

## Chapter 8

### VOUCHER ISSUANCE AND BRIEFINGS

[24 CFR 982.301, 982.302]

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The PHA's goals and objectives are designed to assure that families selected to participate are equipped with the tools necessary to locate an acceptable housing unit. Families are provided sufficient knowledge and information regarding the program and how to achieve maximum benefit while complying with program requirements. When eligibility has been determined, the PHA will conduct a mandatory briefing to ensure that families know how the program works. The briefing will provide a broad description of owner and family responsibilities, PHA procedures, and how to lease a unit. The family will also receive a briefing packet which provides more detailed information about the program including the benefits of moving outside areas of poverty and minority concentration. This chapter describes how briefings will be conducted, the information that will be provided to families, and the policies for how changes in the family composition will be handled.

#### **A. ISSUANCE OF VOUCHERS** [24 CFR 982.204(d), 982.54(d)(2)]

When funding is available, the PHA will issue vouchers to applicants whose eligibility has been determined. The number of vouchers issued must ensure that the PHA stays as close as possible to 100 percent lease-up. The PHA performs a monthly calculation **electronically and manually** to determine whether applications can be processed, the number of vouchers that can be issued, and to what extent the PHA can over-issue (issue more vouchers than the budget allows to achieve leaseup).

The PHA may over-issue vouchers only to the extent necessary to meet leasing goals. All vouchers, which are over-issued, must be honored. If the PHA finds it is over-leased, it must adjust future issuance of vouchers in order not to exceed the ACC budget limitations over the fiscal year.

## **B. BRIEFING TYPES AND REQUIRED ATTENDANCE** [24 CFR 982.301]

### **Initial Applicant Briefing**

A full HUD-required briefing will be conducted for applicant families who are determined to be eligible for assistance. The briefings will be conducted in **groups**. Families who attend group briefings and still have the need for individual assistance will be referred to **Section 8 Program Specialist**.

Briefings will be conducted in English.

The purpose of the briefing is to explain how the program works and the documents in the voucher holder's packet to families so that they are fully informed about the program. This will enable them to utilize the program to their advantage, and it will prepare them to discuss it with potential owners and property managers.

The PHA will not issue a voucher to a family unless the household representative has attended a briefing and signed the voucher. Applicants who provide prior notice of inability to attend a briefing will automatically be scheduled for the next briefing. Applicants who fail to attend **2** scheduled briefings, without prior notification and approval of the PHA, may be denied admission based on failure to supply information needed for certification. The PHA will conduct individual briefings for families with disabilities at their home, upon request by the family, if required for reasonable accommodation.

**Briefing Packet** [24 CFR 982.301(b)]

The documents and information provided in the briefing packet for the voucher program will comply with all HUD requirements. **The PHA also includes other information and/or materials which are not required by HUD.**

The family is provided with the following information and materials

The term of the voucher, and the PHA policy for requesting extensions or suspensions of the voucher (referred to as tolling).

A description of the method used to calculate the housing assistance payment for a family, including how the PHA determines the payment standard for a family; how the PHA determines total tenant payment for a family and information on the payment standard and utility allowance schedule. How the PHA determines the maximum allowable rent for an assisted unit **including the rent reasonableness standard.**

Where the family may lease a unit. For family that qualifies to lease a unit outside the PHA jurisdiction under portability procedures, the information must include an explanation of how portability works.

The HUD required tenancy addendum, which must be included in the lease.

The form the family must use to request approval of tenancy **is the Request for Tenancy Approval Form**, and a description of the procedure for requesting approval for a tenancy.

A statement of the PHA policy on providing information about families to prospective owners.

The PHA Subsidy Standards including when and how exceptions are made **and how the voucher size relates to the unit size selected.**

The HUD brochure on how to select a unit **and/or the HUD brochure "A Good Place to Live" on how to select a unit that complies with HQS.**

The HUD pamphlet on lead-based paint entitled *Protect Your Family From Lead in Your Home* **and information about where blood level testing is available.**

Information on Federal, State and local equal opportunity laws and a copy of the housing discrimination complaint form. **\*The PHA will also include the pamphlet "Fair Housing: It's Your Right" and other information about fair housing laws and guidelines** [and the phone numbers of the local fair housing agency and the HUD enforcement office].

