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## **KEY SUCCESS ACHIEVED: COUNTYWIDE REHOUSING EFFORT SECURED HOUSING FOR 295 FORMERLY HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS**

*Santa Cruz County Achieves 100% Utilization of Emergency Housing Vouchers, Provided by U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development in Response to COVID-19 Pandemic*

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY, CA – The Housing Authority of the County of Santa Cruz and Housing for Health Partnership today announced 295 formerly homeless households – representing more than 425 people – have secured housing using Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) through the countywide [Rehousing Wave](#) program.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) allocated Emergency Housing Vouchers to communities in need for low-income households, particularly those experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

Begun Oct. 1, 2021, the Rehousing Wave transitioned highly vulnerable adults and families from “Project Roomkey” and other COVID-era shelters to permanent housing utilizing the EHV program. To date, the Housing Authority in partnership with the County and community-based service providers has utilized over 100 percent of HUD EHVs distributed to the Housing Authority to help address homelessness during the pandemic. The Housing Authority of the County of Santa Cruz ranks #1 in EHV utilization out of all California Housing Authorities and #10 nationwide out of all Housing Authorities, an accomplishment that can be attributed to strong collaboration between the Housing Authority, County, and community partners.

“It is truly significant and gratifying to participate in a collaborative effort to help hundreds of formerly homeless individuals and families secure much-needed housing in Santa Cruz County’s tight rental market,” said Robert Ratner, Director of the Housing for Health Division of the County of Santa Cruz. “The effort highlights the benefits of bringing together funding, public agencies, service providers, and property owners to help ensure more County residents have healthy and safe homes. I especially appreciate the property owners and service providers that helped make this possible.”

According to the Housing Authority of Santa Cruz County, the 295 households that secured housing through the Emergency Housing Voucher program were assisted by

188 property owners/agents that provided a mix of multi-family and single-family housing units located throughout the county. Demographic data for the households, which represent over 425 people, include 44% with children under 18 years old, 47% over the age of 60 or reporting a disability, and 48% Hispanic/Latino.

“The need for more affordable housing resources in the community is tremendous,” said Jenny Panetta, Executive Director of the Housing Authority of the County of Santa Cruz. “The Housing Authority has over 10,000 households on our waiting list for a Housing Choice Voucher. We’re proud of our collaboration with the Housing for Health Partnership and service providers involved in the EHV program. I’m confident that we will continue to build off this success and secure additional resources for the community.”

According to a July 2022 report from the National Low Income Housing Coalition, Santa Cruz–Watsonville Metro Area is the most expensive rental market in the United States for average renters in the region. Because Santa Cruz County has been successful in utilizing Emergency Housing Vouchers despite challenges in the local housing market, HUD has already allocated the Housing Authority of the County of Santa Cruz eleven additional EHV’s due to underutilization of the EHV program in other communities, and more EHV’s may be available later in the year.

The Rehousing Wave effort included support and incentives for property owners, services to help households find and keep housing, flexible funding to help with move-in expenses, and strong collaborative work across public agencies and service provider organizations. The Owner Incentive Program run by the Housing Authority played a significant role in securing housing. Abode Services also provides additional support for participating landlords.

For more on the Owner Incentives from the Housing Authority, visit [Owner Incentives | Housing Authority of the County of Santa Cruz \(hacosantacruz.org\)](https://www.hacosantacruz.org/owner-incentives).

For more on Abode’s housing supports for owners, visit [Housing Services/Landlords – Abode Services](https://www.abodeservices.org/housing-services/landlords).

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*The Housing for Health Partnership is a collaboration of the County and each city within Santa Cruz County, along with local homelessness service providers. It acts as the federally-designated continuum of care for Santa Cruz County and helps allocate State and federal funding to address homelessness. The County of Santa Cruz serves as lead agency for the H4H Partnership.*

*The Housing Authority of the County of Santa Cruz provides affordable housing and rental assistance to over 5,000 low-income individuals and families in our community each year through a variety of local, state, and federal programs.*