



Using Tenant-based Housing Vouchers to Help End Homelessness in Los Angeles, 2016-2020



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About This Report

In a partnership with the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, as part of the larger evaluation of the Foundation's Chronic Homelessness Initiative, Abt Associates examined how effective the Los Angeles region's public housing authorities (PHAs) have been in using vouchers to help people leave homelessness, the extent to which voucher holders succeed in using the vouchers, the locations where they use vouchers, and the implications for the PHAs' programs—who they serve and at what cost. This study focuses on 2016 through early 2020, before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Glossary

area median income (AMI)—the midpoint of a geographic region’s income distribution. This means that half of households in the region earn more than the median income and half earn less than the median income.

Continuum of Care (CoC)— a regional or local planning body required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to organize and deliver housing and services to meet the specific needs of people who are experiencing homelessness, as they move to stable housing. CoC refers to the system for coordinating programs that address and prevent homelessness within a geographic region.

coordinated entry system (CES)—a centralized system for assessing the needs and program eligibility of people experiencing homelessness and determining priorities for linking them to the housing programs available in the community for people who were formerly homeless.

disabled household—a household with a head or spouse with a disability, where “disability” is defined as a condition likely to persist and limit the person’s ability to live independently.

elderly household—a household with a head or spouse age 62 or older.

Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV)—a new allocation of tenant-based housing vouchers authorized by HUD in May 2021. Nationally, 696 PHAs have received 70,000 EHVs. PHAs must work with local CoCs to select individuals or families who are experiencing homelessness, at risk of homelessness, fleeing domestic violence, or at high risk of housing instability.

Fair Market Rent (FMR)—estimate of the 40th percentile of monthly gross rents for standard-quality housing units within a metropolitan area or nonmetropolitan county. HUD annually estimates FMRs. FMRs are used to determine standard payment amounts for the Housing Choice Voucher program.

family household—household with at least one child younger than age 18.

general preference—a mechanism a PHA can implement that prioritizes access to its public housing units or its HCV program for a specific population, such as people experiencing homelessness.

Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program—the federal government’s largest program that provides housing assistance to the lowest-income renters across the nation. The assistance takes the form of HCVs.

Housing Choice Voucher (HCV)—a subsidy from HUD equal to the difference between the rent of a housing unit found in the private market and 30 percent of the applying household’s income.

Housing Quality Standards (HQS), the health and safety standards a housing unit must meet before a PHA may sign a HAP contract with a landlord.

Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) contract—used to provide a subsidy payment to a landlord in the HCV program.

HUD—the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

HUD-VASH program—a collaboration between HUD and the VA that provides HCVs for use in the private market (from HUD) and case management and supportive housing (SH) services (from the VA);

such as mental health services and substance use counseling) to help veterans who are experiencing homelessness to secure and maintain permanent housing.

limited preference—a mechanism in which a PHA allocates a set number of HCVs for its clients in a specific program created by the PHA in partnership with a homeless service provider. A “set-aside.”

payment standard—the PHA’s share of rent plus 30 percent of the household’s income, or the maximum amount of the rent on which a voucher subsidy is based.

permanent supportive housing (PSH)—permanent housing combined with services for vulnerable people leaving homelessness

Point-in-Time (PIT) Count—a count of people experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness conducted nationally on a single night during the last 10 days in January. HUD requires CoCs to conduct PIT Counts of people experiencing sheltered homelessness annually and people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in odd-numbered years.

Project Roomkey—a California-wide effort, implemented by its Department of Social Services, to protect the health of people experiencing homelessness by providing funding for hotel and motel rooms for them as an alternative to their staying on the street or in congregate shelters during the COVID-19 pandemic.

public housing authority (PHA)—a local organization that manages federal housing assistance programs. PHAs typically are created by state law and sometimes public non-profits and sometimes are part of city, county, or state government. PHAs manage the HCV and public housing programs in a geographic area.

Small Area Fair Market Rent (SAMFR)—an FMR calculated for an individual ZIP code within a larger metropolitan area. HUD requires PHAs in some regions to set HCV payment standards using SAFMRs. Other PHAs may do so at their option.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)—a federal income supplement program operated by the U.S. Social Security Administration that provides monthly payments to adults and children who are disabled and have little or no income to cover basic needs such as food, clothing, and housing.

turnover voucher—a voucher that becomes available for use by a new household when a participating household exits the HCV program.

VA—the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

voucher success rate—a measure how many HCVs issued by a PHA within a specified period of time result in a successful search for housing and a HAP contract. A “lease-up.”

Executive Summary

For more than 10 years, Los Angeles has been engaged in a community-wide effort to end homelessness, focusing on people with high-needs and chronic patterns of homelessness through a partnership among local government agencies, homeless service and healthcare providers, community organizations, and philanthropy.

Tenant-based rental subsidies are a major component of the strategy for expanding access to permanent housing that includes supportive services made available to residents—that is, scattered-site permanent supportive housing for people experiencing chronic homelessness. Most of the community’s tenant-based rental subsidies are provided through the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, which is funded by the federal government and administered by local public housing authorities (PHAs). Nineteen PHAs across Los Angeles County administer HCVs.

The Los Angeles PHAs have committed substantial numbers of their vouchers to people experiencing homelessness. PHAs work together with homeless service providers, the County’s Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Department of Mental Health (DMH), and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to match people experiencing homelessness to vouchers and assist them in becoming eligible for HCV and searching for housing.

In a partnership with the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, as part of the larger evaluation of the Foundation’s Chronic Homelessness Initiative, Abt Associates examined how effective the Los Angeles region PHAs have been in using vouchers to help people leave homelessness, the extent to which voucher holders succeed in using the vouchers, the locations where they use vouchers, and the implications for the PHAs’ programs—who they serve and at what cost.

Findings

Across Los Angeles County, ***PHAs issued 12,768 vouchers to people experiencing homelessness between 2016 and 2020.*** Those vouchers came from a combination of turnover in the regular HCV program and new allocations of vouchers through special programs, in particular a program that provides vouchers to homeless veterans with disabilities (HUD-VASH). PHAs used their preference systems (the way in which they order their waiting lists) to devote major shares of their regular HCVs to households experiencing homelessness. The largest numbers of voucher issuances to households experiencing homelessness were from the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA, 7,033 issuances), the Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA, 4,328), and the Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB, 1,211). Those are the largest PHAs in the region, but they also are devoting the largest shares of their HCV programs to the effort to end homelessness.

Of the vouchers that went to people experiencing homelessness, the ***highest number went to single individuals***, consistent with the high share of people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles who do so as individuals rather than as members of families. Many of those individuals had disabilities, consistent with the community’s priority of serving people with chronic patterns of homelessness. ***More than half of all issuances were to people identifying as Black, consistent with the community’s 2020 homeless Point-in-Time Count that showed a disproportionate share of people experiencing homelessness in the Los Angeles region are Black.*** About a quarter went to households identifying as Latino, a smaller share

than the share of people experiencing homelessness who identify as Hispanic or Latino in the community's 2020 homeless Point-in-Time Count.

Most voucher issuances to people experiencing homelessness were for people referred by the homeless services systems, from the organizations that implement the coordinated entry system (CES), from the VA health system (for HUD-VASH), or from the Los Angeles County health agencies. Households with such referrals had case managers dedicated to helping them get through the PHAs' process for determining that a household is eligible for the HCV program. The process is notoriously complex, as households must produce documentary evidence of their identity and legal status (such as Social Security cards), as well as evidence that they qualify for preferential access to a voucher because of their current homelessness. Some people are barred from receiving federal housing assistance based on certain types of criminal histories or outstanding debts to PHAs. The process can take many months, but staff of PHAs said that ***most people referred to the PHA from the homeless service system make it through the process and are issued a voucher.***

Once issued a voucher that permits them to search for housing, ***nearly seven of every 10 households experiencing homelessness (65 percent) succeeded in leasing a housing unit with voucher assistance.*** This was a somewhat higher success rate than for households not experiencing homelessness (61 percent) and can be attributed to two factors—the ***high motivation*** to make the effort to use a voucher for people without a current place to live and the ***help they received from case managers.*** During the 2016-2020 period, Los Angeles County funded and implemented incentives for landlords that agree to rent to people experiencing homelessness, and that also appears to have helped drive these high success rates. Among the largest of the Los Angeles PHAs, HACLA a success rate of 63 percent and HACLB had a similar rate of 62 percent for people experiencing homelessness. LACDA had the highest success rate, 67 percent. LACDA serves the balance of Los Angeles County not served by a city housing authority. While LACDA and HACLB had higher success rates for people experiencing homelessness compared to other households, success rates were comparable at HACLA across people experiencing homelessness and people not experiencing homelessness.

The average time elapsed between the issuance of a voucher and lease-up for people experiencing homelessness was 122 days. ***Many households experiencing homelessness needed more than 180 days to find a unit.*** This reflects the challenges of the Los Angeles housing market. Across the US, most households who succeed in using a voucher do so within 180 days. Both people experiencing homelessness and other households need a longer time to secure housing in the Los Angeles region.

Success in using a voucher was similar among people experiencing homelessness, regardless of household size and disability and for all racial and ethnic groups. Black households experiencing homelessness had a success rate of 66 percent. Black and Hispanic households experiencing homelessness had greater success using vouchers than Black and Hispanic households who were not homeless at the time the vouchers were issued. That was not the case for White households. Case managers and landlord incentives appear especially important for helping Black and Hispanic households overcome barriers to leasing up.

Use of vouchers by people experiencing homelessness is heavily concentrated in certain parts of the Los Angeles region. This is true of other voucher users as well, but ***households who use a voucher to leave homelessness are more likely to be concentrated in the same locations and more likely to rent units in***

census tracts with a high proportion of people living in poverty. This could reflect their high imperative to use a voucher (and willingness to compromise on location), racial discrimination (reflecting the high percentage of voucher users who are Black), or the greater likelihood that they stayed close to the locations where they were staying during their episode of homelessness.

Devoting substantial shares of their HCV programs to helping people leave homelessness has implications for the PHAs. They are *less likely to serve families with children and seniors and more likely to serve single, non-elderly people*, including people both with and without disabilities. The per household cost of serving people experiencing homelessness is only slightly higher than the per unit cost of serving other households. People leaving homelessness use their vouchers to rent somewhat less expensive units (because they more often only need one bedroom and perhaps also because they are renting in less expensive locations). However, their income is lower on average, with more households with income below \$5,000 per year. *The additional cost of serving a formerly homeless household is \$29 per month or about 3 percent.* PHAs also consider that their administrative costs (staff hours) are greater when they serve homeless people.

Overall, the commitment of tenant-based vouchers by the Los Angeles PHAs to the effort to address homelessness appears successful. Based on the study's detailed findings, we have some recommendations for making the effort work even better. A *stronger focus on speeding the process from assessment and referral through qualification and voucher issuance is needed*—for example, devoting effort to ensuring people are document-ready before they are referred to the PHA. The new practice adopted by some PHAs of *issuing provisional vouchers* while documents are located could be extended. This might require cooperation from HUD. In view of the time needed from receiving the voucher to leasing a unit and the compromises people are making on location, *landlord incentives should continue to be tested* and their effectiveness evaluated. Strong enforcement of the laws prohibiting owners of rental housing to discriminate against voucher holders is needed, together with other measures that increase the availability of units available to voucher holders across the Los Angeles region.

We also make some recommendations for additional research that builds on this study, including following the households in this study into the period after they have leased up and conducting similar research on the use of HUD's Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) in the Los Angeles region.

Study Scope and Methodology

This study draws on a data source that only recently has become available. PHAs have made it possible to measure the extent to which households who receive vouchers succeed in using them by submitting a Form 50058 to HUD at the time a voucher is issued, rather than waiting until a household succeeds in using a voucher and the housing subsidy starts. PHAs are also complying with HUD's request to indicate whether the voucher is issued to a household currently experiencing homelessness. Some PHAs are entering the homelessness indicator only at the time a voucher is used to lease a unit. Therefore, the analysis of lease-up rates for people experiencing homelessness uses characteristics of households that leased up with a voucher to fill in missing data on homelessness at the time the voucher was issued. The analysis also makes use of the extensive information on household characteristics, the locations of leased housing units, and the subsidy costs incurred by the PHAs to produce the findings presented in the report.

In addition to drawing on that rich data source made available to the study team by HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research, the study team conducted extensive interviews with staff of PHAs,

organizations in the region's homeless services system and health system, and people with lived experience of using a voucher to leave homelessness.

This study focuses on the period 2016 to early 2020, before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and before a new allocation of tenant-based EHV's added new resources to the effort to end homelessness. Nonetheless, we provide some information on how the pandemic effected the effort to use existing resources and preliminary information on how the homeless services system and the PHAs are using EHV's.

1. Introduction

For more than 10 years, Los Angeles, California, has been engaged in a community-wide effort to end its homelessness crisis, focusing on people with high needs and chronic patterns of homelessness, through a partnership among local government agencies, homeless service and healthcare providers, community organizations, and philanthropy.

Tenant-based rental subsidies are a major component of the strategy for expanding access for people experiencing chronic homelessness to permanent housing with available services—that is, scattered-site permanent supportive housing. Most of the community’s tenant-based rental subsidies are provided through the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Subsidies take the form of vouchers (HCVs) provided by HUD to local public housing authorities (PHAs) for distribution to households to find housing in the private rental market.

The 19 PHAs operating in the Los Angeles region have committed substantial numbers of their vouchers to people experiencing homelessness. PHAs work with homeless service providers, the County’s Department of Health Services and Department of Mental Health, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to match people experiencing homelessness to vouchers and help them become eligible for vouchers and search for housing.

However, using vouchers in Los Angeles has been notoriously difficult. In addition to overall high demand for rental housing manifested as low rental vacancy rates across the region, Los Angeles landlords strongly resist accepting households who will use vouchers to pay part of the rent. In a study of landlord discrimination against voucher holders, only 15 percent of landlords in Los Angeles appeared willing to accept vouchers, a lower rate than in Newark (New Jersey), Philadelphia (Pennsylvania), or the District of Columbia.¹ To help overcome the problem of landlord refusal to rent to households with vouchers, in 2019 the City and County of Los Angeles and the State of California each passed legislation banning a landlord from turning away renters simply because they want to use a housing voucher to help pay the rent.² Passing that legislation probably had little effect on landlord practice over the past several years.

In a partnership with the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, as part of the larger evaluation of the Foundation’s Chronic Homelessness Initiative, Abt Associates examined how effective the Los Angeles region’s PHAs are in using vouchers to help people leave homelessness, the extent to which voucher holders succeed in using the vouchers to lease a housing unit (“lease-up”), the locations where they use vouchers, and the implications for the PHAs’ programs—who they serve and at what cost.

This study focuses on 2016 through early 2020, before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 and before a new allocation by HUD in May 2021 of tenant-based vouchers called Emergency

¹ Martha Galvez, Mary Cunningham, Claudia L. Aranda, Rob Santos, Doug Wissoker, Alyse Onteto, Rob Pitingolo, and James Crawford, “[A Pilot Study of Landlord Acceptance of Housing Vouchers](#),” U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, 2018.

² https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200SB329. Housing: Source of Income. (2019-2020). California Legislative Information.

Housing Vouchers (EHVs) added new resources to the effort to end homelessness. Nonetheless, this report provides some information on how the pandemic affected the effort to use existing resources and preliminary information on how the homeless services system and the PHAs are using EHVs.

1.1 Study Scope and Methodology

The findings presented in this report are based on several sources of data:

- A review of the most recent available HCV administrative plans of the 19 Los Angeles PHAs, to identify preferences for households experiencing homelessness and payment standards used to determine the maximum voucher subsidy.
- An extract of Form 50058 administrative data from HUD’s Inventory Management System/PIC data system that provides extensive information on each tenant-based HCV issued by the Los Angeles PHAs during 2016-2020. That information includes the characteristics of the household, success in using the voucher, location of the housing unit leased by the voucher holder, rent of the housing unit, and the cost of the HCV rental subsidy. The extract was provided by analysts at HUD’s Office of Policy Development and Research. The overall data quality was good and supported analysis of voucher success rates. Identifying people experiencing homelessness at the time the voucher was issued was more challenging (see text box).
- Interviews with staff of seven of the 19 Los Angeles PHAs: the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA), the Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA), the Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB), the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Monica, the Housing Authority of the City of Burbank, the Glendale Housing Authority, and the Housing Authority of the City of Pasadena.
- Interviews with the staff of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), the LA County Department of Mental Health, the VA, and homeless service providers who help voucher holders navigate the process of using vouchers.
- Interviews with people with lived experience going through the process of using a voucher.

Using Administrative Data to Measure Voucher Success Rates

This study is among the **first** to use a data extract from HUD that **includes voucher issuances as well as voucher lease-ups**, and therefore can be used to measure success rates. Because of improved quality of the data on whether the household was experiencing homelessness when the voucher was issued, this is the **first study to measure success rates separately for people experiencing homelessness versus other households**.

However, some of the PHAs in the Los Angeles region enter the indicator of homelessness for most households experiencing homelessness only at the time a unit is leased up, rather than at the time the voucher is issued. Therefore, the analysis of the number of households experiencing homelessness who were issued vouchers and their success rates relies in part on using the demographic characteristics of households that leased up to estimate which households were homeless at the time of issuance.

See Appendix C for an explanation of the imputation methodology.

The analysis does not include HCVs that the PHAs have decided to “project-base” (i.e., assign vouchers to a particular building). Neither does it include voucher-like subsidies from a different federal program called Continuum of Care (CoC).

This report does not use any data from the Los Angeles region’s homeless service systems, such as client-level data from the CoCs Homelessness Management Information Systems or from coordinated entry system assessments. Therefore, the analysis does not show the acuity of needs for services of households experiencing homelessness who were issued vouchers or used them successfully.

The analysis does include HUD–VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers, which combine HCVs with VA case management and supportive services for veterans with disabilities referred to a PHA by the VA health system.³ During the period covered by this report, the Los Angeles PHAs received substantial allocations of HUD-VASH vouchers.⁴

1.2 Organization of the Report

This report proceeds as follows:

- Chapter 2—how the HCV program works and the process through which people experiencing homelessness are referred to a PHA.
- Chapter 3—the extent to which new HCVs issued between 2016 and 2020 were for households experiencing homelessness and how that changed over the five-year study period.
- Chapter 4—the process for determining eligibility for an HCV, the role of case managers in helping people experiencing homelessness through voucher process, and the challenges. The chapter details the characteristics of households issued vouchers and how they differ from those of households not experiencing homelessness at the time of voucher issuance. Because homelessness in Los Angeles disproportionately affects people of color, and especially Black individuals and families, the analysis focuses on racial equity.
- Chapter 5—the study’s findings on how households experiencing homelessness were successful or not successful in using their HCVs to lease a housing unit, comparing those success rates to the rates for households who were not experiencing homelessness. The findings include analysis of demographic characteristics and other factors that affect successful lease-up, again focusing on racial equity. The analysis also describes the time it takes from voucher issuance to a successful lease-up. The chapter illustrates where across the Los Angeles region people used housing vouchers during 2016-2020 and the extent to which they did so in areas of concentrated poverty.
- Chapter 6—the implications for PHAs’ operations of using HCVs to help people leave homelessness and the demographic characteristics of households PHAs serve. The chapter also

³ <https://www.va.gov/homeless/hud-vash.asp>

⁴ During this period, PHAs also received some allocations of vouchers for a special program for non-elderly people with disabilities called Mainstream Vouchers. We included them in the data analysis, as they follow the same rules as HCVs and are sometimes issued to people experiencing homelessness.
https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/mainstream

describes the cost to Los Angeles PHAs of serving people experiencing homelessness and how that differs from the costs of serving other households.

- Chapter 7—observations on how to make tenant-based vouchers a more successful tool for reducing homelessness in Los Angeles and across the region. We also make some recommendations for further research that builds on the data platform created for this study.

2. How Do Tenant-based Vouchers and Referrals from the Homeless Services System Work?

This chapter provides information on tenant-based Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) as context for their use for people experiencing homelessness. The chapter also introduces the Los Angeles public housing authorities (PHAs) and describes the process through which people experiencing homelessness in the Los Angeles region are referred to the PHAs' voucher programs.

2.1 How Does a Tenant-based Voucher Work?

The HCV program, created in the 1970s by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is the federal government's largest program that provides housing assistance to the lowest-income renters across the nation. In California, vouchers constitute an even larger share of federal housing assistance because relatively few public housing units and housing produced by other legacy housing assistance programs were built in the state. PHAs are responsible for managing the HCV program in their communities.

What does a housing voucher do? A housing voucher pays the difference between the rent of a housing unit found in the private market and 30 percent of the voucher user's income; the household pays the remaining rent amount. For example, if the voucher holder leases a two-bedroom unit with rent of \$2,000 monthly and the household has an income of \$18,000 annually, the household would pay \$450 (i.e., 30 percent of their income) and the PHA would pay the balance of \$1,550 each month.⁵

A household issued a housing voucher is responsible for finding a suitable housing unit that the landlord agrees to rent under the program. The housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by the PHA on behalf of the participating household. Once a household makes use of a voucher, the voucher has no term limit, as long as the household follows the program rules and cooperates with periodic reexamination of income.

Who is eligible to receive a voucher? Eligibility is limited to low-income households, and 75 percent of households a PHA newly admits to its HCV program must have an income below 30 percent of the area median income (AMI). In 2021 in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, 30 percent of AMI was \$24,850 per year for one person and \$35,450 for a family of four—higher than in many other parts of the country and reflecting the relatively high median income in the region.⁶

The income counted to determine both eligibility for the program and the amount of rent paid by the household is cash from both earnings and

Across the nation, **only one of every four households that qualify for the voucher program receives a voucher or is assisted by public housing or another federal program** that links the tenant's rent payment to the household's income.^a

In California, the share of eligible households served by HUD housing assistance is likely much lower because of the smaller stock of public housing and other "legacy" programs.

^aRobert Collinson, Ingrid Gould Ellen, and Jens Ludwig, "Reforming Housing Assistance," *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science* (November 6, 2019).

⁵ The tenant may receive some deductions from income before the 30 percent is applied; in some cases, a minimum rent applies even if the household has no income. If utilities are paid for by the household, a utility allowance is deducted from the tenant share of the rent.

⁶ "[Income Limits Documentation System](#)," U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, April 14, 2020.

benefit programs. This includes income from California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids program (CalWORKs, California's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program) and income from Supplemental Security Income benefits, including California supplements. Non-cash benefits such as food stamps (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) are not counted. To qualify for a voucher, a household must have citizenship or documented legal status, with special rules applying to households with mixed status.

