

Emergency Housing Vouchers: Analyzing Placement Outcomes among NYC Department of Homeless Services Clients

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Executive Summary

The Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program was established under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to reduce homelessness and support housing stability following the COVID-19 pandemic. Modeled on the Federal Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, EHV's subsidize rental housing for eligible households and are administered through local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs). In New York City, 7,788 EHV's were allocated to NYCHA and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). By early 2024, the City had successfully used all allocated EHV's, with clients served by the NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS) accounting for nearly one third of EHV placements.

In this brief, the Office of Evaluation and Research (OER), a unit of the NYC Department of Social Services' Office of Research and Policy Innovation, presents findings on the implementation and housing outcomes of the EHV program for DHS clients. The analysis draws on administrative data from the NYC Office of Management and Budget, matched to DHS datasets to track outcomes for DHS households issued a voucher between July 2021 and December 2022. Households issued EHV's included all DHS case types, with families with children comprising the largest share (52%), followed by single adults (36%), adult families (8%), and outreach clients (4%).

Our analysis found that 75% of DHS clients secured permanent housing within one year of receiving the voucher: 45% leased up using an EHV; an additional 29% exited shelter to permanent housing using another subsidy, often CityFHEPS; and 1% exited to unsubsidized housing. Housing outcomes varied by case type and the timing of voucher issuance. Families with children experienced the highest rates of both EHV placement and overall permanent housing placement. Clients issued vouchers in 2021 had higher EHV placement rates and shorter times to lease-up than those issued vouchers in 2022, while overall rates of permanent housing placement remained relatively stable over time. These findings suggest that programmatic and market conditions likely influenced the pathways to permanent housing for DHS households who were issued an EHV.

Introduction

The American Rescue Plan, signed into law in March 2021, created the Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program. The EHV program was established to reduce homelessness and improve housing stability in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The voucher was designed to operate like the Federal Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program: EHV recipients live in housing of their choosing and generally pay 30 percent of their household income on rent, while the remaining rent is paid directly to the landlord by a local Public Housing Authority (PHA).

In May 2021, the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued 70,000 EHV to more than 600 PHAs across the country. Recent evidence illustrates how localities applied unique strategies to connect households to the voucher and expedite lease-ups.¹ This study from the Office of Evaluation and Research (OER), a unit of the NYC Department of Social Services' Office of Research and Policy Innovation, focuses on the implementation and outcomes of the EHV program in New York City. Specifically, we focus on the program roll-out at the NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS), which ultimately issued nearly 5,500 Emergency Housing Vouchers.

This research brief outlines findings across two key areas of study. First, we present measures related to the program's implementation in NYC, including the timing and configuration of voucher issuances. Then, we analyze clients' housing outcomes, including both EHV lease-ups and any other move-outs to permanent housing within one year of being issued the voucher.

Program Design

The Federal government issued a tranche of 7,788 Emergency Housing Vouchers to the PHAs in New York City—i.e., the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). These PHAs coordinated with City agencies to distribute the vouchers, with nearly 4,000 EHV initially allocated to the NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS).

Due to the limited number of EHV available, voucher access was mediated through a screening and referral process. DHS and its nonprofit partners identified families and individuals who were experiencing homelessness or were at-risk of homelessness, and conducted a preliminary screening through the NYC Continuum of Care's Coordinated Assessment and Placement System (CAPS).² Households who met initial eligibility criteria were prioritized on the basis of certain conditions, including: length of stay in the shelter

¹ The Urban Institute. (2025). *How Have Communities Used Emergency Housing Vouchers to Prevent and End Homelessness?*. Accessed at <https://www.urban.org/projects/how-have-communities-used-emergency-housing-vouchers-prevent-and-end-homelessness>.

