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

*Webinar*  
*January 26, 2023*



# Webinar panelists



- **Christina Miller**, Senior Advocacy Officer, Homelessness, *Conrad N. Hilton Foundation*
- **Nichole Fiore**, Senior Associate, *Abt Associates*
- **Tracy Jones**, Senior Vice President, Housing Choice Voucher Program, *Atlanta Housing*
- **Peter Lynn**, Chief Program Officer, *King County Regional Homelessness Authority*

# Agenda



- Welcome
- What are federal tenant-based housing vouchers?
- Design of this study—research questions and data collection
- Highlights of findings
- Discussion with panelists

# What are federal housing vouchers?



- HUD's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV or voucher) program is the federal government's largest program that provides housing assistance to the lowest income renters across the nation.
- Vouchers pay the difference between the rent of a housing unit and 30 percent of a household's income.
- The household must find a rental unit in the private market that is available and has a willing landlord.
- Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) administer the program.
- LA County has 19 PHAs. HACLA and LACDA have among the largest voucher programs in the US. Long Beach also has a substantial number of vouchers.

# Research questions



- Overarching questions:
  - How do the PHAs in the LA region use federal tenant-based vouchers as part of the effort to end homelessness?
  - How successful are people experiencing homelessness in using those vouchers?
- Why are these questions important?
  - Federal housing vouchers are the largest rental subsidy resource that Los Angeles has to end homelessness.
  - Knowing how they are used can:
    - Identify potential improvements in the use of this resource
    - Support successful use of other rental subsidy resources
    - Help advocate for more federal housing vouchers

# Data collection



## Process Study

- Interviews with:
  - HACLA
  - LACDA
  - LAHSA
  - 5 smaller PHAs
  - Homeless service providers (management and case managers)
  - People with lived experience using a voucher

## Success rates and characteristics of voucher holders

- 50058 data from HUD

\*Housing authority staff complete a 50058 form when a voucher is issued (given to a household) and when a household successfully leases a unit. This information is then submitted to HUD on a regular basis.

# 50058 data



- This study is among the first to use a data extract from HUD that includes voucher ***issuances*** as well as voucher ***lease-ups***
- This is the first study to measure success rates separately for people experiencing homelessness and other households

# Not covered by this study



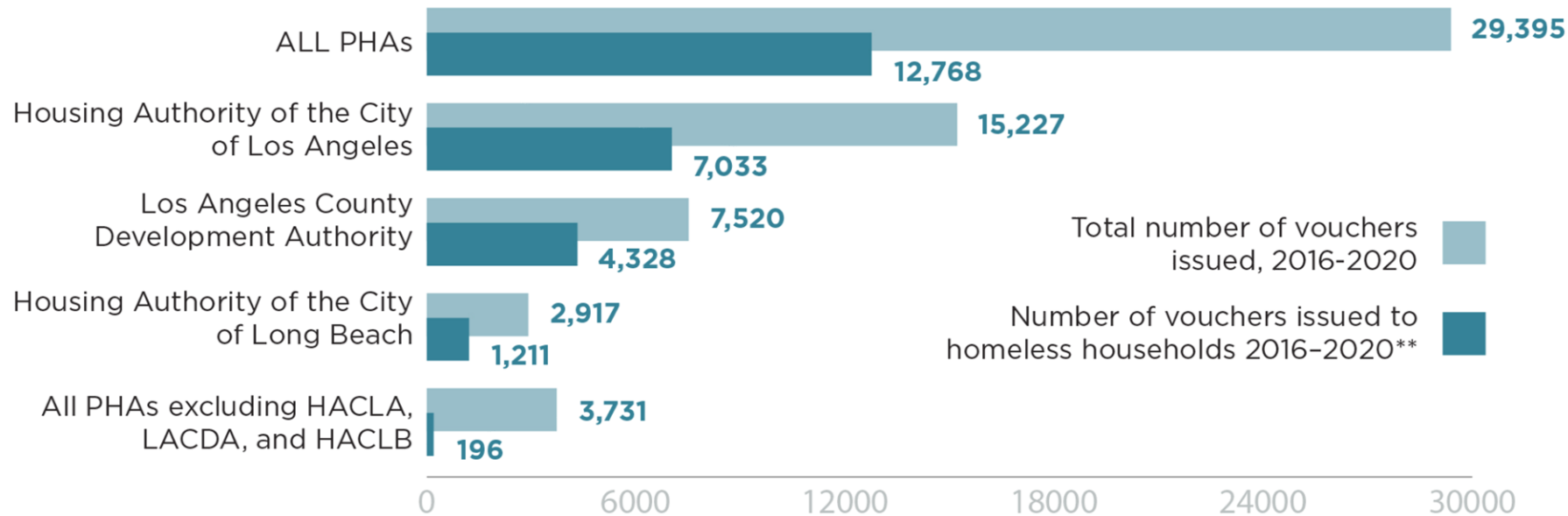
- Project-based vouchers (used extensively in LA for project-based PSH)
- Emergency Housing Vouchers issued to PHAs in Summer 2021
- HMIS data on the vulnerability of people experiencing homelessness who received a voucher
- Continued housing stability after people experiencing homelessness leased up with their vouchers

