

Section 8 Program

Introduction

The Section 8 Housing Assistance Program is a federally funded and regulated program through the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Program provides assistance to eligible low income families, the elderly and disabled in the private rental market by paying a share of the family's rent each month directly to the property owner. Since housing assistance is provided on behalf of the family or individual they are responsible for finding a suitable unit of their choice, whether it is an apartment, single family home, or mobile home, etc where the owner agrees to participate in the program.

The benefit of participating in the program offers owners and managers:

- Free advertising of available units.
- Screen applicants for program eligibility
- Guaranteed rent checks each month by mail or direct deposit
- Annual inspections
- Opportunity to help provide affordable housing to families.

So the next time you have a house, apartment, condominium or mobile home for rent, start by listing your property free of charge at www.SCHhousingSearch.com or calling 1-877-428-8844.

We appreciate your interest in the Section 8 Program and we look forward to a successful working relationship with you.

The Section 8 Program is a three-way partnership between the Authority, the Tenant/Family, and the Owner/Landlord. Columbia Housing Authority's involvement is to subsidize rent on behalf of the Family.

HA/Landlord/Tenant Responsibilities

The Section 8 Rental Assistance Program is a three-way partnership between the Authority, the Family and the Owner/Landlord. The Housing Authority pays owner on behalf of the family

The Authority Responsibilities:

- Determine eligibility
- Explain rules of the program to eligible families
- Inspect and Approve unit,
- Make Housing Assistance Payments to the owner
- Ensure that both tenant and unit continue to qualify under the program
- Comply with terms of the Contract with the property owner

The Tenant Responsibilities

- Find a place to live that is suitable and qualifies for the program
- Pay rent on time and comply with the terms of the lease with the owner
- Take responsibility for the care of their unit
- Comply with the tenant family obligations
- Report accurate and complete information when required

The Landlord/Owner Responsibilities

- Screen the family to determine if they will be a good tenant
- Comply with Fair Housing laws and not discriminate against any family
- As a landlord, you should treat Section 8 tenant as you would a non-subsidized tenant.
- CHA is not a party to the lease, the lease is a contract between the landlord and the tenant.
- Landlords are encouraged to collect a security deposit.
- Landlords should always enforce the lease . Landlords should provide copies of correspondence of tenant violations to CHA.
- Evictions are performed by the landlord in accordance with State and local laws.
- Landlords should conduct periodic inspections of their unit to ensure the tenant is maintaining the property. Make necessary repairs in a timely manner.
- Damages to the unit is between the landlord and tenant. It is the landlord's responsibility to maintain the unit in a habitable and good living condition.

Most Common Deficiencies

That Cause the Unit to Fail

Electrical

- Exposed electrical wires.
- Broken or missing electrical cover plates.
- Inoperable ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI).
- Missing or damaged light fixture or covers.
- Open ground electrical outlets.
- Loose electrical receptacles/switches.
- Electrical knockout plugs missing from panel box.

Smoke Detectors

- Non functioning smoke detectors.
- Missing or no smoke detector.
- Smoke detector batteries missing.

Wall Hazards

- Damages or cracked – severe walls.
- No holes, peeling or chipping paint or plaster.
- Stairway handrails and guardrails loose, damaged, rotten, missing, or incomplete.

Ceiling Hazards

- Damaged or cracked – severe buckling or bulging, blistering in ceiling.
- No holes or chipping, peeling paint.
- Stain in ceiling – indicating possible roof leaks.

Window Hazards

- One or more windows must open in a bedroom or bathroom.
- No crack window panel that can cause a cutting hazards.
- No missing or broken window panels.
- Missing or broken window locks.

Floor Hazard

- Buckling floor boards and loose carpet tripping hazards.
- Rotten or missing floor boards.
- Cable cords improperly installed throughout unit.
- Protruding nails and sharp objects – cutting hazard.

Housing Quality Standards

Housing Quality Standards (HQS) is HUD's minimum quality standards for all Section 8 tenant-based programs. HQS standards are required both at initial occupancy and during the term of the lease. CHA must inspect all units prior to entering into a contract with the landlord to assist the family with their rent. In addition to HUD's minimum requirements CHA has adopted the State of SC Building/Housing Codes.

Utilities and Appliances

Utilities must be in service at the time of initial inspection and the unit must be vacant unless the owner is already renting to the family.

