

Responsibilities of Section 8 Tenants

Tenants who receive Section 8 rent assistance must comply with the provisions of their landlord's lease, or the Authority may terminate their assistance. Thus, it is emphasized to Voucher-holders that they must pay their share of the rent on time, maintain good housekeeping, prevent damage to the dwelling, prohibit occupancy of the dwelling by unauthorized people, and not disturb neighbors.

In addition, the Housing Authority requires tenants to report all changes in household income and composition. Moreover, tenants must only pay the amount of rent specified by the Authority.

Advantages to Landlord

The Section 8 Voucher provides several benefits to landlords, including the following:

1. The Housing Authority makes reliable monthly payments to cover its part of the rent.
2. Because the rent subsidy is based on the tenant's income, this tenant is less likely to have difficulty paying rent. Moreover, if the tenant's income is reduced, the subsidy may be increased.
3. At lease renewal the landlord may increase the rent (as long as the proposed rent is reasonable, as determined by the Authority).
4. Tenants are more likely to adhere to their lease obligations, since failure to do so will jeopardize their rent assistance.

The Section 8 Existing Housing Program has been one of the most successful housing subsidy programs. Landlords of more than two million rental units have participated nationwide, and the Housing Authority of Cook County has signed contracts for more than 20,000 units in suburban Cook County.

Local landlords are virtually unanimous in expressing their satisfaction with the program, and many have called the Authority seeking additional Voucher-holders. As one manager of a large apartment complex once said, ... "I am happy to have given Section 8 a chance."

THE SECTION 8 HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM



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Under the provisions of Section 8 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 the Housing Authority of Cook County may provide rental assistance payments to landlords of a limited number of lower income families and elderly people in suburban Cook County.

Applications

Since the number of subsidies available each year is very limited, a waiting list is maintained, which is only opened periodically. Those households who register on the waiting list for an application are processed on a first-come, first-served basis. Priority is given to those who live or work in suburban Cook County, excluding Chicago, Park Forest, Oak Park, Elgin, Cicero, and Maywood, (since these cities have their own housing authorities and Section 8 Programs).

Eligible applicants who household income is less than the income limit are given a Housing Voucher, which states that the Housing Authority will generally pay the landlord this difference between the rent and approximately 30% of the household's monthly income. The family is responsible for the remainder of the rent.

Eligible Rental Units

The Voucher-holder may ask to have the rent subsidized for their present unit or for one to which the household moves. However, the rental unit must:

1. Be located within the Authority's jurisdiction, which is suburban Cook County, (excluding the cities listed above). (PLEASE NOTE: It may also be possible for the rental unit to be located outside of the Authority's jurisdiction, which may require transfer to another housing authority).
2. Have a rent that is reasonable, comparable to rents for similar units, and is not so high above the payment standard as to cause the tenant to pay more than 40% of the adjusted monthly income for the tenant's rent share plus utilities.
3. Pass the Authority's inspection to insure that it is in good condition.
4. Have a landlord who is willing to participate in the Section 8 Program.

Approval of Rental Unit and Contract

The Housing Authority briefs each applicant concerning program requirements when the Voucher is issued. The Voucher-holder is given a Request for Tenancy Approval form, which he or she and the landlord must complete and return to the Authority with a copy of the lease. **The lease is not effective until a Section 8 Contract is approved and signed by the Authority.**

The Housing Authority reviews the forms and conducts an inspection. **If the unit is approved and the rent has been offered and accepted, the tenant can take possession of the unit the day after the inspection is approved.**

Monthly Housing Assistance Payment (HAPs)

Under the HAP Contract the Authority sends the landlord a check each month for its portion of the rent. The tenant must send a payment for the balance of the rent in accordance with the lease. The tenant may not make any additional payments to the landlord.

Lease

The landlord may use his or her own lease, or any standard lease form. The lease may be terminated by written agreement of both parties, or by the landlord, for good cause. The landlord may change any amount for security deposit.

The Section 8 Program is designed to maintain the basic landlord/tenant relationship. Normally, during the lease term the Authority has no contact with either party other than sending the monthly payment to the landlord.

Renewal of Contract and Lease

Approximately four months before the lease and Section 8 Contract expires, the Housing Authority contacts the landlord to find out whether he or she is satisfied with the tenant and Section 8 Program, and whether the tenant's lease will be renewed. The tenant is sent another application to recertify his or her income to insure that the household is still eligible for rent assistance. The tenant is also asked whether he or she is planning to move. If so, the tenant may receive another Voucher if the household is still eligible and has complied with the lease and their responsibilities under the program.

Tenant Screening

THE HOUSING AUTHORITY DOES NOT SCREEN APPLICANTS ON THEIR PREVIOUS RENT HISTORY. THEREFORE, THE AUTHORITY STRONGLY ENCOURAGES LANDLORDS TO THOROUGHLY SCREEN THEIR POTENTIAL TENANTS BY USE OF CREDIT, EMPLOYMENT (IF APPLICABLE), LANDLORD REFERENCES, AND HOUSEKEEPING INSPECTIONS. It is recommended that a Voucher-holder's previous landlord be contacted, as well as their current landlord. Call the Authority if you wish to confirm a prospective tenant's current address or name and address of current or previous landlord.