# How are vouchers used for people experiencing homelessness in LA?



- PHAs do not receive enough budget from the U.S. Congress to serve everyone eligible for a voucher
  - Instead, they create “preferences” for who goes to the top of the wait list and gets the next available voucher
  - Most PHAs in LA County have preferences for people experiencing homelessness
  - HACLA has set asides of specific numbers of vouchers for people experiencing homelessness
  - LACDA has committed to issuing 100 percent of its turnover vouchers to people experiencing homelessness

# Issuances of vouchers and issuances of vouchers to people experiencing homelessness



# How do vouchers get to people experiencing homelessness?



- HACLA and LACDA have contracts with DHS, DMH, and homeless service providers
  - The PHAs commit to issuing available vouchers to the clients of these organizations when they become available
  - The organizations use their internal client lists or ask LAHSA's coordinated entry SPA leads for referrals of people experiencing homelessness.
- Once a client has been identified a case manager works with the client
  - to acquire all the necessary documents (ID, SS card, homelessness verification, income determination)
  - to complete and submit the voucher application

# Who receives vouchers?

- 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.

71%

of new vouchers are issued to  
**single person households**

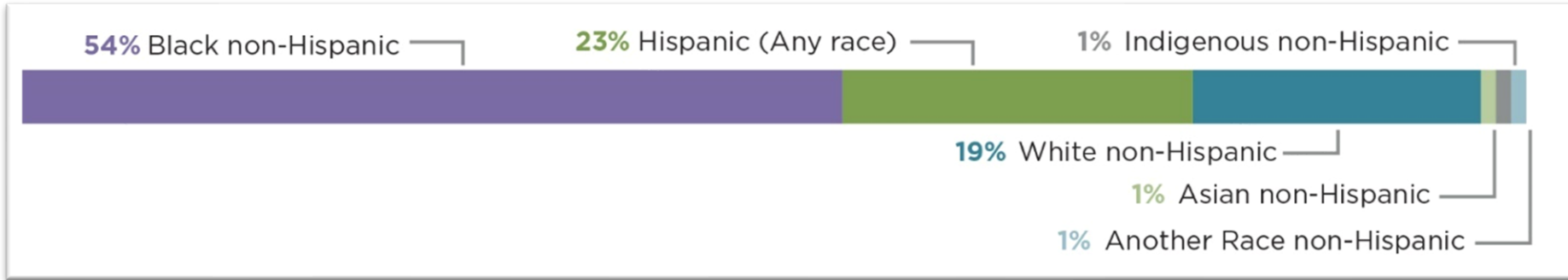


29%

of new vouchers are issued to  
**multi-person households**

# Who receives vouchers?

- More than half of households experiencing homelessness issued vouchers by LA County PHAs between 2016 and 2020 were Black.



# Voucher issuance and housing search



- Once the application is complete and approved, the PHA issues the household a voucher
  - He or she then can start looking for a rental unit
  - The voucher tells the household where they can look for housing (city vs. county) and how much rent the voucher will support (the total rent including the household's share)

# Help finding a rental unit and leasing up



- Case managers help their clients find housing based on:
  - Personal connections and landlords that other clients use
  - PATH's Lease-Up program
  - Online search platforms (Zillow, Craigslist, Facebook Marketplace)
- Landlords may be offered financial incentives besides the rent:
  - Measure H Housing Incentive Program (HIP)

# Barriers applying for housing 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.”*

# Success rates for new households issued vouchers, 2016-2020



PHA Name*	Number of Vouchers Issued to Homeless Households	Homeless Households Issued Vouchers Who Leased Up (%)	Other Households Issued Vouchers Who Leased Up (%)
All LA County PHAs	11,771	65%	61%
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles	6,276	63%	63%
Los Angeles County Development Authority	4,235	67%	51%
City of Long Beach Housing Authority	1,087	62%	59%
All PHAs Excluding HACLA, LACDA, and HACLB	173	73%	64%