How are rents determined? The maximum amount of rent on which the voucher subsidy is based on is called a *payment standard*. Every year HUD publishes Fair Market Rents (FMRs), including for the Los Angeles metropolitan area, based on data that show current rents at about the middle of the housing market.⁷ The FMRs vary with the size of the unit a family needs (one bedroom, two bedrooms, etc.). A PHA is allowed to set its payment standard between 90 and 110 percent of the local FMR. Instead of the metropolitan-wide FMR, a PHA may choose to use HUD's Small Area FMRs (SAFMRs), which vary by ZIP code (to reflect relative ZIP code rent levels). The result of using SAFMRs is that some parts of the PHA's jurisdiction have higher payment standards and some have lower.

Continuing the earlier example, the 2021 FMR for the Los Angeles metropolitan area was \$2,058 monthly for a two-bedroom unit. A PHA could set its payment standard between \$1,852 (90 percent) and \$2,264 (110 percent). If that \$2,000 monthly rent for household's chosen unit is below its PHA's payment standard, then as above, the household pays \$450 (i.e., 30 percent of their income) and PHA pays the balance.⁸

How does a household apply for a voucher? Eligible households must complete an application and undergo eligibility screening for the HCV program by a PHA.⁹ This process involves submitting documentation to verify the identity and citizenship status of all household members, as well as proof of income eligibility and any current government assistance factored into the household's income calculation. All adult household members undergo a criminal background check to identify convictions for the manufacture of methamphetamine or sex offenses, which prohibit HCV program participation under federal law. Documentation required during the eligibility screening can include a government-issued identification, birth certificates, Social Security cards, verification of disability status, financial records, and any immigration status verification documents.

Households the PHA determines to be eligible attend a briefing session that explains the rules of the program and how to search for housing. After this briefing, each household receives a voucher, a document that lists the size unit for which the household is eligible, the PHA's payment standard for that size unit, and the rules that determine the household's share of the rent.

⁷ This "middle" is technically 40 percent of units in standard condition that have recently been rented to new tenants.

⁸ This is a simplification. The total rent received by the owner can be greater than the payment standard if the household agrees to pay more than 30 percent of income, up to 40 percent.

⁹ "[Housing Choice Voucher Program Guidebook: Eligibility Determination and Denial of Assistance](#)," U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, November 2019.

How long does it take to obtain a voucher? Many more households are eligible for the HCV program than can be supported by PHAs' allocations of HUD funding, and most issuances of vouchers to new households are based on turnover as households already in the program leave. Turnover rates have fallen over time, in part because of increasing use of HCVs by people who are age 62 or older or have a disability. Once they start using a voucher, they are not likely to leave the program. In addition, gaps between incomes and rents have increased over time in many parts of the United States, so all types of households have stayed in the program longer.

PHAs maintain *waiting lists* to determine who should next be issued a voucher. A survey of 20 PHAs in 2015-2016 showed that larger PHAs had median wait times of three years.¹⁰ PHAs are allowed to order their waiting lists based on preferences for types of households, including preferences for people experiencing homelessness. The leadership of the PHA makes that decision and publishes it in a public document called the Voucher Administrative Plan.

2.2 Project-based Vouchers

A PHA can “project-base” some of its voucher subsidies, agreeing with the sponsor of a housing development receiving public capital subsidies (e.g., tax credits) that the PHA's vouchers must be used there. The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) and the Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA) have made extensive use of this option, especially for *permanent supportive housing* (PSH).¹¹ However, HUD limits the project-based option to 20 percent of the budget authority for its vouchers a PHA receives, plus another 10 percent for special types of projects such as PSH. HACLA and LACDA are close to reaching those caps.¹² This study does not include project-based vouchers, as it focuses on how well *tenant-based* vouchers work for helping people leave homelessness for permanent housing.

2.3 HUD-VASH Vouchers

A special program of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) first implemented in 1992, VA Supportive Housing (VASH) provides separate allocations to Los Angeles PHAs of HCVs for veterans. VASH vouchers are limited to veterans with disabilities experiencing homelessness, and eligible veterans are referred to PHAs from the VA health system. Most HUD-VASH vouchers are tenant-based and follow the same rules as regular HCVs. VASH provided substantial numbers of vouchers to Los Angeles PHAs both before the period of this study and during it, making it possible for PHAs to issue vouchers to

¹⁰ Andrew Aurand, Dan Emmanuel, Diane Yentel, Ellen Errico, Zoe Chapin, Gar Meng Leong, and Kate Rodrigues, “[The Long Wait for a Home](#),” *The National Low Income Housing Coalition*, V.6 I.1, (2016).

¹¹ Some people leaving homelessness, in particular Black men, do not consider PSH concentrated in a particular facility to be permanent housing over which they have control. See Norweeta G. Milburn, Earl Edwards, Dean Obermark, and Janey Rountree, “[Inequality in Permanent Supportive Housing System in Los Angeles: Scale, Scope, and Reasons for Black Residents' Returns to Homelessness](#),” *California Policy Lab*, October 6, 2021.

¹² PHAs that have special demonstration authority, called Moving to Work (MTW), may exceed those caps. Of the PHAs in the Los Angeles region, only the Housing Authority of the City of Pomona has MTW authority, and that happened very recently. HACLA is precluded from applying for MTW designation by an upper limit on size in the MTW legislation. Nationally, that limit currently applies only to HACLA and the New York City Housing Authority.

veterans experiencing homelessness both from new allocations and from turnover vouchers. This study includes HUD-VASH, as part of its focus on tenant-based vouchers.

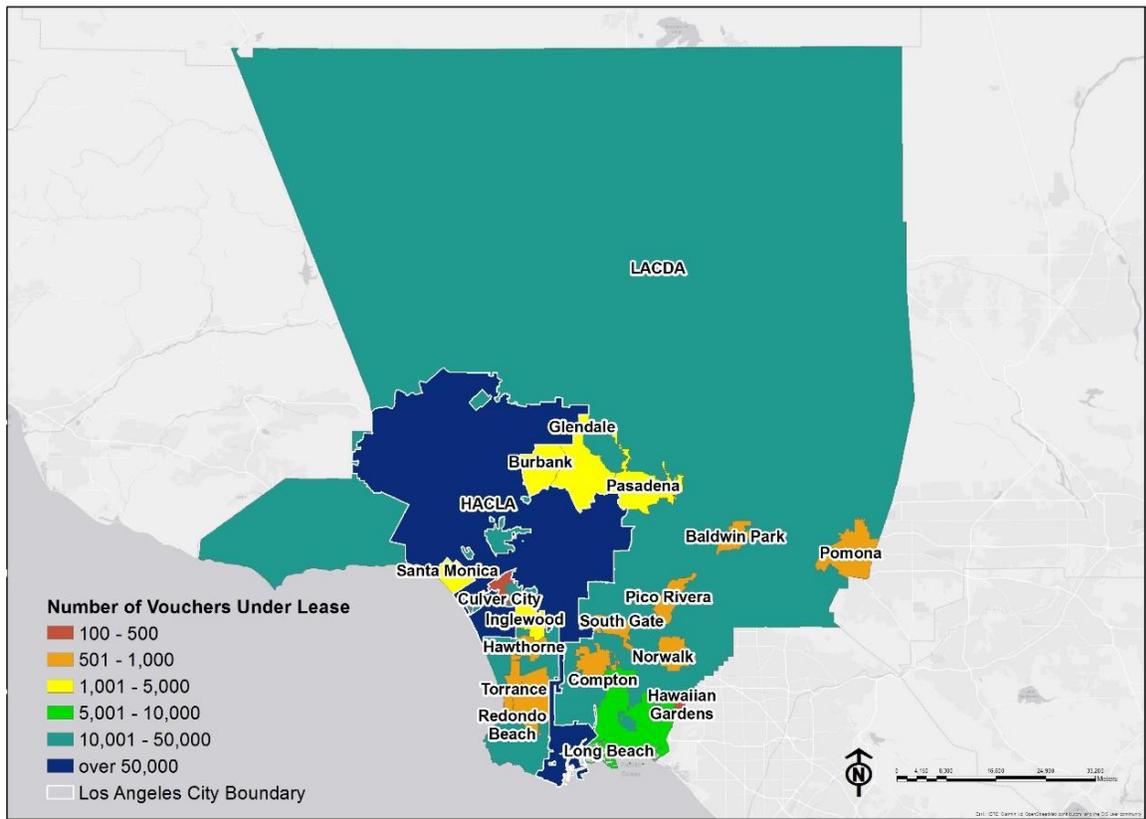
HUD’s Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs)

In 2021, the U.S. Congress appropriated funds for an expansion of the HCV program called Emergency Housing Vouchers. HUD allocated 6,806 vouchers to PHAs in the Los Angeles region, almost 10 percent of the EHVs available nationwide. This report provides some information on how homeless service systems and PHAs in Los Angeles are using EHVs, based on publicly available documents and interviews with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority and PHA staff. (See the text box: Implementation of Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs) by Los Angeles PHAs.)

2.4 Los Angeles-area PHAs

Of the 19 PHAs the Los Angeles region, by far the largest are HACLA and LACDA, the latter serving parts of the county that are not cities with their own PHAs. As of the end of 2020, HACLA administered almost 51,000 vouchers and LACDA more than 25,000. As Exhibit 2.1 below illustrates, 17 other PHAs based in the county’s smaller cities also administer HCVs. The largest is Long Beach, with about 7,500 vouchers under lease as of 2020.

Exhibit 2.1: Scale of HCV Programs of the PHAs in Los Angeles County, 2020



Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, “Picture of Subsidized Households (POSH)” website, 2022

Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)

The second largest PHA in the United States, HACLA operates within the boundaries of the City of Los Angeles (dark blue on the map). *HACLA administers almost 51,000 vouchers*, 9 percent of which are HUD-VASH vouchers.

Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA)

LACDA's jurisdiction is the balance of the county outside of the City of Los Angeles, excepting other cities within Los Angeles County that have their own PHAs. LACDA's jurisdiction is shown on the map in dark green and covers the bulk of the county. *LACDA administers more than 25,000 vouchers*, of which 13 percent are HUD-VASH vouchers.

Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB)

HACLB serves the City of Long Beach (shown on the map in light green) and administers more than 7,500 vouchers, 11 percent of which are HUD-VASH vouchers.

The 16 other PHAs in Los Angeles County each administer from 132 to 1,621 vouchers.

2.5 Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority and Coordinated Entry System

HACLA and LACDA have developed close relationships with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), a joint powers authority of the City and County governments. LAHSA has been designated by HUD as the Continuum of Care (CoC) to plan and implement a strategy for ending homelessness across much of the Los Angeles region. LAHSA manages both HUD funding and local and state resources. Part of LAHSA's mission is to implement a coordinated entry system (CES) to coordinate and match available housing and supportive services to people experiencing homelessness. LAHSA implements the CES through contracts with homeless service providers responsible for defined geographic portions of Los Angeles County ("service planning areas").

LAHSA's CES is designed to assist people with highest acuity or needs first and match them with available housing subsidies and supportive services.¹³

To serve people experiencing homelessness with vouchers, the Los Angeles PHAs have contracts with homeless service providers, the County's Department of Health Services (DHS) and Department of Mental Health (DMH), and the VA. When vouchers become available, through either new allocations or turnovers, a PHA will notify the appropriate voucher contract holder. The process used to match a client to a voucher varies by contract holder and changed during the period of this study.

Some contract holders match a voucher by referring to their internal listings of their clients with high needs for services ("high acuity") who are experiencing homelessness. Other contract holders send the quota of available vouchers to LAHSA for matching, giving LAHSA their criteria for eligibility (e.g., disability status, mental health condition, geographic location). In either scenario, whichever organization

¹³ [About CES](#), "Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, Los Angeles County Coordinated Entry System, (August 23, 2017). The way in which the assessment tool is currently being used for resource matching is undergoing revision; it is uncertain how and if it will be used in the future.

does the matching, matches the voucher to a person with high acuity who is experiencing homelessness. Exhibit 2.2 illustrates this process.

Exhibit 2.2: Process of Matching a Client to Housing Resources



A client matched to a voucher usually has a case manager, from a homeless service provider, DHS, DMH, or the VA. Our interviews with PHAs, homeless service providers, and the DMH confirmed that most homeless households referred to the voucher program during the study period had case managers.

For HUD-VASH vouchers, referrals are made by the VA health system, from one of several offices across Los Angeles County. After an intake team determines that a veteran is eligible for HUD-VASH, a case manager is assigned. Case managers are either on-staff social workers or staff of service provider organizations under contract to the VA.

Separate from LAHSA, the City of Long Beach has its own CoC, managed by the Long Beach Multi Service Center. Most households experiencing homelessness in the city are referred to the Center. The Long Beach CES is similar in concept to LAHSA's but operates on a much smaller scale.

Continuum of Care Vouchers

Voucher-like subsidies are also funded by the federal Continuum of Care (CoC) program. The federal funds go through the local planning organizations such as LAHSA. For the Los Angeles region, LAHSA has contracted with HACLA and LACDA to administer tenant-based CoC program vouchers. These vouchers follow essentially the same subsidy structure as HCVs. However, they do not use the PHA's waiting list and are not included in household-level data reported to HUD for HCVs. CoC vouchers are not included in this study of tenant-based vouchers.

3. How Many Vouchers Did PHAs Issue to People Experiencing Homelessness?

How many tenant-based vouchers that public housing authorities (PHAs) make available to people experiencing homelessness depends on two factors:

- (1) Special allocations of federal vouchers that are limited to people experiencing homelessness; for example, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development–U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers.
- (2) Preference systems for using HUD’s Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) that are at the discretion of the PHAs. PHAs may put a specific population, such as people experiencing homelessness, at the top of their waiting list for voucher assistance (*general preference*). Or PHAs might not rely on waiting lists but instead provide set numbers of vouchers for the clients in a specific program created by the PHA in partnership with a homeless service provider (*limited preference*, or “set-aside”).¹⁴

Section 3.1 describes Los Angeles PHAs’ preferences for people experiencing homelessness and shows the numbers of vouchers each PHA issued to households experiencing homelessness during the five-year study period of 2016-2020. Section 3.2 shows how issuances to homeless households varied from year to year.

3.1 Homeless Preferences and Vouchers Issued by PHAs

A voucher becomes available for use by a new household when a participating household exits the HCV program (“turnover” vouchers) or when new funding is provided by HUD to support additional vouchers. The number of HCVs a PHA can distribute varies from year to year, depending on turnover and on HUD-VASH or other new special-purpose funding made available by Congress.¹⁵

The number of vouchers made available through turnover is modest relative to the overall size of a PHA’s voucher program. Each PHA has a different HCV attrition rate, but the average length of participation for a household across all PHAs in the Los Angeles area has been *more than 13 years*, and the average time a household spends on the HCV waiting list *more than five and a half years*.¹⁶ Nonetheless, the largest of the Los Angeles PHAs had thousands of vouchers potentially available to issue to households experiencing homelessness.

¹⁴ Lauren Dunton et al., [Study of PHAs’ Efforts to Serve People Experiencing Homelessness](#), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2014.

¹⁵ A PHA might stop issuing turnover vouchers to new households for two reasons: Sometimes a PHA has exceeded the budget authority provided by HUD or fears that it might do so. Sometimes Congress appropriates insufficient funds to support PHAs’ current allocations of vouchers. The first occurred during the study period at both the Los Angeles County Development Authority and the Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach.

¹⁶ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, “[Picture of Subsidized Households](#) (POSH)” website, 2020. Includes 18 of the 19 PHAs highlighted in this study. No data are reported for Pomona in 2020.

3 HOW MANY VOUCHERS DID PHAS ISSUE TO PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS?

The largest PHAs in the Los Angeles region have strong preferences for people experiencing homelessness. *Through their preference systems they have made major commitments to use their tenant-based HCVs as part of the community-wide effort to address homelessness.* They also have accepted large allocations of HUD-VASH vouchers.¹⁷ Some PHAs set a *general preference*, which puts people experiencing homelessness at or near the top of the waiting list;¹⁸ others set a *limited preference*, which commits a large number of vouchers to them.

Most of the Los Angeles PHAs with homeless preferences require that households receiving the preference meet HUD's definition of homelessness (i.e., staying in shelter or in a place not intended for human habitation). Most PHAs with preferences rely on their partners to use the community's coordinated entry system (CES) to ensure that the highest-need individuals are matched to the housing resource. Some PHAs also require that homeless households qualifying for the preference have ongoing case management from a homeless service provider.

The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) has committed large numbers of vouchers to people experiencing homelessness through limited preferences totaling more than 5,900 vouchers. The Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA) has committed to using a percentage of vouchers that become available through turnover, growing from 35 percent in 2014 to 50 percent in 2017 and 100 percent by the end of the study period.¹⁹ The Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB) has a set-aside of 150 vouchers a year for people experiencing homelessness and also has a general preference that puts people experiencing homelessness in the same category as non-elderly people with disabilities. (See Appendix A for additional detail on the preference systems of PHAs in Los Angeles County.)

Across all PHAs in Los Angeles County, 12,768 tenant-based vouchers were issued to people experiencing homelessness across the five-year period from 2016 through 2020. Exhibit 3.1 shows the numbers of all issuances overall and of issuances to households experiencing homelessness for the three largest PHAs in Los Angeles County. During the five-year period, HACLA issued 7,033 vouchers to people experiencing homelessness, LACDA issued 4,328, and HACLB issued 1,211. (For other PHAs, see Appendix Exhibit D.1.a.)

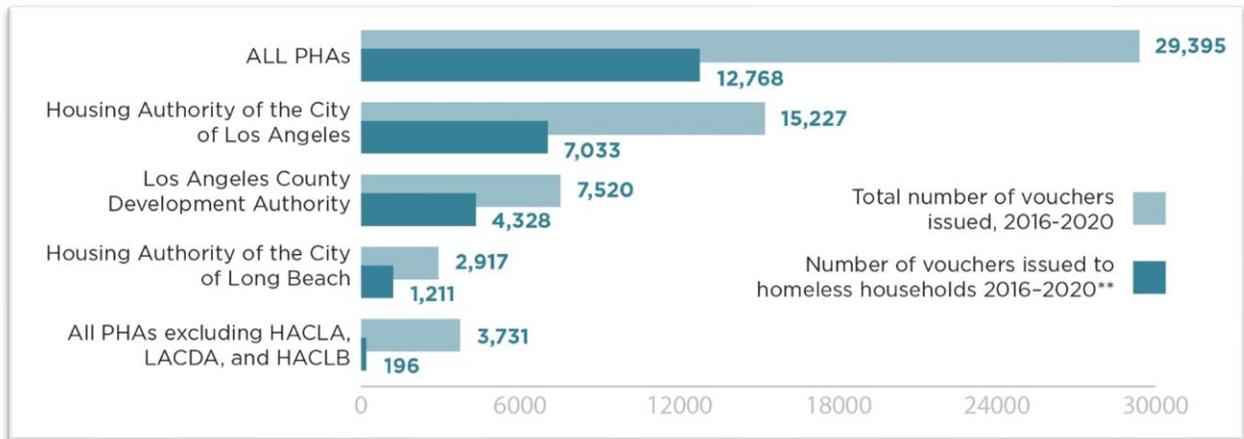
¹⁷ VASH allocations are based on both a formula based on relative need and an expression of interest by the PHA.

¹⁸ Another category of household might have a higher preference but include so few households that the preference for people experiencing homelessness is strong. Conversely, households experiencing homelessness might be grouped with another category with so many households that the preference for people experiencing homelessness is weak.

¹⁹ This approach does not fit well into HUD's definitions of general and limited preferences. When the commitment was 35 percent, it was like a limited preference. At 100 percent, it is like a general preference. HUD's regulations defining preference systems apply to other types of households besides households experiencing homelessness, and those regulations were developed before CES.

3 HOW MANY VOUCHERS DID PHAS ISSUE TO PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS?

Exhibit 3.1: Large PHAs' Overall Issuances of Vouchers and Issuances of Vouchers to People Experiencing Homelessness (2016-2020)



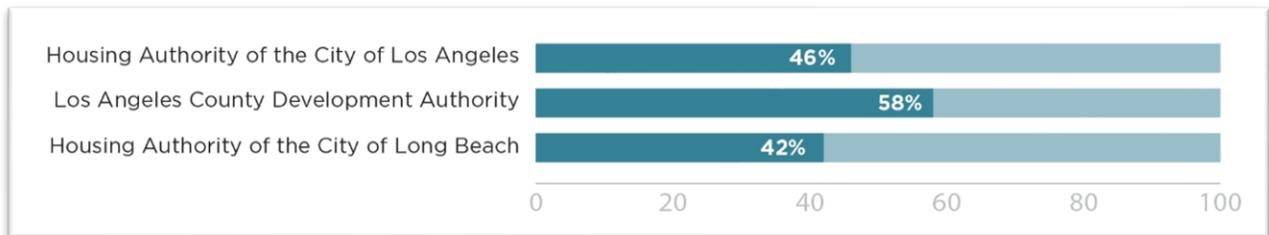
* The PHAs excluding HACLA, LACDA, and HA CLB are the Housing Authority of the City of Glendale, the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Monica, the City of Pasadena Housing Department, the Housing Authority of the City of Inglewood, the Housing Authority of the City of Burbank, the Housing Authority of the City of Pomona, the Housing Authority of the City of Baldwin Park, the City of Compton Housing Authority, the Housing Authority of the City of Norwalk, City of Hawthorne Housing Authority, the Housing Authority of the City of Torrance, the Housing Authority of the City of South Gate, the Housing Authority of the City of Redondo Beach, the Pico Rivero Housing Assistance Agency, the Culver City Housing Authority, the Housing Authority of the City of Hawaiian Gardens.

** Numbers of vouchers issued to households experiencing homelessness: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Includes all issuances, both observed and presumed. When a household is newly admitted to the program, we assume there was an issuance even if the 50058 data have no record of an issuance (Appendix C).

Source: Total number of vouchers (HCV and VASH): [HUD Picture of Subsidized Households database](#).

Across all PHAs in LA County, 43 percent of new voucher issuances were made to people experiencing homelessness (Exhibit 3.1). ***In addition to providing the largest numbers of tenant-based vouchers to people experiencing homelessness, HACLA, LACDA, and HA CLB devoted the largest percentages of their voucher issuances to this purpose.*** During 2016-2020, HACLA issued 46 percent of its new vouchers to households experiencing homelessness; LACDA, 58 percent; and Long Beach, 42 percent (Exhibit 3.2).

