

Tenant Information

Eligibility Criteria

An applicant must meet the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) criteria, as well as the additional criteria established by the Housing Authority. The Housing Authority accepts applications from families whose head or spouse is at least 18 years of age or emancipated minors under State law. The eligibility criteria are:

- An applicant must be a "family" as defined in the Administrative Plan for the Housing Authority. A family may be a single individual or a group of persons. A "family" includes a family with or without a child or children. A group of persons consisting of two or more elderly persons or disabled persons living together, or one or more elderly or disabled persons living with one or more live-in aides is a family. The Housing Authority determines if any other group of persons qualifies as a "family."
- An applicant must be within the appropriate income limits.
- An applicant must furnish social security numbers for all family members aged six and older.
- An applicant must furnish a declaration of Citizenship or Eligible Immigrant Status and verification where required.
- At least one member of the applicant family must be either a U.S. citizen or have eligible immigration status before the Housing Authority may provide any financial assistance.

Tenant Responsibilities to the Owner

- Pay utilities that are not supplied by the owner.
- Provide and maintain the appliances for which they are responsible.
- Repair damages to the unit done by family members and their guests.
- Do not commit serious or repeated lease violations.
- Notify the owner and the Housing Authority 30 days prior to moving, or no more than 60 days as provided in the owner lease.

Income Limits

The following schedule of HUD Income Limits is effective December 18, 2013

Family Size	Extremely Low Income	Very Low Income	Low Income
1	22,500	37,450	47,950
2	25,700	42,800	55,800
3	28,900	48,150	61,650
4	32,100	53,500	68,500
5	34,700	57,800	74,000
6	37,250	62,100	79,500
7	39,850	66,350	84,950
8	42,400	70,650	90,450

Criminal Background Check

The Housing Authority conducts a criminal background check on each applicant and household member over 18 years of age. Applicants who are found to have a criminal background meeting the criteria of the

established policy will be denied assistance.

Owner Screening

The owner is responsible for screening the family's behavior or suitability for tenancy. Owners may screen for prior rental payment history, credit history, lease violations, condition of previous rental units, income, and references. The Housing Authority will give to the owner, upon written request, the family's current and prior address as shown on Housing Authority records, and the name and address (if known) of the owner of the family's current and previous addresses.

Applying for Admission

Families who wish to apply for any one of the Housing Authority's rental assistance programs must complete a written pre-application form when the waiting list is open. When the pre-application is submitted, the applicant's name is entered into a lottery to determine placement on the waiting list.

Pre-applications will not require an interview. The information on the preapplication will not be verified until the applicant has been selected for final eligibility determination. Final eligibility will be determined when the full application process is completed and all information verified.

Applicants are required to inform the Housing Authority, in writing, of changes in address. Applicants are also required to respond to requests from the Housing Authority to update information on their application and to determine their interest in assistance.

When funding is available, families will be selected from the waiting list in their determined sequence, regardless of family size, subject to income targeting requirements.

Completion of a Full Application

All preferences claimed on the pre-application or while the family is on the waiting list will be verified after the family is selected from the waiting list, and prior to completing the full application. When the Housing Authority is ready to select applicants and after the preference is verified, applicants will be required to complete forms necessary for application purposes and participate in a full application interview with a Housing Authority representative. At that time, applicants are required to furnish complete and accurate documentation as requested by the interviewer.

After the verification process is completed, the Housing Authority will make a final determination of eligibility. This decision is based upon information provided by the family, the verification completed by the Housing Authority, and the current eligibility criteria in effect. If the family is determined to be eligible, a briefing will be scheduled for the family's orientation to the housing program.

The Housing Authority will apply the following criteria, in addition to the HUD eligibility criteria, as grounds for denial of admission to the program.

