter, for anyone requesting them.

Do you require information to be presented in an accessible format or reasonable accommodations to participate in this study?

[If No] Thank you. We'll get started then.

[If Yes] Can you describe what accommodations would be helpful for you?

[Note to interviewer: depending on how the respondent answers the above, the following probes and responses can be used to ensure the appropriate accommodation(s) are provided.]

If closed captioning is requested: I can set up closed captioning right now. [Interviewer should turn on closed captioning]

If sign language interpretation is requested: We can arrange to have a sign language interpreter attend the interview. I will email you now to find a time that works for us to conduct this interview with the sign language interpreter in attendance.

If Spanish language is requested: [If interviewer is a Spanish speaking data collector] That is no problem at all. I'm happy to conduct the interview in Spanish. [Interviewer should pull up the Spanish language interview guide and proceed in that language.]

[If interviewer is not a Spanish speaking data collector] That is no problem at all. Thank you for letting me know. We'll need to reschedule this interview for a time when one of our Spanish speaking interviewers is available. I will follow up with an email in a moment with some possible times. I'll make sure to send that email in Spanish as well.

If another type of accommodation is requested: Thank you for letting me know. I'll reach out to schedule this interview at another time when [insert appropriate accommodation] is available. [As needed, interviewer should ask for any clarifying details about the accommodation so that it can be set up as needed.]

Now I'd like to give you a little more information about this interview and the EHV evaluation. As part of this study, we surveyed all PHAs and CoCs that participated in the EHV program. Thank you for your agency's participation in that survey. From the PHAs that completed the survey, and in coordination with HUD, we selected 25 PHAs to participate in these follow-up telephone interviews. Our goal was to identify 25 PHAs that were representative of the larger group and that we believe are well positioned to share information around various approaches to implementing the program. Today's conversation is designed to help clarify and expand on your survey answers and to delve deeper into topics of interest. We will also be talking to leaders from your partner [CoC/other partner] in a separate call.

We are not auditors, and we are not considering anything related to compliance with the program. We are here to learn about your experience with the EHV program, document lessons learned, and to better explain challenges PHAs faced in implementing EHV programs, along with their strategies for overcoming them. We will summarize our findings in a report. We may use quotations or examples you share, but we will not use your name or reference the name of your PHA or partners in the report. Participation is voluntary, so you may skip any questions that you are not comfortable answering. There are no right or wrong answers. The interview will last approximately 90 minutes.

We would like to record our conversation for internal analysis. We will not share any recordings with HUD or outside the SPR-Abt study team. The recordings will be destroyed after our analysis is complete. Do we have your consent to record?

[If yes] Thank you. I'll start the recording now.

[If no] No problem. I'll take some written notes instead.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Background

First, I'd like to understand your role at the PHA and in the EHV program.

- What is your title and how long have you been with your PHA?
- What was or is your role with the EHV program and about how many total months did you work with the program?

Partnerships and Targeting

We'd like to learn more about the partnership between your PHA and [CoC/other partner] for the EHV program, the development of the MOU, and how you decided to target EHV's.

Partnerships

[Interviewers should select the version of question 1, below, that is appropriate based on survey responses (see PHA survey question #1)]

1. I see from the survey responses that your PHA only partnered with the CoC.
 - a. Why did your PHA decide to partner with only the CoC and not other organizations?
 - b. What worked well and what was challenging about working with the CoC?

I see from the survey that your PHA partnered with the CoC as well as other partners.

- a. Why did your PHA decide to work with [fill in with non-CoC partner(s) from survey question #1, e.g., another homeless services provider, a VSP, etc.] to implement the EHV program?
- b. What worked well or was challenging about working with these partners and your CoC partner?
- c. What challenges, if any, did your PHA face in balancing responsibilities or priorities across multiple partner organizations?

I see from the survey that your PHA partnered with only an alternative partner.

- a. Why did you decide to work only with a partner other than the CoC?
- b. What worked well or was challenging about working with these partners?

2. [If the PHA had more than one partner, probe about each relationship.] How, if at all, has your PHA's relationship with [CoC/other partner(s)] changed over the course of the EHV program?
3. In the survey, your PHA listed [customize with PHA coordination strategies, i.e., cross training of staff, PHA staff involvement in CoC governance, etc. from survey question #4] as coordination strategies that were used with the CoC/its partner organization. Which of these have been most valuable in supporting the partnership, and why?
4. As the EHV program concludes, what changes, if any, has your PHA made to how it coordinates with the CoC [or other partner] for non-EHV

programs (for example, improved reporting of whether a household was experiencing homelessness at the time a voucher was issued)?

5. Your partnership with the CoC [included/did not include (see CoC survey question #5g)] people with lived experience of homelessness or housing insecurity to guide the decision-making process around targeting EHV. [Interviewers should select the version of the question that is relevant based on survey responses]

[If CoC indicated “did not include”] Why did the partnership not engage people with lived experience in the decision-making process and what might support the PHA to include the perspective of individuals with lived experience in the future?

[If CoC indicated “included”] What did your PHA learn from these individuals and what suggestions do you have for other programs hoping to incorporate feedback from individuals with lived experience?