Exhibit 3.2: Percentages of New Voucher Issuances that Went to Homeless Households (2016-2020)



Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Includes all issuances, both observed and presumed (Appendix C).

In addition to preference systems, the numbers of vouchers issued to people experiencing homelessness were influenced by whether the PHA had a large VASH program. HACLA and LACDA have large VASH programs, both in absolute numbers and as percentages of their tenant-based vouchers. Of the

vouchers HACLA issued to households experiencing homelessness, 32 percent were VASH; for LACDA, 30 percent (Appendix Exhibit D.1.b).²⁰

3.2 Year-to-Year Variation in Issuance to Households Experiencing Homelessness

Voucher issuances to households experiencing homelessness by Los Angeles County PHAs varied over the 2016-2020 study period.

Number of Vouchers Issued

HACLA began its programs for people experiencing homelessness based on limited preferences for tenant-based vouchers in 1991, and the programs grew steadily over the next 15 years. By 2006, the set-asides had more than 4,000 vouchers. Though HACLA's homeless initiatives grew during the years of this study, the growth was mostly in limited preferences for project-based vouchers, the HUD-VASH program, and the Continuum of Care (CoC) program. That may help explain why the numbers of vouchers issued by HACLA to people experiencing homelessness did not grow steadily over the period (Exhibit 3.3).

LACDA's homeless vouchers dropped in 2017 because of a budget shortfall that forced the PHA to pause issuing turnover vouchers. The number then rebounded in 2018 and grew in 2019 as LACDA made a commitment to use all turnover vouchers to help people leave homelessness. Federal budget sequestration also affected the numbers of vouchers issued by HACLA in 2017.²¹ Numbers of vouchers issued to people experiencing homelessness then grew across all Los Angeles County PHAs in 2018 and 2019. In 2020, the Los Angeles County PHAs issued fewer vouchers because of staff shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Share of Vouchers Issued

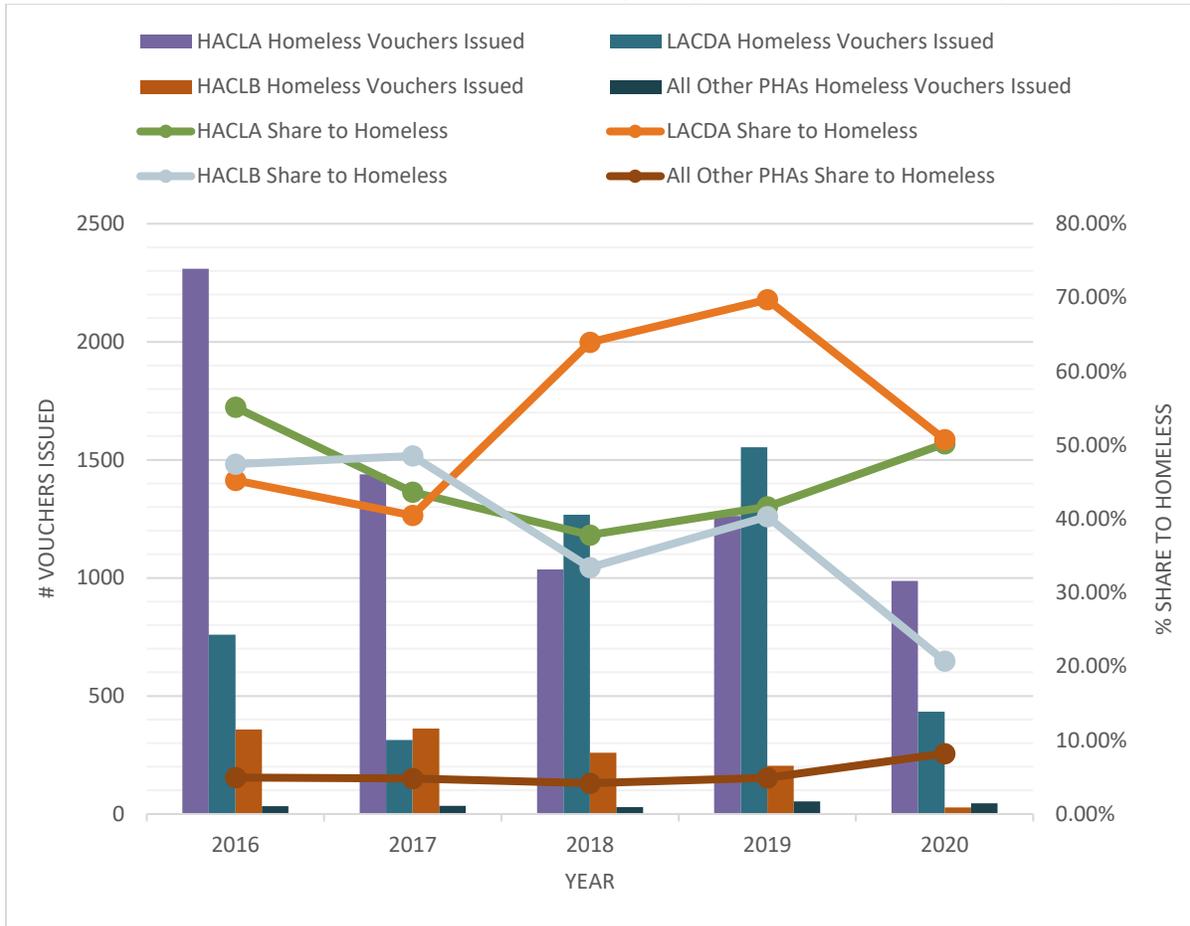
The share of all new issuances that went to people experiencing homelessness also rose at HACLA and LACDA over time. ***Over the past decade, HACLA and LACDA have been strong partners in Los Angeles community's effort to end homelessness.*** Analysis of administrative data shows that for the two years 2018-2019 when, according to LACDA staff, the policy for using turnover vouchers for people experiencing homelessness was "most aggressive," LACDA issued 2,821 vouchers to households experiencing homelessness. This was 50 percent of all tenant-based vouchers issued to households experiencing homelessness across all the Los Angeles PHAs during those two years. The next largest PHA in the region, HACLB, had no clear pattern in the share of vouchers it issued to households experiencing homelessness (Exhibit 3.3). HACLB appears to have had strong ties to its own CoC (separate from LAHSA) during the entire period.

²⁰ HACLB appears to have missing 50058 data on VASH, as the number of VASH issuances is much lower than reported by PHA staff in an interview. Across all PHAs in Los Angeles County, 15 percent of records noted that a voucher was associated with a special program such as VASH.

²¹ Douglas Rice, "Budget Cuts, Not Rent Aid, Forcing HUD Budget Cuts," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities website, October 30, 2017. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/budget-caps-not-rent-aid-forcing-hud-budget-cuts>

3 HOW MANY VOUCHERS DID PHAS ISSUE TO PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS?

Exhibit 3.3: Year-to-Year Variation in Issuances to People Experiencing Homelessness (2016-2020)



Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Includes all issuances, both observed and presumed (Appendix C).

4. Who Received Tenant-based Vouchers from the Los Angeles PHAs?

Once a household comes to the top of a waiting list through a general preference, is offered an opening in a set-aside of vouchers, or is referred by the Veterans Administration health system for the VASH program, the household must undergo eligibility screening before a voucher is issued. That screening can be difficult to navigate, especially for people experiencing homelessness. Section 4.1 describes how the process works for the Los Angeles public housing authorities (PHAs), based on interviews with staff of PHAs and Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) staff, homeless service providers, and people with lived experience of homelessness. Section 4.2 describes the demographic characteristics of the people experiencing homelessness who received vouchers and compares them with the characteristics of other households who received vouchers during the same five-year study period.

4.1 *Determining the Eligibility of Homeless Households Referred to the Los Angeles PHAs*

People experiencing homelessness often face challenges in navigating the application and eligibility screening processes for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. While the voucher application process may seem straightforward, several steps in the process can result in lengthy delays.

Retrieving or obtaining identity and financial documents can be difficult for people experiencing homelessness, as can enrolling and staying engaged in the necessary supportive services that may be required as part of the PHA's preference.

While a PHA staff member who works with new voucher applicants can help a person through applying and screening, it often is the case manager from the homeless service provider or health agency who helps the person fill out the voucher application and obtain the necessary eligibility documentation (i.e., Social Security card, state identification, homeless verification, income documents). For HUD-VASH, the intake team that refers veterans to the PHA for a voucher helps the veteran acquire the needed documentation to establish voucher eligibility before a case manager is assigned. Often the case manager reviews the application form and the documentation before submitting them to the PHA, to ensure they are complete. The PHA staff and case manager might coordinate efforts throughout. The VA has several staff members dedicated to working with the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) and the Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA).

The degree of coordination during the application process between the case manager and the PHA varies greatly by PHA and homeless service provider. ***The greater the coordination between case managers and PHA staff, the more quickly people experiencing homelessness can receive a voucher.*** For example, staff we interviewed at the Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB) said that many case managers referring households to the Long Beach program had already gathered most of the eligibility documentation needed before they referred the household to the PHA.²² This practice led

²² During 2020 and 2021, LAHSA and homeless service providers also have focused on having their clients become “document ready,” meaning clients would have obtained their documents prior to being matched to a

4 WHO RECEIVED TENANT-BASED VOUCHERS FROM THE LOS ANGELES PHAS?

to a quick voucher issuance after a referral. Long Beach also uses a “provisional voucher” that permits the applicant household to begin their housing search while the PHA waits for the documentation.

Streamlining application and eligibility screening can help expedite the issuance process. One PHA staff member said that their organization had cut the application packet in half to make it easier for all households to apply. Another had reduced the required documentation by verifying public records through a third party. Other PHAs made the application process easier by setting up appointment windows instead of exact appointment times for intake interviews.

PHAs have also pared back criminal background checks; for example, reducing the lookback period for reported criminal offenses. Other PHAs accept mitigations such as anger management training to address issues associated with previous arrests. Some PHAs do not screen an applicant’s credit history. If rental arrears are owed to PHAs, homeless service providers and PHAs can help pay owed rent.

Submitting the HCV application is easier when a case manager is allowed to receive communications about the application and sign documents for the household. At LACDA, case managers can submit the HCV application and required documentation through a secure email system to PHA staff.

However, difficulties in coordination and documentation requirements remain. PHAs reported it was difficult to reach households without access to email or a physical address and difficult for these households to acquire the necessary documentation.

Several PHA staff surmised that some homeless service providers had less capacity than others to help households gather necessary documentation. Similarly, homeless service providers noted discrepancies between PHAs or among the staff of a particular PHA in which documents were needed. Since PHAs and staff within a particular PHA administer the same program with the same requirements, staff would expect the process to be similar. *Both groups stressed that ongoing training was needed about application requirements and the steps necessary, to alleviate some of the difficulties households experiencing homelessness face in applying to the HCV program.*

Given how difficult receiving a voucher can be, it is possible that many of the households referred to the PHAs never receive a voucher.²³ PHA staff, however, said they believe almost all people who are referred to the PHA ultimately are issued a voucher. They said that a few people fail because they do not clear the criminal background checks, but the rest ultimately receive a voucher, although the voucher issuance process can take a long time.

Interviews with service providers give a somewhat different picture. One of the organizations interviewed for this study that had done some analysis on one of its programs reported that roughly 20

housing resource. The goal of having clients become “document ready” is that clients will then be able to move more quickly through the application and eligibility screening.

²³ Thus, the demographic characteristics of the households issued vouchers, as shown in Section 4.2 below, and characteristics across all households referred to the PHAs may differ. This study did not have the administrative data needed to assess any such difference definitively. It should be possible if referrals to the PHAs are entered into the Continuum of Care Homelessness Management Information System. However, that analysis would require a data use agreement with LAHSA (and the other Los Angeles Continuums of Care), which was not feasible within the scope of this study.

percent of people they referred to a PHA never received a voucher.²⁴ Of them, two-thirds never completed the paperwork, 22 percent were found not eligible, and 11 percent left the Los Angeles area. Another provider organization that predominantly serves unsheltered people experiencing homelessness reported that many people were lost during the voucher process because they no longer could be located.

4.2 *Demographic Characteristics of Households that Received Vouchers from the Los Angeles PHAs*

Across the United States, seven of every 10 people experiencing homelessness do so without children and usually alone.²⁵ The pattern is even stronger in the Los Angeles region, where eight in 10 people experiencing homelessness do so as an individual—that is, not part of a family with children.²⁶ The administrative dataset from the HCV program this study used has less information about household members at the time a voucher is issued and more information at the time a voucher is successfully used. Though we know the number of household members at the time the voucher is issued, we cannot determine from the dataset whether a voucher is issued to a household with children or to a household headed by an elderly person (i.e., age 62 or older).²⁷ However, we do know the number of people in the household and whether the household head or spouse has a disability, so we can assess the extent to which the households issued vouchers to help them leave homelessness are similar to the broader population of people experiencing homelessness in the Los Angeles region.

Between 2016 and 2020, more than two-thirds of new vouchers (71 percent) issued to homeless households by the Los Angeles PHAs were for households consisting of one person. This is somewhat lower than the 76 percent of individuals (adults 25+) among all people experiencing homelessness in the Los Angeles region.²⁸ However, the 71 percent does not include the large number of project-based vouchers HACLA has devoted to permanent supportive housing for people formerly experiencing homelessness. Most PSH is occupied by individuals.

²⁴ An early study of the HUD-VASH program, a randomized controlled trial, shows that only 78.6 percent of households randomized to receive a VASH voucher were issued a voucher by a PHA. The average time from random assignment to issuance was three months. Maria O’Connell, Wesley Kaspro, and Robert Rosenheck, “National Dissemination of Supported Housing in the VA: Model Adherence vs. Model Modification” *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 33:4 (2010), 301-319. Email communication with Robert Rosenheck, January 2022, confirmed the interpretation of the data presented by O’Connell et al.

²⁵ People considered individuals in the data on homelessness sometimes are homeless with another adult, but that happens infrequently. Meghan Henry, Tanya de Sousa, Caroline Roddey, Swati Gayen, and Thomas Joe Bednar, [The 2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report \(AHAR\) to Congress](#), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development (January 2021).

²⁶ “LAHSA’s (CA-600) Point-in-Time Count for January 2020,” <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/ahar/2020-ahar-part-1-pit-estimates-of-homelessness-in-the-us.html>

²⁷ If the household successfully uses the voucher, then information on each member’s age becomes available in the HUD 50058 data. Therefore, in Chapter 6 of this report, we report the percentages of households using vouchers by these categories: elderly, disabled, families with children, and other households.

²⁸ “[2020 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count—Los Angeles Continuum of Care \(CoC\)](#),” Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (June 22, 2020).

People with Disabilities

PHAs receive many referrals from coordinated entry systems (CES) that give priority to people with chronic patterns of homelessness and other people with substantial behavioral and physical health challenges.²⁹ HUD’s definition of chronic homelessness requires a person to have a disability. The two largest PHAs have substantial allocations of VASH vouchers, which are intended for veterans with psychiatric or substance use disorders identified as homeless and referred by the VA health care system. In addition, the two PHAs have been active participants in the effort to reduce chronic homelessness in the Los Angeles region, and many people referred for vouchers are identified by the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH) and the Department of Health Services (DHS).³⁰

The Prioritization System Can Be Confusing and Even Demeaning

“They put me in a system to see what I ranked: Are you more homeless than the next person? I believe I rated high. I didn’t know anyone here and I didn’t have anywhere to go.”

—Voucher User

Thirty-five (35) percent of households experiencing homelessness who were issued vouchers were single people with disabilities, and 36 percent were single people not identified by the PHA as having a disability (Exhibit 4.1 below).³¹ That only half of the one-person households were recorded in the HUD data as having a disability may indicate that the homeless service system uses a broader definition of “high needs” than the definition of disability used in the HCV program. The HCV program specifies that the disabling condition must be “expected to be of long-continued and indefinite duration” and substantially impede the person’s ability to live independently.³² The homeless service system’s assessment tool that determines a person’s acuity level asks questions about disability status and health conditions.³³ However, this assessment is not the same as a determination of disability such as that required by the Social Security Administration.

The percentages of single individuals with and without disabilities were higher for households experiencing homelessness than for other households that received vouchers from the PHAs. The greatest difference between households experiencing homelessness and other households is for single people without disabilities issued vouchers by LACDA (Exhibit 4.1).

²⁹ Nichole Fiore, Tanya de Sousa, Aubrey Sitler, Carol Wilkins, Brooke Spellman, Jill Khadduri, and Jessica Kerbo, [2019 Annual Report](#), Conrad N. Hilton Foundation Evaluation of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation Chronic Homelessness Initiative (Rockville, MD: April 1, 2020).

³⁰ Fiore et al., 2020.

³¹ HUD’s issuance data record disability only for the head of household.

³² U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Public and Indian Housing, [Family Report Instructions for Form HUD-50058](#) (November 2013).

³³ To assess an individual’s needs, homeless service providers use the VI-SPDAT, a universal assessment tool. This tool helps determine the level of services and housing interventions a person experiencing homelessness might need. The VI-SPDAT combines the Vulnerability Index (VI), a survey that measures the person’s chronicity and medical vulnerability, with the Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT), a longer and more intensive case management and intake tool used by service providers to help prioritize access to resources.

Exhibit 4.1: Percentages of New Vouchers Issued (2016-2020), by Household Type and Homeless Status

Household Type	All LA County PHAs		HACLA		LACDA		HACLB		Other LA County PHAs	
	Homeless	Other	Homeless	Other	Homeless	Other	Homeless	Other	Homeless	Other
One-person, Disabled	35%	28%	39%	29%	27%	17%	38%	32%	41%	32%
One person, Not Disabled	36%	23%	38%	25%	34%	18%	32%	22%	25%	24%
One-person Household (All)	71%	51%	77%	54%	62%	35%	70%	54%	66%	55%

Note: Figures may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Includes all issuances, both observed and presumed (Appendix C).

When asked whether people who did not make it through the issuance process were different from those who did, one service provider said that mental health and substance abuse challenges sometimes made it difficult to keep up the communication needed. She also said that sometimes it is just luck—whether the person already has obtained the needed documents. Another service provider said that “*sometimes people are just not ready to leave the streets and go into housing and take on responsibility.*”

Families with Children

The homeless services system in Los Angeles is thought by practitioners and researchers to be underserving families, especially Hispanic/Latino families. Families often experience hidden homelessness such as severe overcrowding that leads to sleeping in backyards or vehicles where they are not observed during Point-in-Time Counts.³⁴ Only 20 percent of people counted as homeless in the LAHSA’s 2020 Point-in-Time Count were people in families.³⁵

Without data on the age of household members, we can rely on household size data to assess how many voucher issuances may have gone to families with children. Households with three or more people are very likely to be families with children. Households with two people could be either two adults or one adult and a child.

About a third (29 percent) of new vouchers issued by all LA County PHAs to households experiencing homelessness went to households with two or more people. Almost a fifth (18 percent) went to households with three or more people. In contrast, almost half of vouchers issued to households not experiencing homelessness went to households with two or more people; nearly 29 percent went to households with three or more people. (Appendix Exhibit D.1.c)

The pattern for LACDA is somewhat different from the other PHAs. Thirty-eight (38) percent of vouchers LACDA issued to households experiencing homelessness went to households with two or more people; about 24 percent went to households with three or more people. During the study period,

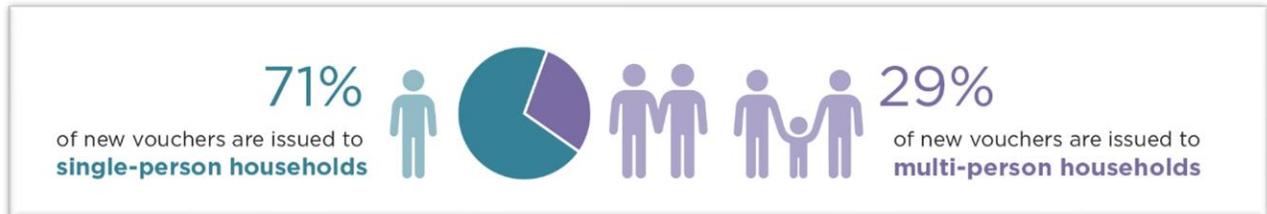
³⁴ Melissa Chinchilla, *Stemming the Rise of Latino Homelessness: Lessons from Los Angeles County*, Latino Policy and Politics Initiative (n.d.). Stephen J. Conroy and David M. Heer, “Hidden Hispanic Homelessness in Los Angeles: The “Latino Paradox” Revisited,” *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 25:4 (2003).

³⁵ “LAHSA’s (CA-600) Point-in-Time Count for January 2020,” <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/ahar/2020-ahar-part-1-pit-estimates-of-homelessness-in-the-us.html>

4 WHO RECEIVED TENANT-BASED VOUCHERS FROM THE LOS ANGELES PHAS?

LACDA issued many vouchers to households experiencing homelessness from its waiting list rather than through the CES. The relatively large number of multi-person households may reflect the types of households that typically work with homeless service providers and apply for housing assistance in the part of Los Angeles County that is not in the City of Los Angeles or another city.

Exhibit 4.2: Percentages of New Vouchers Issued for People Experiencing Homelessness (2016-2020), by Household Type



Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Includes all issuances, both observed and presumed (Appendix C).