- The family must not have violated any family obligation during a previous participation in the Section 8 program for 5 years prior to final eligibility determination.
- The family must have paid any outstanding debt owed the Housing Authority or another Housing Authority as a result of prior participation in any federal housing program.
- If any applicant deliberately misrepresents the information on which eligibility or tenant rent is established, the Housing Authority may deny assistance and may refer the family file/record to the Program Compliance Unit and/or the proper authorities for appropriate disposition. False statements to the Housing Authority are punishable under Maryland law.

- A family will be denied admission to the program if any member of the family fails to sign and submit consent forms for obtaining information required by the Housing Authority, including Form HUD-9886, Authorization for Release of Information/Privacy Act Notice.

Local Preferences

The Housing Authority uses the following preference system:

- Residency preferences for families who live, work or have been hired to work in the jurisdiction.
- Displaced by government action.
- Head of Household or Co-head has paid employment at least thirty hours per week.
- Head of Household or Co-head are 62 years of age or older.
- Head of Household or Co-head qualify as handicapped or disabled.
- Any member of the household is medically verified as disabled/handicapped.
- Head of Household or Co-head is a verified full time training or educational program with the intent of securing employment within the next twelve months as a result of completing the program.
- Household has successfully completed a transitional housing program under the Prince George's County Continuum of Care Program.

For the purposes of the above local preferences, a spouse may be a co-head. All families with children and families who include an elderly person or a person with a disability shall be given a selection priority over all other applicants.

Housing Choice Voucher Payment Standards

The maximum limits listed below include rent and utilities. The Housing Authority must approve the contract rent for a unit based on Rent Reasonableness criteria. The unit must also pass Housing Quality Standards inspection.

Effective: October 1, 2013

Bedroom Size	Payment Standard
Efficiency	\$1130
1	\$1191
2	\$1412
3	\$1890
4	\$2374
5	\$2730
6	\$3086
7	\$3342

Families are required to report all income and all household members in order to determine level of subsidy benefit and bedroom size. A voucher is issued and is valid for an initial period of 60 calendar days for the date of issuance. The family must submit a Request for Tenancy and unsigned lease within the 60-day period unless the Housing Authority has granted an extension.

If the voucher has expired, and has not been extended by the Housing Authority or expired after the extension, the family will be denied assistance. The family will not be entitled to a review or hearing.

If the family is currently assisted, they may remain as a participant in their unit if there is an assisted lease/contract in effect.

A family must provide a written request for an extension of the voucher time period. All requests for extensions must be received prior to the expiration date of the voucher.

Moving Process

Applicants in the Section 8 Rental Assistance Program may elect to rent from their current owner if the unit meets the established criteria. Applicants and participants may be required to pay a security deposit to their prospective landlord and must pay for their own moving expenses and screening fees.

A signed Request for Tenancy Approval, a copy of the unsigned lease from the prospective owner, proof of paid utility bills on the current unit, and a copy of your written 30 day notice must be submitted to the Housing Authority in order to process an inspection request. The Housing Authority will schedule a Housing Quality Standards inspection of the vacant unit and prepare a Rent Reasonableness comparison. The Housing Authority will provide to the owner a list of deficiencies found in the unit to be repaired and a date for a re-inspection. Once the repairs are made, the inspector re-inspects the unit. If there are no deficiencies the unit passes inspection. Once the unit passes inspection and the contract rent is approved including the lease dates and terms, the client will be approved to move in the unit. The owner must provide to the inspector a copy of a Rental License issued by the Prince George's County Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE) for the prospective unit. At that time, the client and the owner will sign the lease. The owner will sign the Housing Assistance Payments Contract.

Security Deposits

The owner of the property determines the security deposit. The maximum amount an owner may charge in the state of Maryland is two times the monthly rent on the unit. Most owners will charge one month's rent as a deposit. If an owner owns more than one property, the owner may not charge families under the Section 8 Rental Assistance Program a larger deposit than is charged to other families who are not under the program. For landlord-tenant information, you may call Baltimore Neighborhoods at 1-800-487-6007.

