

SECTION 8 BRIEFING VIDEO

Welcome to the Housing Authority's Section 8 Housing Voucher Program briefing video. The Section 8 voucher program is a Federal housing program authorized by the Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD). The Section 8 Voucher Program allows you, as a participant, to find a housing unit in the private market and receive subsidy on that unit, from the housing authority, to make it affordable.

As you can imagine, there is some very important information that I would like to share with you so that you can be well informed on how the section 8 program works. The tools that you will need to become a successful participant are located here, in your briefing packet that is in front of you right now. In addition, you should have a piece of paper and pen available so that you can write down any questions that you may have. It is important for you to understand the information that we will be covering today. First, let's cover some terms that I will be using during this video:

PHA- Public Housing Authority: is the entity that administers the Section 8 Program. In exchange for the money that HUD gives them for the Voucher program, they too must follow many federal regulations. Many of these rules will be covered with you today.

HAP-Housing Assistance Payment: is the amount of money that the housing authority pays your landlord.

Tenant Payment: is the amount of money that you will be paying your landlord for rent. In order for us to make the determination of what you will be paying for rent, we look at things such as: your income, your family size, cost of daycare, and medical expenses. When we calculate rents, 30% of your adjusted income will go towards the payment of your rent and utilities. It may be necessary to use a minimum rent that has been established by your housing authority according to bedroom size. Your housing authority will discuss this in great detail with you. **Payment Standard:** The payment standard is a dollar figure that is given to the housing authority by HUD. This is the target rent amount that you should try to stay as close to when looking for a new home. The payment standard that you qualify for is based on your family size and will be given to you when you meet with the housing authority section 8 person.

Utility allowance: This is an added allowance that the housing authority gives to you if the rent that your landlord is charging does not include all utilities paid. This along with your payment standard will be covered in detail with your housing authority representative.

HQS- Housing Quality Standards: After you have found an apartment to rent, it will be necessary for a representative of the Housing authority to make a physical inspection of the housing unit to make sure that it is a safe place for you to live. Some of the things that they will be looking at are operable smoke detectors, windows and doors that lock, electrical and plumbing issues and the condition of the painted surfaces. Your new home must pass inspection before you receive assistance. In addition, an inspection is necessary at each annual recertification date as well.

Annual Recertification: Each year at the anniversary date of your assistance, you will be required to recertify your income and family composition. You will receive a letter from the housing authority informing you of your upcoming recertification.

Interim Recertification: If your income or family composition should change prior to your annual recertification date, it may be necessary to inform the housing authority of interim changes that may have taken place in your household. If you are not sure whether or not to let the housing authority know of any

changes that may have taken place, it would be a good idea to let them know and allow them to make the proper determination. It's always better to keep the housing authority informed.

Term of assistance: or simply put, how long do I qualify for the Section 8 program. The answer to this is simple. You stay on the program as long as your income is such that you qualify to receive \$1 from the housing authority for assistance. In fact, after you no longer need help from the housing authority in paying your rent, we allow a 6 month grace period where you pay the full amount of rent due to your landlord and the housing authority pays zero. If after the 6 months are up and you no longer need us, you are then taken off of our assistance roles. If, however, for any reason within those 6 months, your income drops and you need help from us again, you will be given the assistance at that time. It is important to understand, however, to keep this provision in place, you cannot move during the 6 month grace period. There is no time limit on how long you can receive housing assistance.

Now that we have covered some terms that will pop up in this video, let's dig in to your informational packet.

FAIR HOUSING: You should have a fair housing brochure. If you or any member of your family has reason to believe that, in its search for suitable housing, it has been discriminated against on the basis of age, race, color, religion, sex, disability, national origin, or familial status, the family may file a housing discrimination complaint. If this is the case or if you have any questions regarding fair housing, this brochure gives you the information of the people to contact.

In North Dakota, there are a few organizations that can assist you with any complaints or concerns. The High Plains Fair Housing Center handles all fair housing claims across the state and HUD cases. The North Dakota Department of Labor – Human Relations Division investigates discrimination claims as well. You should be provided their contact information in your packet, and it is available through the local housing authority office.