If the unit does not pass inspection the owner will be provided a detailed list of deficiencies. The owner will be given a reasonable time period to correct the deficiencies. Some may appear minor, however CHA cannot make rental assistance payments until the deficiencies are corrected.

Housing Quality Standards Inspection Report

Regardless of the type of inspection, the landlord will always be provided an HQS inspection report. The report will list the deficiencies and a deadline for correction. It is the landlord's responsibility to contact the Housing Authority once the necessary repairs are completed. If you have any questions concerning the list of deficiencies or the deadline date, please contact the Inspector upon receipt of the report.

The following is a list of requirements in addition to HUD's HQS that the unit must meet:

Walls

- In area where plaster or drywall is sagging, severely cracked or otherwise damaged, it must be repaired or replaced.

Windows

- All window sashes must be in good condition, solid and intact, and fit properly in the window frame. Damaged or deteriorated sashes must be replaced.
- Windows must be weather-stripped as needed to ensure a watertight seal.
- Window screens must be in good condition (applies only if screens are present)
- Any room for sleeping must have a window.

Doors

- All exterior doors must be weather-tight to avoid any air or water infiltration, be lockable, have no holes, have all trim intact, and have a threshold.
- All interior doors must have no holes, have all trim intact, and be operable without the use of a key.

Floors

All wood floors must be sanded to a smooth surface and sealed. Any loose or warped boards must be secured and made level. If they cannot be leveled, they must be replaced.

All floors must be in a finished state (plywood).

All floors should have some type of base shoe trim or sealing for a finished look. Vinyl base shoe may be used for kitchens and bathrooms.

Security

- If window security bars or security screens are present on emergency exit window, they must be equipped with a quick release system. The owner is responsible for ensuring that the family is instructed on the use of the quick release system.

Toilet

- All worn or cracked toilet seats and tank lids must be replaced and toilet tank lid must fit prop early.

Sinks

- All sinks must have functioning stoppers.

Smoke detectors

- Owners are responsible for providing and replacing old batteries for battery powered units.
- Tenants will be instructed not to tamper with smoke detectors or remove batteries.

Bedrooms

- Bedrooms in basements or attics are not allowed unless they meet local code requirements and must have adequate ventilation and emergency exit capability.
- Minimum bedroom ceiling height is 7'6" or local code, whichever is greater. Sloping ceilings may not slope to lower than five feet in the 70 square foot area.

Modifications

- Modifications or adaptations to a unit due to a disability must meet all applicable HQS and building codes.

Inspection Criteria

The following criteria are provided as a generalized checklist used in determining a rent ready unit for Section 8 participants and serves as a guide in preparing for the initial and annual inspection. Other items not listed below may cause the unit to fail. **All HUD regulations, local and state codes, and CHA Section 8 Administrative Plan must be followed.**

General Requirements

The unit must include a living room, kitchen, and bathroom.

- Unit must be market rent ready for initial inspection, and free of any trash or debris or landlord possessions (no storage of any kind including automobiles, furniture, etc). Utilities must be turned on and functioning.
- Ceiling and walls must be in good condition, with no larger cracks, holes, peeling or chipping paint or plaster.
- Handrails for stairs and guardrails for porches, if required. Generally 4 or more steps for any stairs require handrails and porch 30 inches above ground requires guardrails.

- Floors must be in good condition. The floor covering must not be curling or have loose edges or holes. No tripping hazards.
- Windows, including sills, frames and sashes must be in good operating condition and must open and close. There can be no broken, cracked or missing windowpanes. Windows must have permanently attached and adequate locks. Windows must be weather tight.
- All rooms must have either two working outlets or one working outlet and an overhead light or light fixture. All outlets, switches and electrical boxes must have covers with no exposed or frayed wires. All electrical splices must be properly contained in junction boxes with covers.

Kitchen

- All stove burners/oven must be functioning properly.
- The refrigerator door gasket must be attached to the door, forming a proper seal, and freezer must be functioning properly.
- Sink must have hot and cold running water and drain with a trap. The sink must be properly hooked to a sewer line. Neither the faucet nor the sink can leak or drip.
- There must be adequate food preparation and storages area, with adequate means to dispose of food wastes.

Bathroom

- There must be a private flush toilet fastened tightly to the floor.
- The bathroom sink must meet the same criteria as the kitchen sink.
- There must be a bathtub or shower.
- There must be adequate ventilation either from an operable window or an exhaust fan or vent.
- There can be no rotten or weak areas in the floor, nor any water damage.
- Bathroom doors have functioning locks.