Race and Ethnicity

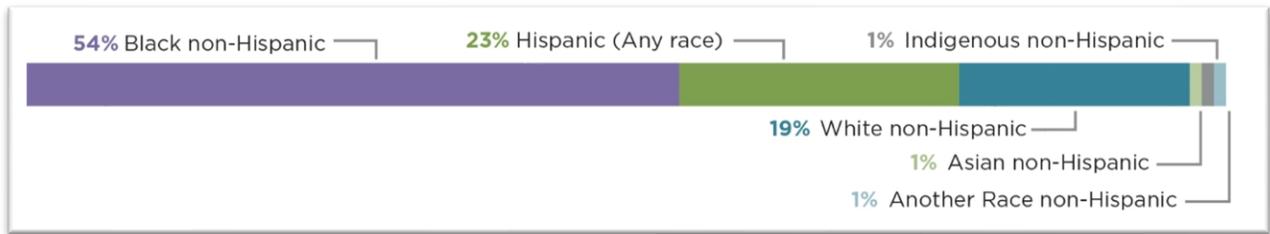
The racial/ethnic characteristics of people experiencing homelessness who are issued vouchers reflect the disproportionate representation of Black people among people experiencing homelessness in the Los Angeles region. According to the 2020 homeless Point-in-Time Count, about 34 percent of people experiencing homelessness in the Los Angeles region identify as Black/African American.³⁶

More than half of households experiencing homelessness issued vouchers by LA County PHAs between 2016 and 2020 were Black (Exhibit 4.3). This pattern is especially pronounced for HACLA, where 58 percent of households experiencing homelessness who were issued vouchers were Black. However, the share of Black households among households experiencing homelessness issued vouchers by HACLB and LACDA was also high, around 50 percent. Smaller PHAs issued a lower but still substantial shares of vouchers to Black households experiencing homelessness (44 percent). (Appendix Exhibit D.1.d)

When all voucher issuances across all the Los Angeles PHAs are summed, a high proportion of vouchers issued to households not experiencing homelessness also went to households identifying as Black (45 percent). The exception was LACDA, where the share of vouchers issued to Black households among those experiencing homelessness (48 percent) was lower than the share issued to Black households among those not experiencing homelessness (53 percent). LACDA issued vouchers to a larger share of households experiencing homelessness in which the household head was White and not Hispanic (18 percent) compared to the share of vouchers issued to similar households not experiencing homelessness (11 percent). Possibly, White non-Hispanic households are more likely to be referred to PHAs from the homeless services system than to seek housing assistance if they are not experiencing homelessness. (Appendix Exhibit D.1.d)

³⁶ [“2020 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count—Los Angeles Continuum of Care \(CoC\).”](#) Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (June 22, 2020).

Exhibit 4.3: Percentages of New Vouchers Issued for People Experiencing Homelessness (2016-2020), by Race and Ethnicity



Note: Figures may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Includes all issuances, both observed and presumed (Appendix C).

According to the 2020 homeless Point-in-Time Count, 36 percent of the homeless population are Hispanic/Latino.³⁷ However, only 23 percent of people experiencing homelessness who received a voucher from the Los Angeles PHAs were Hispanic/Latino (Exhibit 4.3). The low participation in public programs among Hispanic households is related to several issues, including fear of exposing the undocumented status of family members, information on programs not reaching the community, lack of cultural competence by public agencies, and language barriers.³⁸ Hispanic households experiencing homelessness may also have a lower rate of referrals to the PHAs because they are relatively younger and therefore less likely to be assessed as having physical health needs that make them vulnerable.³⁹

Asked what they did about households with undocumented or mixed status, service providers said they generally would be screened out by the CES assessment tool as not being eligible for the HCV program and referred to another program that does not require legal status.⁴⁰ Though the HCV program permits a mixed-status household to qualify for a voucher, the subsidy is based on just those members of the household with legal status. Service providers said that means that the housing unit that such a family can rent usually is not large enough for the household’s needs, so they do not refer such families to the PHA.

There was little difference in the share of vouchers that were issued to Hispanic household heads experiencing homelessness versus not experiencing homelessness across all Los Angeles PHAs from 2016 to 2020 (Appendix Exhibit D.1.d).

³⁷ “[PIT Inflow and Annualized Estimate.](#)” Los Angeles Homeless Services Data & Research (June 1, 2020).

³⁸ Melissa Chinchilla, *Stemming the Rise of Latino Homelessness: Lessons from Los Angeles County*, Latino Policy and Politics Initiative (n.d.). Stephen J. Conroy and David M. Heer, “Hidden Hispanic Homelessness in Los Angeles: The “Latino Paradox” Revisited,” *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 25:4 (2003). . Conversation with Melissa Chinchilla (January 2022).

³⁹ Conversation with Melissa Chinchilla (January 2022).

⁴⁰ For example, the Flexible Housing Subsidy Program funded by Los Angeles County Department of Health Services.

4 WHO RECEIVED TENANT-BASED VOUCHERS FROM THE LOS ANGELES PHAS?

Across the United States and Canada, Indigenous people experience homelessness at disproportionate rates compared with their share of the overall population.⁴¹ In the Los Angeles region, few people identify as Indigenous, about 1.4 percent of people experiencing homelessness.⁴² Similarly, only a small number of households identifying as Indigenous are served by the PHAs in the Los Angeles region.⁴³ However, a higher percentage of vouchers were issued to people experiencing homelessness who identified as Indigenous compared to the percentage issued to people not experiencing homelessness (1.4 percent vs 0.6 percent) (Appendix Exhibit D.1.d).

⁴¹ Marybeth Shinn and Jill Khadduri. *In the Midst of Plenty: Homelessness and What to Do About It* (Wiley Blackwell, 2020).

⁴² “2020 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count—Los Angeles Continuum of Care (CoC),” Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. <https://www.lahsa.org/documents?id=4585-2020-greater-los-angeles-homeless-count-los-angeles-continuum-of-care-coc>

⁴³ We define Indigenous as Native American, Alaskan native, Hawaiian native, or other Pacific Islanders.

Implementation of Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs) by Los Angeles PHAs

In May of 2021, HUD allocated 6,806 Emergency Housing Vouchers to PHAs in the Los Angeles region. These vouchers must be used for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness or for victims of domestic violence. HUD required PHAs to sign Memoranda of Understanding with their local CoCs. HACLA received 3,365 EHVs and LACDA received 1,964, the second and fourth largest allocations in the United States. The next largest allocation in Los Angeles County, 582 units, was to Long Beach, which has its own CoC. Most of the other PHAs in the region received small allocations.

The Memoranda between LAHSA and HACLA and LACDA state that EHVs will be used by households referred to the PHAs through CES. LAHSA has established three priority levels, in interim guidance published in September 2021. The first group is for people seeking an emergency transfer from HUD-assisted housing because they are at risk of violence if they remain. This is likely to be relatively few households. The second priority group is broader and includes recently homeless households that have a time-limited rental subsidy (the type of subsidy often known as “rapid re-housing”) and need a permanent housing subsidy (i.e., a housing voucher) to avoid returning to homelessness. The second group also includes households whose emergency housing facilities are closing (probably referring to the hotels that provided shelter during the pandemic under Project Roomkey), households with long stays in emergency shelter, and households that have case managers. The third priority group is other people currently experiencing homelessness or who have recently experienced homelessness; these households are unlikely to be reached because in Los Angeles the number of people in the second group is large

EHVs come with some incentives for landlords not found in the regular HCV program. Payment standards can be up to 120 percent of Fair Market Rent, and landlords can receive a signing bonus of \$2,500.

The process for issuing vouchers has also been streamlined. Issuances are permitted based on self-certification of identity, Social Security number, and homeless status. The LAHSA guidance requires documentation but only after 90 days.

The federal appropriation for EHVs requires that all vouchers must be leased up by September 2023. HUD has established incentives for the community for rapid lease-up and a dashboard that tracks progress.

As of March 14, 2022, HACLA had issued 1,356 of its 3,365 vouchers and had 56 lease-ups. LACDA had issued 1,339 of its 1,964 vouchers and 229 lease-ups. HA CLB had issued 270 of its 582 vouchers and had 52 lease-ups.²

In an interview with LACDA staff in March 2022, we learned that LAHSA was sending referrals on a weekly basis.³ So far, many of the EHV issuances were for people referred by LAHSA who were at risk of homelessness because their current rent subsidy would expire or their Roomkey project would close. LACDA staff attributed the large number of issuances in part to the assignment of many staff to this effort. Another factor could be that many of these households already are housed in a set location, so working with them through the EHV application and eligibility process might be easier for case managers than working with someone who is experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Getting from issuance to lease-up had been challenging in the difficult Los Angeles housing market, according to LACDA staff. LACDA was using the \$2,500 signing bonus and also was offering the landlord up to three month’s rent or \$5,000 to bring newly leased units up to HUD’s Housing Quality Standards. However, the new EHVs were competing for housing units with other programs, including the CoC program, the regular HCV program, and programs providing temporary rent subsidies.

In contrast to LAHSA, the Long Beach CoC (the Multi-Service Center) was referring mainly high-needs people currently experiencing homelessness. Referrals had been slow as of March 2022, in part because of a delay in signing the contract with the provider of case management. Many more referrals were expected. The PHA was willing to move forward with an issuance if the household could prove identity and legal status but was reluctant to sign a Housing Assistance Payments contract without full documentation of eligibility. A few referrals had been from a short-term subsidy program with a lower housing quality standard, and the PHA was considering using some of its EHV funding for a forgivable loan program to bring the units up to the Housing Quality Standards.

¹ LAHSA. Interim Prioritization and Matching for Permanent Housing for HUD’s Emergency Housing Vouchers Program. September 29, 2021.

² HUD Emergency Housing Voucher Dashboard. https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/ehv/dashboard. Data accessed on March 15, 2022.

³ The Abt evaluation team was not able to conduct an interview with HA CLA staff on EHVs.

5. How Successful Were People Experiencing Homelessness in Using Their Vouchers?

To use a tenant-based voucher, a household must find an eligible unit that meets several criteria. The unit must have a rent that can be reached with the maximum subsidy permitted by the payment standard set by the public housing authority (PHA),⁴⁴ and the unit must pass an inspection against HUD's Housing Quality Standards (HQS). The landlord must be willing to accept the voucher subsidy as part of the rent, have the unit inspected, and otherwise work with the PHA. Households experiencing homelessness may have special challenges using their vouchers—for example, if they have limited previous experience becoming leaseholders or if landlords perceive that they will not be good tenants. However, people who are staying in shelter or on the street may be highly motivated to find housing and therefore work hard searching for available rental units and finding a landlord that will accept a voucher. Furthermore, people who are referred to a PHA through the community's homeless service system or through the Veterans Administration health system typically have case managers, part of whose job is to help their clients find housing and succeed in using their vouchers. With the help of those case managers, households using vouchers to leave homelessness might have an easier time finding rental units.

A study conducted 20 years ago at 50 large, urban PHAs found an overall lease-up success rate of 69 percent across all of the 50 PHAs and 47 percent for the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA). The study was not able to determine whether people experiencing homelessness referred to the voucher program had higher or lower success rates than people not experiencing homelessness at the time they received a voucher. However, the study found that households that had no children, no elderly members, and no members with a disability, a group that made up 9 percent of all voucher holders, had a lower success rate in using their vouchers. These households were likely to be headed by men, to be between 45 and 61 years old, to have moved ahead on the waiting list as the result of a preference for people experiencing homelessness, and to have zero income.⁴⁵

Other studies that have tracked people with severe mental illness who were randomly assigned to receive tenant-based vouchers and case management have found success rates greater than is typical. One study with a small sample was conducted in San Diego, California, where 80 percent of such people assigned vouchers were able to use them. A demonstration of housing and services for people with severe mental illness found very high success rates for people issued tenant-based vouchers in eight of the nine participating cities; the exception was Honolulu, Hawaii.⁴⁶ A study of VA Supportive

⁴⁴ The PHA may sign HAP contracts for units with rents above the payment standard, with the household paying the extra rent. However, this option is limited, especially for households with little income, because the household must not be paying more than 40 percent of its gross income.

⁴⁵ Many of these households were in New York City, which had an overall lease-up success rate of 57 percent. That a household received a homeless preference had no statistically detectable effect on their success. Meryl Finkel and Larry Buron, *Study on Section 8 Voucher Success Rates, Volume I: Quantitative Study of Success Rates in Metropolitan Areas*, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research (2001).

⁴⁶ Sandra Newman and Howard Goldman, "Housing Policy for Persons with Severe Mental Illness," *The Policy Studies Journal*, 37:2 (2009).

Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers with a large, national sample found that 82 percent of those assigned to the program received a voucher of those who were issued a voucher, the success rate was 96 percent.⁴⁷

This chapter first describes the process of leasing up with a voucher, based on interviews with PHA and service provider staff. Section 5.1 describes the incentives that have been made available by Los Angeles County to encourage landlords to rent their units to people experiencing homelessness. Section 5.2 presents the results of analysis of the extent to which households issued vouchers by the Los Angeles PHAs succeed in using them. The section focuses how successful in using vouchers different types of households were, including by race/ethnicity. Section 5.3 shows how long it takes from issuance of the voucher to lease-up for households that successfully use a voucher. Section 5.4 describes the locations where people formerly experiencing homelessness used their vouchers, focusing on the extent to which they are concentrated in specific parts of Los Angeles County and in specific types of neighborhoods.

5.1 Assistance during the Lease-Up Process

Immediately following the issuance of a voucher, a household can begin their search for a rental unit that qualifies for the program. During the period covered by this study, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA), the Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA), and the Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB) all had policies that a household had six months (180 days) to find a unit. The payment standards used by HACLA and LACDA as of 2021 were \$1,764 for a one-bedroom unit and \$2,248 for a two-bedroom unit, approximately 10 percent above the Fair Market Rents (FMRs) published by HUD for the Los Angeles metropolitan area that year.⁴⁸

One- and two-bedroom units are the sizes for which households experiencing homelessness typically are eligible. Because the Los Angeles region has few efficiency/studio (zero-bedroom) housing units, the PHAs issue a one-bedroom voucher for a single individual. If the person finds

The HCV Lease-Up Process

When a household identifies a suitable unit, the landlord and potential tenant complete a request for tenancy approval and submit it to the PHA along with a blank lease and a tentative move-in date. The landlord may conduct additional tenant screening at this time.

The PHA then reviews the lease, conducts a rent reasonableness assessment, and initiates an inspection against HUD's Housing Quality Standards (HQS).

When the unit passes inspection and the rent is found to be reasonable for the area, within the PHA's payment standards, and affordable to the tenant, the PHA executes a **housing assistance payment (HAP) contract** with the owner and the tenant signs the lease. This completes the lease-up process, and the tenant can move into the unit.

⁴⁷ Maria O'Connell, Wesley Kaspro, and Robert Rosenheck, "National Dissemination of Supported Housing in the VA: Model Adherence vs. Model Modification," *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 33:4 (2010), 301-319.

⁴⁸ This is the maximum payment standard permitted by federal regulations, although PHAs are allowed to set higher "exception" payment standards in special circumstances.

5 HOW SUCCESSFUL WERE PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN USING THEIR VOUCHERS?

an efficiency/studio unit, the payment standard is lower.⁴⁹ Santa Monica had slightly higher payment standards than other areas in Los Angeles County, and Long Beach was using Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMR), with average payment standards of \$1,743 for a one bedroom and \$2,257 for a two bedroom. As of 2020, neither HACLA nor LACDA was using SAFMRs.

(See Appendix B for payment standards of the other PHAs in Los Angeles County.)

According to HACLA staff, households experiencing homelessness may be permitted “exception” payment standards 10 percent higher than the published payment standard. Because of budget shortfalls, LACDA has at times been more restrictive and not permitted this exception.

Help Provided by Case Managers and Leasing Services

When a household has a case manager from a homeless service provider, the case manager can help the household in their housing search, offer information about neighborhood amenities and proximity to services, and help negotiate with landlords. When an individual or household head has an ongoing relationship with a case manager, the landlord can be assured the case manager will be available to help address issues that may arise after the household moves in.

In an interview conducted for this study, a program manager at one of the service providers described the support her staff provides during the lease-up process:

[We] call landlords for them, call on their behalf, we do anything and everything. Nothing is done alone, but we've never given a client a voucher and left them to it. Once we find a unit, we work with the landlord to connect the client, we submit the [Request for Tenancy Approval]. Once we submitted an RFTA, that starts the leasing process, and it can take about five days for the Authority to agree on an inspection with the landlord.

Case managers and households use various tools to find rental units in Los Angeles County, such as Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist, Zillow, and driving around communities looking for rental signs. Most service provider staff interviewed also described relying on relationships that they created with landlords in the community. Some staff explained that they would reach out to their current clients' landlords or landlords they have worked with in the past to see whether they have any rental vacancies. Case managers often help households contact landlords and management companies of rental units, and they accompany households to view units.

People Experiencing Homelessness Face Barriers in Applying for Units

“It was hard becoming document-ready. I didn't have a rent history or a credit score, I would have had voucher assistance and they would [have] need[ed] those things to show that I would be a respectable tenant.”

—Voucher User

⁴⁹ PHAs have discretion over the payment standard they assign depending on the household's size and configuration. HACLA, LACDA, and HACLB confirmed that they issue one-bedroom vouchers to single people, rather than zero-bedroom vouchers, because few affordable studio apartments exist in Los Angeles.

Some Voucher Users Complained about Lack of Help from the PHA during Lease-Up

“No, it’s ridiculous, they don’t help you, don’t give you options, you have to look [for a unit] on your own. You can only find [units] on Section8.com and they’re all in bad areas. I didn’t have any guidance, so I started calling random places. I would say this would be the hardest part [of the lease-up process]. I would ask, ‘Hi, I was wondering if you accept Section 8?’”

— Voucher User

One case manager described using private rental companies to find housing units for her clients. However, she explained that trying to recruit property managers from large buildings is more difficult than recruiting “mom and pop” owners of rental housing. Her housing search work with clients starts with an intake interview that reviews the household’s preferences for housing amenities, neighborhood characteristics, and accessibility features. She works mainly with people in South Los Angeles, and most of her clients prefer to stay in that area.

The household and the case manager may make use of LeaseUp, an online rental search platform operated by People Assisting the Homeless (PATH) and funded by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)

starting in 2018 and more recently by private philanthropy. LeaseUp staff recruit landlords from across Los Angeles County to list their rental unit there and agree to rent to households experiencing homelessness and to accept housing subsidies. Case managers from any homeless service provider have free access to LeaseUp and work with clients to search for rental units. When recruiting landlords, LeaseUp staff highlight the permanence of a rental subsidy (such as a federal voucher) and that clients will be supported by a case manager should any issues arise. LeaseUp also offers financial incentives to landlords for listing their unit on the platform, including unit holding fees, vacancy loss fees, and any damage costs. Landlords sign a participation agreement with LeaseUp and agree to have lower standards for credit and rental history when reviewing the rental applications of voucher holders.

According to interviews with PHA staff, many of the households experiencing homelessness issued vouchers by HACLA are referred to LeaseUp. According to an interview with a homeless service provider, landlords recruited by LeaseUp come prepared to work with voucher holders.

Case Manager Support Can Be Critical to Navigating Application and Lease-Up Process

“Joe [the case manager] is really awesome, I never have to call anyone else above him, and he always gets back to me, even when he’s on vacation... He bent over backwards to support me during the COVID pandemic.”

—Voucher User

For a veteran who receives a HUD-VASH voucher, a case management team is assigned to assist them through the voucher issuance process. Because HUD-VASH is permanent supportive housing, the team includes clinical staff in addition to a social worker who helps with housing navigation.

In our interviews, people with lived experience exiting homelessness with a voucher stated that support from their case manager was important to navigate application and housing search as well as to provide overall support.

However, households’ experiences with case managers vary;

one household might have a positive experience and their case manager help them find housing; others might not.

Landlord Incentives

In 2016, LACDA established the Homeless Incentive Program (HIP), funded by Measure H, a local sales tax dedicated to the funding of homeless services and housing, and available to all the Los Angeles PHAs. HIP has been used by HACLA, LACDA, HACLB, and the Redondo Beach PHA. HIP provides private-market landlords with financial incentives for agreeing to rent units to people experiencing homelessness who have federal rental subsidies, including VASH and the Continuum of Care program. HIP provides unit-holding fees, security deposits, damage mitigation, rental application fees, credit checks, and utilities arrears mitigation. During 2019-2020, HIP assisted 2,277 households.⁵⁰ As of late 2021, HACLA reported that 1,100 households experiencing homelessness who were using a HACLA subsidy had benefitted from HIP funding.⁵¹

5.2 How Well Do Households Experiencing Homelessness Succeed in Using Tenant-based Vouchers in Los Angeles?

The analysis of household-level administrative data shows that almost two-thirds of all households that received tenant-based vouchers from the Los Angeles County PHAs during 2016-2020 succeeded in using them to rent housing. **For households experiencing homelessness, the success rate was 65 percent. For households not experiencing homelessness at the time they received a voucher, the success rate was 61 percent** (Exhibit 5.1). Thus, it appears that having a case manager is helpful and that the incentives for landlords implemented in recent years may have increased the number willing to rent to people they know have experienced homelessness. Interviews with PHA staff supported the finding that the help people receive from case managers in the lease-up process can be important. Motivation to leave homelessness is also a factor. One staff member at a homeless service provider said, “Generally, people who make it through the process [of obtaining a voucher] are ready to be housed and motivated to find housing.”

Landlords Perceive People Experiencing Homelessness as Challenging Tenants

“The response I got back from the landlord was that I was wasting her time due to it not being a good fit. She completely ripped me a new one, but you’re not going to call me all those names for taking a subpar unit.”

— Voucher User

Exhibit 5.1: Lease-Up Success Rates for New Households Issued Vouchers (2016-2020), by Homeless Status

PHA	Vouchers Issued to Homeless Households (#)	Lease-Up Rate for Homeless Households Issued Vouchers (%)	Lease-Up Rate for Other Households Issued Vouchers (%)
All LA County PHAs	11,771	65%	61%
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)	6,276	63%	63%
Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA)	4,235	67%	51%

⁵⁰ [Quarterly Report # 18](#),” The Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative (November 2020).

⁵¹ “[Homeless Initiatives](#),” Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (October 2021).

5 HOW SUCCESSFUL WERE PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN USING THEIR VOUCHERS?

Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB)	1,087	62%	59%
All LA County PHAs Excluding HACLA, LACDA, and HACLB	173	73%	64%

Note: Included in All LA County PHAs but not shown separately: the Housing Authority of the City of Glendale, the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Monica, the City of Pasadena Housing Department, the Housing Authority of the City of Inglewood, the Housing Authority of the City of Burbank, the Housing Authority of the City of Pomona, the Housing Authority of the City of Baldwin Park, the City of Compton Housing Authority, the Housing Authority of the City of Norwalk, City of Hawthorne Housing Authority, the Housing Authority of the City of Torrance, the Housing Authority of the City of South Gate, the Housing Authority of the City of Redondo Beach, the Pico Rivero Housing Assistance Agency, the Culver City Housing Authority, the Housing Authority of the City of Hawaiian Gardens.

Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Includes observed issuances only. When the data have a lease-up record but no record of an issuance, we could not include that household in the calculations of success rates. Therefore, the numbers of issuances in this exhibit are slightly lower than the numbers in Exhibit 3.1 (see Appendix C).

The success rate for households issued a voucher at HACLA both experiencing homelessness and not experiencing homelessness was 63 percent. Over the five-year period 2016-2020, the success rate for households experiencing homelessness issued vouchers by HACLA was similar every year.

