

The PHA's Role in the Housing Choice Voucher Program



U.S. Department
of Housing and
Urban Development

The Housing Choice Voucher program, commonly known as HCV or Section 8, is the Federal government's primary program for assisting low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities to afford rent in the private market.

In the HCV program, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) pays rental subsidies so eligible families can afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing. The HCV program is generally administered by state or local governmental entities called public housing agencies (PHAs). HUD provides housing assistance funds to PHAs to distribute on behalf of families. HUD also provides funds for PHA administration of the program.

PHAs are State-Created Entities

Each state's law governs how PHAs are formed. There may be state, county, or city PHAs that are authorized to administer the program. PHAs are not federal agencies, although HUD has regulatory oversight over many of the programs PHAs administer. Under program regulations, PHAs have discretion to run their programs in ways that best support their local communities. As each community has its own unique needs and issues, PHAs in different areas will operate the HCV program in different ways.



PHAs Serve their Communities

PHAs run their programs to best serve the needs of their individual communities. Examples of how one PHA's HCV program may differ from another PHA's program include:



PHAs have discretion in **setting payment standards.** Payment standards determine the maximum amount of rental assistance a PHA may pay to a landlord on behalf of an assisted tenant. Two PHAs serving the same area may have vouchers operating under different payment standards.



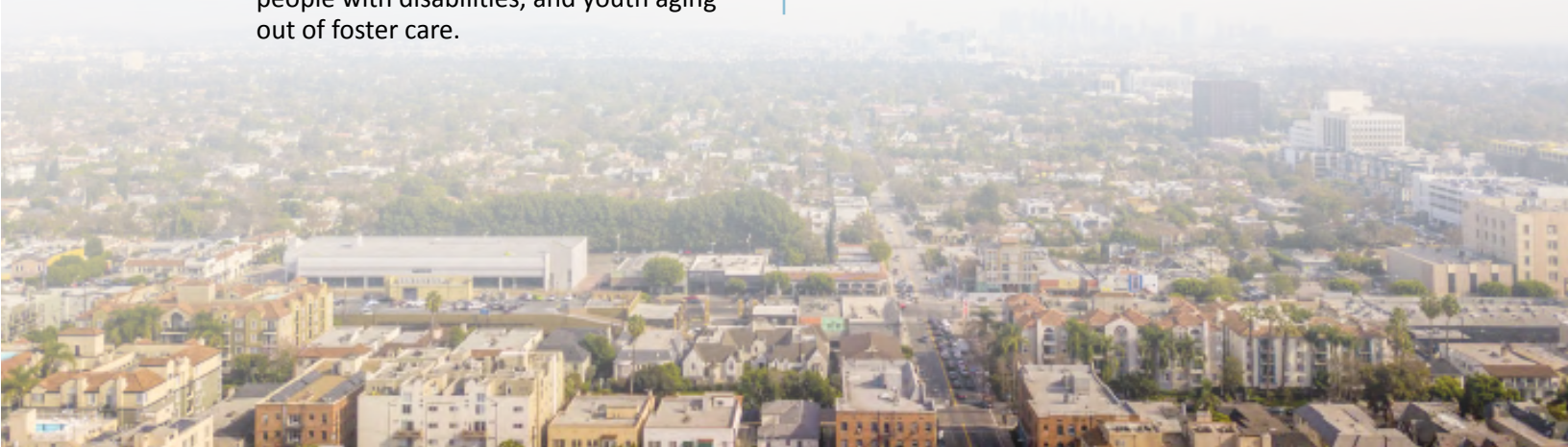
PHAs are allowed to determine how to **prioritize which families receive vouchers among all applicants** for the program depending on the local housing needs. For example, some PHAs may have adopted a preference for people experiencing homelessness, while other PHAs may have adopted a preference for working families.



PHAs may **offer distinct or special purpose vouchers that are specifically designed to help serve different high-need groups** of people in their community. Some examples of high-need groups include veterans experiencing homelessness, non-elderly people with disabilities, and youth aging out of foster care.



PHAs follow different inspection schedules for their HCV units. For example, some PHAs may conduct inspections annually, while other PHAs may conduct them biennially, or even every three years in some rural areas.



PHAs perform a variety of tasks in administering the HCV program.



Helping Families Join the HCV Program

PHAs help families join the HCV program by maintaining waiting lists, processing applications, determining eligibility, issuing vouchers, providing search assistance, approving units, and executing contracts with landlords.



Providing Rental Assistance Payments to Landlords

PHAs provide a portion of the voucher family's rent to the landlord. Typically—though not in every instance—**families pay 30% of their monthly income towards rent**, while the PHA covers the remaining portion of the rent through a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). PHAs will adjust the family's portion of the rent, as well as the payment to the landlord, if the voucher family experiences a change of income.



Helping Families Stay and Leave the HCV Program

PHAs help families retain assistance through the HCV program by verifying their income at regular intervals and when requested by the family. They also **assist the family in ensuring they still meet program requirements** during a move. PHAs may help families leave the HCV program by administering a Family Self-Sufficiency program, which helps HUD-assisted families increase their earned income so they can afford to leave the program. Some PHAs may refer families to other social service organizations to address specific challenges or needs.



Conducting Physical Inspections

PHAs **help ensure that units are decent, safe, and sanitary** by conducting inspections. Activities related to inspections include scheduling, notifying, and preparing for inspections; conducting inspections; and enforcing inspection standards. Inspectors are looking at key aspects of housing quality, including, but not limited to, sanitary facilities, illumination and electricity, lead-based paint, smoke detectors, and interior air quality.



Providing Landlord Supportive Services

In some instances, PHAs may provide certain supportive services to landlords. These activities may include **aiding in advertising rental units; providing incentive or bonus payments to landlords; or connecting landlords with potential tenants.**

For more resources, please visit the following webpage: www.hud.gov

Search for:



Landlord participation in the HCV program is free, and landlords do not pay to maintain compliance with the program, though in limited instances PHAs may charge for re-inspections after inspection violations have been found.