Targeting

6. In their survey, your partner CoC indicated that the partnership prioritized [customize with response from CoC survey question #4, i.e., households currently participating in RRH programs] households for EHV.
 - a. What role did your PHA play in choosing this/these priority household type(s)?
 - b. [If the PHA played a role] Why did the partnership prioritize this/these household type(s)?
 - c. How did considerations of racial equity affect which households you prioritized?

[If respondent asks what equity means, use the following definition: Equity has the meaning given to that term in Section 2(a) of Executive Order 13985 and means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.]

7. [If in CoC survey question #7, the CoC indicated that 20 percent or more of their referrals were individuals “at risk of homelessness,” ask the following question.] In their survey, your CoC indicated that at least 20

percent or more of referrals were individuals who were “at risk of homelessness.”

- a. How did your PHA and your CoC partner define “at risk of homelessness”?
- b. Why did your PHA your CoC partner prioritize this qualifying population?
- c. How were such individuals referred?

Referrals and Eligibility

Next, we’d like to learn more about how people eligible for EHV were referred to your PHA.

Referrals

8. [Interviewers should select the version of the question that is relevant based on survey responses]

In the survey [see PHA survey question #10, CoC Survey question #8], your PHA indicated that it used the Coordinated Entry (CE) system for some or all referrals.

- a. How well did this system work for referrals both overall and compared to your typical PHA waiting list process?
- b. Was this a new system and if so, what challenges did your PHA encounter in setting up this process?
- c. How, if at all, did the households referred from the CoC for the EHV program differ from those referred previously/on the HCV waiting list?
- d. What populations, if any, did you feel the CE system missed?

In the PHA survey, your PHA indicated that it used [include direct referral sources listed in response to PHA survey question #10, CoC survey question #8] in place of/in addition to the CE system.

- a. Why did your PHA decide to use a referral method [instead of/in addition to] other than the Coordinated Entry system?
- b. How did this/these other referral organization(s) decide who to refer to your PHA for the EHV program?
- c. What challenges did you experience with this process, and how did they differ from any challenges experienced with your typical PHA waiting list process?
- d. To what extent was equity a consideration in choosing this referral method(s)?

Eligibility and Waivers and Alternative Requirements

9. Through the administrative data, we calculated that your PHA had a [x percent – as calculated based on PHA survey and admin data] eligibility rate.

- a. How does this vary from what you expected, if at all?
 - b. How, if at all, did eligibility rates change over time?
 - c. What were the main reasons referred households were found ineligible for the EHV program?
 - d. What happened to households determined ineligible for the EHV program?
 - e. [If PHA has more than one referral partner] Were households referred from a certain partner more likely to be found eligible, and if so, why do you think this was?
 - f. Describe any discussions or concerns about whether denials were equitable or impacted certain groups more than others.
10. Consider the **alternative requirements related to eligibility** [interviewer will have a list of these required elements from the interviewer training to reference and share with/prompt the respondent as needed, see also survey question #6].
- a. Why did you select [share highly ranked alternative requirements related to eligibility from survey question #6] as most useful to program implementation?
 - b. Which of these was least helpful in operating your program, and why?
11. In the PHA survey, your PHA indicated that it used [note the **optional waivers related to eligibility** that were selected in question #7].
- a. How did your PHA decide to implement these optional waivers?
 - b. Which waivers were the most and least useful and why?

Housing Search and Lease-up Process

We'd like to learn more about the housing search and lease-up process for EHV participants and what services your PHA provided participants during this process.

Housing Search

12. In the survey, your PHA indicated that [populate with challenges from question #25] were particular challenges in the housing search for EHV households.
- a. Why were these, as compared to the others listed, the primary challenges for your PHA?
 - b. How, if at all, were any of these more apparent or different than search related challenges faced under the HCV program?
13. Your PHA indicated it used [populate with **housing search assistance** strategies/supports included in question #20].
- a. Why did your PHA choose these strategies and supports?

- b. Which do you think were the most effective, and why and were some more effective than others with certain groups?
 - c. Which of these services, if any, would your PHA be interested in using for its HCV program, and why?
14. Your PHA indicated that it modified the inspection process in the following ways [customize with variations implemented by the PHA from survey #22].
- a. How helpful were these modifications in expediting lease-up and why?
 - b. Which methods, if any, would your PHA be interested in using in other voucher programs, and why?

