

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM

CONTRA COSTA

HOUSING AUTHORITY

THE FAMILY BRIEFING HANDBOOK

2870 Howe Road Martinez, CA 94553

Phone: 1-925-957-7000
Toll Free 1-888-746-8731
(Selected Locations)

FAX: 1-925-957-1280
TDD: 1-925-957-1685



affordable housing solutions

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	Page 1
Introduction	Page 2
Housing Choice Voucher Program	Page 3-6
Steps to Assistance	Page 7-8
Determination of Payment Standards & Unit Size (Subsidy Standards)	Page 9
Where to Live	Page 10
Tips to Locate Suitable Housing	Page 10-12
Confronting Housing Discrimination	Page 13
Determining Housing Assistance Payment	Page 14-15
Family Obligations	Page 16-17
Family Briefing	Page 18-19
Moving In	Page 20
Taking Care of Your Home	Page 21-24
Moving to Another Unit After the First Year	Page 25
Family Obligations to the Landlord	Page 26-28
Program Integrity	Page 29-30
Denial or Termination of Assistance	Page 31
Hearings	Page 32
Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS)	Page 33
Portability	Page 34
Glossary of Housing Choice Voucher Program Terms	Page 35-38
Notes	Page 39
Attachments Form A- Documents Provided Form B- Briefing Evaluation Form C- Customer Service Evaluation	Page 40-43



Introduction

This Briefing Handbook has been prepared for you as a guide to participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

It is designed to provide you with accurate information about how the program works. Please take the time to read it carefully; it will help you to find a suitable place to live, and to remain in good standing with your landlord and the Housing Authority.

After reading the handbook, make sure you save it with your important papers so that you can refer to it as needed. If you have any questions, contact the Housing Authority.

Housing Authority's Goal

It is the Housing Authority's goal to provide excellent service to the families in Contra Costa County. The Housing Authority will make every effort to inform you of the program rules, and to advise you of how these rules affect you. Since federal regulations are not always easy to understand, it is very important to ask questions if you are not sure of something. Do not hesitate to contact the Housing Authority if you have a question or problem that pertains to the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Evaluations

In the back of this handbook you will find two forms that you may use to provide feedback or comments to the Housing Authority, a **Briefing Evaluation** form (Form B), and a **Customer Service Evaluation** form (Form C). Please complete the Briefing Evaluation form after your briefing and return it to a Housing Authority representative. You may submit the Customer Service Evaluation at any time during your participation in the program.

Requests for Reasonable Accommodations

Persons with disabilities may request a reasonable accommodation in order to utilize the housing program and any related services. The Housing Authority will make all reasonable efforts to be flexible in assisting persons with disabilities to participate in the program successfully. Requests for accommodation will be verified to ensure that the accommodation is reasonable.



Housing Choice Voucher Program

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) determines the rules and regulations for the Housing Choice Voucher Program. The purpose of the Housing Choice Voucher Program is to provide rental assistance to eligible families. The maximum amount that the Housing Authority will pay is an amount equal to the **Payment Standard** minus the family's total tenant payment.

Partnership

The Housing Choice Voucher Program is a three-way partnership between you (the family), the Landlord/landlord, and the Housing Authority.



The Family's Responsibilities

- Provide the Housing Authority with complete and accurate information.
- Make your best effort to find a place to live that is suitable for your family and qualifies for the program.
- Cooperate in attending all appointments scheduled by the Housing Authority.
- Take responsibility for the care of your housing unit.
- Comply with the terms of your lease with the Landlord.
- Comply with the Family Obligations of the Housing Authority.

The Landlord's Responsibilities

- Screen families to determine if they will be good renters.
- The Housing Authority can supply the Landlord with the current and previous address and landlord information if they have this information.
- The Housing Authority may also provide additional information pertaining to a tenant's performance as a renter.
- Comply with fair housing laws, and not discriminate against any family.
- Maintain the housing unit by making necessary repairs in a timely manner.
- Comply with the terms of the Housing Assistance Payments Contract with the Housing Authority.
- Collect the rent due by the family and otherwise enforce the lease.



The Housing Authority's Responsibilities

- Review all applications to determine if they are eligible for the program.
- Explain all the rules of the program to all families who qualify.
- Approve the family, unit, and Landlord.
- Make Housing Assistance Payments to the Landlord in a timely manner.
- Ensure that both the family and the unit continue to qualify under the program.
- Ensure that Landlords and families comply with the program rules.
- Provide families and Landlords with prompt, professional service.

Landlord Approves Family

Even though a family is determined to be eligible for the program, the Landlord must approve the family as a suitable renter. Most Landlords/managers will ask you to complete an application and will check on your rental history and credit. Landlords can deny you a rental unit if you have a previous history of not fulfilling your obligations under a lease.

The Housing Authority knows that the Landlord has approved the family when a Request for Tenancy Approval form is submitted.

Before Signing a Lease

- Have Landlord/manager complete Request for Tenancy Approval & Pre-Inspection form
- Submit Request for Tenancy Approval & Pre-Inspection form to the Housing Authority
- If Request for Tenancy Approval and lease meet HUD guidelines, an appointment will be scheduled to inspect the unit. (All utilities must be on.)
- If the unit passes inspection, the Housing Authority will enter into a contract with the Landlord/manager, and you will then sign your lease to begin after the unit passes the inspection.



Housing Authority Approves Tenancy and Unit

After a family finds a suitable housing unit and the Landlord approves the family, the Housing Authority needs to determine if the unit qualifies for the Program. This includes a Housing Quality Standards inspection.

Contract and Lease Signed

If the lease and unit are satisfactory, the Housing Authority will enter into a Contract with the Landlord, and the family will enter into a lease with the Landlord. **DO NOT** sign a lease until the Housing Authority inspects and passes the unit.

Housing Assistance Payments (HAP)

After the HAP Contract and lease are signed, the Housing Authority makes the initial HAP payment and continues to make monthly payments to the Landlord as long as the family continues to meet the eligibility criteria under the Voucher program.