Bedroom

- Each bedroom must have at least one window and must open and be large enough to use as an emergency exit.
- Each bedroom must measure at least 70 square feet, and has closet space for clothes.
- Each bedroom must have a door, which can close.

Heating/Plumbing

- The heating system must be capable of maintaining temperature appropriate for the local climate.
- Water heater is properly installed, operational, equipped with a temperature pressure valve according to the manufacturer's specifications, and a discharge pipe is installed on the valve in according to local codes.

Site Hazards

- There can be no hazards on site, such as dilapidated structures, trash, debris, unlicensed vehicles, and non-maintained yards and shrubs.

Smoke Detectors

- Smoke detectors must work.
- There must be at least one battery-operated or hard wired smoke detector in proper working condition on each floor, and each end of the unit if the bedrooms are located on opposite ends of unit.

Building Interior and Exterior

- The unit address must be clearly marked on the front entrance.
- The entrance door must have a working lock. Double cylinder deadbolts are not acceptable under HQS.
- The unit must have a mailbox.
- The unit must be decent, safe, sanitary and free of roaches or rodent infestation.
- Roof, gutters, fascia and foundation walls are structurally sound and weather tight. May not have cracks, holes, or opening.
- All interior and exterior stairs and rails must be hazard free. Porches must be hazard free, also in accordance with HQS or Local codes.
- The building must be free from high levels of pollution caused from sewer/fuel gas, and pollutants.
- Exterior surfaces accessible to children under 6 years old must be free of any cracked or peeling paint and adequately covered to prevent exposure to lead paint.
- There shall be no blocked fire exits from the building.

Special/Complaint Inspection

If at any time the family or owner notifies the HA that the unit does not meet Housing Quality Standards, the HA will conduct an inspection.

The HA may also conduct a special inspection based on information from third parties such as neighbors or public officials.

The HA will inspect only the items which were reported, but if the Inspector notices additional deficiencies that would cause the unit to fail HQS, the responsible party will be required to make the necessary repairs.

Lead Based Paint

- Units that were constructed prior to 1978 and are occupied by a child younger than 6 years of age must be inspected for defective paint on all interior and exterior painted surfaces of a residential structure.
- Units that were constructed prior to 1978 and are occupied by a child younger than 6 years of age with elevated blood level (LBP) must receive treatment of all intact and on intact interior and exterior painted surfaces of a residential structure.
- Units that were constructed prior to 1978 and occupied by a minor child younger than 6 years of age can have some defective paint conditions and pass inspection.

Special/Complaint Inspections

The following Housing Quality Standards (HQS) items are considered of an emergency nature, and must be corrected by the owner/tenant (whoever is responsible) within 24 hours of notice by the Inspector:

- Lack of security for the unit.
- Waterlogged ceiling in imminent danger of falling.
- Major plumbing leaks or flooding.
- Natural gas leak or fumes.
- Electrical problem, which could result in shock or fire.
- No heat when outside temperature is below 55 F and temperature inside is below 68 F.
- Utilities not in service (electric, gas and water).
- Obstacle which prevents tenant's entrance or exit.
- Lack of functioning toilet (if only one exist in unit).
- Inoperable smoke detectors

The Director of Inspections or designated representative may give short extension not more than 24 additional hours whenever the responsible party cannot be notified or it is impossible to correct the repairs within the 24-hour period.

In cases where there is a gas leak, potential fire or other threat to public safety, the proper authorities will be notified by CHA if the responsible party cannot be notified or it is impossible to make the repair.

If the emergency repair item(s) are not corrected in the time period required by CHA, and the owner is responsible, the housing assistance payments will be abated and the HAP contract will be terminated.

If the emergency repair item(s) are not corrected in the time period required by CHA, and it is an HQS breach which is a family obligation, CHA will terminate the assistance to the family.

The owner will be required to repair an inoperable smoke detector unless CHA determines that the family has intentionally disconnected by removing batteries or other means. In this case the family will be required to repair the smoke detector within 24 hours.

