

# Transcript: Interview with Santa Ana Resident

- [Jie] Record this. Okay, okay. Oh nice dog you have there.
- [Isaiah] Thanks, his name is Hector.
- [Jie] Yeah yeah yeah, so, all right so, let's begin. Would you please state your full name?
- [Isaiah] My name is Isaiah Kyle Nunez.
- [Jie] Okay, and would you mind telling us a little bit about yourself?
- [Isaiah] I'm 29 years old, I live in California, Orange County specifically, and love living here, but it's just really expensive living here too, to be honest, rent is really high, and it's really hard to make it on your own, usually. Usually it's like roommates and all that stuff. But, I love going to the beach, I love going to the movies, I love my life in Orange County and California. So that's a little bit about myself.
- [Jie] That's good, that's good. Have you always lived in Orange County?
- [Isaiah] Yes, I'm a OC native, I was born and raised in Orange County.
- [Jie] Nice, nice, okay, okay. thank you for the information, now, how did you learn about the mainstream voucher program?
- [Isaiah] So, 2019, it was when I became homeless, around November, and that was a little bit before the pandemic started. But I was in a shelter, and I was in the shelter for about 4 months, and after that, my friend found this program, it was called Project Roomkey, and she told me basically, they would allow you to stay there, it's like a paid hotel service. The hotel's are vacant for us to use them for the pandemic. So, I stayed there for about 6 months, and that was to the Illumination Foundation. They provided that service, and it was an awesome experience. It was hard, but it was still, I'm very grateful for it.
- [Jie] Okay so from then on, you found out about this program?
- [Isaiah] Yes. Through them. I went through City Net, and then City Net told me about Project Tool Belt, is that what it's called? I think that's, from Project Roomkey to Project Tool Belt, that's my understanding.
- [Jie] Okay, okay. So those are community-based programs that informed you of the availability of the voucher, that's what your saying.

- [Isaiah] Yes. Initially it was just to be housed during the pandemic, 'Cause I'm a little high risk, I have asthma, I have a couple mental illnesses, so it was a program to help people like that to be housed, and so, you know, safer at home kind of thing. And through there, they helped us apply for housing and that's how I ended up in that program.

- [Jie] So you had a sort of like a case manager from that program? Is that correct?

- [Isaiah] Yes. From City Net specifically, I have to give it all up to City Net. They're awesome, they were the greatest people, so kind, and very, just down to earth, and they made me feel like they cared, and I did get housing through it, so I felt very grateful.

- [Jie] Right, so now obviously you wanted to obtain stable and permanent housing. Was there any other motivating factors that led you to apply for the voucher?

- [Isaiah] It was more just a necessity. I mean, of course, having stable housing lets you have a stable life. Without housing it's kinda hard to make moves and find a job, hold down anything to do with any things like that. But, with housing, it's a lot easier .

- [Jie] Absolutely.

- [Isaiah] Definitely benefited from it.

- [Jie] Right absolutely. So, just a point of clarification. The program that you were staying at in the hotel, how long was that program? Did it have an expiration date?

- [Isaiah] It didn't. I think it ended in October of 2020.

- [Jie] Okay okay.

- [Isaiah] Yeah, and so that's actually the same month that I got my voucher.

- [Jie] Yeah, you got it, you got it. Okay, so that was good, so you didn't have to experience another traumatic experience of being homeless, in that sense.

- [Isaiah] Yeah, I mean it was traumatic at first, but it was definitely worth the hardship, 'cause it paid off in the end, and I felt very grateful for it though. I'm very, I'm being humble and saying it's awesome, these people are wonderful and I love the communities and how they're able to help each other, and it's just great to have this program around.

- [Jie] That's great, that's great. Now how long was the process from the time that you were working on the application to receiving the voucher, and then to finally finding the perfect home, and then to move in? How long was that, that dur--

- [Isaiah] So, actually, it was a little fast, I mean, really fast. It was from as soon as, I think I was at the hotel from maybe May 'til October,

- [Jie] Right

- [Isaiah] until I got the voucher.

- [Jie] Yeah.

- [Isaiah] So from May to October, that's how long it took for me to get it, and that's what, four, five months?

- [Jie] Okay. So, can you walk through that process a little bit more in terms of when did you first starting to apply for it, and then you got the voucher to, was there a period of time that you were looking for the right apartment to move into?

- [Isaiah] Oh yeah, definitely there was a period for me looking for it. I basically didn't even know it was gonna work out that way. I thought it was just a program that was supposed to help us for the COVID, the pandemic situation. And then it being something that led to housing, and City Net was that partnership with the Illumination Foundation, and those are the two resources that I had that helped me so much to get the housing. And the process was pretty simple, they just kinda said, okay, we'll help you apply for it. They helped me with my filing for disabilities, and I knew I had disabilities, but I never knew how to do anything with them, but actually they helped me with the whole process of getting it submitted and getting it approved, and basically helped me through the whole thing. So, I can not say how much I love and appreciate them.

- [Jie] That's great man, that's great. Now in terms of finding the actual apartment what was that experience like? Did you have to physically go and see the apartment?