# Case managers provide support



*“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.”*

# Success rates for households issued vouchers by race and ethnicity, 2016-2020

- Black and Hispanic households using vouchers to leave homelessness had higher rates of success if they were using vouchers to leave homelessness

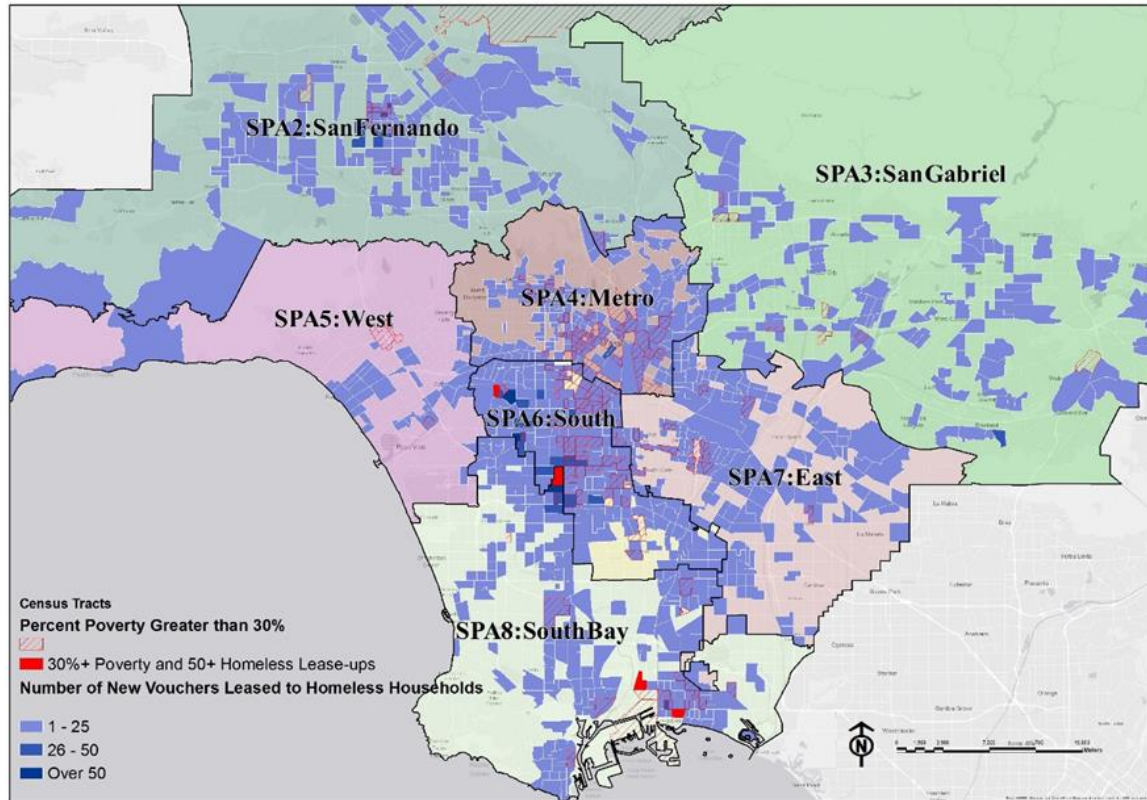
Racial/ethnic categories	New Vouchers Issued to Homeless Households (#)	Lease Up for Homeless Households (%)	New Vouchers Issued to Other Households (#)	Lease Up for Other Households (%)
Black (non-Hispanic)	6,289	66%	5,527	58%
Hispanic (any race)	2,783	66%	3,283	59%
White (non-Hispanic)	2,258	60%	2,710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

# How long does it take to find housing?

- Typically, PHAs give households three months to find a housing unit and submit a Request for Lease Approval, often extended to six months if the household is believed to be actively searching for housing.
- LA PHAs will often give even longer extensions to households who are actively searching for housing

PHA Name*	Days to Lease up Homeless Households		Days to Lease Up Other Households	
	Average	Median	Average	Median
All LA County PHAs	122	106	113	97
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles	122	109	126	114
Los Angeles County Development Authority	125	107	111	90
City of Long Beach Housing Authority	110	97	119	107
Other PHAs in LA County	86	76	84	63

