

SECTION 8

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM

INFORMATION SHEET

PORTSMOUTH REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY

THE PROGRAM

The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program, a voluntary program for both landlords and tenants, is a Federally Funded effort designed to assist eligible, very low-income families with their monthly rental housing payments.

HOW IT WORKS

A family whose income is 80% or less of the area's medium income, obtains certification to participate in the program from the Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority, then selects a rental unit (the owner of which is willing to participate in the program), and negotiates a lease. The Authority executes a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract and monthly payments are made directly to the landlord/property owner for the amount of rent, which the family cannot afford. Allowances are made for utilities not included in the rent; the HAP makes up the difference in total amount due. For example, if 30% of a family's gross monthly income is \$100 and the rent, including utilities for the selected apartment is \$350 per month, the tenant pays the landlord \$100 and the remaining \$250 is paid to the landlord by the Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority through the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.

REQUIREMENTS

A family may either remain in their present rental unit or move to another. The following guidelines are applicable:

1. Under the Housing Choice Voucher Program, the family's share of gross rent (rent to owner plus tenant-paid utilities) must not exceed 40 percent of the family's monthly adjusted income. This rent restriction will not apply to a family that rents a unit for a gross rent at or below the Payment Standard for the family. The Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority will not approve a tenancy for initial occupancy of a unit, if the family's share would exceed 40 percent of adjusted income.

The Payment Standards for calculating subsidies for the Voucher Program are listed below:

Efficiency	\$851	One Bedroom	\$887
Two Bedroom	\$1027	Three Bedroom	\$1404
Four Bedroom	\$1692	Five Bedroom	\$1945
Six Bedroom	\$2200		

2. The unit must be in decent, safe and sanitary condition (meets relevant HUD Housing Quality Standards- HQS).
3. The minimum lease length is one year (the majority of leases under the program are written for this length of time).
4. Owners determine the security deposit. The security deposit cannot exceed one month's rent.

LANDLORD/OWNER BENEFITS

Aside from the retention of good tenants perhaps otherwise unable to afford the unit, the program provides an owner or landlord with:

1. Guaranteed rent, together with an opportunity to fill vacant units.
2. There is no annual adjustment factor for the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Rent increases are not limited by the Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority. Rent increases have to be requested 60 days prior to the anniversary date of the lease. A Rent Reasonableness test is performed to determine if rents are reasonable as compared to unassisted units. Tenants will pay rent increases.
3. Incentive to rehabilitate substandard buildings.
4. Contribution to the community by addressing a portion of very low-income housing needs through the utilization of existing housing stock.
5. In exchange for these benefits, the landlord is requested to:
 - a. Agree to a manual inspection by the Authority confirming housing quality standards.
 - b. Notify the tenant and Authority in writing of a proposed eviction, at least 20 days in advance, obtaining the Authority's authorization for such action.
 - c. Comply with standard nondiscrimination and affirmative marketing requirements.

Note: There are NO requirements to renegotiate a lease after its expiration if the owner or landlord is dissatisfied with the program.

There are NO requirements to lease additional units under the program after leasing one. Any type of rental housing qualifies (single-family homes, apartments and mobile homes) provided it meets applicable program standards.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Is the Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority looking for a number of available units in the City of Portsmouth?

The Authority is looking for as many available units as possible as this will ensure a range of Housing opportunities for program participants.

2. Is the Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority looking for specific areas or a specific number of units?

The Authority is looking at the City at large to ensure that no one area or community will be adversely affected or impacted by the program.

3. Do you have to sell to the City when your lease is up?

The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program is limited solely to the leasing of individual existing units and has nothing to do with the acquisition of these properties.

4. Is the government going to keep this program going and what is the duration?

The Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority will enter into Annual Contracts with the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The duration of the program is contingent upon decisions made by Congress.

5. Will the landlords/property owners be able to select the tenants they want?

The lease for a unit is between the owner and tenant holding a Housing Voucher. The final decision on selection of a tenant will be made by the landlord and/or manager; normal State and Federal fair housing laws prohibiting discrimination in the rental of housing would apply in any event.

6. Are the people screened by the Authority?

The Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority determines eligibility to include criminal history checks and verification of income and family composition. It is the responsibility of landlords and/or property owners to screen applicants, review background and credit history and to do a pre-home visit to determine housekeeping practices.

7. What are the owner's responsibilities?

Landlords and/or property owners are responsible for normal landlord functions during the lease term; including but not limited to maintenance, rent collection, tenant selection and screening.

8. Is the Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority responsible for conduct matters?

Conduct matters are governed by the provisions of the lease agreement as executed between the landlord and the tenant. The Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority is not a party to the lease agreement.

9. If you make your unit available, can you put another tenant in when someone vacates?

Yes. However, to be eligible for subsidy, the new tenant must also be a voucher holder.

10. Would you provide information concerning inspections?

Authority staff will make all inspections. The inspection will have to meet Housing Quality Standards incorporated in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Regulations. In the event a unit fails to meet these standards a letter stating deficiencies will be sent to the owner so that he or she may make the necessary corrections. A copy of the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspection booklet is attached as a reference guide.

11. May the landlord's current lease be utilized in the program?

Yes. The landlord is required to provide a lease that must first be submitted to the Authority for approval. If the lease does not contain all provisions required by both law and program regulations, the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Tenancy Addendum will be incorporated with the lease as an attachment to address these concerns.

12. Is the landlord guaranteed a tenant?

No. Once the unit has been determined eligible for the program, it will be placed on a referral list for participating Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher families.

If you need additional information, please contact:

Ms. Gail R. Johnson, Program Officer, at 391-2920, or Ms. Carol Thomas, Program Coordinator, at 391-2921.