HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHERS FACT SHEET FOR LANDLORDS

What are housing choice vouchers?

The housing choice voucher (HCV) program is the federal government's major program for assisting very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market. The program is also referred to by its old name "Section 8." Since housing assistance is provided on behalf of the family or individual, participants are able to find their own housing, including single-family homes, townhouses, mobile homes and apartments.

The participant is free to choose any housing that meets the requirements of the program and is not limited to units located in subsidized housing projects.

Housing choice vouchers are administered locally by public housing agencies (PHAs). The PHAs receive federal funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to administer the voucher program. Adams County Housing Authority (ACHA) administers the voucher program for Adams County. Currently around 520 households in the county are using vouchers.

A family who is issued a housing voucher is responsible for finding a suitable housing unit of the family's choice where the owner agrees to rent under the program. This unit may include the family's present residence. Rental units must meet minimum standards of health and safety, as determined by HUD and ACHA and also be considered "rent reasonable" according to ACHA's payment standards. The housing inspector offers pre-inspections of any rental units where you might accept the voucher. All inspections are free of charge.

A housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by ACHA on behalf of the participating family. The family then pays the difference between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by the program. If a tenant's income should decrease the housing subsidy would increase and you will always receive your full amount of rent.

You should screen tenants with vouchers just as you would tenants who do not have a voucher. You can determine your own screening criteria for credit and criminal history as long as you apply those criteria to all of your tenants.

What are the Advantages?

A few of the main benefits of accepting housing choice vouchers include:

- **Receiving regular, monthly rental payments from the government**—Unlike receiving rental payments for tenants, you don't have to worry if you'll get paid. Payments will be directly deposited into your bank account.
- **A consistent base of tenants** is another perk as there is a long list of people who want to be in the voucher program. This means you don't have to be concerned about vacancies.

- I**deal marketing opportunities** - Marketing can easily be done online. If you choose to advertise online, you can use PAHousingSearch.com, a rental listing site that is free to use for both landlords and tenants.

What are the Myths?

- **"Rentals may be subjected to more wear and tear"**—Tenants with voucher assistance are no better or worse than a tenant without assistance. You as the landlord have the right to enforce your lease. If you issue lease violations related to tenant damages and provide a copy to your tenant's HCV caseworker, the tenant will receive a warning notice that they must be in compliance with their lease. Tenants don't want to risk losing their voucher assistance and will usually comply.
- **"Too many inspections"**— HUD standards are probably not much different than the standards you have for your own properties. The inspections are meant to protect you as the landlord/property owner and also to protect the tenant. Tenants are required to keep their unit in a clean and sanitary condition. If you feel your tenant is damaging the unit you can request a special inspection by ACHA's housing inspector.
- **"You'll get lower quality tenants"** — Most of the participants in the voucher program are working families or households on fixed incomes because they are elderly or disabled. The households need assistance to afford decent housing in a county with limited affordable housing opportunities. Remember, you can screen your tenants with vouchers, just like you screen all of your other tenants.
- **"To participate as a landlord the government wants your whole life story"** – The paperwork is fairly simple. ACHA needs proof the landlord owns the rental unit (copy of deed) and a signed W-9 form along with account information for the direct deposit of rental payments.

Interested in Learning More?

For more information about the voucher program you may contact the Housing Coordinator, at 717-334-2911 x223

To schedule a pre-inspection or for any questions about housing quality standards you may contact Finn Entwistle, Housing Inspector, 717-334-1518 x240 or fentwistle@adamscha.org All inspections are free.

ADAMS COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY
40 E. High Street
Gettysburg, PA 17325

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.