

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS** **REGARDING SECTION 8 ASSISTED HOUSING**

### **How does the program work?**

The Housing Choice Voucher Program, formerly referred to as Section 8, is a type of housing assistance administered by the Durham Housing Authority that helps low-income individuals and families obtain and afford privately owned market rental housing. The family is determined eligible, must find a unit, and will pay rent based on the total family income directly to the property owner/agent. Regulations prohibit families from paying more than 40% of their adjusted monthly income at program entry and at transfers/relocation to a new unit. At initial leasing, families must not exceed the income limits established by HUD for the area.

### **How are rents determined in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program?**

DHA calculates the family share of the rent by annualizing all income received in the household. The family pays the greatest of 10% of their gross monthly income or 30% of their adjusted monthly income for rent and utilities. The family must contribute at least \$50.00 toward rent and utilities (minimum rent).

If the apartment rent does not include the cost of utilities, the share of rent payable by the family is reduced by a utility allowance. For example, the utility allowance for a two-bedroom unit might be \$70.00 (this is only an example). If the family's total payment is \$100.00, the family would pay \$30.00 to the owner plus the actual utility bill directly to the supplier and Durham Housing Authority would pay the balance of the contract rent.

### **What rental units will qualify for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program?**

All units must pass Housing Quality Standards (HQS) in order to be subsidized. The HQS inspection ensures that the unit is maintained in decent, safe, and sanitary condition.

The owner must agree to rent to the family and abide by the rules governing the program. Property owners are not permitted to refuse to participate because of illegal discrimination based, for instance, on a family's race, ethnicity, or disability, but they are permitted to screen applicants for income, rent payment history, lease compliance, and criminal background. The rent charged by the owner must be 'reasonable', which means the owner is prohibited from charging a voucher family more for the same unit than a family who is renting a similar unit without a voucher.

Participation in the program is voluntary. If you want to move to a unit, it must meet the program criteria. If you meet the background requirements, the unit passes the HQS inspection

the owner may refuse to participate. The housing voucher provides an opportunity for an eligible family to receive assistance to pay market rent but does not guarantee each family will find housing within the specified period provided to search for housing.

### **Where can I look for a rental unit if I get a Voucher?**

Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers are portable. You can take the Voucher anywhere in the United States where there is a housing authority to administer the program. This means that families issued a voucher by Durham Housing Authority are not required to stay in Durham, or even in the state of North Carolina. There are certain terms and conditions that the family must fulfill prior to submitting a request to leave the jurisdiction of the housing authority.

If you use your voucher to move out of the jurisdiction of Durham Housing Authority, the payment standard that will apply to your apartment or house will be the standard in effect in that locality. For example, rents are higher or lower in some regions than the rents in Durham; therefore, your share of the rent will depend on your income and the variables used to compute assistance in the location where you want to move.

### **Can I qualify for a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher if I owe an outstanding balance to Durham Housing Authority or have a criminal record?**

Any balances owed to Durham Housing Authority, other Housing Agencies must be paid before individuals, or families may qualify for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. Depending on the nature of your criminal record (when the crime occurred, who was involved, what the crime was) you may be ineligible for a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher.

### **How long is a Voucher funded?**

Congressional appropriations fund the Housing Choice Voucher program. The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program has been in effect since 1975 and no family has ever lost their voucher because Congress failed to renew funding.

### **Are there families who are not likely to find units with Vouchers?**

Yes, many families face barriers while searching for eligible housing. Families with very poor tenant histories or poor credit scores may not find owners willing to rent to them. In addition, very large families may have difficulty finding units that are large enough. Families that have a member in a wheelchair may have difficulty finding a private apartment that is suitable for wheelchair use.

Durham Housing Authority is always seeking property owners that have units that are wheelchair or otherwise accessible to persons with disabilities.

### **What process must I follow?**

You must apply when the waiting list pool is open.

- You must be certified income eligible by the Durham Housing Authority.
- You must submit a Request for Tenancy Approval and a copy of the proposed lease.
- The owner must provide documents to the housing authority and the unit must pass the HQS inspection.
- The rent requested by the owner must be reasonable in comparison to similar unassisted units in the area.
- You must have funds to pay the security deposit and moving expenses.
- The lease must be legal and in accordance with the State of North Carolina Landlord/Tenancy Law.

Durham Housing Authority will execute contractual documents with the owner and inform the family of the amount to pay. The lease must be effective after the unit passes the housing authority inspection and must contain the HUD required Tenancy Addendum. After, Durham Housing Authority will prepare a contractual agreement between the housing authority and the owner. DHA remits payments to the owner after executing all required documents on or after the first business day of each month.