A list of landlords or other parties willing to lease to assisted families or help in the search **and/or known units available for the voucher issued**. The list includes landlords or other parties who are willing to lease units or help families find units outside areas of poverty or minority concentration.

If the family includes a person with disabilities, notice that the PHA will provide **assistance in locating accessible units and** a list of available accessible units known to the PHA.

The grounds on which the PHA may terminate assistance for a participant family because of family action or failure to act.

PHA informal hearing procedures including when the PHA is required to offer a participant family the opportunity for an informal hearing, and how to request the hearing.

Information packet including an explanation of how portability works, including a list of neighboring housing agencies with the name, address and telephone number of a portability contact person at each for use by families who move under portability. (required for PHAs in MSAs)

A map showing areas representing various income levels of the jurisdiction and surrounding areas for the purpose of expanding housing opportunities for families. (required for PHAs in MSAs)

Information regarding the PHA's outreach program which assists families who are interested in, or experiencing difficulty in obtaining available housing units in areas outside of minority concentrated locations.

A list of properties or property management organizations that own or operate housing units outside areas of poverty or minority concentration (required for PHAs in MSAs).

**\* Procedures for notifying the PHA and/or HUD of program abuses such as side payments, extra charges, violations of tenant rights, and owner failure to repair.**

**\* The family's rights as a tenant and a program participant.**

**\* Requirements for reporting changes between annual recertifications.**

**\* Exercising choice in residency**

If the family includes a person with disabilities, the PHA will ensure compliance with CFR 8.6 to ensure effective communication.

### **\*Owner Briefing**

**\*Briefings are held for owners at least yearly. All new owners receive a personal invitation and current owners are notified by mail. Prospective owners are also welcome. The purpose of the briefing is to assure successful owner participation in the program. The briefing covers the responsibilities and roles of the three parties.**

### **Signature Briefing**

**\* Interested owners who request to sit in on scheduled family briefings to obtain information about the voucher program will be allowed to do so if the request is made within 7 days of the scheduled briefing.**

### **C. ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION IN AREAS WITHOUT LOW INCOME OR MINORITY CONCENTRATION**

At the briefing, families are encouraged to search for housing in non-impacted areas and the PHA will provide assistance to families who wish to do so.

**\* The PHA has areas of poverty and minority concentration clearly delineated in order to provide families with information and encouragement in seeking housing opportunities outside highly concentrated areas.**

**\* The PHA will investigate and analyze when voucher holders are experiencing difficulties locating or obtaining housing units outside areas of concentration.**

**\* The assistance provided to such families includes:**

**\* Providing families with a search record form to gather and record info.**

**\* Direct contact with landlords.**

**\* Counseling with the family.**

**\* Providing information about services in various non-impacted areas.**

**\* Meeting with neighborhood groups to promote understanding.**

**\* Formal or informal discussions with landlord groups**

**\* Formal or informal discussions with social service agencies**

**\* Meeting with rental referral companies or agencies**

**\* Meeting with fair housing groups or agencies**

**D. ASSISTANCE TO FAMILIES WHO CLAIM DISCRIMINATION**

The PHA will give participants a copy of HUD Form 903 to file a complaint.

**E. SECURITY DEPOSIT REQUIREMENTS** [24 CFR 982.313]

The owner is not required to but may collect a (one) security deposit from the tenant.

Security deposits charged to families may be any amount the owner wishes to charge, **(subject to the following conditions:)**

**\* Security deposits charged by owners may not exceed those charged to unassisted tenants or one month's rent as the maximum prescribed by State or local law.**

For lease-in-place families, responsibility for first and last month's rent is not considered a security deposit issue. In these cases, the owner should settle the issue with the tenant prior to the beginning of assistance.

