



## **SECTION 8 VOUCHERS**

### ***What are housing choice vouchers?***

The housing choice voucher program (Section 8 vouchers) is the federal government's major program for helping low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford decent and safe housing in the private rental market. Since housing assistance is provided on behalf of the family or individual, participants find their own housing, including single-family homes, townhouses, and apartments.

Housing choice vouchers are administered locally by public housing agencies (PHAs). The PHAs receive federal funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to manage the voucher program.

A family that is issued a housing voucher must find a housing unit of the family's choice where the landlord agrees to rent under the program. The family is free to choose any housing that meets the requirements of the program and is not limited to units located in housing projects. Rental units must meet minimum standards of health and safety, as determined by the PHA. A housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by the PHA on behalf of the family. The family then pays the difference between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by the program.

### ***Am I eligible for a Section 8 voucher?***

Eligibility for a housing voucher is determined by the PHA based on gross income and family size and is limited to U.S. citizens and non-citizens who have eligible immigration status. Income levels vary by location. The PHA serving your community can give you the income limits for your area and family size.

When you apply, the PHA will collect your income, assets, and family size. The PHA will verify this information with other agencies, your employer, and bank, and will use the information to determine if you are eligible and the amount of your housing assistance payment. If the PHA determines that your family is eligible, the PHA will put your name on a waiting list, unless it is able to help you immediately. Once your name is reached on the waiting list, the PHA will contact you and issue you a housing voucher.

### ***How do I apply?***

If you are interested in applying for a voucher, contact your local PHA. You can find local contact information for the local PHAs in West Tennessee on our Housing Assistance Intro to Income Based Rental Properties fact sheet, or see <https://www.hud.gov/>.

### ***Local preferences and waiting lists - what are they and how do they affect me?***

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Since the demand for housing assistance often exceeds the resources available, long waiting periods are common. In fact, a PHA may close its waiting list when it has more families on the list than can be helped in the near future.

PHAs may set local preferences for selecting applicants from its waiting list. Families who qualify for local preferences move ahead of other families on the list who do not qualify for any preference. Each PHA has the discretion to set local preferences to reflect the housing needs and priorities of its particular community.

***What happens after I am approved for a voucher?***

Once you are approved for a voucher, your PHA will tell you the unit size for which you are eligible based on your family size and composition. The housing unit you select must meet an acceptable level of health and safety before the PHA can approve the unit. When you find a unit that you want to rent and reach an agreement with the landlord over the lease terms, the PHA must inspect the unit and determine that the rent requested is reasonable.

***Can I move and continue to get my voucher?***

Moves are allowed if you tell the PHA ahead of time, end your existing lease within the lease provisions, and find acceptable alternate housing. If you want to move to another PHA's jurisdiction, you must consult with your PHA about moving procedures.

***What are my obligations as a tenant?***

When you select a unit and the PHA approves the unit and lease, you will sign a lease with the landlord for at least one year. You may be required to pay a security deposit to the landlord. After the first year, the landlord may require a new lease or allow you to stay in the unit on a month-to-month lease. You must comply with the lease and the program requirements, pay your share of the rent on time, maintain the unit in good condition, and notify the PHA of any changes in your income or family size.

***What are the landlord's obligations?***

The landlord must provide decent and safe housing to a tenant at a reasonable rent. The unit must pass the program's housing quality standards, and the landlord must maintain the unit up to those standards as long as the landlord receives housing assistance payments.

***What are the housing authority's obligations?***

The PHA administers the voucher program locally. If the landlord fails to meet his obligations under the lease, the PHA has the right to terminate assistance payments. The

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PHA must check your family's income and size at least annually and must inspect each unit at least annually to make sure it meets minimum quality standards.

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