² For more detail on this process, see: NYC Continuum of Care. (2021). *Emergency Housing Voucher Program*. Accessed at <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/nycccoc/downloads/pdf/ehv-process-for-providers.pdf>.

system, household size, families with child(ren) under age 2, families with ACS involvement, adult families receiving SSI/DI, and individuals in DHS stabilization beds.³

Prioritized clients were then referred to NYCHA or HPD to submit and process their EHV application. The PHA reviewed the application and followed up to retrieve any missing information, complete background checks, and carry out an eligibility interview. Once approved, clients would be issued the voucher and could be connected to an HPD-contracted housing navigator for assistance with their search for an apartment. When a suitable apartment was identified, clients and their shelter provider worked with the PHA to submit a rental package, complete a housing inspection, and arrange a lease with the landlord.

By early 2024, the City had successfully used all allocated EHV, with nearly 8,000 households placed. DHS accounted for close to one third of those placements: Approximately 2,500 DHS households leased up with an EHV, out of 5,500 who were issued a voucher. One reason for drop-off between EHV issuance and placement was that DHS clients could secure permanent housing through other avenues—e.g., by reuniting with family, or through other housing subsidy programs—even after being issued an EHV. In particular, the City Fighting Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement (CityFHEPS) voucher operates similarly to the EHV program, and households that were issued *both* an EHV and CityFHEPS voucher could make use of either voucher to lease up an apartment.

Data Sources

This study analyzed a sample of DHS clients who were issued an Emergency Housing Voucher between July 2021 and December 2022. The sample was derived from a dataset shared by the NYC Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which tracked EHV distribution across multiple City agencies, and included an EHV referral date, issuance date, and placement date for each voucher recipient.

The OMB dataset, which was shared in March 2024, identified 3,855 unique DHS clients in the study period. Among this group, OER matched 3,851 (99.9%) to an internal DHS dataset that was created to track clients' EHV screening and processing information. We also matched 3,841 (99.6%) to the DHS Client Assistance and Rehousing Enterprise System (CARES) database to gather information on clients' shelter stays and exits through December 2023, as well as demographic information for the head of case.

For any clients who exited shelter with an EHV by December 31, 2023, the OMB dataset included a lease date—i.e., the date when a client completed a move to permanent housing with an Emergency Housing Voucher. Among those without a lease date, OER used CARES data on shelter stays between July 2021 and December 2023 to determine outcomes within

³ Note: Individuals and families experiencing or at-risk of domestic violence were also prioritized, but those cases were referred for an EHV through the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence.

one year (+365 days) of a client’s EHV issuance date. For those who did not lease up with an EHV, housing outcomes were classified based on DHS clients’ most recent exit from shelter:

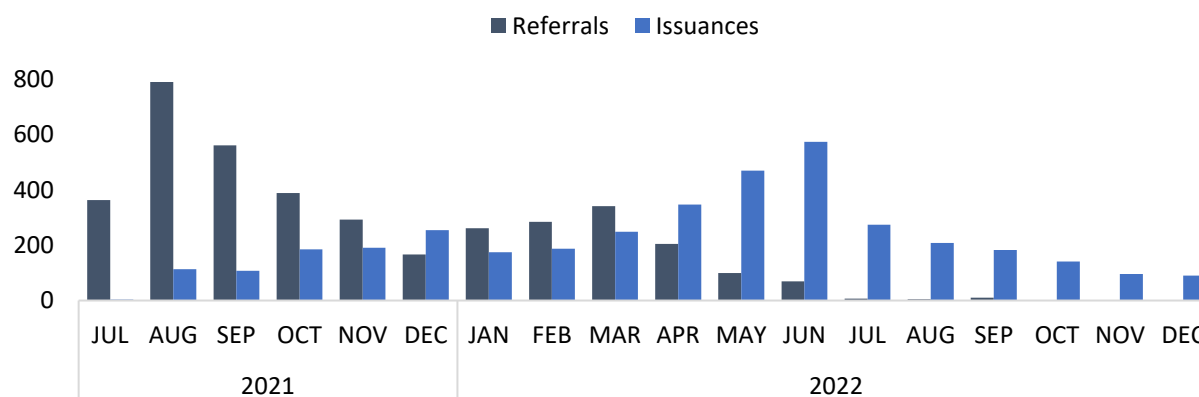
- *Subsidized exit* = client completed a subsidized (non-EHV) exit to permanent housing.
- *Unsubsidized exit* = client completed an unsubsidized exit to permanent housing.
- *Exit on own* = client left shelter without a documented destination.
- *In shelter* = client was in shelter one year after their EHV issuance date.