# Where are vouchers used?



# Using a voucher



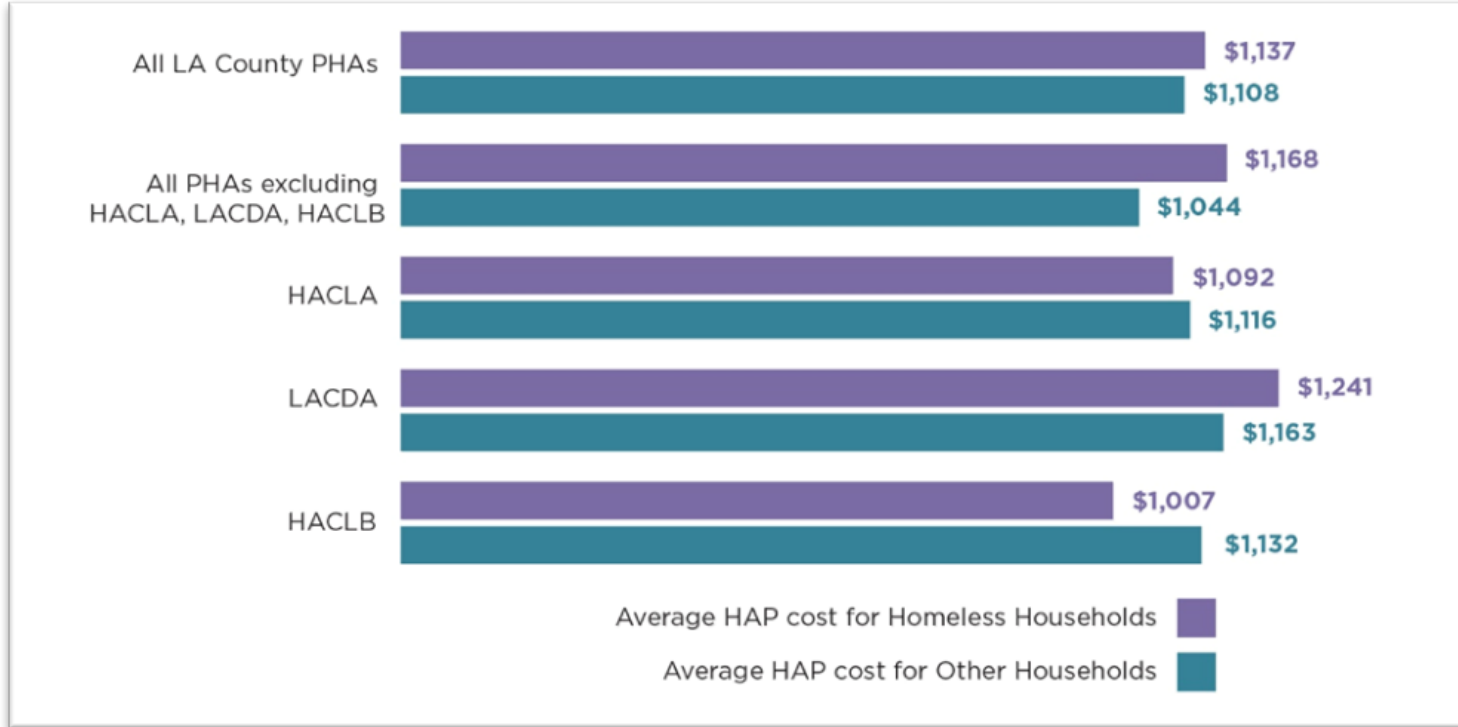
- *“When I was told, ‘Hey, we have a place for you,’ I didn’t want to live in that location because of gangs, drug dealers, and that kind of thing. But when you don’t have a choice, you don’t have a choice. The availability [of units] is in the ghetto, which leaves no choice.”*
- *“Should I move to the 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.”*

# How much do vouchers for people experiencing homelessness cost?



- 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 vs. \$1,108 for other households, a difference of \$29 per month
- This pattern is not consistent across the PHAs
  - HACLA and Long Beach pay more subsidy for households that were *not* experiencing homelessness before they leased up with a voucher. HACLA pays \$24 more per month; Long Beach pays \$125 more.
  - LACDA pays \$78 more for people who were homeless before they leased up with vouchers

# Average HAP cost for homeless and other households



# Future considerations for Los Angeles



- Advocate for more federal vouchers
- Invest in efforts to increase the ability of voucher holders to rent housing they need and want
- Continue to invest in staff dedicated to helping households become “document ready” and applying for public benefits

# Discussion with panelists



Christina Miller  
Senior Advocacy Officer  
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Tracy Jones  
Senior Vice President  
Housing Choice Voucher Program  
Atlanta Housing



Peter Lynn  
Chief Program Officer  
King County Regional  
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# Thank you for attending!

Questions: [Nichole\\_Fiore@abtassoc.com](mailto:Nichole_Fiore@abtassoc.com)



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