Key Activities in the Housing Choice Voucher Program

Here are the basic stages of a household's journey toward stable rental housing with a housing choice voucher (HCV). Individual situations, public housing agency (PHA) policies, and local housing markets are among the factors likely to influence your specific experience.

APPLICATION PROCESS

- A household in need of assistance applies for an HCV by completing a PHA application form
- If the waiting list is "open," the agency administering the HCV program is accepting applications
- If the waiting list is "closed," no one can apply for a voucher

SELECTION FROM WAITING LIST

Depending on how many vouchers are available, the applicant is either:



Given a voucher (once eligibility is verified)

Placed on a waiting list



SCREENING AND VERIFICATION

- When a household reaches the top of the list, it will be required to supply documents that verify eligibility for the HCV program
- The PHA may also screen the household with regards to prior tenant history and recent criminal history

Generally, households move from the bottom of the waiting list to the top, however some households may be selected before others based on the PHA's waiting list preferences.

BRIEFING AND ISSUANCE

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- When a household is determined eligible for the program, it is "issued" a voucher
- The household is required to attend a "briefing" to learn about how the HCV program works and the responsibilities of voucher holders

INSPECTION AND RENT REASONABLENESS DETERMINATION

- The PHA inspects the unit to ensure that it is safe, decent, and of good quality
- The rent of the unit is compared to rents of similar, unassisted units in the community to ensure it is reasonable

UNIT APPROVAL AND MOVE-IN

- All paperwork is signed (i.e., lease between household and owner and contract between PHA and owner) and the household moves into the unit
- HCV rental assistance begins. The household pays 30 – 40% of its income toward rent and any tenant-paid utilities, and the HCV subsidy pays the difference

ANNUAL RE-EXAMINATION

HOUSING SEARCH

- The household has a short time (usually 60 days) to find a rental unit that meets HCV guidelines
- In some cases, the household may already be living in a housing unit that meets the HCV guidelines and may choose to use the voucher in the existing unit
- Once a unit is located and the owner agrees to participate in the HCV program, the household submits a Request for Tenancy Approval form to the PHA, which stops the clock on the housing search time

At least annually, the household must be re-certified for the program and the PHA must reinspect the unit and re-examine the contract rent amount to ensure they continue to meet HCV guidelines