

Frequently Asked Questions about the Housing Choice Voucher Program

Tenant

The Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program is a federally funded, rental subsidy program that assists its participants with their monthly rental payments. This Program ensures that its participants have a safe, decent and sanitary place to live. The Housing Authority of the City of Charleston (CHA) administers funds received from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and distributes them in the form of Housing Choice Vouchers to eligible families and individuals. A Voucher allows participating households (tenants) to rent housing that meets their needs. The tenant pays a portion of the rent directly to the landlord. The HCV Office pays the landlord the difference between the tenant's portion of the rent and the total rental amount.

Here are answers to frequently asked questions about the Program:

1. Are you accepting Housing Choice Voucher applications?

Not at this time. We currently have a waiting list. When we resume taking applications, we will advertise in The Post & Courier and The Chronicle (newspapers), as well as on our website at www.chacity.org.

2. Why does The HCV Office have a waiting list?

Since the demands for affordable housing, specifically those associated with federally-subsidized rental programs such as The HCV Program, usually exceed available resources, CHA, like other housing authorities, maintains a waiting list in order to keep a log of those individuals who have applied in the past. Due to the volume of people who need housing assistance, and because we do not want an applicant to be forced to wait an enormous amount of time once they have been allowed to apply, we do not keep the waiting list open at all times. The HCV Office will re-open its waiting list for new applications after all eligible applicants on the waiting list have been housed.

Note: Submission of an application does not guarantee that housing will be offered.

3. Why does The HCV Office accept so many applications if there isn't enough housing?

Families in our HCV Program are allowed to remain on the Program as long as they adhere to Program rules and regulations. However, we generally have a small turnover of participants annually and in conjunction with this turnover, are periodically able to offer assistance to a small percentage of applicants who have applied.

4. What are my responsibilities as a tenant?

Like any tenant, HCV participants have responsibilities, all of which should be spelled out in the lease, including but not limited to the timely payment of their portion of the rent, as well as those utilities for which they are responsible. To participate in the HCV Program, tenants must use the unit as their principal residence. They cannot sublease the unit or allow unauthorized persons to reside with them.

The tenant also has responsibilities to the Housing Authority, which are listed on their Housing Choice Voucher, which states:

The tenant **MUST**:

- Promptly notify The HCV Office in writing when the tenant is away from the unit for an extended period of time;
- Notify both The HCV Office and the landlord in writing before moving out of the unit or terminating the lease;
- Allow The HCV Office to inspect the unit at reasonable times and after reasonable notice;
- Request The HCV Office to add any family member as an occupant of the unit;
- Give The HCV Office a copy of any landlord-issued eviction notice.

Also, the participating household (including all family members) **MUST NOT**:

- Own or have any interest in the unit;
- Commit any serious or repeated violation of the lease;
- Commit fraud, bribery or any other corrupt or criminal act in connection with the Program;
- Participate in illegal drug or criminal activity;
- Damage the unit or premises (other than ordinary wear and tear) or permit any guest(s) to damage the unit or premises;

5. What happens after a Landlord selects me as a tenant?

Once you have selected a tenant, you must complete their Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) form and submit it to our Office. When the RFTA has been received, our Staff will check for affordability and comparability, and if the rent is affordable and comparable, will contact the Landlord to schedule an inspection of the property. If the unit passes inspection and the rent is approved, you and the tenant sign a Lease (provided by you), and you sign a concurrent Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Contract with CHA.

If the unit does not pass inspection, we will allow up to ten (10) working days for correction of the repair items. A re-inspection will be necessary to confirm that the corrections have been made. Tenants have only sixty (60) days to find housing before they risk losing their Voucher, so repairs must be made in a timely manner. To avoid the possibility of a participant's Voucher expiring before the leasing process can be completed, the unit should be in in move-in condition prior to you submitting the RFTA.

6. Because I am on a time restraint, may I turn in several RFTA's at a time?

No. Only one RFTA may be turned in at a time.

7. How much rent can a Landlord ask for?

Please refer to the Payment Standards for Vouchers below:

<u>BEDROOM SIZE</u>	<u>PAYMENT STANDARD</u>
0	\$628.00
1	\$696.00
2	\$787.00
3	\$1,026.00
4	\$1,194.00
5	\$1,373.00

Please note that the payment standard includes all utilities. Note also that this is a baseline figure. The estimated utility costs of the unit, as well as the tenant's income, also play a part in what amount of rent can be approved. A comparability test is also done at the time of our housing inspection to insure that the amount of rent being requested is not excessive when compared to other similar units in that general area.

8. How is the unit size (number of bedrooms) determined?

The HCV Office will assign one bedroom for every two persons within the household. Persons of the opposite sex (other than spouses and children under age 8) will be allocated separate bedrooms.

9. If the HCV Office cannot approve the rent amount that the landlord requests, can I pay the difference?

No. the tenant is forbidden from paying more than the HCV staff states they should pay.

10. How much of the rent do I pay?

That depends on a number of factors including the tenant's income, the deductions to which they are entitled, the number of people in their household (which determines their voucher size), the applicable payment standard and the utility allowance for the unit.. Generally speaking, they will pay between 30% and 40% of their monthly-adjusted income for rent.

11. I am interested in transferring to your housing agency, what would be my next step?

You must notify your housing authority and request to submit a Portability Package. Portability Packages should be mailed to our office.

The Housing Authority of the City of Charleston
Housing Choice Voucher Office
550 Meeting Street
Charleston, SC 29403
Phone: 843-723-4491

Portability Packages will also be accepted by fax. Our fax number is: 843-720-5349 and is available 24 hours, 7 days per week.

Once all the documents have been received and reviewed, depending on your Agency's payment standards, you will be called to schedule an appointment or an appointment letter will be mailed to you.

12. Is The Housing Choice Voucher Office currently absorbing the Vouchers of those persons wishing to transfer in from other housing authorities?

No. CHA is currently billing for all incoming Vouchers.

13. What documents should I bring to my first appointment?

You should bring proof of income, birth certificates, Social Security Cards, photo identification, and any documents that pertain to you and your household income and expenses.

14. If I have an income or composition change, what should I do?

Any changes must be reported to your caseworker within ten (10) days of the change.

15. I received a Termination Letter. What do I do?

You have 10 days from the receipt of the letter to respond in writing to request a hearing.

16. What is the maximum amount of income that I can earn in order to continue to qualify for HCV assistance?

There is no set maximum amount. Your portion of the rent is based on 30% of your income.