

Emergency Housing Voucher Program

Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority

Rental Housing: Multifamily Management

HFA Staff Contact

Brenda Marquardt

brenda.marquardt@wheda.com

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Overview

WHEDA is proud of its long-standing relationship with Wisconsin's local U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The two organizations have regular phone calls to ensure WHEDA's Housing Voucher program remains successful. WHEDA's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program currently includes administration of the Family Unification Program (FUP), Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) and, just recently added, Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) which was created through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021. HUD announced that the EHV program would provide 70,000 housing choice vouchers to local Public Housing Authorities across the country, 313 of which were awarded to WHEDA.

Under the traditional Housing Choice Voucher program, WHEDA's voucher team within the Risk and Compliance department contracts with local agents who certify applicants, inspect housing units, maintain waiting lists, and issue the vouchers. The new EHV program operates differently, with WHEDA's voucher team handling the administration and development of all procedures in-house. The voucher team of three administers roughly 2,700 vouchers with around 2,400 leased, so adding 313 more in one month was a huge undertaking, but one that WHEDA couldn't turn down.

Program Highlights

WHEDA received an invitation to participate in the EHV program on May 8, 2021. WHEDA's voucher team immediately put together an action plan, including hiring additional staff members, updating WHEDA's website and marketing materials, and establishing partnerships with the Balance of State Continuums of Care (CoC) and Racine City and County CoC. In less than one week, WHEDA and the CoCs were working together to draft the required Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and referral submission packets. On May 25, 2021, WHEDA was notified that two local Wisconsin housing authorities had declined their awarded EHV's, and in turn, WHEDA would receive them. This increased WHEDA's total available vouchers from 313 to 343. Upon receiving approval from the WHEDA Executive Office and Board members, the voucher team worked to execute the MOU on June 22, 2021. WHEDA was

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one of the first Wisconsin Housing Authorities, if not the first, to finalize their MOU. In addition, WHEDA shared their MOU and referral packet template with three other Public Housing Agencies (PHA) to use as a template for their own voucher distribution process. The EHV program officially launched on July 1, 2021, and WHEDA received the first referral on July 27, 2021. At the end of August, when the program was well underway, WHEDA added three new employees to the voucher team.

In addition to offering housing vouchers, HUD provided \$2,500 in service fees per recipient to address financial insecurities being encountered in other areas of life. Unused fees were required to be returned to HUD, so WHEDA was creative in providing unique options for tenants to utilize these funds. Tenants were offered several options on how to use the \$2,500 fee including: funding a security deposit, utility arrears and deposits, application fee(s), renter's insurance, moving expenses, utility fees, and/or the purchase of essential household items. Participants are allowed to keep the security deposit that is returned at the end of their occupancy; therefore, encouraging them to be good tenants. WHEDA staff worked directly with EHV recipients to create purchase lists on retail sites such as Amazon, Walmart, and Target for household items. Purchases were initiated by WHEDA staff and shipped directly to the tenants. WHEDA went above and beyond to ensure that all financial support provided by HUD was used in a way that supported each individual's unique circumstances and needs.

Impact

Through WHEDA's dedicated work to ensure that the EHV's were administered efficiently and effectively, the local Milwaukee HUD office gave WHEDA much praise for their expedited launch of the program and use of HUD funding for housing needs. WHEDA was able to distribute EHV's in 70 of Wisconsin's 72 counties. This is a new and valued service for families living in counties which do not have agencies available to administer county-wide vouchers. WHEDA was also highly praised for their work to distribute one of the highest volumes of \$2,500/household funding sources amongst all PHAs. Program participants themselves have provided feedback to WHEDA that the additional HUD funding resource allowed them to furnish their homes, satisfy past-due utility balances which allowed them to qualify for future services, and obtain housing because their security deposit was covered.

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Because of the creation of the EHV program, some of Wisconsin's most vulnerable residents have been able to overcome significant life challenges. In one case, WHEDA, assisted a Green Bay man who was on the verge of homelessness. He relocated to Two Rivers and obtained reliable, safe, and affordable housing right on the shore of Lake Michigan. This assistance gave him the necessary stability to obtain employment at a local grocery store, and within a month, get promoted to assistant manager. It is residents like this man that WHEDA feels honored to have helped realize his hopes and dreams.

Conclusion

Through HUD's creation of the Emergency Housing Voucher program, WHEDA was able to leverage its prior HUD collaboration and experience to help 112 Wisconsin individuals and families to-date who were in serious need of housing assistance. The number of referrals received by WHEDA and families under lease are increasing daily. WHEDA feels great pride in the accomplishment of getting this program started less than 2 months after HUD had provided the Authority with its 313 Emergency Housing Vouchers to distribute. WHEDA's three-person voucher team demonstrated significant leadership and dedication in handling the in-house development and administration of the EHV program for the first time in the Authority's history. The since-expanded team of six continues to ensure that current as well as prospective program participants are met with the support they need to obtain safe and affordable housing.

Appendix A

WHEDA Emergency Housing Voucher Specific Resources

[EHV Referral Packet](#)

[Detailed Service Fee Form](#)

[Press Release announcing EHV program](#)

[WHEDA EHV Program Briefing Video](#)

Appendix B

WHEDA Housing Choice Voucher Program Resources

[WHEDA Voucher Administration Webpage](#)

[WHEDA Housing Choice Voucher Program Map](#)

Appendix C

Quotes from a WHEDA Emergency Housing Voucher recipient

“I wouldn’t have had the opportunity to move out of Green Bay if it wasn’t for the WHEDA Emergency Housing Voucher program.”

“In my few years of being on emergency housing, I got out of homeless, got into counseling, began to focus on my mental health, and looked for other resources.”