



Orange County worked with the Towns of Carrboro, Chapel Hill, and Hillsborough to consolidate separate housing assistance programs into the Orange County Emergency Housing Assistance Program (EHA) in 2020. EHA assists Orange County residents with low incomes to secure and maintain stable housing and prevent eviction and homelessness. EHA assists households that earn no more than 30% of the area median income (AMI), have an urgent need for housing assistance that is related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and do not have adequate resources to cover the cost of their housing need. Staff have designed program processes and documents to be low-barrier and accessible, and have served over 1,883 households since the beginning of the pandemic, providing over \$7.4 million in direct assistance.

### Program Participants Served

Black and African American households make up 46% of all households served by the EHA and HOPE programs between January 2020 and July 31, 2021.<sup>1</sup> Hispanic and Latino households comprise the second largest ethnic group served (26%) by program during this time period. The EHA program served relatively smaller numbers of households identifying as White (21%), Asian (3%), multiracial (3%), and American Indian/Alaska Native (1%).

**Table 1. Race/ethnicity of unique households served by EHA and HOPE programs**

Total	EHA	HOPE	Total	%	%*
AIAN**	15	1	16	1%	1%
Asian	59	1	60	2%	3%
Black	785	297	1,082	36%	46%
Hispanic/Latino	594	16	610	20%	26%
Multiracial or other	47	33	80	3%	3%
White	360	139	499	17%	21%
No data	637	1	638	21%	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,497</b>	<b>488</b>	<b>2,985</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*-Percent total excluding households with no race/ethnicity data

\*\* -American Indian and Alaska Native

### Outreach & Referrals

Community partners are instrumental to EHA outreach and engagement in addition to being a key source of referrals. The Refugee Community Partnership has referred the majority of Asian households to EHA. El Centro Hispano and the Family Success Alliance have referred the majority of Latinx households to the program. The Orange County Housing Helpline serves as the main source of referrals to the EHA program for Black/African American applicants.

A complete list of referral partners is available in Table 2 below. Orange County Housing and Community Development staff host a bimonthly call with community partner agencies to provide

<sup>1</sup> Orange County administered the HOPE Program in the Fall of 2020.



updates on the EHA program, answer questions, and hear feedback. The Helpline and community partners regularly assist applicants who face language or technology barriers to apply for assistance and work to keep the EHA program low barrier and accessible.

**Table 2. Referrals by agency to the EHA and HOPE program (as of July 2021)**

Agency/ Service	#	%	Cumulative %	Type
Housing Helpline	1,681	42.1%	42.1%	County
Family Success Alliance	589	14.7%	56.8%	County
Neighbory* (EHA website)	576	14.4%	71.3%	County
Refugee Community Partnership	303	7.6%	78.8%	Non-profit
El Centro	209	5.2%	84.1%	Non-profit
Community Empowerment Fund	112	2.8%	86.9%	Non-profit
Empowerment	79	2.0%	88.9%	Non-profit
Community Home Trust	70	1.8%	90.6%	Non-profit
Oxford House	57	1.4%	92.0%	Non-profit
Eviction Diversion Program	51	1.3%	93.3%	County
OWASA**	49	1.2%	94.5%	County
Housing Choice Voucher office	44	1.1%	95.6%	County
SCHRAD***	37	0.9%	96.6%	County
Compass	28	0.7%	97.3%	Non-profit
HOPE	26	0.7%	97.9%	County
InChuCo	18	0.5%	98.4%	Landlord
IFC	16	0.4%	98.8%	Non-profit
Department of Social Services	15	0.4%	99.1%	County
Criminal Justice Resource Department	12	0.3%	99.4%	County
Single Family Rehabilitation Program	6	0.2%	99.6%	County
Orange County Rape Crisis Center	5	0.1%	99.7%	Non-profit
Self	5	0.1%	99.8%	N/A
Homelink	2	0.1%	99.9%	Other government
Legal Aid	1	<0.1%	99.9%	Non-profit
Orange County Schools	1	<0.1%	99.9%	County
Refugee Support Center	1	<0.1%	99.9%	Nonprofit
Veterans Affairs	1	<0.1%	100.0%	Other government

The Orange County Housing Helpline provides referrals to Emergency Housing Assistance and has connected thousands of residents to housing resources and services since launching in March of 2020. The Helpline can provide service in 200 languages, including English, Spanish, Karen, Burmese, Arabic, Hindi, Korean, and Chinese. Assistance is available in-person at





weekly office hours and via phone or email. Information about the Housing Helpline has been widely circulated among homelessness service providers, community partner agencies, local elected officials and community leaders, property owners, at the Orange County Courthouse and in the local press, municipal newsletters, Orange County Twitter feeds and on the Orange County website.

### **Community Listening Sessions**

In June 2021, EHA staff partnered with EmPOWERment, Inc. to host two virtual listening sessions to get feedback from households who received EHA about their experience with the program. There were 87 total survey responses. Language interpretation in Burmese, Karen and Spanish was available at the listening sessions. EmPOWERment, Inc. reported the following findings:

- Most participants who received assistance from the EHA program reported that their experience was positive.
- Some of the Spanish-speaking survey respondents requested that OCHCD place promotional materials (e.g., flyers) in Spanish in grocery stores, churches, and medical offices catering to Orange County's Spanish-speaking community.

Based on the listening feedback, staff are working on the following recommendations:

- Making printed and digital documents available in multiple languages.
- Providing applicants with a timeline for receiving assistance when they apply, including updates on the status of application.

As a result of these listening sessions, the Housing Helpline revised their outreach materials to highlight that services are available in over 200 languages and to dispel misconceptions that language access is unavailable. The Emergency Housing Assistance program staff are working on a technology solution to provide automated application updates to applicants, however applicants can contact the Housing Helpline or their EHA specialist processing their application at any time for an update. The average processing time for applications has also decreased from six weeks to four weeks. EHA program staff are working to distribute more flyers at local grocery stores, libraries, community centers and throughout the County.