

INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE OWNERS VOUCHER PROGRAM

Introduction

The voucher program is a **tenant based rental assistance program** administered by the Housing Authority. Under the program, the tenant's eligibility for the program is certified by the Housing Authority (HA) and the tenant then seeks out a suitable rental unit where the landlord is willing to enter into a contract to receive part of the rent directly from the Housing Authority.

Successful Tenancies Under the Program

The Program is successful when each party understands and implements its role well. Tenants are not pre-screened by the Housing Authority for past tenant behavior. When the landlord does a thorough screening of tenant history, chances increase that there will be a successful tenancy under the program. Hundreds of landlords and thousands of tenants have participated in this program over the past sixteen years. The vast majority have been successful tenancies.

The Owner's Responsibilities

In order for the program to work well, the owner needs to:

1. **Screen families** to determine that they meet the owner's criteria for a successful tenancy. Owners are encouraged to screen families on the basis of their tenancy histories. An owner may consider a family's background with respect to such factors as:
 - ⇒ payment of rent and utility bills
 - ⇒ caring for a unit and premises
 - ⇒ respecting the rights of others to the peaceful enjoyment of their housing
 - ⇒ drug related criminal activity or other criminal activity that is a threat to the life, safety or property of others; and
 - ⇒ compliance with other essential conditions of tenancy
2. **Comply with fair housing laws** which prohibit discrimination based on race, color, religion, creed, familial status and disability.
3. **Comply with the terms of the Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Contract** including maintenance of the unit to minimum standards. The landlord **is not responsible** for any Housing Quality Standards (HQS) that is not caused by the landlord and for which the family is responsible. (but HATC may terminate assistance to a family because of HQS breach caused by the family.)
4. **Enforcement of the terms of the lease** including collecting tenant share of the rent.
5. Prior to execution of the HAP contract, inform the HA and the family of any knowledge of the **presence of lead based paint** on the surfaces of the residential unit.

Housing Authority Responsibilities With Respect to an Owner Contract on Behalf of a Tenant

1. Receive applications from families, determine eligibility, maintain the waiting list, **select applicants, issue a voucher** to each selected family, provide housing information to families selected;
2. Determine **who can live in the assisted unit**, at admission and (with landlord approval)during the family's participation in the program;
3. Review the family's **request for approval of the unit and lease**;
4. Inspect the unit before assisted occupancy and at least annually during the assisted tenancy;
5. Determine the **amount of the housing assistance** payment for a family;
6. Determine the **maximum rent to the owner**, and whether the rent is reasonable;
7. Make **timely housing assistance payments** to an owner in accordance with the HAP contract;
8. **Examine family income, size and composition**, at admission and during the family's participation in the program. The examination includes verification of income and other family information;
9. **Administer and enforce the HAP Contract** with owner, including taking appropriate action, as determined by the HA, if the owner defaults (e.g., Housing Quality Standards [HQS] violation);

10. If owner fails to maintain the unit in accordance with standards the Housing Authority must take **prompt and vigorous action to enforce the owner obligations**.--Remedies include termination, suspension or reduction of housing assistance payments and termination of the HAP contract.
- ⇒ The Housing Authority **must not make payments unless the owner corrects the deficiency** within the time specified: 24 hours for life threatening; other defects, 30 calendar days (or any HATC approved extension).
11. Determine whether to **terminate assistance to a participant family for violation of family obligations**

Policy with respect to the release of information to prospective landlords:

The HA “may offer a prospective owner other information in the HA possession, including information about the tenancy history of family members or about drug-trafficking by family members.” [982.307 (b)].

With a written authorization, or the submission of the papers preparatory to going under a contract for a tenant, the staff may release to the prospective landlord the name and address of the current and past landlords and the tenant’s current address. If there has been no paperwork submitted, an authorization will be required to make sure that the person requesting the information is a prospective landlord.

No additional information will be released to the landlord. The landlord will be reminded that no screening has been done of the tenant and that we recommend contacting previous landlords to secure information on the tenant history.