Findings

Program Implementation

DHS and its partners began referring clients for an EHV in July 2021 and largely stopped making referrals after June 2022. Among clients who ultimately received a voucher, the median time between referral and issuance was 140 days (roughly 4.5 months). In total, 66% of clients were referred in calendar year 2021, and 78% were issued the EHV in 2022—a pattern demonstrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. EHV Referrals and Issuances by Month, among EHV-issued DHS clients



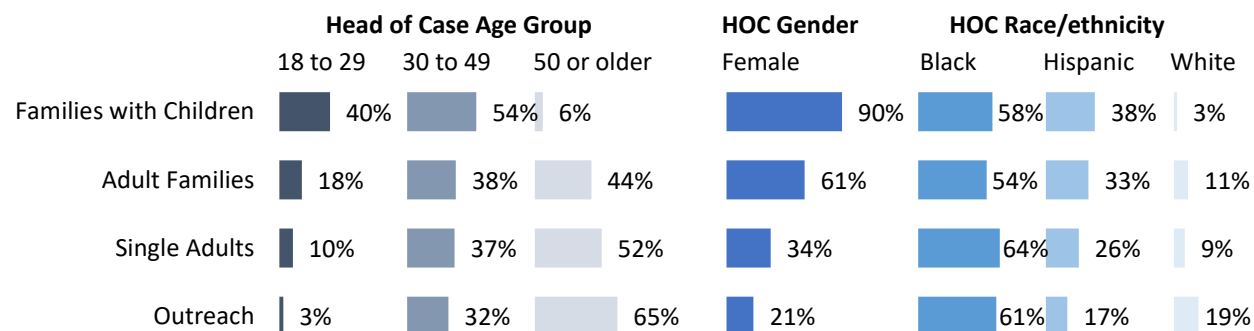
Source: OER analysis of DHS process metrics matched to OMB dataset (n=3,851).

DHS issued vouchers to households across all types of shelters (Single Adult, Adult Family, and Families with Children) as well as individuals on street outreach caseload. Among the 3,841 DHS households issued an EHV by the end of 2022, the largest share were families with children (n=2,007; 52%), followed by single adults (n=1,374; 36%), adult families (n=301; 8%), and outreach clients (n=159; 4%). The demographics of the householder varied widely by case type and were largely reflective of case characteristics in the DHS shelter system; see Figure 2 below.⁴ Length of stay (LOS) in shelter also varied notably by case type. Overall, vouchered households had spent a median of 485 days in shelter over the prior four years, or the equivalent of 1.33 years. By case type, median LOS ranged from approximately 1 year

⁴ For a snapshot of demographic statistics for the entire DHS shelter population, see: NYC Department of Homeless Services. *Stats & Reports*. <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dhs/about/stats-and-reports.page>.

out of four for outreach clients and families with children, to 1.6 years for single adults, and 2 years for adult families.

Figure 2. Vouchered Householder Demographics by Case Type



Source: OER analysis of DHS clients matched to OMB dataset (n=3,841).

Note: In line with Federal guidelines, OER classifies individuals who identify as Hispanic or Latino/a as a distinct racial/ethnic group; all other groups (Black, White, etc.) are non-Hispanic.

The NYC Housing Authority was the PHA for a predominant share of households in our sample. NYCHA was responsible for three-quarters of the vouchered households, primarily because the agency handled nearly all families with children cases and the vast majority of adult families. By contrast, just over half of single adult clients and most of the outreach clients in our sample were issued a voucher through HPD.