The success rate for LACDA was somewhat higher than for HACLA: 67 percent of households experiencing homelessness who were issued vouchers by LACDA succeeded in using them. The success rate for other households issued vouchers by LACDA was much lower, 51 percent. The success rate for homeless households issued vouchers by LACDA reached 74 percent in 2018 and 71 percent in 2019.

HACLB’s success rate for households experiencing homelessness who were issued vouchers was 62 percent, similar to HACLA’s 63 percent. The success rate for other households issued vouchers by HACLB was somewhat lower, 59 percent. (For other PHAs, see Appendix Exhibit D.2.a.)

Success rates for people experiencing homelessness were high across racial/ethnic groups—for example, 66 percent for households identifying as Black non-Hispanic, 66 percent for Hispanic/Latino households of any race, and 60 percent for White non-Hispanic households (Exhibit 5.2). **Black and Hispanic households had higher rates of success if they were using vouchers to leave homelessness than if they were not. Case managers may have helped Black and Hispanic voucher holders overcome barriers to leasing up.**

Exhibit 5.2: Lease-Up Success Rates for New Households Issued Vouchers (2016-2020), by Race/Ethnicity

Racial/Ethnic Category	New Vouchers Issued to Homeless Households (#)	Lease-Up Rate for Homeless Households Issued Vouchers (%)	New Vouchers Issued to Other Households (#)	Lease-Up Rate for Other Households Issued Vouchers (%)
Black non-Hispanic	6,289	66%	5,527	58%
Hispanic (any race)	2,783	66%	3,283	59%
White non-Hispanic	2,258	60%	2,710	68%
Asian non-Hispanic	174	67%	652	65%
Indigenous non-Hispanic	176	56%	69	55%
Other non-Hispanic	91	65%	36	56%

Note: The Indigenous category is households identifying as Native American, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander. The Other category includes people identifying as mixed race.

5 HOW SUCCESSFUL WERE PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN USING THEIR VOUCHERS?

Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Includes observed issuances only. When the data have a lease-up record but no record of an issuance, we could not include that household in the calculations of success rates. Therefore, the numbers of issuances in this exhibit are slightly lower than the numbers in Exhibit 3.1 (see Appendix C).

Success rates were similar for all types of households identifiable from the issuance data—that is, households of different sizes and with and without disabilities (see Appendix Exhibit D.2.b). Most three-person households probably are families with children. Lease-up rates are high even for this group.

5.3 How Long Does It Take for People Experiencing Homelessness to Find Housing?

Typically, PHAs give households three months (90 days) to find a housing unit and submit a Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA), often extended to six months (180 days) if the PHA believes the household to be actively searching for housing. The clock stops during the period when an RFTA has been presented to the PHA and the PHA is inspecting the housing unit and determining whether the landlord’s rent is reasonable. It starts again if the housing is not accepted into the program and the household must search for another unit. The administrative data show that the PHAs often gave additional time to households attempting to use a voucher.

For households that successfully lease-up, the average time between voucher issuance and lease-up is 122 days for households experiencing homelessness and 113 days for other households. Ten (10) percent of households experiencing homelessness required more than 234 days to lease up, and 10 percent of other households required more than 227 days. We found many additional lease-ups by using a 365-day cut-off for measuring lease-ups instead of the 180-day cut-off often used to measure success rates.⁵²

Exhibit 5.3: Time from Issuance to Lease-Up for Households Issued Vouchers (2016-2020), by Homeless Status

PHA	Days to Lease-Up for Homeless Households		Days to Lease-Up for Other Households	
	Average	Median	Average	Median
All LA County PHAs	122	106	113	97
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)	122	109	126	114
Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA)	125	107	111	90
Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB)	110	97	119	107
Other LA County PHAs	86	76	84	63

Note: Included in All LA County PHAs but not shown separately: the Housing Authority of the City of Glendale, the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Monica, the City of Pasadena Housing Department, the Housing Authority of the City of Inglewood, the Housing Authority of the City of Burbank, the Housing Authority of the City of Pomona, the Housing Authority of the City of Baldwin Park, the City of Compton Housing Authority, the Housing Authority of the City of Norwalk, City of Hawthorne Housing Authority, the Housing Authority of the City of Torrance, the Housing Authority of the City of South Gate, the Housing Authority of the City of Redondo Beach, the Pico Rivero Housing Assistance Agency, the Culver City Housing Authority, the Housing Authority of the City of Hawaiian Gardens.

⁵² Finkel and Buron (2001) use 180 days, as does analysis under way by the Furman Center at New York University.

5 HOW SUCCESSFUL WERE PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN USING THEIR VOUCHERS?

Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Includes only observed issuances with observed admissions. When the data have a lease-up record but no record of an issuance, we could not include that household in the calculations of success rates. Therefore, the numbers of issuances in this exhibit are slightly lower than the numbers in Exhibit 3.1 (Appendix C).

Times to lease-up were similar for most types of households and were similar for households with different racial/ethnic identities (see Appendix Exhibits D.3.b and D.3.c).

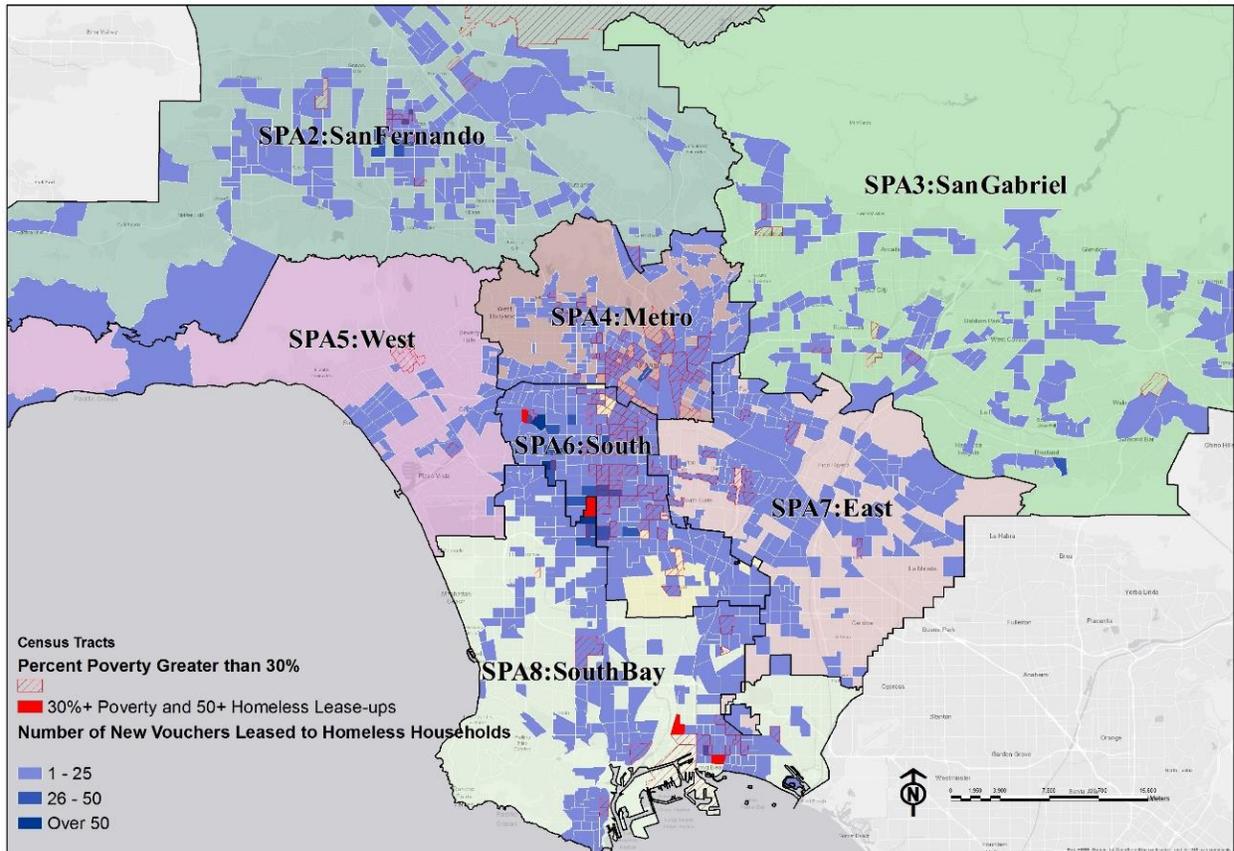
Service providers often had a different perception of success rates for households issued vouchers. Without having analyzed data, they suggested much lower success rates for people experiencing homelessness. This may reflect the tendency for people asked retrospective questions to remember problems. Or some of the households that ultimately used their vouchers may have lost contact with their case managers before finally leasing up.

5.4 *Where Do Households Leaving Homelessness Use Their Vouchers?*

Housing units with tenant-based vouchers are heavily concentrated in some parts of the Los Angeles region, and that is even more prevalent for vouchers used by people leaving homelessness. The imperative for both the household experiencing homelessness and a case manager helping with housing search is to secure a permanent housing unit. The map in Exhibit 5.4 shows large concentrations of units rented by formerly homeless people in some census tracts in the City of Los Angeles and in Long Beach. Those same neighborhoods have large numbers of other households assisted with vouchers, but the concentration is not nearly as great (see Appendix Exhibit D.3.d). People leaving homelessness with a voucher explained that they sometimes had to make tradeoffs between the location they wanted and the imperative to find permanent housing and leave homelessness.

A program manager from the largest VA campus in the region, located in West Los Angeles, said that most veterans want to live as close as possible to that campus, but that it is extremely difficult to find housing in which to use a voucher in that area.

Exhibit 5.4: Number of Vouchers Leased to Homeless Households in Central LA County Census Tracts and Tracts with Poverty Rates Greater than 30 Percent (2016-2020)



Source: Poverty rates are from the 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Voucher lease-ups are from HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Includes all observed admissions (see Appendix C).

For both formerly homeless and other households in the Los Angeles region, many voucher units are in areas of concentrated poverty, census tracts in which 30 percent or more of the population is living below the federal poverty level. A poverty rate above 40 percent is considered an area of extreme poverty concentration and is often a census tract with a large public housing or Section 8 development⁵³—that is, not private market housing available to a household attempting to use a tenant-based voucher.

⁵³ Paul A. Jargowsky, *Poverty and Place: Ghettos, Barrios, and the American City*. Russell Sage Foundation, 1997.

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Eighteen (18) percent of households who recently experienced homelessness were using vouchers in areas where between 30 and 40 percent of the population is living in poverty; 12 percent were in tracts where more than 40 percent is (Exhibit 5.5). In contrast only 14 percent of households who had not recently experienced homelessness used their vouchers in tracts with poverty rates between 30 and 40 percent; only 5 percent were in tracts with rates higher than 40 percent (Appendix Exhibit D.3.d). For context, only 8 percent of all renter households across Los Angeles County are living in tracts with poverty rates 30 percent or greater.⁵⁴

People with lived experience leaving homelessness with vouchers said that they wanted to move to safer neighborhoods with less crime but believed they had to compromise on location to use their vouchers. Some voucher users in neighborhoods without concentrated poverty appreciated the greater safety compared with where they had experienced homelessness. Others felt uncomfortable because they lacked social connections and they perceived hostility from some neighbors based on their race.

Concentrations of voucher users who were experiencing homelessness when the vouchers were issued are greatest in Long Beach, where 27 percent of formerly homeless households were in areas with poverty rates between 30 and 40 percent, and another 11 percent were in tracts in which more than 40 percent of the population was living in poverty (Exhibit 5.5).

Exhibit 5.5: Neighborhood Poverty Concentrations of Formerly Homeless Households Using Tenant-based Vouchers (2016-2020)

PHA	Tract less than 10% poverty	Tract greater than 10%, less than 20% poverty	Tract greater than 20%, less than 30% poverty	Tract greater than 30%, less than 40% poverty	Tract greater than 40% poverty
All LA County PHAs	7%	27%	36%	18%	12%
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)	5%	26%	38%	18%	14%
Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA)	11%	30%	34%	16%	9%
Housing Authority City of the City of Long Beach (HACLB)	5%	19%	37%	27%	11%
All Other LA County PHAs	14%	45%	30%	3%	8%

Note: Included in All LA County PHAs but not shown separately: the Housing Authority of the City of Glendale, the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Monica, the City of Pasadena Housing Department, the Housing Authority of the City of Inglewood, the Housing Authority of the City of Burbank, the Housing Authority of the City of Pomona, the Housing Authority of the City of Baldwin Park, the City of Compton Housing Authority, the Housing Authority of the City of Norwalk, City of Hawthorne Housing Authority, the Housing Authority of

Using a Voucher in the “Ghetto”

“When I was told, ‘Hey, we have a place for you,’ I didn’t want to live in that location because of gangs, drug dealers, and that kind of thing. But when you don’t have a choice, you don’t have a choice. The availability [of units] is in the ghetto, which leaves no choice. A one bedroom wasn’t enough for me and my vision situation. One bedrooms were small in general, small square footage even without a little extra I need for my equipment. Should I move to the outskirts of LA? But where I was connected in the community is in the South LA area, and we do a lot of community advocacy and our networks are here. It doesn’t mean I don’t want to be safe. I want to be able to walk and exercise in my neighborhood without a gun, without pepper spray or a taser. I want to be able to do this where I live.”

—Voucher User

⁵⁴ American Community Survey 2019, 5 year.

5 HOW SUCCESSFUL WERE PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN USING THEIR VOUCHERS?

the City of Torrance, the Housing Authority of the City of South Gate, the Housing Authority of the City of Redondo Beach, the Pico Rivero Housing Assistance Agency, the Culver City Housing Authority, the Housing Authority of the City of Hawaiian Gardens.
Source: Poverty rates are from the 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Lease-ups are from HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Includes all observed admissions (see Appendix C).

Using a Voucher in a Low-Poverty Neighborhood

"I am one of a few Black tenants here, and the area isn't as diverse. My neighbors showed a side that I hadn't seen. I found some things in the garbage, including a poster saying 'Black Girl Magic.' It's only 3 percent Black people and most are tourists. We have a lot of weed shops and it's a nice area, but there is no sub-community to feel comfortable. I could not switch that code off. Although West Hollywood is nice, it's glorious, I feel like I haven't planted any roots here, but I have planted seeds here in LA."

— Voucher User

"Where I was living before I was scared. I was living in a park area with a lot of gang violence. I found a place in East Hollywood and it's so calm. The area was the most important thing. I'm not looking for a luxury place, just a nice area."

— Voucher User

Changes to HCV Program during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic led to significant changes in organizational processes and reduced people's comfort level in searching for housing units in person. At first, as employees stayed home and businesses limited their operations, the pandemic led to a significant slowdown. As government agencies and community organizations re-opened virtually, the processes in which homeless service providers, government agencies, and PHAs operated changed. HUD issued emergency waivers to PHAs allowing them to operate more safely during the pandemic and better accommodate households experiencing pandemic job loss. Initially, unit inspections and turn-around maintenance stopped, and then restarted at a slower pace. Intake appointments and housing searches became virtual. PHA staff interviewed for this study said that staffing shortages caused by the pandemic significantly reduced the number of lease-ups during 2021, confirmed by the administrative data, which show one-third as many issuances in 2020 as in 2019.

Some organizational changes made it more difficult for some households experiencing homelessness to navigate the voucher process. For example, virtual appointments were often difficult for people experiencing homelessness to attend, as they did not have reliable access to technology and internet, especially when public facilities, such as libraries, were closed. Similarly, electronic follow-up was more challenging, likely compounding the problem for households who did not have a physical mailing address. PHA staff reported that many households attempting to qualify for the program were not familiar with how to upload documents electronically.

However, some processes were made easier during the pandemic. For example, HUD issued waivers in early 2020 that allowed landlords to conduct an initial housing quality inspection and self-certify there were no life-threatening deficiencies. As the pandemic persisted, HUD issued additional waivers to relax verification requirements at eligibility. These waivers allowed voucher applicants to self-certify their household income, and PHAs could verify Social Security and citizenship documentation after admission. Rules for signing the final voucher application were also relaxed, authorizing caseworkers to provide documentation and finalize applications for their clients. LACDA, for example, permitted homeless households to authorize their caseworker to submit the voucher application on their behalf, a process the PHA is hoping to continue. Practices such as these reduced the documentation needed for eligibility screening and likely shortened the time to lease-up.

Like most people, low-income households navigated the pandemic by staying in place, if possible. PHAs likely experienced reductions in voucher turnover that, in turn, reduced new vouchers available to incoming households. Though people may have felt less comfortable moving, pandemic-induced limitations to the referral and lease-up process itself (such as reductions in staffing) could have been a significant challenge to people experiencing homelessness to find housing through the voucher program. LACDA also experienced a budget shortfall, and for that reason stopped issuing vouchers in August of 2020, only issuing a quarter as many vouchers in 2020 as in 2019.

Though voucher issuances dropped significantly across all PHAs, the share of vouchers issued to people experiencing homelessness dropped only slightly, from 45 to 43 percent between 2019 and 2020. The pattern varied among the Los Angeles PHAs. LACDA and HACLB both saw drops in the shares of vouchers issued to households experiencing homelessness, whereas shares increased as HACLA and the smaller city PHAs in 2020.

6. What Are the Implications for Who PHAs Serve and at What Cost?

Over time, policies that focus tenant-based vouchers on people experiencing homelessness—both preferences chosen by the public housing authority (PHA) leadership and allocations of special programs such as the new Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs)—can change the nature of a PHA’s programs. Changes may affect the demographic characteristics of the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program and also the costs of providing housing assistance.

6.1 Implications for Demographic Characteristics of Assisted Households

To assess this, we use a single-year snapshot of people who were issued vouchers in 2019 and leased up with their vouchers. We use 2019 as an illustration because a substantial share of lease-ups were for households experiencing homelessness. Data are available for 2020 but are less representative because many households issued vouchers during that year were still searching for housing as of the end of the year.

During 2019, the year covered by this study that immediately preceded the COVID-19 pandemic, 3,889 tenant-based vouchers were issued by the Los Angeles PHAs that households successfully used to lease up units and start participating in the HCV program. About half of those households had previously experienced homelessness and half had not.⁵⁵ The demographic characteristics of the households who had left homelessness using a voucher differed from characteristics of other households using a voucher.

Once a household has leased a rental unit, we can use the administrative data to distinguish among elderly households (households with a head or spouse age 62 or older), households with disabilities (disabled head or spouse), and families (any household with children, regardless of the age or disability status of the head or spouse).

For vouchers issued in 2019, formerly homeless households were (Exhibit 6.1):

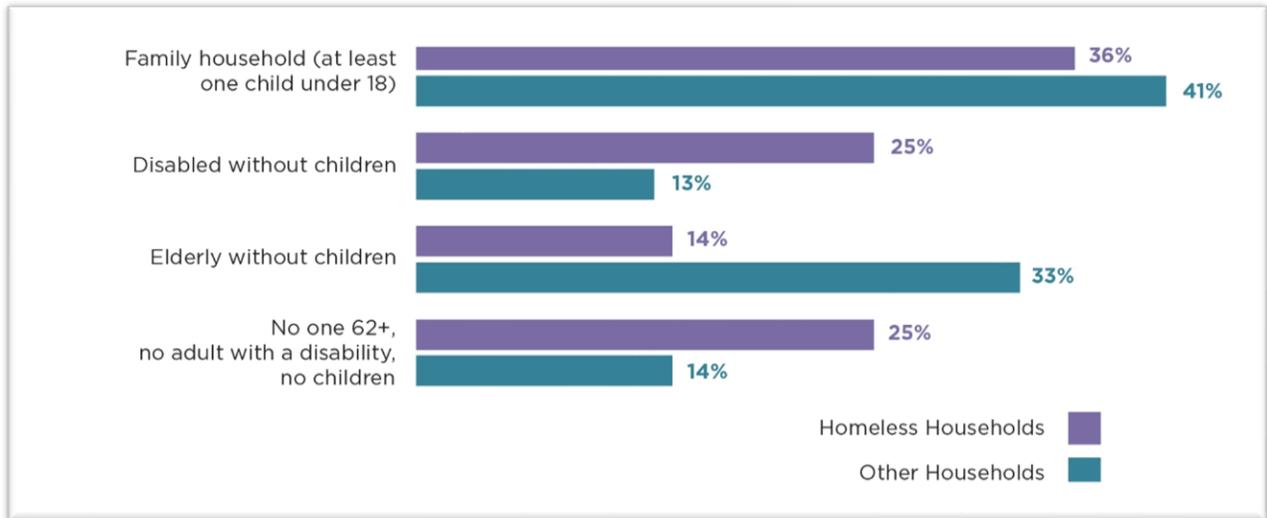
- Less likely to be families with children than were other households—those who had not been homeless when issued the voucher (36 percent versus 41 percent). That as many as a third of households leaving homelessness were families with children may be surprising, given the demographics of homelessness in the Los Angeles region. However, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) targets its largest set-aside of tenant-based vouchers in part to families with children (Appendix A).
- More likely to be an adult with a disability (and no children) than were households who had not used the vouchers to leave homelessness (25 percent versus 13 percent).
- More likely to be an adult not yet elderly, without a disability, and not living with children than were households who were not formerly homeless (25 percent versus 14 percent). The lack of a disability among this group of individuals referred to the PHA may be surprising. However,

⁵⁵ In the 2019 year, 5,662 vouchers were issued. Of these, 3,889 voucher holders successfully leased up—2,004 of successful lease-ups were by households experiencing homelessness and 1,885 were by other households.

they may have been assessed by the referring agency as having high needs although they did not meet the HUD definition of having a disability. The HUD definition requires the disability to be likely to persist and limit the person’s ability to live independently.

