



# EHV COMMUNITY SUCCESS STORY

## FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA

### PARTNERSHIP SUCCESS STORY

#### OVERVIEW

The Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA) received a total of 169 Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs), as well as administrative and other fees, for a total of \$3.74 million in funding. As of April 29, 2022, a total of one hundred and fifteen (115) households, two thirds of the households to be served, were either leased or in the leasing process. Thirty-four (34) households were issued vouchers and searching for housing. The remaining twenty (20) vouchers were in the process of porting out or waiting for new referrals after the initially referred household declined or were determined to be ineligible.

In 2020, the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness (the lead CoC agency), merged with the Fairfax Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), who serve as the administrative staff to the FCRHA. As part of the same department, the teams were prepared to expand their existing long-term partnership (originally established for special purpose voucher programs) to a new level to leverage proven strategies to utilize the EHVs.

#### PRIORITIZING AND ADVANCING EQUITY

The EHVs were targeted to serve all four EHV eligible population groups in the following order: move-on eligible households, households who were literally homeless, and households at risk of homelessness. All categories included referrals from providers serving survivors of domestic violence. In 2017 the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors adopted a joint racial and social equity policy, called “One Fairfax”, which committed the county to intentionally consider equity when making policies or delivering programs and services. Starting with this foundation, HCD staff wanted to ensure the prioritization process was designed to equitably serve households with the highest vulnerabilities. The existing Coordinated Entry assessments were used to identify which households should be referred to the EHV program. To establish an equitable distribution, staff reviewed data to determine the total number of people experiencing homelessness and the race and ethnicity breakdown in each eligible category. Those numbers allowed staff to create base line goals for how many vouchers should be distributed to each category, and a target goal for the distribution by race and ethnicity that generally reflected the larger population experiencing homelessness. In addition, for each eligible criteria, staff decided to prioritize first the households with the longest length of homelessness, then households with a documented disability, and lastly based the household’s vulnerability assessment score. The coordinated entry team evaluated the distribution by race weekly to ensure housing matches were meeting the equity goals.

In addition to HCD staff, partner nonprofit organizations from the local CoC play an essential role in the successful utilization of the EHV’s. All the homeless assistance providers helped identify families and individuals who would be eligible and referred them through the coordinated entry system. One nonprofit organization, Cornerstones, signed a contract with HCD to provide housing location services and landlord engagement. Cornerstones created a team that specializes in locating housing opportunities for those facing significant barriers including less than perfect rental histories, credit issues, and criminal backgrounds. Cornerstones staff continues to engage landlords and clients after initial lease up to ensure success for the client and to address any issues.

#### KEY PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIES

- HCD leadership and program management staff held weekly update and strategy meetings.
- Intake and coordinated entry teams met routinely to address bottlenecks in the referral and intake process, review the status of referrals and to quickly fill spots when applicants declined service or were determined to be ineligible.
- Monthly By-Name List meetings were held with CoC partners to track and update status of applicants, as well as identify barriers and resources to successful leasing.
- HCD applied some of its COVID waivers and most available EHV waivers to reduce the paperwork burden for applicants and staff.
- Using Moving to Work flexibility to reduce barriers to housing, the FCRHA created flat utility allowances, and streamlined inspections and re-certifications.
- To expedite the intake process, the Coordinated Entry team worked directly with referring parties to assist applicants with the application and supporting documentation. With the completed applications, HCD’s intake team were better poised to expedite voucher issuance.

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## TENANT SUCCESS STORIES

### CARL

Prior to moving into his current apartment, Carl Bailey was living in a shelter. With help from Northern Virginia Family Services (NVFS), he was able to access a locally funded short-term rental assistance program and get necessary support to secure housing. However, since this assistance was time-limited, Carl was still at risk of returning to homelessness and needed long-term housing assistance. Northern Virginia Family Services was able to assist Carl in obtaining an Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) in August 2021, that allowed him remain stably housed in the community. Carl had the following to share about his experience:

“Having this apartment is everything. I have always been a hard working person, but sometimes that’s not enough. I ended up homeless and living in the homeless shelter in Reston. I’m grateful for the shelter, it was there when I needed it.

The case managers at the shelter helped me find this apartment and helped with the security deposit. I moved in here in 2019. This neighborhood is very nice. It’s beautiful. I can walk to the grocery store or take the bus to do shopping about 10 minutes away. The apartment complex has a work-out room, a community center, and an elevator. Waking up every day in my own apartment is more than I dreamed. It’s everything. This takes away the worry. I used to worry about things constantly.

When I moved here, the Northern Virginia Family Service workers worked with me to get training for a better-paying job and helped me pay off some of my medical bills. I’m still working and doing well.

I’m grateful that Northern Virginia Family Services referred me for the Emergency Housing Voucher. It provides me with a permanent hous-

ing option that I’ve never had before. I no longer have to worry about where I’m going to live or how to come up with enough money to pay the high rents in this area.”

### HAROLD

Much like Carl, Harold Hamilton was also living in a shelter until NVFS helped him get short-term rental assistance and then eventually an EHV. Harold was eager to share his experience:

“Having the opportunity to rent an apartment and have a place to live, changed my life tremendously. My relationships have improved and I’ve learned a lot from friends and family. This has helped me to stand on my own feet and be responsible.

Before I was in a Shelter for about one year and a half. There with the help of the people at the Shelter and the people

from Northern Virginia Family Service, I was trying to get my life together and, to overcome my addictions. I would not have done it without all the help I’ve got.

Having the opportunity to be referred into the Emergency Housing Voucher program through Northern Virginia Family Service has been a blessing to me. My case managers there helped me and guided me to find ways to do better and improve my life. With their help, I have completed and graduated from the Drug Program through CSB, and got my Certificate. I have not gone back through that path again. I have also, obtained my Certificate as Unarmed Security Guard with a training course completion.

Now, I am trying to grow a life doing it right and be together with my family. My goal is to open up my own business working as Body Guard Limousine.”



“Waking up every day in my own apartment is more than I dreamed. It’s everything. This takes away the worry. I used to worry about things constantly.” Carl Bailey (left) — EHV participant