Table 1. EHV Issued by Public Housing Authority and Case Type

	NYCHA	HPD
Total (n=3,851)	2,886 (75%)	965 (25%)
Families with Children (n=2,007)	96%	4%
Single Adult (n=1,382)	49%	51%
Adult Families (n=301)	87%	13%
Outreach (n=161)	5%	95%

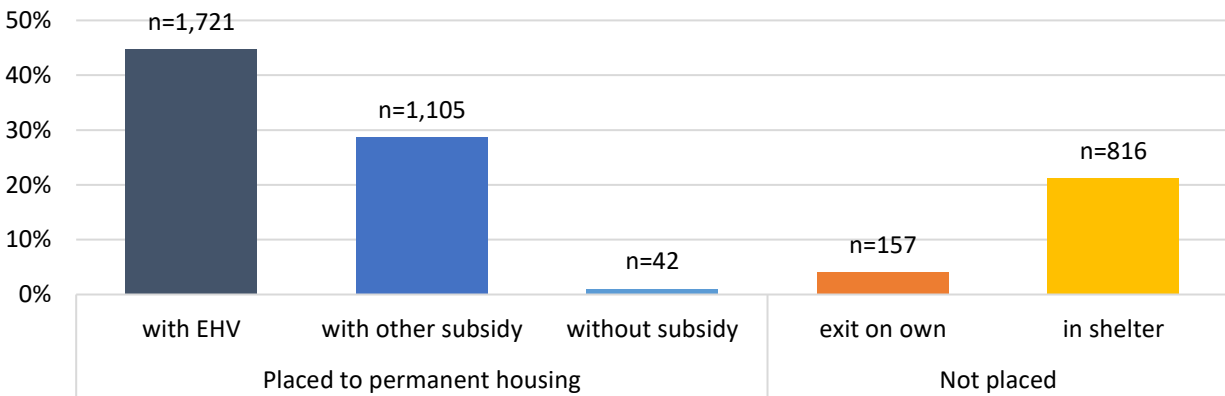
Source: OER analysis of DHS process metrics matched to OMB dataset (n=3,851).

Housing Outcomes

Among the DHS clients in our sample, just under half (45%) utilized their EHV to lease up within a year. However, a substantial share (29%) completed a move to permanent housing using another subsidy—in most cases, the CityFHEPS voucher. A small share (1%) also completed an unsubsidized exit, e.g., reunited with family.

In total, three quarters (75%) of DHS clients transitioned to permanent housing within one year of EHV issuance. Among the quarter who did not move to permanent housing within a year, most (21%) were still in shelter at one year. Figure 3 below outlines the one-year housing outcomes for our sample.

Figure 3. Housing Outcomes One Year from EHV Issuance Date

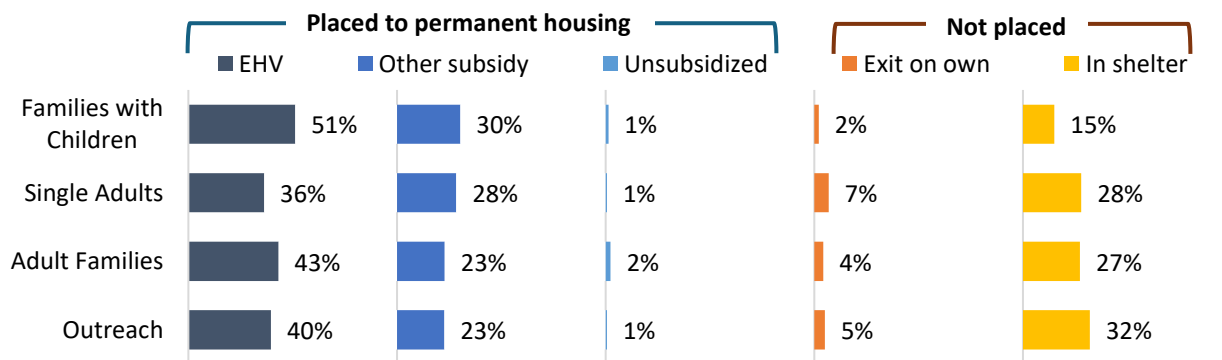


Source: OER analysis of DHS clients matched to OMB dataset (n=3,841).

