

Temporary Resource Prioritization Policy During COVID-19

Purpose: Adopt a temporary prioritization policy covering new and anticipated resources in response to conditions occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic. Resources covered by this policy include new permanent housing units created by Project Homekey, Rapid Rehousing slots funded by ESG-CV and other housing resources including Emergency Housing Vouchers intended to rehouse those sheltered in Safer Ground or otherwise impacted by COVID-19.

Background: Currently, Alameda County uses an assessment tool with questions related to household composition, homeless and housing history, health and vulnerability, and rehousing barriers to establish a queue of persons seeking housing and target list of those prioritized for PSH and for Rapid Rehousing.

The COVID-19 Pandemic resulted in a large number of homeless people who were assessed as highly vulnerable to risk of death or complications if they contracted COVID-19 being moved into hotel rooms through Project Roomkey/Safer Ground. The community has determined as a priority to ensure that persons temporarily housed in Roomkey/Safer Ground do not return to the streets by prioritizing certain new and onetime resources for rehousing.

Policy:

1. PSH will continue to be allocated based on the existing PSH Target list and new housing queue using the threshold score.
2. New housing resources allocated in response to COVID-19, including ESG-CV bridge subsidies, permanent affordable and/or supportive units made available through Project Homekey, and Emergency Housing Vouchers will be assigned in the following manner:
 - a. Persons in Project Roomkey/Safer Ground will be prioritized first for these resources. Persons on the PSH target list who are sheltered through Project Roomkey/Safer Ground may be prioritized for ESG-CV Rapid Rehousing if it is unlikely that they will have access to a PSH unit within 60 days. They will retain their place on the PSH target list and their homeless status.
 - b. It is the intention that individuals currently fleeing domestic violence or other forms of gender-based violence and Transitional Age Youth will be allocated Emergency Housing Vouchers according to the percentage represented in the Point in Time (PIT) count. People in these populations of focus may be referred from Roomkey or by other population-specific shelters and service providers.

3. Once all persons in Project Roomkey who qualify and need assistance have been assigned or offered a resource, any additional openings will be prioritized for persons on the BNL who are at higher risk for complications from COVID-19, including: *
 - Individuals aged 50 years old and older; and
 - Individuals of any age with the following underlying medical conditions:
 - Cancer
 - Chronic kidney disease
 - COPD (Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
 - Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant
 - Obesity/ BMI of 30 or higher
 - Serious heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease or cardiomyopathies
 - Sickle cell disease
 - Type 2 diabetes mellitus
4. Persons in Project Roomkey will be matched to ESG-CV, Permanent units from Project Homekey or to Emergency Housing Vouchers based on the geographic assignment of the resources and of the person. For example, ESG-CV funds that were allocated to the City of Oakland will be used to rehouse persons who were homeless in the City of Oakland prior to their admission into Project Roomkey/Safer Ground, or who have an established history in the City of Oakland. This is intended to ensure geographic equity and as a way to achieve race/ethnic equity as well, as the racial/ethnic make-up of the homeless population varies across the county. This approach is intended to result in *at least* county-wide proportional rehousing rates for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC).
5. Close attention will be paid to the results of this prioritization approach on the match rate and receipt of resources by BIPOC, and modifications to the prioritization may be considered if the match rates are not equitable within each geographic area to the demographics reflected in the 2019 Point in Time Homeless Count.
6. This policy shall remain in place for as long as the resources covered have openings and County Public Health Officer determines that the COVID-19 pandemic is in the community in a way that endangers the potential health of those at higher risk, or until it is rescinded and replaced by a new policy

*HCSA will follow up on this to ensure that this prioritization based on age or medical need can be done without significant additional data collection and documentation that could delay rehousing or require significant staff time. In addition, the list of COVID-19 risk factors may be reviewed/ changed if the CDC COVID-19 guidance is updated.