- Less likely to be an elderly adult or couple (without children) than were other households using vouchers (14 percent versus 33 percent). This is not surprising: elderly people are a small share of all people experiencing homelessness, although the percentage has been rising in recent years.⁵⁶

Exhibit 6.1: Percentages of Households Leasing up with Vouchers in LA County (2019), by Household Type and Homeless Status



Note: Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

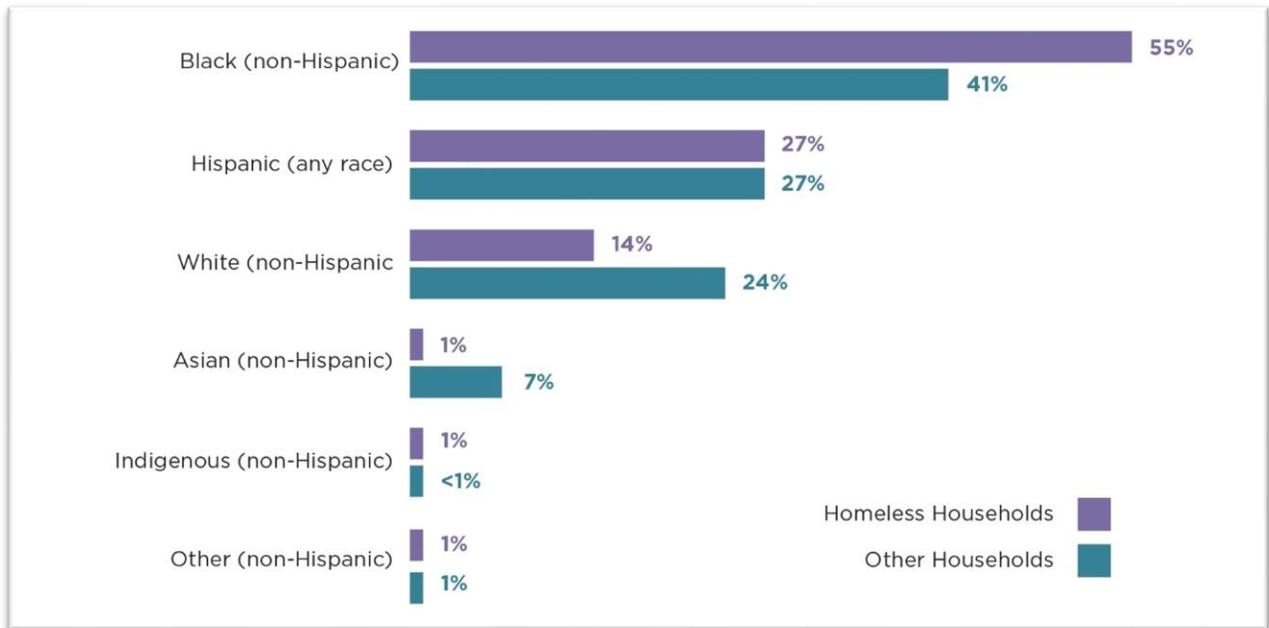
Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Includes all observed admissions even if the 50058 data did not have a record for issuance of a voucher to the household (Appendix C).

Households experiencing homelessness leasing up in 2019 were more likely to be Black non-Hispanic than were other households leasing up in that same year (55 percent versus 41 percent). Voucher use by Black individuals and families is high among all households compared to the share of the Los Angeles population that identifies as Black or African American, and the pattern is even more pronounced for people who had experienced homelessness. White and Asian non-Hispanic households are a smaller share of homeless households using vouchers than of other voucher users. The small number of Indigenous non-Hispanic households using vouchers in the Los Angeles region is somewhat larger for households that were experiencing homelessness. (Exhibit 6.2).

The share of Hispanic or Latino households (any race) among formerly homeless households using vouchers is nearly identical to the Hispanic share of other voucher users, around 27 percent in 2019.

⁵⁶ Meghan Henry, Korrin Bishop, Tanya de Sousa, Azim Shivji, and Rian Watt, [The 2017 Annual Homeless Assessment Report \(AHAR\) to Congress. Part 2: Estimates of Homelessness in the United States](#). October 2018.

Exhibit 6.2: Percentages of Households Leasing up with Vouchers in LA County (2019), by Ethnicity/Race and Homeless Status



Note: Totals may not add to 100 percent due to rounding. The Indigenous category is households identifying as Native American, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander. The Other non-Hispanic category includes people identifying as mixed race.

Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Includes all observed admissions even if the 50058 data did not have a record for issuance of a voucher to the household (Appendix C).

6.2 Implications for the Per Unit Costs of Housing Assistance

Serving people experiencing homelessness may have implications for the per-unit costs of voucher assistance. The size of the subsidy paid on behalf of each household, the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), is the rent of the unit agreed to by the PHA and the owner, minus the portion of the rent that the tenant pays.⁵⁷ The rent of the unit is limited by the payment standard, which varies by household size; the tenant payment is roughly 30 percent of the household’s income. Thus, the factors that determine the subsidy cost incurred by the PHA are the size of the household and the household’s income. On average, households experiencing homelessness are smaller (have fewer members) than other assisted households, but they also have less income.

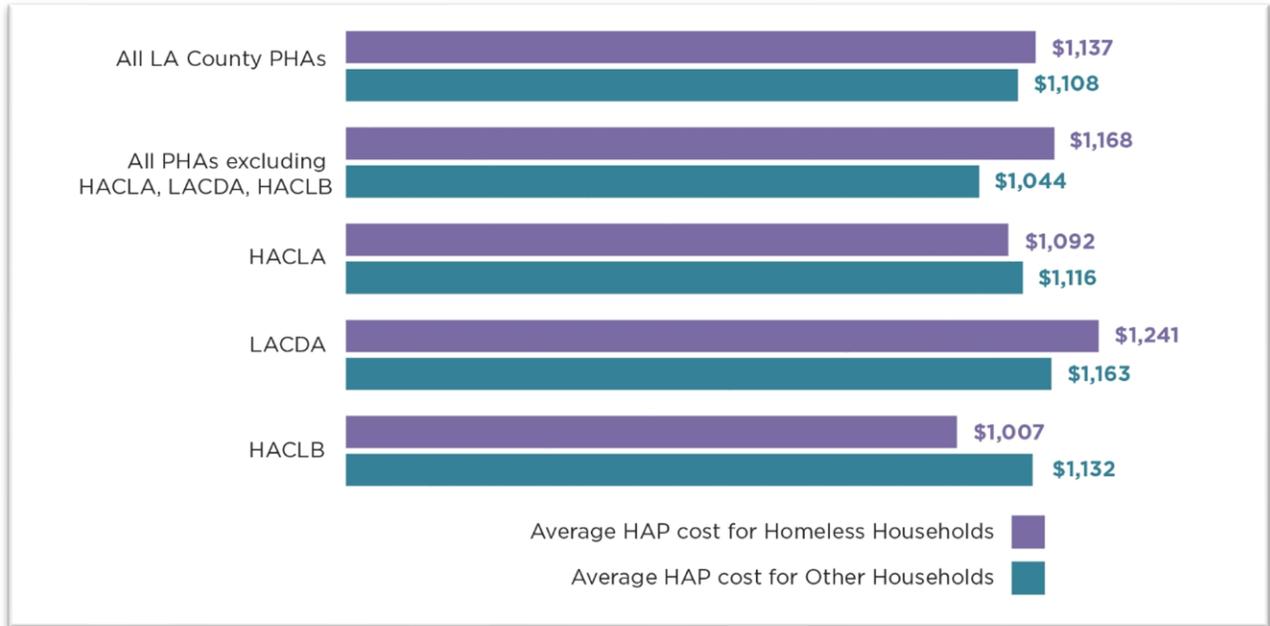
Across the 19 Los Angeles PHAs, the cost of serving households experiencing homelessness is only slightly greater than the cost of serving other households—\$1,137 per month for homeless households versus \$1,108 for other households, a difference of \$29 per month, or about 3 percent.

Furthermore, this pattern is not consistent across the PHAs. HACLA and the Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB) pay more subsidy for households that were *not* experiencing homelessness before they leased up with a voucher. HACLA pays \$24 more per month and HACLB

⁵⁷ When this might not be completely accurate and other complications in the calculation of the tenant’s share are discussed in Chapter 2. The utility allowance deducted from the tenant’s share of the rent discussed in Chapter 2 does not affect the costs shown in this section, as the HAP payments in the administrative data include that part of the subsidy.

pays \$125 more, as shown in Exhibit 6.3. In contrast, the Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA) pays \$78 more for households who were homeless before they leased up with vouchers.

Exhibit 6.3: Average HAP Costs (2016-2020), by PHA and Homeless Status



Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Includes all observed admissions even if the 50058 data did not have a record for issuance of a voucher to the household (Appendix C).

Differences in average subsidy costs vary by household type. For families and elderly households, the subsidy paid by the PHA for a household that left homelessness is somewhat greater than the subsidy paid for a household that had not been experiencing homelessness. The difference for families is \$151 per month. In contrast, the subsidy paid by the PHA for a household with a disability who left homelessness is \$35 lower than the subsidy paid for a disabled household who was not homeless.

Landlords Require Tenants to Have Income in Addition to a Voucher

"I couldn't get any landlord to say yes, agree to get housing. Along the way, in 2017, I finally got SSI so I could get housing. Landlords wanted SSI and voucher, need a source of income."

— Voucher User

Only 2 percent of households experiencing homelessness have an income of less than \$1,000 per year—that is, essentially no income from either wages or benefits. That share is no different than the share of other households with essentially no income. However, households recently experiencing homelessness are much more likely than households not recently experiencing homelessness to have incomes below \$5,000 per year (23 percent versus 9 percent). The lowest incomes by far are for the category of households that are not families, not disabled, and not elderly. Forty-seven (47) percent of those experiencing homelessness in this category have

incomes below \$5,000 per year; by comparison, only 25 percent of households with disabilities, 7 percent of families, and 7 percent of elderly households experiencing homelessness have incomes less than \$5,000 per year. A single person with a disability determination is likely to receive Supplemental Security Income, which (with the California supplement) is greater than \$10,000 per year. However,

6 WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR WHO PHAS SERVE AND AT WHAT COST?

once stably housed, people who had been experiencing homelessness may have more success at securing a higher income through employment or additional public benefits. Therefore, their lower income at lease-up may be temporary.

7. Conclusion and Future Considerations

Federal rental subsidies paired with supportive services have been a long-standing component of the homeless service system's response to the crisis of homelessness in Los Angeles. Public housing authorities (PHA) across Los Angeles County have committed substantial portions of their federal funding for tenant-based Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) to help people leave homelessness. The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) and the Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA) have been recognized as strong partners within the Los Angeles homeless service system.

This chapter summarizes our findings from analysis of an extract of HUD's 50058 data for the 19 PHAs in the Los Angeles region and extensive interviews with staff of PHAs, homeless service providers, the County's Department of Mental Health (DMH), the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), and people with lived experience of using a voucher to leave homelessness. We also offer some considerations for community stakeholders as they continue to use tenant-based housing vouchers as part of the strategy to end homelessness in the Los Angeles region. We conclude by offering some suggestions for future research based on the robust data collection and analysis we have built for this study.

7.1 Research Findings

- ❖ Across Los Angeles County, ***PHAs issued 12,768 vouchers to people experiencing homelessness between 2016 and 2020.*** Those vouchers came from a combination of turnover in the regular HCV program and new allocations of vouchers through special programs and represent one-third of all vouchers issued during that period.
- ❖ The ***highest number of vouchers issued to people experiencing homelessness went to single individuals***, consistent with the high share of people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles who do so as individuals rather than as members of families. Many of those individuals had disabilities, consistent with the region's focus on people with chronic patterns of homelessness.
- ❖ Once issued a voucher that permits them to search for housing, almost ***seven of every 10 households experiencing homelessness (65 percent) succeeded in leasing a housing unit with voucher assistance.***
- ❖ The average time elapsed between the issuance of a voucher and lease-up for people experiencing homelessness was 122 days. ***Many households experiencing homelessness needed more than 180 days to find a unit.*** This reflects the challenges of the Los Angeles housing market.
- ❖ The racial characteristics of people experiencing homelessness issued vouchers reflect the disproportionate representation of Black people among those experiencing homelessness in the Los Angeles region. About 34 percent of people experiencing homelessness in the Los Angeles

region identify as Black non-Hispanic/Latino.⁵⁸ ***More than half of households experiencing homelessness issued vouchers by LA County PHAs between 2016 and 2020 were Black.***

- ❖ Use of vouchers by people to leave homelessness is heavily concentrated in certain parts of the Los Angeles region. This is true of other voucher users, as well, but ***formerly homeless households are more likely to be concentrated in the same locations and more likely to rent units in census tracts with a high proportion of people living in poverty.***
- ❖ The per household cost for PHAs to serve people experiencing homelessness is only slightly higher than the cost of serving other households. ***The additional cost of serving a formerly homeless households is \$29 per month, or about 3 percent.***
- ❖ In May of 2021, ***HUD allocated 6,806 Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs) to PHAs in the Los Angeles region.*** These vouchers must be used for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness or for victims of domestic violence.

7.2 Future Considerations for the Los Angeles Community

Overall, the commitment of tenant-based vouchers by the Los Angeles PHAs to the effort to address homelessness appears successful. The study’s findings suggest some considerations for community stakeholders (philanthropy, community organizations, elected officials, homeless service providers, and housing advocates) as they continue to strategize on ways to end homelessness in Los Angeles.

- ❖ ***Advocate for more rental subsidies from the federal government.*** Homelessness in the Los Angeles region will not be reduced without more housing vouchers funded by the federal government and administered by its PHAs. Despite major commitments of resources to prevent and end homelessness by the City and County of Los Angeles and the State of California, the scale of the problem is simply too great. More vouchers are needed to prevent inflow into homelessness and to help people leave homelessness for stable housing, including people with chronic patterns of homelessness and other people who need the services provided by permanent supportive housing.

Federal rental subsidies are the biggest lever that local communities have to provide affordable housing for the poorest and most vulnerable households. Stakeholders should create an estimate for how many additional vouchers the Los Angeles area needs and request them from HUD. Then stakeholders can educate federal officials on why those additional vouchers are needed and how they will be successfully used.

- ❖ ***Invest in efforts to increase the ability of voucher holders to rent housing they need and want.*** Though the success rate of people experiencing homelessness using a federal housing voucher is high, 65 percent across all Los Angeles PHAs between 2016 and 2020, we know that voucher holders face discrimination from private market landlords. Many people who hold vouchers are not able to find units with willing landlords. Faced with such discrimination, people experiencing homelessness are forced to turn the voucher back to the PHA and may not

⁵⁸ [2020 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count-Los Angeles Continuum of Care \(CoC\).](#) Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, (June 22, 2020).

receive another opportunity to be placed into permanent housing. The “source of income” protections recently enacted by both the State of California and Los Angeles County could help. However, this depends on the capacity of advocacy and fair housing organizations to sue landlords that discriminate against vouchers, as well as landlords that violate federal fair housing law on discrimination on the basis of race/ethnicity. It is important to build the capacity of these organizations to partner with private law firms to pursue such litigation.

Complementary approaches should focus on positive incentives for landlords to accept vouchers. PHAs across LA County have used financial incentives for landlords for years, and the newly allocated federal EHV funds include supplemental funding for landlord incentives such as signing bonuses and payments to cover damages and unpaid rent not covered by a security deposit.

- ❖ ***Consider using Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMRs).*** Los Angeles PHAs might consider adopting these standards for the maximum rent of a subsidized unit that vary by ZIP code rather than being uniform across the Los Angeles region. So far, only the Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach is using SAFMRs. Using SAFMRs could result in a larger number of private market units across the region becoming available to people trying to leave homelessness with a voucher. For example, we heard from VA staff and service providers that many veterans experiencing homelessness would like to find housing near the VA health care campus in West Los Angeles, but that area of Los Angeles has little housing for rent within the voucher payment standards. However, there are tradeoffs with using SAFMRs, as fewer units might be available in ZIP code areas with relatively low rents where formerly homeless voucher users currently are concentrated. The net result could be that fewer people experiencing homelessness use their vouchers successfully. There also could be administrative burdens for PHAs implementing the SAFMRs and confusion among voucher holders for how much their voucher could pay toward rent in areas across the region. An alternative to full adoption of SAFMRs would be to use “exception” payment standards in particular ZIP codes where people leaving homelessness want to live.⁵⁹
- ❖ ***Continue to invest in staff dedicated to helping households become “document ready.”*** We heard from case managers at homeless service providers, PHA and LAHSA staff, and people with lived experience using a voucher that one of the most cumbersome components of accessing a federal housing voucher is assembling the documentation requirements (Social Security card, state identification, financial and income records, disability verification, homelessness verification). During 2020 and 2021, LAHSA and homeless service providers focused efforts on getting their clients document ready, meaning clients would have obtained their documents prior to being matched to a housing resource. The goal of having clients become document ready is that clients will then be able to move more quickly through the application and eligibility determination processes.

⁵⁹ See Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and Poverty and Race Research Action Council, [A Guide to Small Area Fair Market Rents](#). Also Samuel Dastrup, Meryl Finkel, Kimberly Burnett, Tanya de Sousa, [Small Area Fair Market Rent Demonstration Evaluation: Final Report](#), January 31, 2019.

- ❖ ***Continue to invest resources in linking people experiencing homelessness to public benefits.*** Most case managers work with their clients to access public benefits for which they are eligible. However, the paperwork and application process for these benefits can be confusing and time-consuming for case managers with large client caseloads. This study found that many people referred to PHAs from the homeless services system were single individuals apparently with high acuity but without Supplemental Security Income benefits. Dedicated staff who specialize in helping people through the process of qualifying for those benefits could make landlords more willing to accept them as tenants and also lower the per household cost of vouchers, permitting PHAs to serve additional households.

7.3 *Suggestions for Future Research*

Based on the data that has been collected and analyzed for this study, we have some suggestions for future research.

- ❖ ***Acuity of households experiencing homelessness as they are matched to a voucher.*** This report does not include administrative data from the Los Angeles region's homeless services systems, such as client-level data from the Continuum of Care Homelessness Management Information Systems (HMIS) or from coordinated entry assessments. Client-level HMIS data sit locally at LAHSA. Pursuing data use agreements to gain access to that data and match it with household-level data from the HUD 50058 form that PHA staff complete was outside the scope of the study. Therefore, the analysis reported here does not show the acuity of needs of households experiencing homelessness who were issued vouchers or used them successfully. Such analysis might be useful to the PHA and homeless service system leadership and policy makers to further understand the needs of clients and the acuity level of households who are successful using vouchers in the community.
- ❖ ***Housing stability of households who successfully use a voucher.*** Little is known in Los Angeles about what happens to households who later experience homelessness after they successfully used a voucher. A longitudinal study analyzing additional extracts of HUD 50058 data would allow us to follow households to observe the extent to which they maintain their vouchers, whether their income changes, whether they move, and whether their outcomes differ from households who were not experiencing homelessness at the time of voucher issuance. Such a study might also obtain extracts of HMIS data to measure the extent to which formerly homeless people using vouchers return to homelessness. The study might have a special focus on racial equity.
- ❖ ***Understanding in greater depth how case management and landlord incentives work.*** Over the past five years, PHAs saw nearly seven of every 10 households experiencing homelessness (65 percent) succeed in leasing a housing unit with voucher assistance. Currently, PHAs and homeless service providers use various strategies, including intensive case management, financial incentives for landlords, and housing search assistance, to help people experiencing homelessness become ready for a voucher, find a unit, and successfully lease it. However, it is difficult to untangle the effect that each of these strategies has on successful lease-up. As the Los Angeles community continues to invest substantial amounts of funding into case

management services, landlord incentives, and housing search assistance, further research on their implementation and their outcomes might be useful for policy makers and practitioners.

- ❖ ***Understanding how HUD’s EHV’s have been used in Los Angeles.*** In May of 2021, HUD allocated 6,806 EHV’s to PHAs in the Los Angeles region. This is the largest allocation of EHV’s made to one region in the United States. EHV’s must be used for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness or for victims of domestic violence. They provide additional incentives for landlords and relax some rules of the regular HCV program. The PHAs, LAHSA, and homeless service providers quickly mobilized to create guidance and a process for issuing these vouchers. LAHSA is working on creating a data dashboard to track where each application and voucher issuance is in the process.

A study of EHV’s in Los Angeles might be based on combining LAHSA’s dashboard and HMIS data with an extract of Form 50058 data from HUD. The Continuum of Care for Long Beach, which appears to have made choices different from LAHSA’s for using EHV’s, also might be part of a study.

Many of the research questions in this study also apply to EHV’s, with some modifications:

- What were the policy decisions of LAHSA and the PHAs on how to target the vouchers within the constraints of the federal rules?
- How did the referral systems work?
- What were the barriers to getting through the voucher issuance process?
- What was the result for the types of households and race/ethnicity of the people who received EHV’s?
- How successful were households in using EHV’s, and how did that vary by household characteristics and for the target groups chosen by LAHSA and the PHAs?
- How long did the lease-up process take?
- What are the implications for possible further allocations of EHV’s?
- What are the implications for policy changes to the regular HCV program?