We also examined housing outcomes as of January 1, 2024—a follow-up period of between 12 and 30 months depending on issuance date—and found even higher rates of permanent housing placements. As of January 1, 2024, 87% of clients had been placed to permanent housing, including 52% who leased up with an EHV, and just 13% were not placed.

The rates of EHV placement and overall permanent housing placement differed by case characteristics and conditions. First, **families with children had the highest rates of EHV placement and of other subsidized placements.** Among families with children, 83% moved to permanent housing—including 51% with an EHV—within one year; among other household types, roughly two-thirds had moved to permanent housing within one year. Conversely, just 15% of families with children remained in shelter at one year, compared to 32% of outreach clients.

Figure 4. One Year Housing Outcomes by Case Type



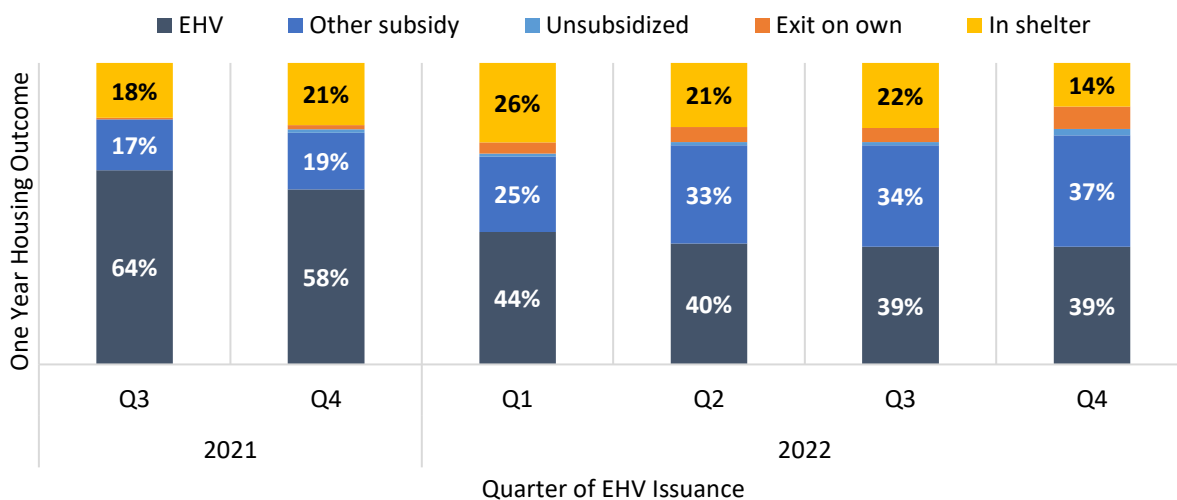
Source: OER analysis of DHS clients matched to OMB dataset (n=3,841).

Note: Case type percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

One-year housing outcomes also varied by the timing of EHV receipt: **Those issued vouchers in 2021 had higher rates of EHV placement, compared to those issued a**

voucher in 2022. Among clients who received an EHV in 2021, approximately 60% used the voucher to lease an apartment within a year. As EHV issuances continued into 2022, clients' rate of EHV placement declined, while the share of other subsidized exits increased. In total, the rate of placements to permanent housing was fairly consistent over time, but the *type* of subsidy utilized by clients shifted: Among clients issued an EHV in the fourth quarter of 2022, the EHV placement rate was roughly equivalent to the rate of completing another subsidized placement (e.g., through CityFHEPS). This trend is displayed in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5. One Year Housing Outcomes by EHV Issuance Period



Source: OER analysis of DHS clients matched to OMB dataset (n=3,841).