Abatement

CHA must abate (STOP) the housing assistance payments to the owner for failure to correct an Housing Quality Standard violation for the following reasons:

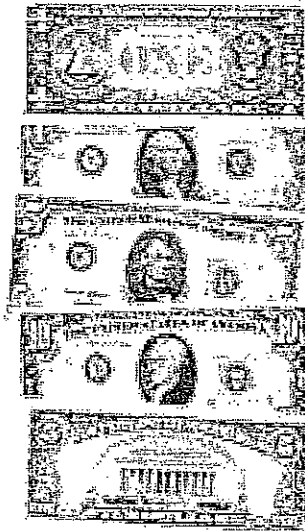
- Annual HQS repairs is not corrected within the 30 days given to the land lord and CHA did not extend the time for compliance;
- Life threatening emergency violation is not corrected within 24 hours of inspection (see attached)
- CHA must terminate the HAP contract if repairs are not made **60** days from the date of abatement (if abated May 1, termination date is June 30). For 24 violations the abatement starts the day after the 24 hours recheck.
- During the time the unit is abated the owner **will not** receive retroactive HAP payments for owner responsibilities. The owner's rent are not abated for HQS failures that is the tenant's responsibility.
- During the abatement period the tenant continues to be responsible for their share of the rent and not the HA portion. The owner must not request the tenant to pay CHA HAP payment and may not use the abatement as cause for eviction.
- Once CHA receives notification from the landlord of completed repairs after a third inspection will be scheduled. If the unit passes inspection payment will resume as of the day of after the date of notification. If the unit fails the third inspection the HAP Contract will be terminated at the end of the month following the abatement period.
- Extensions will be granted in cases where CHA has determined that the owner has made a good faith effort to correct the deficiencies and is unable to for reasons beyond the owner's control. Some of the reasons may include, but not limited to:
 - A reasonable accommodation is needed because the family includes a person with disabilities.
 - The required parts or services not available
 - Whether conditions

The time of the extension will be determined on a case by case basis, but will not exceed 60 days, except in the case of delays caused by the weather condition until the weather improves.

The extension request must be made in writing, stating the need and how many days it will take to complete the repairs. Please do not wait until the day of inspection to request an extension because this may result in termination.

Annual Rent Increase

- Landlords may request one rent increase every 12 months, at the end of the initial lease term for each individual unit.
- The Landlord must give CHA and the Tenant sixty (60) days written notice of the proposed rent increase request.
- Each Rent Increase request must meet Rent Reasonableness in order to be approved.
- The tenant has the option to move rather than accept the new rental amount



- If your request for annual increase is approved or denied, the landlord will be notified by letter from the CHA Inspection Department.

Landlord Check List

Free Advertising – Reach new and current families by registering available units for lease on line at www.schousingsearch.com. For more information, you can contact Housing Search website staff at 1-877-428-8844.

Select and Screen the applicant – Follow your regular application screening procedures when approached by a family with a Housing Choice Voucher. We do not screen participants for tenancy suitability.

Collect a Security Deposit, if you require one – The tenant is responsible for paying the security deposit. Such deposits may not exceed those charged to non-assisted tenants.

Return a completed Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) with the attached Lead Base Form to our office – Both tenant and Property Owner must complete and sign these forms to initiate the free inspection. Please call with any questions.

Complete the Landlord/Owner Certification form, W-9, Direct Deposit and provide proof of Ownership. The Owner must also provide a copy of their SSN, Companies must provide A copy of IRS letter showing the assigned Tax ID number. Housing Assistance Payments cannot be released prior to receiving these documents.

Inspection of the unit – Housing Quality Standards inspections, you will be contacted 3-5 days after receipt of the RTA. The unit must pass inspection prior to the signing of a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract.

Provide signed Lease and Contract – You will be notified when the HAP Contract is ready for signature and receipt of signed lease. Housing assistance payments will be released only after the HAP contract is signed. You will receive a copy after all signatures are obtained.

For initial leases, expect to receive the first Housing Assistance Payment approximately 45-60 days from the date the unit passes inspection/tenant move in date – Payment will not commence until the unit passes the inspection, the tenant moves into the unit and the HAP Contract is signed.

After the initial lease is executed – Housing Authority's rent portion will be sent the first week of every month or deposited in your account.

Change in the tenant's rent portion – is adjusted when the tenant reports a change in income or family composition change. You will be notified in writing prior to any changes or Continuation.

Notify Columbia Housing Authority – when there is an address change, change in ownership/management, or if the family vacates the unit. You must complete the appropriate Forms for this change.