THE QUARTERLY UPDATE

July - September 2021

Our summer edition includes important resources for eligible Orange County residents via the Emergency Housing Voucher program, updates on newly awarded affordable housing developments and links to our Orange County directory guides for homelessness and supportive services resources in your local area.

Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) Program

On March 11, 2021, President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) into law, which provides over $1.9 trillion in relief to address the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. ARPA appropriates $5 billion for new incremental Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs), which are tenant-based housing choice vouchers that provide ongoing rental assistance for eligible households. On May 5, 2021, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced the allocation of approximately 70,000 EHVs to public housing authorities to assist individuals and families who are:

- Experiencing homelessness,
- At risk of homelessness,
- Fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking, or
- Recently homeless and for whom providing rental assistance will prevent the household's homelessness or having a high-risk of housing instability, including participants in rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing programs.

Within these eligibility criteria, there are several subpopulations that these vouchers will be prioritized for, including individuals and adult only households, families with at least one minor child, veterans, transitional aged youth (between the ages of 18 to 24), move on strategy to assist households already in homeless service program transition to an EHV, those in re-entry and exiting facilities, and survivors of domestic violence.

The Orange County Housing Authority (OCHA) received an allocation of 557 EHVs, the Anaheim Housing Authority received an allocation of 272 vouchers, the Garden Grove Housing Authority received an allocation of 117 vouchers, and the Santa Ana Housing Authority received an allocation of 89 vouchers, totaling 1,035 EHV vouchers for Orange County. HUD expects local communities to work together to ensure that these resources are targeted to those with the most need in the community and to work together to ensure that these voucher holders are successfully housed and receive needed supportive services to maintain their housing.

For households issued an EHV voucher from OCHA, EHV supportive services will be delivered by Mercy House, People Assisting The Homeless (PATH), Family Solutions Collaborative Human Options, and Orange County's United Way. These supportive services will at minimum include:

- Housing support assistance that expedites the EHV leasing process by providing support to the participant through the voucher issuance process, working to identify available rental units, and providing transportation assistance and financial resources to secure a rental unit.
- Housing stabilization services to support the participant's transition into housing through the development of a housing stabilization plan, connections to long-term supportive services and mainstream benefits; and ongoing tenancy training and support to sustain long term housing.
- Landlord Engagement through the Welcome Home OC program developed by Orange County's United Way that works to identify private market rental property owners who make rental units available to participants who have been issued EHVs and are actively seeking a rental unit.

More information about the EHV program and the populations it serves, please refer to **Notice PIH2021-15**. If you believe you may be eligible for an EHV, please call 2-1-1 and ask to be referred to your closest Coordinated Entry System Access Point to get connected.

Project Toolbelt and Project Homekey

As of the end of July 2021, Project Toolbelt, one of the County of Orange's COVID-19 homelessness response programs, provided services to 605 program participants. Project Toolbelt engages individuals experiencing homelessness who accessed Project Roomkey, with the goal of connecting them to appropriate housing opportunities by using the "every tool in the tool belt" approach. Of the total 605 participants in Project Toolbelt, 328 have already been supported to obtain permanent housing and work continues with the other participants.

As of the end of July, 122 Project Toolbelt participants have successfully transitioned into the Homekey Program. The Homekey Program provides non-congregate shelter to individuals experiencing homelessness who are at high-risk for severe COVID-19 illness due to age and/or underlying health conditions. The Homekey Program is at full capacity and provides interim housing to 132 program participants. Since November 2020 to date, the Homekey Program has served 190 participants.

OC Housing Finance Trust

In June 2019, the Orange County Housing Finance Trust (OCHFT) held their first board meeting with the mission to strengthen the communities in Orange County by financing the development of affordable housing for homeless and low-income individuals and families. The OCHFT adopted the County of Orange's (County) goal of securing funding that will contribute to the construction of 2,700 permanent supportive housing units by 2025 and work to secure funding that will contribute to additional affordable housing.

Today, the membership of the OCHFT has grown to 23 cities and the County of Orange. In May 2020, nearly one year from their first board meeting, the OCHFT funded seven development projects with $10.2 million and totaling 466 housing units. In May 2021, the OCHFT funded an additional six development projects with $10.2 million and totaling 434 housing units. The 2021 funding awards were scattered across the county and included two projects in each Service Planning Areas of Orange County. The cities of San Juan Capistrano, Santa Ana, Orange, Anaheim, and Lake Forest will have projects funded by the OCHFT from this year's funding awards.

The OCHFT funding sources for 2020 and 2021 has included a total of $8.5 million in Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding and $2 million in general funds provided by the County. The OCHFT has used these sources of funding to apply for matching dollars at the State of California and thereby bringing new dollars into Orange County for the development of affordable and permanent supportive housing. The OCHFT has worked closely with Orange County Health Care Agency (OCHCA) and OC Community Resources (OCCR) to ensure that quality standards are implemented for housing that is funded.

An interactive map displaying all the affordable and permanent supportive housing projects in Orange County since June 2018 can be viewed on the OCHFT website at **https://ochft.org/developments**. This webpage is a resource for tracking the progress towards the County's goal of creating 2,700 permanent supportive housing by 2025 and provides the status and details for each housing project.

Marching Home

Marching Home, a strategy to end veteran homelessness in Orange County, was developed in July 2019 by the Office of Care Coordination. From July 2019 to June 2021, 592 veterans have been permanently housed. There are 220 veterans known to be currently experiencing homelessness in Orange County. 215 of the 220 veterans experiencing homelessness in Orange County have an identified housing resource and are working toward moving into permanent housing. The remaining five veterans are in the process of being engaged by supportive service providers to develop a housing plan.

