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Tenant Based Vouchers

What are tenant-based vouchers?

Tenant-based vouchers increase affordable housing choices for very low-income families. Families with a tenant-based voucher choose and lease safe, decent, and affordable privately-owned rental housing.

What organizations are eligible to apply for tenant-based voucher funding from HUD?

PHAs authorized under State law to develop or operate housing assistance programs may apply for funding.

How do PHAs apply for tenant-based voucher funding?

PHAs respond to notices of funding availability (NOFAs) published in the Federal Register. Each NOFA identifies allocation areas, amount of funds available per area, and the selection criteria for rating and ranking applications.

What families are eligible to apply for tenant-based vouchers?

Very low-income families (i.e families with incomes below 50% of area median income) and a few specific categories of families with incomes up to 80% of the area median income. These include families that are already assisted under the 1937 U.S. Housing Act, such as families physically displaced by public housing demolition, and owners opting out of project-based section 8 housing assistance payments (HAP) contracts. (HUD determines median income levels for each area annually.)

How does a PHA determine if a family is income eligible?

The PHA compares the family's annual income (gross income) with the HUD-established very low-income limit or low-income limit for the area. The family's gross income cannot exceed this limit.

How do families obtain tenant-based vouchers?

Families apply to a local public housing agency (PHA) that administers this program. When an eligible family comes to the top of the PHA's housing choice voucher waiting list, the PHA issues a housing choice voucher to the family.

How does a family obtain an apartment once they have a voucher?

It is the responsibility of a family to find a unit that meets their needs. If the family finds a unit that meets the housing quality standards, the rent is reasonable, and the unit meets other program requirements, the PHA executes a HAP contract with the property owner. This contract authorizes the PHA to make subsidy payments on behalf of the family. If the family moves out of the unit, the contract with the owner ends and the family can move with continued assistance to another unit.

How much rent do vouchers cover?

The PHA pays the owner the difference between 30 percent of adjusted family income and a PHA determined payment standard or the gross rent for the unit, whichever is lower. The family may choose a unit with a higher rent than the payment standard and pay the owner the difference.

Do families have to lease a unit in the jurisdiction where the PHA issued the voucher?

No. A family may choose a unit anywhere in the United States where there is a PHA that administers a tenant-based housing choice voucher program. However, the family may only use the voucher to lease a unit in an area where the family is income eligible at admission to the program.

What regulations cover this program?

Regulations are found at 24 CFR Part 982.

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U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

451 7th Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20410

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