VOUCHER: This is a very important piece of paper. This is the form that gives you the ability to go out into the private market, rent a housing unit and receive housing assistance. It is good for 60 days. That means that you must find a suitable unit and get the appropriate paperwork completed within 60 days. If you are getting close to the 60 day limit and still cannot find a unit, contact the housing authority immediately. There may be an extension that they can grant to you on a case by case basis.

The voucher size is determined by the size of your household and not the unit size you desire. Please visit with your housing authority if you require an additional room size because of a medical or disability need.

Probably the most important part to this form is on the back side under the heading of "Obligations of the Family." The family **MUST** follow these rules in order to continue participating in the housing voucher program. Let's go through them now:

GO THROUGH THE FAMILY OBLIGATIONS ON THE VOUCHER

Provide all information that the Housing Authority or HUD requests

Abide by criminal activity and history policies

Allow the housing authority to inspect the unit annually

Promptly inform the housing authority of any income or household changes

Inform the housing authority of any absence from the unit

Notify the housing authority of any visitors

Pay all utilities and tenant rent portions on time

And more, please read through your tenant packet

REQUEST FOR TENANCY APPROVAL: Once you have found the housing unit that you wish to rent, you must have this form completed. I find that it is helpful to have the owner or resident manager help you complete this form. When complete, you and your landlord must sign the back side of this form. Some of the information that is found on the form include: address, when you plan on moving in, number of bedroom, amount of rent to be charged, security deposit required, and who is going to pay for the utilities. Once you have this form completed, bring it to the housing authority immediately. This is the form that authorizes the housing authority to conduct the HQS inspection.

A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE: This is a brief description of the items that your housing inspector will be looking for when they conduct the inspection on your new home. It's a good idea to make yourself familiar with these items as the housing authority will not allow you to lease a housing unit that does not pass these guidelines.

AUTHORIZATION FOR THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION AND RELEASE OF INFORMATION FORMS: You are required to sign both of these forms. By signing these consents forms, you are authorizing HUD and the housing authority to request income information from the sources listed. HUD and the Housing authority need this information to verify your household's income, in order to ensure that you are eligible for assisted housing benefits and that these benefits are set at the correct level. HUD and the housing authority participate in a computer matching program where the sources of your income identified by the IRS, Social Security Administration, and State, local and local businesses are matched with the information that you provided to the housing authority. Each member of your household over the age of 18 must sign these forms.

ADDITIONAL ADULT CERTIFICATION: With this form, you are certifying to the housing authority as to who is living in your home. Remember, the Section 8 policy states that no adult person other than those listed on the lease shall live or stay in the unit WITHOUT the housing authority's prior approval.

KNOW YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A PARTICIPANT IN THE SECTION 8 HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: For the most part, many of your responsibilities are covered on the Voucher. We use this form to make double sure that you fully recognize the importance of knowing and following the rules for the Voucher Program. You will be signing these forms so you cannot use the excuse that you were not aware of the rules should a problem occur.

NOTICE OF PORTABILITY: We use this form to verify that we, in fact, informed you that your assistance is "portable." By that we mean, after you have satisfied certain provisions of the program, you can take your assistance with you anywhere in the United States. If you think that you may be interested in "porting" your assistance to another housing authority, please let your housing authority know and they will help find a housing authority in the jurisdiction where you want to move. It is important to know, however, that you must live your first housing authority in good standing.

PROTECT YOUR FAMILY FROM LEAD IN YOUR HOME: If you rent a home that was built prior to 1978, you must be informed that it may contain lead based paint. HUD is taking the business of lead based paint very serious because it can pose serious health hazards to humans and in particular; children. With this in mind, we are advising all households about the dangers of lead based paint, dust and soil if it is not managed properly. PLEASE, read this brochure carefully. Your housing authority representative will be asking you to sign a form indicating that they have told you about the dangers of lead based paint and have supplied you with the appropriate brochure.

INFORMAL HEARING: If the housing authority takes an action against you that you do not agree with. An example of this would be a termination for failure to follow your family obligations. If the housing authority

takes an action that you do not agree with, you may have the opportunity to request an informal hearing in front of a neutral party where an explanation can be given for the housing authority's action and you have the opportunity to explain yourself. Even though this is an informal process, you may have an attorney present if you wish.