**F. TERM OF VOUCHER** [24 CFR 982.303, 982.54(d)(11)]

During the briefing session, each household will be issued a voucher which represents a contractual agreement between the PHA and the Family specifying the rights and responsibilities of each party. It does not constitute admission to the program which occurs when the lease and contract become effective.

**Expirations**

The voucher is valid for a period of at least sixty calendar days from the date of issuance. The family must submit a Request for Approval of the Tenancy and Lease within the sixty-day period unless an extension has been granted by the PHA.

If the voucher has expired, and has not been extended by the PHA or expires after an extension, the family will be denied assistance. The family will not be entitled to a review or hearing. If the family is currently assisted, they may remain as a participant in their unit if there is an assisted lease/contract in effect.

**Suspensions**

When a Request for Approval of Tenancy is received, the PHA **will not** deduct the number of days required to process the request from the 60 day term of the voucher.

## **Extensions**

- \* The PHA will extend the term up to sixty days from the beginning of the initial term if the family needs and request an extension as a reasonable accommodation to make the program accessible to and usable by a family member with a disability. If the family needs an extension in excess of sixty days, the PHA will extend the voucher term for the amount of time reasonably required for said reasonable accommodation.**
- \* A family may request a written request for an extension of the voucher time period. All requests for extensions must be received prior to the expiration date of the voucher.**
- \* Extensions are permissible at the discretion of the PHA up to a maximum of an additional sixty days primarily for these reasons:**
  - \* Extenuating circumstances such as hospitalization or a family emergency for an extended period of time which has affected the family's ability to find a unit within the initial sixty-day period. Verification is required.**
  - \* The PHA is satisfied that the family has made a reasonable effort to locate a unit, including seeking the assistance of the PHA, throughout the initial sixty-day period. A completed search record is required.**
  - \* The family was prevented from finding a unit due to disability accessibility requirements or large size 4 or more bedroom unit requirement. The Search Record is part of the required verification.**
- \* The PHA extends in one or more increments. Unless approved by the Director of Section 8], no more than one extensions of sixty days or less will be granted and never for a total of more than an additional sixty days.**

## **Assistance to Voucher Holders**

Families who require additional assistance during their search may call the PHA Office to request assistance. Voucher holders will be notified at their briefing session that the PHA periodically updates the listing of available units and how the updated list may be obtained.

The PHA will assist families with negotiations with owners and provide other assistance related to the families' search for housing.

**\* After the first five business days of the search, the family is required to maintain a search record and report to the PHA every sixty days.**

**G. VOUCHER ISSUANCE DETERMINATION FOR SPLIT HOUSEHOLDS**  
[24 CFR 982.315]

In those instances when a family assisted under the Section 8 program becomes divided into two otherwise eligible families due to divorce, legal separation, or the division of the family, and the new families cannot agree as to which new family unit should continue to receive the assistance, and there is no determination by a court, the **Director of Section 8** shall consider the following factors to determine which of the families will continue to be assisted:

- \* **Which of the two new family units has custody of dependent children.**
- \* **Which family member was the head of household when the voucher was initially issued (listed on the initial application).**
- \* **The composition of the new family units, and which unit contains elderly or disabled members.**
- \* **Whether domestic violence was involved in the breakup.**
- \* **Which family members remain in the unit.**
- \* **Recommendations of social service professionals.**

Documentation of these factors will be the responsibility of the requesting parties.

If documentation is not provided, the PHA will terminate assistance on the basis of failure to provide information necessary for a recertification.

**H. REMAINING MEMBER OF TENANT FAMILY - RETENTION OF VOUCHER** [24  
CFR 982.315]

To be considered the remaining member of the tenant family, the person must have been previously approved by the PHA to be living in the unit.

A live-in attendant, by definition, is not a member of the family and will not be considered a remaining member of the Family.

**\* In order for a minor child to continue to receive assistance as a remaining family member:**

**\* The court has to have awarded emancipated minor status to the minor, or**

**\* The PHA has to have verified that social services and/or the Juvenile Court has arranged for another adult to be brought into the assisted unit to care for the child(ren) for an indefinite period.**

A reduction in family size may require a reduction in the voucher family unit size.