Lease Up

15. According to our data, your PHA received [x] vouchers, issued [y] vouchers, and leased up [z] vouchers. [Review the administrative data around PHA voucher receipt, issuance, and lease up prior to asking this question and customize accordingly.]
- a. [Ask one of the following questions, whichever is appropriate]
 - i. How was your PHA able to issue and lease-up all the vouchers received?
 - ii. Why was your PHA unable to issue and lease up all the vouchers received?
 - b. [Review data on voucher lease up by race and customize as appropriate.] Why do you think the PHA data indicates [fill in with names of groups] households were [more/less/equally] likely to lease up as white non-Hispanic households?
 - c. How do these lease up rates compare to your PHA's HCV program, in terms of rate and speed, and what contributed to the lease-up rate being [higher/lower/faster/slower] than your PHA's HCV program's rate?
 - d. How did your PHA approach the "deadline" date of 9/30/2023 after which EHV turnover vouchers could no longer be leased?
16. According to your PHA response on the survey [see PHA survey question #17], you [did/did not] have to revoke EHV's from households that were already searching for a unit due to over-issuance.
- a. What happened if households issued EHV's were still searching for housing units when the PHA exhausted its allocation of EHV's? [If over issuances]
 - b. How did your PHA assist households who had a voucher revoked?
17. According to your administrative data, your PHA had an average of [x days] between voucher issuance and lease date. Overall, how did you try to expedite lease up and how successful was your PHA with this?

18. The survey indicates that your PHA used [fill in with **optional waivers to support lease up**, question #7] to support lease up. Which do you think most supported expedited lease up, and why?
19. Additionally, which **alternative requirements to support lease up**, if any, did you feel were beneficial, and why [interviewer will have a list of these required elements from the interviewer training to reference and share with/prompt the respondent as needed, see also question #6]?
- [If not already mentioned] How did your PHA feel the portability alternative requirement affected housing search and lease up for EHV households and what impact did this requirement have on your PHA?
20. Which of the waivers and alternative requirements to support lease up under EHV would your PHA be most interested in using under other programs?
21. [Review administrative data on receipt of **rapid leasing incentive** and customize question as needed.]
It looks like [x percent/x] of your PHA's vouchers qualified for the \$500 rapid leasing incentive fee and [x percent/x] of your PHA's vouchers qualified for the \$250 rapid leasing incentive fee, which is [above/below] average.
- To what do you attribute that?
 - To what extent do you think having the rapid leasing incentive is motivating to PHAs?

Services and Implementation

Now we would like to understand more about implementing the EHV program.

22. How many staff were hired to implement the EHV program?
- Did this number feel adequate given program goals?
 - If not, what number might have been better?
23. What staffing challenges, if any, did your PHA experience when implementing its EHV program, and how did they impact the program?
24. Your PHA indicated in the survey that it provided the following tenant related activities [fill in with funded optional **tenant related uses** from question #26 (security deposits, utility deposits, rental application fees, holding fees, etc.)].
- Why did your PHA fund these activities with the service fees?
 - Which of these tenant-related uses best supported EHV households, and why?

- i. Which of these supports not currently offered through the HCV program do you think would be valuable to include, if any?
 - ii. Which of these supports were you already using through COVID waivers or with local funding?
25. Your PHA indicated in the survey that it provided [fill in with optional **owner related uses** from question #24] to incentivize landlords.
 - a. Why did your PHA choose to fund these specific activities with the EHV services fee?
 - b. How much of a concern have landlord issues been for your PHA and how well to these optional owner related uses address these challenges?
 - c. [If applicable] How did your PHA structure **incentive payments** (only in opportunity neighborhoods, only for new owners, etc.) and why did your PHA structure them in this way?
 - d. Which of these owner related uses of the services fees do you think best supported EHV households, and why?
26. The PHA indicated [establishing/not establishing] a **higher payment standard** under the EHV program [see PHA survey question #7g].
 - a. Why did you decide to structure things this way?
 - b. [If applicable] How effective were the higher payment standards at getting households to lease with their voucher?
 - c. [If applicable] What effect did higher payment standard for EHV have on the HCV program?
27. The PHA indicated funding [include optional **other uses of service fees** as listed in question #26 i.e., moving expenses, tenant-readiness services, essential household items, renter's insurance, etc.] with the services fees.
 - a. Why did your PHA choose to fund these activities?
 - b. Which of these other uses of service fees do you think best supported EHV households, and why?
28. According to our review of the administrative data, we see that your PHA spent [x] percent of the services fees, which was [above/below] the average amount. [Review admin data on PHA's percent of service fees spent and choose the appropriate questions below.]
 - a. What contributed to your PHA in spending this amount?
 - b. What supported or was challenging about setting up these service fee options?
29. Describe the type of technical assistance, if any, your PHA received from HUD around the EHV program and which types of TA were most and least helpful.

- a. What type of additional TA might have been useful, and why?

Outcomes and Lessons Learned

30. [Interviewers should select the version of the question that is relevant based on admin data and the threshold for quick/slow start up based on initial voucher issuances and lease-ups, which will be shared at the interviewer training.]

According to the administrative data, your PHA was [relatively fast/somewhat slower] to issue vouchers and connect households to units. To what do you attribute this rate of issuances and lease-ups?

31. From your perspective, what have been the most successful aspects of your implementation of the EHV program?
32. Are you aware of any other evaluations involving your EHV program?
 - a. If so, could you tell me more about this evaluation?
 - b. Who funded it? Who operated it?
 - c. What did it measure? Using what data?
 - d. What have been the results, if any?
33. What lessons did your PHA learn that could improve the HCV program or any future allocations of emergency housing vouchers?
34. What else would you like HUD to know or think about as they consider the success of this program?

Thank you so much for your time. Please feel free to get back in touch if anything additional occurs to you.