When you find a place, remember to read through the entire lease. Landlords can implement policies such as smoke free, limit animals, and other items. Violating the lease can terminate your housing assistance. Make sure you know what you are signing and that you follow the lease.

CRIMINAL HISTORY:

Each housing authority has policies regarding criminal activity. The housing authority may take action against the entire household for any criminal activity. The housing authority does review criminal charges, and you can appeal if terminated. A landlord can also terminate the lease and evict a household because of criminal activity. The housing authority encourages all clients to stay away from any criminal activity and not allow any criminal activity to occur within the unit.

LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE:

If you do not speak the English language very well, but speak another language, you can request language assistance through the housing authority. The housing authority, along with other government agencies, will provide you with an interpreter if you need and request the assistance.

VISITORS:

The housing authority can restrict the length of time a visitor can stay at your unit. If a visitor stays longer than that time, you will be required to add that visitor to the program and lease.

TIME AWAY FROM UNIT:

As a housing client, you can be away from your unit for a period of time. Each housing authority may set a certain amount of time allowed. If you go beyond that point, the housing authority can terminate the assistance and may require repayment.

NDA – LANDLORD TENANT RIGHTS:

The North Dakota Apartments Association publishes a landlord and tenant rights booklet. You should receive a copy of this booklet in your packet. If not, it is available online at www.ndaa.net. This booklet is an excellent resource to tenants and includes many contacts.

ADMIN PLAN:

Each housing authority has an admin plan, or the policies that guide how the housing authority runs the Section 8 program and makes decisions. This manual is available for viewing at each office, and you can request a copy of the manual. Many housing authorities post their admin plan online.

REVIEW: Let's review the steps that you must complete in order to be a successful participant on the Section 8 Voucher Program.

1. Meet with the Housing Authority to obtain all of the necessary forms.
2. Go out into the private market and find a suitable rental unit. Some housing authorities even include a listing of landlords in your briefing packet. Remember, some of the things that you should consider when looking for a place to live are:
 - a. The condition of the unit
 - b. Whether the rent is reasonable
 - c. The cost of any tenant paid utilities

- d. The location of the unit including the proximity to public transportation, centers of employment, schools and shopping.
 - e. If the landlord is willing to participate in the Section 8 Program
3. Complete the form, "Request for Tenancy Approval" once you have identified the unit you would like to rent. Bring the Request for Tenancy Approval form into the Housing Authority office.
 4. The Housing Authority will set up a time for the housing inspection.
 5. If the housing unit does not pass the initial inspection, the housing authority will inform the landlord of what repairs must be made prior to entering into a HAP Contract. Your landlord may make the repairs immediately at which point in time, the unit can be approved, or he may decide that he does not want to make the repairs at which point in time, you must resume your search for a suitable housing unit.
 6. If the housing unit passes inspection, your housing authority representative will give you the approval to enter into a lease. In most cases, an initial 12 month lease is required for all new move-ins.
 7. The housing authority will inform you what you will pay for rent. Remember, your portion of the rent is paid to the landlord ... not to the housing authority.
 8. Each month, the housing authority will send their portion of the rent to the landlord and so between your payment and the housing authority's payment, your rent will be paid in full for the month.
 9. If your income or family composition should change, call your housing authority and let them know any changes that may have taken place.
 10. And lastly, 60-90 days prior to the anniversary date of your assistance, the housing authority will be contacting you to remind you of the need to recertify your income and family composition. Be sure to answer this request for information promptly.

Always check your local housing authority's policies, if you have questions be sure to ask them now to prevent any adverse actions.

Remember, it is your responsibility to report any changes in household composition and income to the housing authority. Social services and other agencies cannot do that on your behalf. Your household can lose the assistance for not reporting any changes immediately to the housing authority, that is your responsibility under the assistance program.

This concludes our briefing video. Remember, to become a successful participant in the Section 8 Voucher program, communication is extremely important. If you have any type of question, feel free to contact your housing authority representative. Good luck on your housing search.