Appendix A: Homeless Preferences of Los Angeles County PHAs

PHA	Preferences
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)	<p>The largest PHA in the Los Angeles region, HACLA administered almost 51,000 vouchers in 2020, 9 percent of which were VASH vouchers. HACLA’s preference system that controls the waiting list for other tenant-based vouchers does not include a general preference for people experiencing homelessness. Instead, HACLA provides some substantial limited preferences—that is, vouchers that are reserved for participants in special programs. As of late 2021, those special programs for tenant-based vouchers were:^a</p> <p>A Homeless Program that allocates 4,111 HCVs for individuals and families in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, or on the street. Households are referred to HACLA from non-profit and public agency partners and must have access to supportive services for at least a year.</p> <p>A Supportive Housing Program that allocates 800 tenant-based HCVs for PSH for chronically homeless individuals and families referred by the Los Angeles County Departments of Health and Mental Health. These individuals must have case managers and longer-term access to supportive services. Originally HACLA received referrals from several non-profit service providers around the City but more recently shifted to receiving referrals from the County Departments of Health and Mental Health.</p> <p>A Homeless Veterans Initiative that provides 500 vouchers who are not eligible for Veterans Affairs healthcare and, therefore, not for VASH vouchers.</p> <p>A Moving On program that has provided tenant-based vouchers to 500 formerly chronically homeless individuals living in PSH who no longer need intensive services.</p>
Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA)	<p>The second largest of the PHAs in the Los Angeles region, LACDA’s jurisdiction is the balance of the County outside of the City of Los Angeles. LACDA administers more than 25,000 vouchers, of which 13 percent are VASH vouchers. For other tenant-based vouchers, LACDA has used a general preference for people experiencing chronic homelessness that dedicates a percentage of its HCV turnover units to people experiencing chronic homelessness. Originally, these vouchers were issued to people on LACDA’s waiting list that met the definition of chronic homelessness. As of 2019, half of the vouchers went to people referred from LAHSA’s Coordinated Entry System.^b LACDA reported that, as of 2021, 95 percent would go through CES. According to interviews with LACDA staff, the homeless preference for 100 percent of turnover vouchers does not mean that all turnover vouchers go to households experiencing homelessness, because referrals must come from service provider agencies. If a voucher is available and LACDA does not have an active referral, the voucher goes to the next household on the waiting list, with a preference for veterans but otherwise by date and time of the application. Because LACDA had over-spent its HCV budget allocation during 2017, no turnover vouchers were issued during a period lasting several months. Another shortfall and suspension of voucher issuances occurred in 2020.^c</p>
Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB)	<p>The PHA serving Long Beach, HACLB had 7,543 vouchers as of 2020, of which 11 percent were VASH vouchers. For other tenant-based vouchers, HACLB has used a general HCV waiting list preference with a point-based scoring system. Each of HACLB’s waiting list preferences receives a specified number of points, which when totaled provide an overall household score. Households with higher scores are then given preference when a voucher becomes available. Households experiencing homelessness are among those with the highest preferences, but the other categories that receive high points include large numbers of other households that might be on</p>

PHA	Preferences
	<p>the waiting list—for example, non-elderly, disabled Long Beach residents and households that are at risk of becoming homeless through displacement, family separation, or domestic violence. According to interviews with HACLB staff, the PHA also has a limited preference for households experiencing homelessness of about 150 vouchers a year, about half of the expected turnover of tenant-based vouchers. Long Beach has a separate CoC from LAHSA, and most households experiencing homelessness are referred by the Long Beach Multi Service Center, which is part of that CoC. These households must have an individual service plan.</p>
<p>Housing Authority of the City of Glendale (GHA)</p>	<p>GHA serves a city of about 200,000 people within Los Angeles County. GHA had a total of about 1,500 vouchers as of 2000, including 15 VASH vouchers. Glendale has its own CoC, separate from LAHSA. GHA’s administrative plan shows a general preference on its HCV waiting list for homeless families who are referred by the City of Glendale Homeless Coalition and are living in a transitional shelter or have graduated from the transitional shelter’s program and are receiving case management or service coordination from a transitional housing provider. GHA assigns points to each of its local preferences to prioritize households on its waiting list. The families that meet GHA’s very specific definition for those qualifying for the preference are allotted the highest number of possible points, along with victims of domestic violence or hate crimes, those in the witness relocation program, or those displaced through government action.</p>
<p>Housing Authority of the City of the Santa Monica (SMHA)</p>	<p>Serving a city of almost 100,000 within Los Angeles County, SMHA had a total of 1,500 vouchers as of 2020, including 35 VASH vouchers. According to SMHA’s administrative plan, SMHA has a limited preference of 25 vouchers for households that have graduated from Santa Monica’s PSH programs. SMHA may also allot a limited number of vouchers to tenants transferring from the City’s HOME-TBRA program within this preference category. According to interviews with SMHA staff, the PHA also has a general preference that applies to people who are on the City’s “homeless registry” or those identified as people with chronic patterns of homelessness or high needs or whose last address before becoming homeless was in Santa Monica. When a person with that preference comes to the top of the waiting list, SMHA gets in touch with the service agency that has committed to working with that person.</p>
<p>Housing Authority of the City of Burbank (BHA)</p>	<p>Serving another small city within LA County, BHA has about 1,000 vouchers, none of which are VASH vouchers. BHA has a general HCV waiting list preference for homeless individuals and families who are currently working with a service provider working in the City of Burbank and designated as qualified by the PHA. Within that homeless preference, veterans and people with disabilities score higher. When a new voucher becomes available, BHA uses a point system to prioritize households on its HCV waiting list. Homeless residents of Burbank are given top priority, just behind residents displaced by BHA or the City of Burbank. Non-residents who are homeless score behind all residents of Burbank but receive the highest priority for new HCVs among non-residents. BHA’s waiting list has been closed since 2016, and BHA encourages people seeking housing assistance to apply to LACDA.</p>
<p>Housing Authority of the City of Pomona (PHA)</p>	<p>Serving a city of 150,000 within LA county, PHA had almost 1,000 vouchers, including 60 VASH vouchers, as of 2020. PHA uses a scoring system to prioritize households on its HCV waiting list and has a general preference for homeless households. The preference system gives the highest preference to homeless individuals and families who are known to city staff to be frequent users of resources or services in Pomona and who have also been sleeping in a space not meant for human habitation for 12 months, have a family member living in Pomona who will assist in stabilizing the household, became homeless while living in the City of Pomona, or have a</p>

PHA	Preferences
	household member attending school in Pomona. Twenty-five percent of vouchers that become available through attrition during a given year will be allotted to homeless households. PHA also has set-asides within its allocation of “mainstream” vouchers for non-elderly disabled households for households that are homeless, at risk of homelessness, at risk of institutionalization, or have been referred by a homeless service organization. PHA has five vouchers set aside for graduates of supportive housing programs.
Housing Authority of the City of Redondo Beach (RBHA)	Serving a small city in Los Angeles County, RBHA had 633 vouchers as of 2020, of which 40 were VASH vouchers. RBHA provides up to five HCV vouchers to chronically homeless households who have been referred through its CES. Homeless households are ranked by household type with residents, veterans, families, and elderly of disabled individuals receiving priority. The primary preference is for a resident of Redondo Beach who is a homeless veteran with a family or is elderly or disabled. Non-veteran, homeless, residents with a family or who are elderly or disabled receive secondary priority followed by non-resident, homeless, veterans who are elderly or disabled or who have a family and non-resident, homeless, elderly or disabled individuals or those with a family. Single homeless, non-resident, non-elderly disabled, non-veterans receive the lowest priority. Homeless households on the waiting list who have not been verified by the CES must provide proof of status from a homeless services provider or are referred to a local homeless service provider for verification.
City of Pasadena Housing Department (CoPHD)	Serving a city of 140,000 in Los Angeles County, CoPHD administered 1,409 vouchers as of 2020, 15 of which were VASH. CoPHD includes homeless households in their general preference for those living in ‘substandard housing’. They also have a limited preference for formerly homeless households exiting rapid re-housing programs (10 vouchers) and those exiting permanent supportive housing tenant-based programs (5 vouchers). Limited preferences are filled through referrals from the CES.

Note:

^a Instead of using its administrative plan to describe these special programs, HACLA periodically posts a fact sheet on its efforts to serve homeless people on its website. The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles HACLA Homeless Initiatives October 2021.

^b Nichole Fiore, Tanya de Sousa, Aubrey Sitler, Lauren Dunton, Jill Khadduri, Carol Wilkins, Katie Bimberg, and Jessica Kerbo, “2020 Annual Report” Conrad N. Hilton Foundation Evaluation of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation Chronic Homelessness Initiative, (Rockville MD: forthcoming).

^c Ibid.

Appendix B: Los Angeles Housing Authorities' Payment Standards for One- and Two-Bedroom Units

PHA	1-Bedroom	2-Bedroom	Date Effective
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles	1,764	2,248	Oct 1 2021
Los Angeles County Development Authority	1,764	2,248	Oct 1 2021
City of Long Beach Housing Authority ^a	1,743	2,257	Jan 1 2021
Housing Authority of the City of Glendale	1,766	2,155	No date given
Housing Authority of the City of Santa Monica	1,930	2,640	No date given
City of Pasadena Housing Department	1,764	2,248	Oct 1 2021
Housing Authority of the City of Inglewood	1,765	2,263	Jan 1 2021
Housing Authority of the City of Burbank	1,764	2,248	Oct 1 2021
Housing Authority of the City of Pomona	1,655	2,058	July 1 2021
Housing Authority of the City of Baldwin Park	1,517	1,956	Jan 1 2020
City of Compton Housing Authority	1,669	1,956	Aug 1 2020
Housing Authority of the City of Norwalk	1,605	2,058	Oct 1 2021
Hawthorne Housing		Not available	
Housing Authority of the City of Torrance	1,525	1,930	Oct 1 2021
Housing Authority of the City of South Gate		Not available	
Housing Authority of the City of Redondo Beach ^b	1,960	2,625	Jul 1 2020
Pico Rivera Housing Assistance Agency	1,764	2,248	Oct 1 2021
Culver City Housing Authority		Not available	
Housing Authority of the City of Hawaiian Gardens	1,605	2,058	Oct 1 2020

Note: Names of PHAs provide links to websites that provide information on payment standards.

^a The City of Long Beach Housing Authority employs Small Area Fair Market Rents to create ZIP code-based payment standards. The payment standards presented in this table are averaged across ZIP codes.

^b The Housing Authority of the City of Redondo Beach employs Small Area FMRs to create ZIP code-based payment standards. The payment standards presented in this table are averaged across ZIP codes and include a payment standard designated for VASH vouchers.

Appendix C: Methodology

This appendix describes the data sources applied to understanding the use of tenant-based Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) among people experiencing homelessness in the Los Angeles region. The appendix details the analysis methods applied to an extract of Form 50058 data to produce statistics describing characteristics of households issued vouchers, their rates of success in using vouchers, where households used vouchers, and the per unit costs of voucher subsidies. We also describe other sources of administrative data and the extensive interviews the study team conducted with public housing authorities (PHAs), providers of services to people experiencing homelessness, the Los Angeles County health system, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), and people with lived experience.

Data and Measures

PHA Administrative Data Reported to HUD

The main source of data for the quantitative measurement in this report is a special extract of PHA administrative data obtained through a data use agreement with HUD’s Office of Policy Development and Research. These data were captured from the HUD 50058 form, which PHAs use to collect information about households in the HCV program and then transmit the resulting data to HUD. The data system records the individual administrative steps of the HCV program for each household, including voucher issuance, expiration of the voucher without a lease-up, lease-up of a housing unit, and annual and interim reexaminations of households that have leased up and are using vouchers. Different household and member characteristics and rental contract information are entered for different steps in the process. For this report, we focus on voucher issuance and lease-up—that is, which households are issued a voucher, and which households successfully lease up. We also use the data on the characteristics of households that have leased up with a voucher and begun to participate in the program, the locations of the leased units, and the voucher subsidy costs incurred by the PHA. We analyze data for vouchers issued during the calendar years 2016-2020 for tenant-based housing vouchers issued by the 19 PHAs in Los Angeles County.⁶⁰

Data available at voucher issuance: Limited household characteristics are collected during the eligibility screening preceding voucher issuance. These characteristics are (1) homelessness status of the head of household; (2) the date of the voucher issuance; (3) whether the head of household is disabled; (4) the race/ethnicity of the head of household; (5) the number of members in a household and (6) the household’s prior ZIP Code. For analyses that include households that received a voucher but did not sign a lease, we can provide descriptions based only on these characteristics. Homelessness status at the time

⁶⁰ The administrative data extract we received included lease-up records for households using project-based vouchers, and many of those households also had issuance records. About one quarter of observed lease-up records are for project-based vouchers. About two-thirds of these records also have a preceding voucher issuance. We exclude any project-based voucher lease-up and preceding issuances from our analysis. There may be some issuances for project-based vouchers that are not successful (although, programmatically, we would expect this to be rare), but we are unable to remove them because we do not observe voucher program type for issuances. Such data anomalies would result in our analysis reporting slightly higher issuance counts and slightly lower success rates than if we could identify and exclude every unsuccessful issuance for a project-based voucher.

of issuance is not reliably recorded across all the PHAs in our analysis. We discuss the implications of that issue and how we address it below.

Data available at successful lease-up: For households that successfully leased a housing unit with their voucher, additional data are available, including the following data fields used in our analysis: (1) homelessness status of the head of household; (2) the type of transaction (e.g., new admission or reexamination); (3) demographic information for all household members, including race/ethnicity, age, and disability status; (4) total annual income for the household; and (5) total housing assistance payment for the household. Based on the frequencies of homelessness status over time and across PHAs that we observed in this data, we concluded that homelessness status is recorded consistently for successful lease-ups (voucher admissions).

Three measures are key to the analysis, the homelessness status of the household, whether a voucher that is issued results in a successful lease-up, and the time between issuance and lease-up for vouchers that successfully lease up.

Identifying Homelessness Status

In our analysis of households issued vouchers and their rates of success leasing up, we include a household in the group experiencing homelessness at the time the voucher is issued if any of the following is true:

1. ***The household is listed as homeless at issuance and the voucher is not issued by HACLA or Long Beach.***

We consider the data on homelessness at issuance reliable for LACDA and the smaller PHAs but not for HACLA and Long Beach. For LACDA, about 63 percent of households that successfully lease up are indicated as experiencing homelessness at lease-up. Of those, 96 percent are also indicated as experiencing homelessness at the preceding issuance. Conversely, 62 percent of issuances are indicated as being to households that are experiencing homelessness, with only 3 percent of these not indicated as experiencing homelessness at the subsequent lease-up. This high concordance of this indicator across the two periods leads us to conclude that the indicator of experiencing homelessness at issuance is reliable for LACDA.

The rest of the PHAs in Los Angeles County are like LACDA in that a very high share of households indicated as experiencing homelessness at lease-up are also indicated as such at the prior issuance. They are different from LACDA in that the share of households experiencing homelessness is substantially lower, with 5 percent of issuances indicated as experiencing homelessness and 6 percent of lease-ups. Because the number of households at issue in the PHAs is comparatively small and a high fraction of records agree between issuance and admission, we accept the indicator of homelessness at issuance as reliable in these PHAs.

HACLA has some households indicated as homeless at issuance, but we do not consider that data reliable, because many of the same households as not listed as homeless at lease-up.

For Long Beach, no households are indicated as experiencing homelessness at issuance, while 42 percent of households that successfully lease up are indicated as experiencing homelessness. So, a “not experiencing homelessness” designation at issuance is not reliable for Long Beach records.

2. *The household is listed as experiencing homelessness at lease-up.*

We consider the data on homelessness at the time of lease-up reliable. Homelessness rates implied by lease-up records are consistent with expectations based on qualitative interviews. Furthermore, when homelessness is indicated at issuance, it is also indicated at lease-up 98 percent of the time. Not all households that are issued a voucher lease up (28 percent of all issuances in our data), and we do not have this reliable indicator of homelessness for these unsuccessful issuances.

3. *The voucher is from the VASH program (since these vouchers are reserved for veterans experiencing homelessness).*

We consider all households served by VASH to have been homeless at issuance. Because VASH is a program that serves veterans that are experiencing homelessness we analyze all records that are indicated as being in the VASH program as a household that is experiencing homelessness. While a few VASH households do not have the homeless indicator at issuance, we consider that to be an error and have re-coded those households as homeless.

4. *The voucher is issued by HACLA or Long Beach, the household does not successfully lease up, and, based on our statistical model, the record has a high likelihood of being for a household experiencing homelessness.*

We use a statistical model of the probability of homelessness at issuance to determine which households issued vouchers by HACLA and Long Beach that did not successfully lease up were homeless at the time of issuance. We do that because we do not have a reliable measure of whether a household experienced homelessness at issuance for these PHAs. If we did not include these households in the analysis, we would underestimate the number of households experiencing homelessness at issuance and overestimate the rates of success in leasing up by households experiencing homelessness. Not all households that are issued a voucher lease up (37 percent of all issuances in our data), and we do not have a reliable indicator of homelessness for these unsuccessful issuances.

Exhibit 7-1 summarizes how many records in the administrative data have reliable indicators of homelessness at issuance, at lease-up, are VASH, or have no reliable indicator of homelessness status. Of the 29,395 issuance records, 11,251 have reliable information about homelessness at issuance. An additional 13,706 records either have a successful lease-up and thus have a reliable indication of homelessness at lease-up or are listed as VASH vouchers. For 15 percent of our sample (4,418 records), we do not have reliable data on whether the household is experiencing homelessness when they are issued a voucher. These are issuances in HACLA and Long Beach that do not successfully lease up.

Exhibit 7-1: Samples Used to Impute Homelessness Status

Homelessness experience observed in the data					
PHA	Reliable at issuance	Available at lease-up	VASH (assumed homeless)	No reliable indicator	Total issuances
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)	--	9,428	2,281	3,518	15,227
Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA)	7,520	--	--	--	7,520
Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB)	--	1,993	24	900	2,917
Other LA County PHAs	3,731	--	--	--	3,731
Total	11,251	11,421	2,305	4,418	29,395
Notes on imputing homelessness status	The 24,977 observations in these three groups are used to fit a statistical model of whether a household is experiencing homelessness.			The statistical model is used to impute homelessness experience for the remaining 4,418 households.	

Imputing homelessness at issuance when not reliably observed. Many of the issuances listed as not experiencing homeless at the time HACLA and Long Beach issued vouchers in reality were experiencing homelessness. We cannot know for sure which records are which, so, we cannot accurately describe characteristics and experiences of households issued vouchers based on homelessness as indicated directly in the data. If we did, we would dramatically undercount homelessness at issuance and only for unsuccessful lease-ups in HACLA and Long Beach. This would result in overstating success rates among households experiencing homelessness and understating success rates among households not experiencing homelessness.

To overcome this limitation of not reliably observing homelessness status for 15 percent of our records, we use other information in the data to make a statistical best guess of homelessness status for those households. To do that, we model a statistical relationship between information we observe at issuance and whether households experience homelessness for the records for which we do have a reliable measure of homelessness. We then assume this statistical relationship also describes the relationship between actual homelessness and the information we observe at issuance for the records for which we do not have a reliable indicator of homelessness. We use this statistical relationship to make our best guess—that is, we assign an imputed value of whether these households were actually experiencing homelessness at issuance.

We fit a linear probability model to the records for which we have a reliable measure of homelessness (i.e., those households experiencing homelessness that successfully leased up and those households issued

vouchers that were not in HACLA or Long Beach).⁶¹ The binary outcome is homeless experience at issuance. The explanatory variables are the following indicators:⁶²

- Whether the household’s prior ZIP Code that produces a low, moderate, high, or very high number of households that have a recorded indication of homelessness (at either issuance or admission)
- Which race/ethnicity category the household head is in (Asian, Black, Hispanic, Indigenous, other, White), whether the household head is female, and whether the household head is indicated as having a disability
- Whether the household includes 1, 2, 3, or 4 or more members

We estimate the model (i.e., calculate the statistical relationships between the explanatory variables and homelessness experience) using the records for which we have reliable indicators of homelessness. We then use the calculated statistical relationship (i.e., model parameters) to calculate a “predicted probability” for each voucher issuance. This predicted probability indicates model’s assessment of the likelihood that the household issued the voucher is experiencing homelessness. We use this assessment to impute homelessness status for the records that do not have a reliable indicator of homelessness.

To impute homelessness status for the needed records, we select a predicted probability cutoff value and classify records with a predicted probability above that value as likely experiencing homelessness. To select the cutoff value, we use the subset of records in HACLA and Long Beach for which we do have reliable indication of homelessness (i.e., that are included in the model estimation sample). We select a cut-off value for separately for HACLA and Long Beach such that the share of households predicted to experience homelessness (i.e., that are above the cut-off) in the estimation sample in each PHA is equal to the share of households indicated as experiencing homelessness in the estimation sample in that PHA.⁶³

Next, we apply the cut-offs to impute homelessness status for the records without a reliable indicator of homelessness. If the record has a predicted probability greater than the cutoff, we impute the household as experiencing homeless. If the record’s predicted probably is less than or equal to the cut-off, then we impute that the household is not experiencing homelessness. In HACLA, 40 percent of the records

⁶¹ We do not include any VASH records in the analysis, since these records have an almost perfect correlation with reported homelessness experience. Rather, we make a logical imputation (where needed) that any voucher listed as a VASH program voucher is issued to a household experiencing homelessness.

⁶² We also considered a model that interacted some of these variables, meaning that, for example, predictors were included for race/ethnicity separately by disability status. Including these interactions does not meaningfully improve the fit of our model (assessed as the share of observations predicted correctly) relative to the simple model, and generates very similar predictions for most observations. So we opt for the more parsimonious model without interactions.

⁶³ Note that this approach to selecting the cut-off values does not constrain the share of households predicted to be experiencing homelessness in the sample to be imputed in any way. The share of “correct” predictions in the estimation sample for HACLA and Long Beach (i.e., the predicted homeless status equals observed homeless status) is 72 percent. It is higher (78 percent) for individuals not experiencing homelessness than for those experiencing homelessness (60 percent).

without a reliable homelessness experience indicator are imputed to be experiencing homelessness, and 44 percent of such households are imputed as experiencing homelessness for Long Beach.

Identifying successful lease-up. We identify lease-up success (for calculating success rates) from three observed transaction patterns. The most common success is a household being issued a voucher followed by a new admission into a housing unit supported by a housing assistance payment (HAP) contract. However, sometimes we observe a voucher issuance followed by either an annual (or interim) reexamination. We consider this a successful lease-up with a missing data point for the associated new admission between the issuances and the reexamination. A third pattern identifies households that successfully use a voucher that we include when reporting on issuance and admission but that we do not include in calculating success rates. These are records of a new admission or a reexamination without a preceding voucher issuance. We assume such households must have had an issuance, but we do not include them in calculations of success rates, because we cannot observe missing issuances for households that did not lease up.⁶⁴

Time to lease-up. Time to lease up is measured by counting days between transactions. For each voucher issuance and transaction record, we observe the date of the transaction. Using this variable, we construct the number of days that pass between a transaction and the previous observed transaction. In addition to reporting on time to lease up in Chapter 5 of this report, we use the days between transactions to limit the amount of time that can pass between a voucher issuance and a successful lease-up as indicated by a new admission, annual reexamination, or interim reexamination. We define a successful lease-up as an admission within 365 days of voucher issuance. This is longer than previous studies of voucher issuance, which often use 180 days.⁶⁵ We selected a 365-day window to measure success because of tight rental market in the Los Angeles area and the long search times associated with finding an affordable unit there, and because a non-trivial number of lease-ups occurred after 180 days. Extending this window beyond 365 days would not materially increase our calculated success rates and would increase the likelihood that we are mistaking a data error (e.g., a missing new issuance after a prior unsuccessful issuance) for a

⁶⁴ These transaction patterns unambiguously capture successful lease-ups and failures to lease up. There are other, infrequent transaction patterns. For some issuances, no subsequent action indicating a lease-up is recorded—whether expiration of the search voucher, admission supported by a HAP contract, or annual reexamination associated with a HAP contract. If there is simply no additional data, we considered this pattern a failure—that is, we assume that the transaction indicating voucher expiration is missing. If an issuance is immediately followed by a portability move-out, we omit the record entirely (since we do not know the household succeeded in using the voucher in another jurisdiction). Sometimes an issuance is followed by another issuance. In these cases, we use the first issuance as the start of the household’s attempt to use a voucher if the issuances were separated by less than a year and went on to determine whether the household leased up within 365 days. In cases where the successive issuances were separated by more than a year, we assume the first was a failure to lease up and that the second was a new issuance and started the 365-day clock at that time. In cases where a household recorded an annual re-certification or an interim re-certification after an issuance, we could not estimate the time to lease-up, but we do include these records when calculating success rates.