The veteran and homeless service provider partners continue to meet weekly to coordinate housing and services for veterans via the veteran Coordinated Entry System placement match meetings. During a recent partner meeting, the Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) announced that the VASH eligibility criteria has been expanded to include anyone who served in the active military, naval, or air services, regardless of length of services, and who received an honorable, general,

other than honorable or bad conduct discharge from a special court-martial. This expansion will allow even more veterans to access housing and the supportive services they need to successfully maintain permanent housing.

Orange County Shelter Programs

The Office of Care Coordination contracts with providers for a variety of supportive services, including shelter programs, for those experiencing homelessness across the County.

The Yale Navigation Center located in Santa Ana opened in late January 2021 and is operated by People Assisting the Homeless (PATH). It provides shelter and supportive services for individuals and couples experiencing homelessness, including those with pets, in the Central Service Planning Area (SPA). During the last quarter, April – June 2021, 293 program participants were served. On-site supportive services include a mobile pet clinic, pet training and grooming services provided throughout the month. Virtual information sessions are offered weekly by CalOptima for program participants to receive one-to-one advice regarding health benefits and Chrysalis offer employment search assistance and support.

Bridges at Kraemer Place located in Anaheim is operated by Mercy House and provides shelter and supportive services for individuals and couples experiencing homelessness in the North SPA. During the last quarter, April – June 2021, 241 program participants were served. The following illustrative success story is from a recent program participant:

> **"John" was experiencing chronic homelessness for over four years when he entered Bridges at Kraemer Place emergency shelter (Bridges) in February 2020. During his enrollment, John engaged with a housing navigator to complete a Housing Plan and he was enrolled in Orange County's Coordinated Entry System (CES). John's goals also included obtaining stable employment to help overcome his biggest barrier to sustain housing on his own and increasing his income. To support his goals, he completed both the Chrysalis and OC United (Jobs for Life) programs to assist him in finding stable employment. Through the CES, John was connected to a Housing Choice Voucher from the Anaheim Housing Authority. John's housing navigator was also able to refer him to the Health Care Agency's Whole Person Care (WPC) program which assisted John in locating an apartment, completing the application process, providing for the cost of security deposit, and obtaining furniture for his new home. John later moved into his fully furnished one-bedroom apartment in the City of Anaheim.**

Emergency Solutions Grant / Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act

On April 3, 2020, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) began distributing award letters to notify Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program recipients of their supplemental allocation of ESG funds as authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (ESG-CV). The ESG-CV funds are established to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19 for individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or receiving homeless assistance. The California Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) oversees a portion of these ESG-CV Program funds and released a Notice of Funding Availability in two rounds.

The County of Orange (County), the designated Administrative Entity for the Orange County Continuum of Care (CoC) applied for both ESG-CV Round 1 and ESG-CV Round 2 funding allocations and was successfully awarded the State ESG-CV program funds in collaboration with the CoC, for a total amount of $20,608,601. In alignment with public health objectives, the County and the CoC are prioritizing the use of State ESG-CV funding for emergency shelter and rapid rehousing activities to address the immediate needs of those experiencing homelessness who are at greater risk for COVID-19 infection. Additionally, the County and the CoC are also prioritizing the advancement of equitable services within our local homeless response system through demographic analysis and the expanse of partnerships with organizations supporting Black, Latinx,

Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native and Indigenous communities.

Rapid rehousing supports individuals and families experiencing homelessness with rental assistance and housing relocation and stabilization services, which include housing navigation and placement, housing stabilization case management, security deposits, utility deposits and payments and other services such as mediation and credit repair and landlord incentives. On March 23, 2021, the County entered into contracts with homeless service providers for the provision of these services throughout Orange County's three North, Central and South Service Planning Areas (SPAs). Mercy House supports individual households and Family Solutions Collaborative supports family households across all SPAs, Interval House serves the Central SPA and PATH serves individual households in the North and Central SPA.

Collectively, the State ESG-CV Program will provide rapid rehousing financial assistance and housing relocation and stabilization services to 260 family and 488 individual households in Orange County by June 30, 2022. Our provider partners have been able to quickly implement these large-scale programs through access point referrals and matches through the Coordinated Entry System. As of July 2021, the ESG-CV Program has served 63 families and 130 individuals, providing them with the assistance needed to gain permanent housing and achieve stability within that housing.

Homelessness Resources

The County provides a variety of resources for those experiencing homelessness in Orange County. The system of care offers individuals and families experiencing homelessness many supportive services, more than just shelter. The County is the lead collaborative applicant for the Orange County Continuum of Care, which receives federal funding to fund nonprofits to provide permanent housing options, such as rapid rehousing or permanent supportive housing, to individuals and families. Additional information on County programs and resources available to address homelessness can be found here: **https://www.ochealthinfo.com/about-hca/directors-office/office-care-coordination/care-coordination-additional-documents**

As well as easy-to-use Homelessness Resources Directory pocket guides for each Service Planning Area (SPA):
Pocket Guide Resource Directory - Central.pdf (ochealthinfo.com)
Pocket Guide Resource Directory - North.pdf (ochealthinfo.com)
Pocket Guide Resource Directory - South.pdf (ochealthinfo.com)

For more information on the work of the Office of Care Coordination,

please contact **carecoordination@ochca.com**