- [Isaiah] I did, I did. They would take, one of the girls from City Net, her name was Bella, and she was my housing navigator, and she helped me a lot. We went to many different apartments, I think I looked at a total of maybe 12 or 13,

- [Jie] Wow.

- [Isaiah] and I ended up finding one that accepted housing and I really, really, really like it a lot, I'm very happy here. Very very happy.

- [Jie] Okay, okay, that's good, that's good. And in terms of moving in, usually, through the application process there are fees and additional costs and things like that. Who assisted you in making sure that you had the financial resources to pay for all these additional expenses.

- [Isaiah] The two resources I would name are City Net again, and American Family Housing. American Family Housing, they basically furnished the apartment for me, so, that was wonderful, I mean, not having anything to having it fully furnished, it was pretty awesome. So, that was a great thing too.

- [Jie] Okay, okay, okay. Any challenges that you can think of, that you experienced and had to overcome during that whole application process?

- [Isaiah] It wasn't so much the application process, and it's not to sound like I'm not grateful, but it's the hardship of being in the hotel program. It was like, because we had a safer home, it was hard to be stuck. It's not like it was jelly, we had free will, but it was hard to be stuck somewhere for so long, and it was for our safety, I get it, totally, and I'm all about that, but that was the hardest part, it's not feeling like you can go where you are, do what you want, it's just 'cause--

- [Jie] Right.

- [Isaiah] I'm glad I did though, I'm glad I did.

- [Jie] Okay, okay, good good good. Yeah, so you talked a lot about the previous living condition prior to becoming a voucher recipient, and, just to clarify, so you were in a shelter prior to this hotel program, right? How long were you in the shelter for?

- [Isaiah] I was in the shelter from November to May.

- [Jie] Okay. What was that housing setting and living condition like?

- [Isaiah] That was extremely hard. That was probably the worst experience of my life, I have to say. It wasn't that the shelter wasn't good enough, it was just it's hard. It was hard from not, from going, from being homeless, just to go there, in that sense, and it was hard because there was a big room with a whole bunch of cots, and it's like, appreciative and grateful all at the same time, but still very hard, and felt surreal, like I didn't really know how to cope with it. It was different, it was way different than I had ever experienced, but grateful that I wasn't at least on the street. So I did have a car and I did sleep in my car sometimes, that was a part of the process too, I'm... Basically it's just, I didn't really want to be at the shelter, but, I was glad I was there, it was a place to shower, it was a place to eat,

- [Jie] Right. it was a place to charge your batteries, so, I do appreciate all the resources that they had to provide.

- [Isaiah] Okay. Good good good. Any other supportive services or soft services that you received from your time being in the shelter and also while you were in the hotel program that got carried over 'til now,

- [Jie] Yes. are you still receiving the same level of services?

- [Isaiah] I am. City Net is still very much a big part of my life. They still help me with everything actually, and I'm just super grateful to them, I really cannot praise them enough. They're awesome, they're one of the best groups I've ever had the experience of working with. And then also, I have another group now called Telecare, that I got introduced to through City Net, and they're a mental health organization, and they've helped me a lot too. I mean, they pick up, not that there was any slack, but they just picked up anything else that City Net couldn't help with, as far as taking care of my mental state.

- [Jie] So do you pretty much have a wraparound case manage service that addresses all your needs?

- [Isaiah] Pretty much, yeah. I mean, it's awesome. It makes me feel secure, it makes me feel safe, and makes me feel like I can do this, because it was hard. Not that I wanted to make any mistakes, but when I moved in, it wasn't the easiest move-in, because I didn't realize how loud I was, maybe, in an apartment, and trying to adapt to that kind of situation.

- [Isaiah] Right. So, I'm glad that they were very lenient with me and gave me a chance.

- [Jie] You're talking about the housing authority or the landlord, the property management firm?

- Basically, the leasing office, yeah.

- [Jie] Okay, okay, got you, got you. So you're in a apartment complex?

- [Isaiah] I'm in an apartment complex, yeah.

- [Jie] Okay, okay. Now talk a little bit about your current living, current home and your living conditions. How long have you been in that apartment?

- [Isaiah] I've been in since October,

- [Jie] Okay, October.

- [Isaiah] of, yeah.

- [Jie] So, almost six months. No no, seven months.

- [Isaiah] Yeah.

- [Jie] Yeah yeah, okay, okay. What do you enjoy the most about your current home and current living conditions?

- [Isaiah] Having a place for my dog, having a place to decorate, call my own, all that good stuff. It feels good to have your own place, and just, the amenities here at the apartment complex, like the gym, the pool, I couldn't ask for more. It's really just a dream come true.

- [Jie] Excellent, excellent. Now before you were in the shelter, what was that living condition like?

- [Isaiah] That was like being in my car all the time, like going sleeping on the streets but in my car. I did have a car, it was, I think, an older Honda Civic, but I was living in my car for a while.

- [Jie] Okay okay. So even before you got to the shelter, you were sorta homeless?