We observed similar patterns in the *length of time* recorded between clients' voucher issuance and lease-up dates. Among the 1,721 clients who leased up with an EHV, the median time between issuance and lease-up was 216 days. For families with children, the median was 198 days, compared to 240 for single adults and 275 for outreach clients. For households issued the EHV in 2021, the median time to lease-up was just 149 days, compared to 238 among those issued an EHV in 2022. These results are tabled below.

Table 2. Length of Time from EHV Issuance to EHV Lease-up

		Median time from EHV issuance to lease
Total		216 days
Case Type	Families with Children	198
	Single Adult	240
	Adult Families	249
	Outreach	275
EHV issuance year	EHV issued in 2021	149
	EHV issued in 2022	238

Source: OER analysis of DHS clients with EHV placement (n=1,721).

Discussion

This analysis invites a nuanced understanding of the EHV program's impact on housing families and individuals in NYC. We observed that EHV lease-ups were faster and more common among households issued a voucher in 2021, compared to those issued in 2022. These differential rates of EHV placements speak to an evolving context during the program's implementation.

There are multiple factors that may have contributed to this shift over time. First, the launch of the Emergency Housing Voucher brought a concomitant wave of pressure on DHS and its shelter providers to prioritize EHV placements. DHS was the first referring agency to receive EHV's for its clients and during the first six months of the program, vouchers were set to expire after 180 days, at which point a household was expected to find housing. By 2022, the expiration window was extended to 300 days. Additionally, as other City agencies began using EHV's, some degree of intra-agency competition for similar housing units may have shaped placement outcomes in 2022 and beyond.

At the same time, the share of households who were still in shelter within one year of EHV issuance remained stable over time, as the decline in EHV placements was offset by an increase in other subsidized exits—most notably, CityFHEPS voucher placements. The causes for this shift are not fully observable in the data but may relate to both programmatic and market conditions. For example, in 2022 the CityFHEPS program raised its maximum rent amount to match NYCHA's Section 8 payment standards, narrowing the distinction between EHV and CityFHEPS from the perspective of tenants and landlords. CityFHEPS also offered landlord incentives, including bonuses and unit hold payments, potentially making it a preferable option.⁵

Alongside these programmatic nuances, broader changes in the rental market likely played a role. The NYC Housing and Vacancy Survey estimated that just 33,210 rental units were available in early 2023, down from 103,200 units (-67%) in 2021; and in 2023 the vacancy rate was below 1% for units below \$2,400 in monthly rent.⁶ In other words, there is evidence that rental inventory declined between 2021 and 2023, which may have contributed to longer lease-up times and lower EHV placements for households issued the voucher later in our study period. Indeed, a recent study of the Housing Choice Voucher program demonstrated a declining rate of success in leasing up and longer lease-up times between

⁵ Community Service Society of New York. (2023). *Summary of 2022 Changes to NYC's FHEPS & CityFHEPS*. Accessed at <https://bplc.cssny.org/blog/summary-of-2022-changes-to-nycs-fheps-cityfheps>.

⁶ Gaumer, E. (2024). *The 2023 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey: Selected Initial Findings*. New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

2018 and 2022, suggesting the constraints in New York City may extend to voucher holders nationwide.⁷

In sum, our findings suggest that the Emergency Housing Voucher program functioned not as a singular pathway, but as one of multiple mechanisms for securing permanent housing for DHS clients. Evaluations of voucher programs tend to highlight the so-called “success rate” for PHAs: i.e., the proportion of vouchers that resulted in a lease-up within one year of issuance. In this narrow sense, we found that just 45% of the DHS households leased up with their EHV within one year. However, a substantial and growing share of households in our sample moved to permanent housing through another subsidized placement—most often the CityFHEPS voucher. If we take a broader measure of the ability to secure permanent housing within one year, the success rate for our sample was 75%—and 83% for families with children. That this rate was also fairly stable over time suggests that DHS was able to facilitate continuous housing placements throughout developments in the policy and market environment.

⁷ Gould Ellen, I., O’Regan, K., Stochak, S. (2025). *Success Rates in the Housing Choice Voucher Program: 2018-2022*. NYU Furman Center, Prepared for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research.