⁶⁵ For example, the success rate study conducted at 50 large, urban PHAs in 2000. Meryl Finkel and Larry Buron "[Study on Section 8 Voucher Success Rates, Volume I: Quantitative Study of Success Rates in Metropolitan Areas](#)," U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, (2001).

successful lease-up that takes many months. More than 95 percent of voucher issuances followed by lease-ups had been completed within this 365-day window.

Samples Used for Different Analyses

We use different portions of the administrative data for the different analyses. For some analyses, some observations should be excluded to prevent exacerbating potential biases, while for others the outcome being examined is only defined for households that have experienced a successful lease-up. We analyze the following four groupings of data:

1. **All issuances, both observed and presumed:** For the analyses in Chapters 4 and 6 on the quantity and characteristics of households receiving vouchers, we use all issuances, including both those observed as issuance type of actions, and presumed issuances where an admission or reexamination is not preceded by an expected issuance. This gives us the most complete set of issuances.
2. **Observed issuances only:** For the analyses in Chapter 5 on success rates, we use only issuances directly observed in the administrative data. We do not include presumed issuances in this analysis. These are records with admissions but no preceding issuances. The existence of such records (about 12 percent of issuances) suggests there are issuances that do not result in successful admissions that cannot be observed in the data. Including only the successes with missing data for issuances would overstate the actual success rates.
3. **Observed issuances with observed admissions:** For the analysis in Chapter 5, we include all issuances with observed admissions. Most observed successful issuances have an admission, but for a small fraction the first observed action is a reexamination. To accurately characterize time to lease up since issuance we only use those instances for which we observe both issuance and lease-up.
4. **Observed admissions:** For the analysis in Chapter 5 of where households use vouchers to and the analyses in Chapter 6 of, demographic characteristics of voucher users (households that have leased up) and per unit costs of voucher users, the analysis uses all successful lease-ups, regardless of whether a preceding issuance is observed.

Our analysis period is issuances that occur between in 2016 through 2020. For analyses that break out results by year, we use the year voucher was issued. For example, if a voucher was issued in December of 2016 and leased-up in March of 2017, we report household characteristics in the 2016 statistics and include the observation in calculating the success rate for 2016.⁶⁶

We found significant problems with the data field indicating a household's previous address ZIP code, which is provided by the household at voucher issuance. These problems suggest that the field is not a

⁶⁶ Our definition of success is whether an issuance is converted to an admission within 365 days. Our data extract includes records created through the end of the second quarter of 2021 (i.e., about June 30, 2021). As a result, for the small fraction of our data with issuances in the second half of 2020 we do not have a full 365-day follow-up period, with issuances at the end of the year having only six months of follow-up. Therefore, 2020 success rates may be slightly understated. Because 2020 had fewer issuances than prior years, largely due to pandemic disruptions, our total success rates over the entire analysis period are unlikely to be affected.

reliable indicator of where a household had a prior permanent residence. For example, many households experiencing homelessness in our data with reported ZIP codes were in a ZIP code prior to receiving a voucher that contained the address of the downtown Los Angeles facility of Veterans Affairs. Additionally, a large share of ZIP codes were not valid ZIP codes. As a result, we were not able to use neighborhood characteristics associated with the previous ZIP code in an analysis of factors that influence success rates or of the locations of units leased with a voucher. However, we were able to use the field to create a predictor for imputing the homeless status of households at the time of issuance, as a number of reported ZIP Codes were highly correlated with homelessness at the time of lease-up.

Publicly Available Voucher Data

We found several public data sources useful to triangulate the extract of HUD administrative data and to further detail the scale and scope of each PHA's voucher program. Information on the scale of HCV programs for PHAs in LA County come from a HUD-curated dataset of PHA administrative data, Picture of Subsidized Households (POSH), which is extracted from PHA submissions of form 50058 and is aggregated to various geographic levels and organizational entities. It is made publicly available each year through a web query tool on the huduser.gov website. Supplemental data on VASH vouchers come from a report of VASH allocations awarded to PHAs each year and maintained by HUD.

PHA HCV Administrative Plans

We reviewed the administrative plans of each of the PHAs in Los Angeles County, using the latest plans found on their websites as of early 2022. Three PHAs did not maintain a website or did not post their HCV administrative plan to their websites: Torrance, South Gate, and Culver City. The HCV administrative plan is required by HUD and provides the regulations and local PHA policies that govern each PHA's HCV program. The PHA administrative plan includes a description of each PHA's local preferences used to prioritize families on its HCV waiting list. Homelessness preferences were obtained for each PHA and categorized by strength. PHAs with strong homelessness preferences have general preferences for homeless households that provide a high priority to people experiencing homelessness such that they are likely to receive new vouchers as they become available. They may also have significant limited preferences (set-asides of vouchers) for people experiencing homelessness. PHAs with no or weak homeless preferences do not mention homelessness in their list of local preferences in their PHA administrative plans or place a low priority on homelessness in selecting families from their HCV waiting list—for example, by grouping people experiencing homelessness with another group likely to be very large (e.g., residents of the jurisdiction).

Interview Data

To better understand the referral process, we conducted one-hour interviews with LAHSA, homeless service providers and County health agencies. Interviews followed an interview guide prepared in advance and were conducted by phone. The interviews focused on the role of homeless service providers in referring households to the PHAs and providing case management that helped their clients get through the voucher issuance process and the process of leasing up with a voucher.

We also spoke to eight people who had experienced homelessness and received a housing voucher to understand their experience seeking out and successfully using a voucher. During the interviews we asked questions about voucher application process, working with PHA and homeless service provider staff,

searching for housing in Los Angeles, and challenges and successes they encountered through each step of the process.

Finally, we interviewed staff at the three largest PHAs in Los Angeles County and four smaller LA County PHAs to obtain a full picture of the issuance and lease-up processes and the administrative challenges related to serving people experiencing homelessness, including their experiences following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In follow-up interviews, with HACLA, LACDA, and HACLB, we described some of the patterns we were finding in our analysis of the 50058 data and asked PHA staff to comment on the credibility of some of those findings. We also discussed the PHAs' experience with Emergency Housing Vouchers as of early 2022.

Neighborhood Data

Neighborhood data obtained from the American Community Survey (ACS) provided contextual data on the areas in which HCV households leased a unit. ACS data included information on poverty rates at the census tract level for 2019.

Descriptive Analyses

Descriptive analyses include basic frequency counts of voucher transactions such as issuances and lease-ups, as well as crosstabulations of transactions by characteristics such as demographic characteristics and household types. We also explored trends by year and by PHA. For analyses that do not denote specific years, data are pooled from 2016 through 2020.

We categorize the 19 PHAs operating in Los Angeles County into four categories: HACLA, LACDA, HACLB, and all other PHAs. Trends at one or more of the larger PHAs can mask trends at other PHAs. We also analyze patterns across all PHAs in Los Angeles County.

Further descriptive statistics of HCV success rates, costs, and the duration of housing searches compare means by groups. For these analyses, we employ simple t-tests to estimate the statistical significance of differences in group means and identify non-random differences in outcomes by group. Definitive comparisons in the report (i.e., X percent for group A is larger than Y percent for group B) are made only if the described difference is statistically significant at conventional levels.

Maps

Maps were created using ESRI's ArcMap platform. PHA jurisdiction polygons were created using US Census place boundaries. Since LACDA represents LA County minus the 18 separate PHAs detailed in this analysis, these PHAs were removed from LACDA's jurisdiction. US Census place boundaries do not exactly match PHA's jurisdictions but were adequate for showing spatial patterns in data by PHA jurisdiction for LA County. LA County's boundary was obtained from the government of LA County's spatial data website. US Census tract 2010 boundaries for LA County were obtained from the US Census Department's Tigerline query tool.

Appendix D: Detailed Analysis Tables of HUD 50058 Data

Exhibit D.1.a: New Vouchers Issued (2016-2020), by PHA and Homeless Status

PHA	Total number of new vouchers issued	New vouchers issued to homeless households		New vouchers issued to other households	
		Number	Percentage of all new vouchers	Number	Percentage of all new vouchers
All LA County PHAs	29,395	12,768	43%	16,627	57%
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)	15,227	7,033	46%	8,194	54%
Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA)	7,520	4,328	58%	3,192	42%
Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB)	2,917	1,211	42%	1,706	58%
All LA County PHAs other than HACLA, LACDA, and HACLB	3,731	196	5%	3,535	95%
Housing Authority of the City of Glendale	305	<20	NA	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Santa Monica	660	32	5%	628	95%
City of Pasadena Housing Department	498	22	4%	476	96%
Housing Authority of the City of Inglewood	136	<20	NA	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Burbank	168	<20	NA	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Pomona	319	50	16%	269	84%
Housing Authority of the City of Baldwin Park	376	<20	NA	NA	NA
City of Compton Housing Authority	133	<20	NA	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Norwalk	344	<20	NA	NA	NA
City of Hawthorne Housing Authority	258	<20	NA	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Torrance	71	<20	NA	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of South Gate	129	<20	NA	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Redondo Beach	113	<20	NA	NA	NA
Pico Rivero Housing Assistance Agency	119	<20	NA	NA	NA
Culver City Housing Authority	68	<20	NA	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Hawaiian Gardens	34	<20	NA	NA	NA

Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. <20 indicates there were too few households in a category to report. NA indicates that a percentage or value could not be reported because fewer than 20 new vouchers were issued. Includes all issuances, both observed and presumed (Appendix C).

Exhibit D.1.b: VASH Vouchers Issued to Homeless Households (2016-2020), by PHA

PHA	Number of new vouchers issued to homeless households	VASH vouchers issued	
		Number	Percentage of all vouchers issued to homeless households
All LA County PHAs	12,768	3,627	28%
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)	7,033	2,279	32%
Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA)	4,328	1,301	30%
Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB)	1,211	24	2%
All County PHAs other than HACLA, LACDA, and HACLB	196	23	12%

Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Includes all issuances, both observed and presumed (Appendix C)

Exhibit D.1.c: New Vouchers Issued to Homeless Households (2016-2020), by PHA, Household Size, and Disability Status

PHA	New vouchers issued to homeless households			
	Percentage of households that are:			
	1 person disabled	1 person not disabled	2 people	3 or more people
All LA County PHAs	35%	36%	12%	18%
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)	39%	38%	10%	14%
Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA)	27%	34%	14%	24%
Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB)	38%	32%	13%	17%
All County PHAs other than HACLA, LACDA, and HACLB	41%	25%	13%	20%

Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Only PHAs with more than 30 issuances of new vouchers to homeless households shown separately. Due to rounding, numbers presented here may slightly differ from numbers reported in text. Includes all issuances, both observed and presumed (Appendix C).

Exhibit D.1.d: New Vouchers Issued (2016-2020), by PHA, Race/Ethnicity, and Homeless Status

PHA	New vouchers issued					
	Percentage of households that are:					
	Hispanic (any race)	Asian non-Hispanic	Black non-Hispanic	Indigenous non-Hispanic	White non-Hispanic	Other non-Hispanic
Panel A. Homeless Households						
All LA County PHAs	23%	1%	54%	1%	19%	1%
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)	21%	<2%	58%	<2%	18%	<2%
Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA)	29%	<2%	48%	2%	18%	2%
Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB)	15%	<5%	53%	<3%	25%	<3%
All County PHAs other than HACLA, LACDA, and HACLB	28%	<2%	44%	<2%	<28%	<2%
Panel B. Other Households						
All LA County PHAs	25%	6%	45%	1%	23%	0%
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)	22%	4%	48%	<1%	25%	0%
Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA)	29%	6%	53%	<1%	11%	<1%
Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB)	18%	10%	55%	<1%	16%	<1%
All County PHAs other than HACLA, LACDA, and HACLB	31%	6%	28%	<1%	33%	<1%

Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Only PHAs with more than 30 issuances of new vouchers to homeless households shown separately. <#% indicates that an exact percentage could not be reported because the category has fewer than 20 households. Includes all issuances, both observed and presumed (Appendix C).

Exhibit D.2.a: Success Rates for New Households Issued Vouchers (2016-2020), by PHA and Homeless Status

PHA	All new vouchers			New vouchers issued to homeless households			New vouchers issued to other households		
	Successful lease-ups			Successful lease-ups			Successful lease-ups		
	Total Issuances	Successes	Percentage	Total Issuances	Successes	Percentage	Total Issuances	Successes	Percentage
All LA County PHAs	24,048	15,088	63%	11,771	7,612	65%	12,277	7,476	61%
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)	12,505	7,914	63%	6,276	3,968	63%	6,229	3,946	63%
Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA)	6,215	3,846	62%	4,235	2,844	67%	1,980	1,002	51%
Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB)	2,411	1,451	60%	1,087	674	62%	1,324	777	59%
All County PHAs other than HACLA, LACDA, and HACLB	2,917	1,877	64%	173	126	73%	2,744	1,751	64%
Housing Authority of the City of Glendale	133	128	96%	<20	NA	NA	<20	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Santa Monica	449	361	80%	27	22	81%	422	339	80%
City of Pasadena Housing Department	423	184	43%	<20	NA	NA	<20	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Inglewood	96	57	59%	<20	NA	NA	<20	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Burbank	117	98	84%	<20	NA	NA	<20	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Pomona	268	208	78%	47	38	81%	221	170	77%
Housing Authority of the City of Baldwin Park	358	202	56%	<20	NA	NA	<20	NA	NA

PHA	All new vouchers			New vouchers issued to homeless households			New vouchers issued to other households		
	Successful lease-ups			Successful lease-ups			Successful lease-ups		
	Total Issuances	Successes	Percentage	Total Issuances	Successes	Percentage	Total Issuances	Successes	Percentage
City of Compton Housing Authority	100	69	69%	<20	NA	NA	<20	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Norwalk	312	181	58%	<20	NA	NA	<20	NA	NA
City of Hawthorne Housing Authority	221	116	52%	<20	NA	NA	<20	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Torrance	44	41	93%	<20	NA	NA	<20	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of South Gate	115	73	63%	<20	NA	NA	<20	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Redondo Beach	84	62	74%	<20	NA	NA	<20	NA	NA
Pico Rivero Housing Assistance Agency	109	71	65%	<20	NA	NA	<20	NA	NA
Culver City Housing Authority	64	<20	NA	<20	NA	NA	<20	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Hawaiian Gardens	24	<20	NA	<20	NA	NA	<20	NA	NA

Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. <20 indicates there were too few households in a category to report. NA indicates that a percentage or value could not be reported because fewer than 20 new vouchers were issued. Includes only observed issuances (Appendix C).

Exhibit D.2.b: Success Rates for New Households Issued Vouchers (2016-2020), by Household Size, Disability Status, and Homeless Status

PHA	All new vouchers		New vouchers issued to homeless households		New vouchers issued to other households	
	Successful lease-ups	Percentage with successful lease-ups	Successful lease-ups	Percentage with successful lease-ups	Successful lease-ups	Percentage with successful lease-ups
All LA County PHAs	15,088	63%	7,612	65%	7,476	61%
1 person disabled	4,376	62%	2,401	60%	1,975	64%
1 person not disabled	4,019	58%	2,582	61%	1,437	54%
2 people disabled	994	65%	303	60%	691	66%
2 people not disabled	1,559	58%	623	67%	936	54%
3 or more people	4,140	70%	1,703	81%	2,437	65%

Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Includes only observed issuances (see Appendix C).

Exhibit D.2.c: Success Rates for New Households Issued Vouchers (2016-2020), by Race/Ethnicity and Homeless Status

PHA	All new vouchers		New vouchers issued to homeless households		New vouchers issued to other households	
	Successful lease-ups (#)	successful lease-ups (%)	Successful lease-ups (#)	Successful lease-ups (%)	Successful lease-ups (#)	Successful lease-ups (%)
All LA County PHAs	15,088	63%	7,612	65%	7,476	61%
Hispanic any race	3,769	62%	1,837	66%	1,932	59%
Asian non-Hispanic	542	66%	116	67%	426	65%
Black non-Hispanic	7,362	62%	4,155	66%	3,207	58%
Indigenous non-Hispanic	137	56%	99	56%	38	55%
White non-Hispanic	3,199	64%	1,346	60%	1,853	68%
Other non-Hispanic	79	62%	59	65%	20	56%

Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Includes only observed issuances (Appendix C).

Exhibit D.3.a: Time to Lease-Up for New Vouchers Issued (2016-2020), by PHA and Homeless Status

PHA	New vouchers issued to homeless households		New vouchers issued to other households	
	(Days from issuance to lease-up)		(Days from issuance to lease-up)	
	Median	Average	Median	Average
All LA County PHAs	106	122	97	113
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)	109	122	114	126
Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA)	107	125	90	111
Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB)	97	110	107	119
All LA County PHAs other than HACLA, LACDA, and HACLB	76	86	63	84
Housing Authority of the City of Glendale	NA	NA	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Santa Monica	53	70	46	64
City of Pasadena Housing Department	NA	NA	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Inglewood	NA	NA	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Burbank	NA	NA	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Pomona	77	82	63	84
Housing Authority of the City of Baldwin Park	NA	NA	NA	NA
City of Compton Housing Authority	NA	NA	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Norwalk	NA	NA	NA	NA
City of Hawthorne Housing Authority	NA	NA	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Torrance	NA	NA	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of South Gate	NA	NA	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Redondo Beach	NA	NA	NA	NA
Pico Rivero Housing Assistance Agency	NA	NA	NA	NA
Culver City Housing Authority	NA	NA	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Hawaiian Gardens	NA	NA	NA	NA

Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Only PHAs with more than 30 issuances of new vouchers to households experiencing homelessness are shown separately. NA indicates that a percentage or value could not be reported due to the number of new vouchers issued category having fewer than 20 households. Includes successful lease-ups with a record of an issuance (Appendix C).

Exhibit D.3.b: Time to Lease-Up for New Vouchers Issued (2016-2020), by Household Type and Homeless Status

Household Type	New vouchers issued to homeless households		New vouchers issued to other households	
	Days from issuance to lease-up		Days from issuance to lease-up	
	Median	Average	Median	Average
Families with children	97	114	104	118
Elderly without children	101	120	68	91
Disabled without children	114	128	106	118
Other	110	126	136	144

Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Includes only successful lease-ups with a record of an issuance (Appendix C).

Exhibit D.3.c: Time to Lease-Up for New Vouchers Issued (2016-2020), by Race/Ethnicity and Homeless Status

Race/Ethnicity	New vouchers issued to homeless households		New vouchers issued to other households	
	(Days from issuance to lease-up)		(Days from issuance to lease-up)	
	Median	Average	Median	Average
Asian Non-Hispanic	97	114	65	83
Black Non-Hispanic	112	126	122	132
Hispanic Any Race	98	116	97.5	111
Indigenous Non-Hispanic	116	125	95	111
Other Non-Hispanic	110	129	79	106
White Non-Hispanic	102	118	70	91

Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. Includes only successful lease-ups with a record of an issuance (Appendix C).

Exhibit D.3.d: Poverty Concentration of Census Tracts in Which New Vouchers Issued Lease Up (2016-2020), by PHA and Homeless Status

PHA	Vouchers leased up (Poverty rate)				
	0-10 %	10-20%	20-30%	30-40%	>40%
Panel A. Homeless Households					
All LA County PHAs	7%	27%	36%	18%	12%
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)	5%	26%	38%	18%	14%
Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA)	11%	30%	34%	16%	9%
City of Long Beach Housing Authority (HACLB)	5%	19%	37%	27%	11%
All LA County PHAs other than HACLA, LACDA, and HACLB	<20%	45%	30%	<5%	<10%
Panel B. Other Households					
All LA County PHAs	11%	37%	33%	14%	5%
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles	7%	30%	39%	17%	7%
Los Angeles County Development Authority	15%	37%	30%	14%	5%
City of Long Beach Housing Authority	6%	26%	40%	23%	5%
All LA County PHAs other than HACLA, LACDA, and HACLB	<25%	56%	20%	<5%	<3%

Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. <#% indicates that an exact percentage could not be reported because the category has fewer than 20 households. Includes only successful lease-ups with a record of an issuance (Appendix C).

Exhibit D.4.a: Household Types of New Voucher Users for Vouchers Issued in 2019

PHA	New voucher lease-ups for vouchers issued in 2019			
	Percentage of households that are:			
	Families with children	Elderly	Disabled	Other households
Panel A. Homeless Households				
All LA County PHAs	36%	14%	25%	25%
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)	24%	16%	21%	39%
Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA)	24%	24%	14%	39%
Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB)	32%	21%	28%	20%
All LA County PHAs other than HACLA, LACDA, and HACLB	NA	NA	NA	NA
Panel B. Other Households				
All LA County PHAs	41%	33%	13%	14%
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)	40%	31%	15%	14%
Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA)	50%	NA	NA	NA
Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB)	46%	<15%	32%	<10%
All LA County PHAs other than HACLA, LACDA, and HACLB	34%	46%	11%	9%

Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. NA indicates that a percentage or value could not be reported because the category had fewer than 20 households. (Appendix C).

Exhibit D.4.b: Rents and Subsidy Costs of New Voucher Users for Vouchers Issued in 2019

PHA	All new vouchers			New vouchers issued to homeless households			New vouchers issued to other households		
	Gross Rent (average \$ per month)	Family Contribution (average \$ per month)	Housing Assistant Payment (average \$ per month)	Gross Rent (average \$ per month)	Family Contribution (average \$ per month)	Housing Assistant Payment (average \$ per month)	Gross Rent (average \$ per month)	Family Contribution (average \$ per month)	Housing Assistant Payment (average \$ per month)
All LA County PHAs	\$1,688	\$418	\$1,255	\$1,683	\$378	\$1,285	\$1,692	\$452	\$1,229
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)	\$1,726	\$445	\$1,258	\$1,700	\$395	\$1,271	\$1,745	\$479	\$1,249
Los Angeles County Development Authority (LACDA)	\$1,684	\$369	\$1,303	\$1,675	\$364	\$1,300	\$1,713	\$385	\$1,312
Housing Authority of the City of Long Beach (HACLB)	\$1,733	\$401	\$1,324	\$1,642	\$360	\$1,275	\$1,797	\$429	\$1,359
All LA County PHAs other than HACLA, LACDA, and HACLB	\$1,580	\$447	\$1,132	\$1,702	\$465	\$1,236	\$1,573	\$446	\$1,126

Source: HUD Administrative Data Extract of Voucher Issuances and Lease-Ups, 2016-2020. (Appendix C).