- [Isaiah] It was, yeah, on the cusp of homeless.

- [Jie] Okay

- [Isaiah] Living in a car is not really ideal for anyone.

- [Jie] Right, right, right, right, right. Absolutely, absolutely. Okay, now how has your current living conditions impact other aspects of your life? You talked about, having access to gym, having your own home, but has that had a profound impact in other areas such as employment, education, or relationship with others or community involvement or any other personal interests?

- [Isaiah] Definitely community involvement. I'm involved more in, and I want to be part of the communities that helped me. So, I mean, definitely turned my eyes to help people wanna help each other. I try to share my experience with others and tell them what I did to do it and see if I can help anyone else, guide them through it. So, I mean, that, it's kinda like I want to give back in that way. But, it's helped me in every way shape and form in my life. Financially I'm better, mental stability I'm better, everything is a lot better .

- [Jie] Very well. Are you currently employed? If you don't mind me asking?

- [Isaiah] Currently I'm not employed, but I am looking for employment, and possibly going back to school, which is--

- [Jie] Okay, okay, good.

- [Isaiah] I've already looked into some and I'm just kind of deciding which one.

- [Jie] Okay. Where do you want to study?

- [Isaiah] I actually want to do a trade school and I'm thinking of doing massage therapy.

- [Jie] Okay.

- [Isaiah] It's called Healing Hands, and it's holistic, and I'm kind of really into that, so I'm really interested

- [Jie] Right, right.

- [Isaiah] in doing that.

- [Jie] That's very cool, that's very cool. And you mentioned about helping others to understand that there is a path to obtain stable housing, specifically through this mainstream voucher program. Where in the community do you go to share your testimony?

- [Isaiah] I haven't shared it specifically with a group of people, but friends and people that I know, and my friends I met through the shelter and all that, I would share with those people.

Anyone I knew, like that, and they were going through some homelessness, or some troubles, I would try to be like, this is what I did, this is how I did it, and try to guide them along.

- [Jie] Okay, okay.

- [Isaiah] And even send them to people that I knew, from City Net or from different organizations that helped me and try to hook up, make the connection for them .

- [Jie] Yeah yeah, no, that's great, that's great. Now, any other resources or agencies that we haven't talked about or mentioned, that you feel like have been instrumental in terms of supporting you? You mentioned City Net, right, and then what was the other mental health agency?

- [Isaiah] It's called Telecare.

- [Jie] Telecare. Okay, okay.

- [Isaiah] Yeah.

- [Jie] Okay.

- [Isaiah] And they're mental health, for helping you with that, you're staying stable, making sure you are on top of your meds, and just, it's a helpful resource. It's a very helpful resource for people who have mental disabilities.

- [Jie] Got it, got it.

- [Isaiah] And, the Illumination Foundation was the program that supported the hotel vouchers until we got housing. So, obviously very grateful to them as well.

- [Jie] Wait, are they still involved with supporting you or that was the cutoff line?

- [Isaiah] They, I don't really know. I know that City Net just took it from there, and they have been with me ever since.

- [Jie] Okay, okay. And for City Net, you pretty much, how often do you check in with those folks there?

- [Isaiah] Monthly, at least once a month.

- [Jie] Okay, okay. And then, is that in form of a, sort of a case management slash mentorship, or information referral?

- [Isaiah] Basically like a check-in, making sure I'm okay, and referrals like you said, referrals to any program they think that would help me, or what I'm interested in doing, and helping me find resources, they're awesome. I really cannot praise them enough. I'd give it all up to City Net,

especially if I can give a shout-out to the girl who helped me, specifically her name was Taylor Verlossi, I don't know if I'm allowed to say her name,

- [Jie] Yeah yeah yeah.

- [Isaiah] but she's wonderful, and she has a big heart, and I'm just so glad I've met her.

- [Jie] That's awesome, that's awesome. Now, this leads to my final question, what is your engagement or involvement or interaction like with the folks at the public housing authority? The folks who issued the voucher to you. How often do you interact with them?

- [Isaiah] Only on a need-to basis, but I try to keep it on the good, oh, always stay on the good side. But if I needed to update my income, or something changed like that, that's when I'll reach out to them. And Maria, she's always there, always answers, and does it very fast, and so, it's been a great experience.

- [Jie] That's great, that's great to hear. Anything else you would like to share, besides what we already covered?

- [Isaiah] I just want to tell people not to give up. There's hope out there, there are all these resources that are everywhere for everyone, and, it's just, you got to look into it, and not be afraid to ask questions. That's just what I would say.

- [Jie] Thank you so much for being a part of this spotlight project. We really really appreciate your willingness to be able to share your vulnerable past, and wish you nothing but the best in your future.

- [Isaiah] I appreciate that very much.

- [Jie] Yes, and then we'll let you know once we get the recording and the documents posted on a website, so that you can then tell friends and families and other personal associates about this amazing resource.

- [Isaiah] I definitely look forward to seeing that!

- [Jie] All right, thank you, have a good day.

- [Isaiah] You too.

- [Jie] All right, bye bye now.