



## **Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8)**



### **What is a housing choice voucher and how can I get one?**

As a federal program through Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), housing choice vouchers assist very low-income families, elderly, and people with disabilities. US citizens and some non-US citizens, depending on their status, qualify for this program. Always ask the agency you are applying for about the details on what non-US status qualifies.

#### **Overview**

This program provides a subsidy for rent payment assistance in market rate rentals.

You pay 30% of your adjusted gross income toward rent amount and the local PHA (Public Housing Authority) pays the difference.

Minimum quality standards are set for each rental unit for health and safety of tenants.

#### **How to Apply**

You must submit an application through the

local PHA. Each city and/or county has its own PHA. Applications, which are usually advertised on PHA websites or through community agencies, are typically available 1-2 times per year. Most have waiting lists.

#### **Income**

Your income must not exceed 80% of AMI (area median income) for the city and/or county where you are applying. Some PHA give preferences to those who are unhoused or living in substandard housing, those paying 50% or more for rent and/or if they have been involuntary displaced.

#### **Can a landlord refuse to accept my application with a voucher?**

In Colorado, there are protections for tenants/applicants in housing against source of income discrimination. If you feel you have experienced this or have questions, please contact an attorney for more information or email [contact@copovertylawproject.org](mailto:contact@copovertylawproject.org).

#### **How long can I keep my voucher?**

Permanently, as long as:

- Your household income does not exceed 80% of area median income.
- You stay in compliance with reporting requirements of any changes that might happen in your household, such as change in income and number of people in household.

## Where is Section 8 housing?

Once approved, you get to look for your own housing such as an apartment, townhome, or house. However, it must meet the following guidelines:

- Acceptable level of health and safety
- Lease terms, including rent amount, must be reasonable
- Assigned payment standard (max amount of rent) and number of bedrooms (based on the size and income of your family). If rent amount is above your assigned payment standard, you must pay the difference as long as the tenant portion, including the difference, does not exceed 40% of adjusted monthly income for the total amount

## Can I move and take my voucher with me?

Yes! You are allowed to move if you give written and verbal notification to the PHA ahead of time, you terminate your existing lease within the lease requirements, and you find acceptable alternate housing.

Under the voucher program, a unit can be chosen anywhere in the United States if you lived in the jurisdiction of the PHA issuing the voucher when you first applied for assistance. Ex: If you lived in Denver, CO and received your voucher in Denver, you can then choose to look for a unit in Aurora, CO. (Please make sure you ask the PHA for details about this when you are approved.)

You still must follow the same process as finding the previous unit.

## What would disqualify me from being approved for a voucher?

- You do not sign/submit all required paperwork at time of application.
- You do not have a disability, or do not have dependent children (including a child attending higher education under age 24).
- Any member in the household is engaging in illegal drug use, abusing alcohol, registered under the state sex offender registry, or has been convicted of manufacturing or producing methamphetamines while living in public housing.
- Any member of the household has been evicted from public housing for drug-related activity within the past 3 years.

Each PHA is encouraged to look at each situation individually, so if one of the above situations apply to you, you can still apply. You should provide the PHA with additional information about the situation to demonstrate that you would be a successful tenant (Ex: evidence that you successfully completed a related program's requirements, or other related successes)

## If I am denied, what can I do?

You have a right to appeal the decision. You **must** follow the PHA guidelines around submitting your appeal, which are typically outlined in denial letter. You must:

- Submit an appeal within time frame PHA sets.
- Gather support from family, friends, and community members to help express why you deserve to be reconsidered. (This could mean gathering letters or documentation from them, or possibly having them participate in your appeal hearing.)



Questions? Contact Maria, Housing Navigator, at [maria@copovertylawproject.org](mailto:maria@copovertylawproject.org)



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