Utility Allowances

Utility allowances are developed by unit size and type of fuel used in apartments and condominiums, townhouses, and single family dwellings. Housing Authorities are required to review utility allowances annually and revise them when there is a change of 10% in utility fees.

The utility allowance is always based on the actual size of the unit, regardless of the Voucher size.

Occupancy Standards

Guidelines for determining Voucher size

Voucher Size	Minimum Persons in Household	Maximum Persons in Household
Efficiency	1	1
1	1	2
2	2	6
3	3	8
4	4	10
5	6	12
6	8	14

The Housing Authority may approve an exception and grant a family a larger bedroom size for verified medical reasons.

Adding Persons to the Household

All participant families must report any changes in household composition to the Housing Authority. In order to add a person to their family other than a newborn child, the participant must have the written approval of the owner and the approval of the Housing Authority. To add a minor, the participant must have legal custody of the child and submit that document to the Housing Authority along with the written approval of the owner. This must be completed before the minor moves into the unit. To add an adult, the participant must request the Add a Person Letter from the Housing Authority and provide the requested documentation before the adult moves into the unit. Upon conducting a Criminal Background Check and a review of the documentation submitted by the family and the prospective family member, the Housing Authority will approve or disapprove the request. If the prospective family member is not approved the person may not move into the unit. If the person moves in without the permission of the Housing Authority, the family's participation in the program will end for violation of family obligations.

Reporting Change of Income and Family Composition

Applicants who currently have a Voucher and Participants are required to report immediately and in writing any changes in income, in other words, change of employment including part-time and full time employment, change of income source such as child support, Social Security and Supplemental Security benefits, TCA, unemployment, or any other change of income source to the family.

Applicants who currently have a Voucher and Participants are also required to report immediately and in writing any changes in household composition. In other words, you must notify this office if a family member leaves the assisted unit, or request the Housing Authority's permission to add a family member. Please see Adding Persons to Household.

Housekeeping Standards

The participant has an obligation to keep their rental unit clean and free of all dirt, debris, and report all maintenance repairs to their landlord. Poor housekeeping may be considered a lease violation. For safety reasons, do not store trash, flammable articles or liquids, or other items in or around heaters and water heaters.

Repairs

All unit inspections are performed for move-ins, annual recertification, and for complaints from the participant or the owner. Participants must notify the owner if an item needs repair. If the owner does not repair the item after a reasonable period of time, the participant may contact the Housing Authority Inspection Division and request an Inspector to inspect the unit. The Inspector upon finding a deficiency, will contact the owner in writing, or, if the item is an immediate threat to health and safety, will contact the owner by phone to make repairs. If the problem is not repaired within the allotted time frame, the Housing Inspector will recommend that the Housing Assistance Payments stop (abatement) until the repairs have been made.

Once the repairs are made, the Housing Inspector will verify the repair and the payments will re-start. The participant must continue payment of their portion of rent under the terms of the lease agreement. If the owner does not make the necessary repairs, the Housing Authority will issue a new voucher to the participant to look for other housing. The Housing Authority will terminate the Contract after notifying the participant and the owner. In order for the assistance to continue, the participant must find other suitable housing, which is decent, safe, and sanitary. If a participant does not find housing within the allotted time frame and the unit still does not pass inspection, the participant will lose their assistance.

If emergency or non-emergency violations are determined to be the responsibility of the family, the Housing Authority will require the family to make the repairs or corrections within an allotted time frame. If the repairs or corrections are not made, the Housing Authority will terminate assistance to the family, after providing an opportunity for an informal hearing. Only the Inspection Supervisor can approve extensions. The owners' rent will not be abated for items that are the family's responsibility.

Certain Housing Quality Standards deficiencies are considered the responsibility of the family:

- Tenant-paid utilities not in service
- Failure to provide or maintain family-supplied appliances.
- Damage to the unit or premises caused by a household member or guest beyond normal wear and tear.
- Normal wear and tear is defined as items that could not be charged against the tenant's security deposit under state law or court practice.

Damages

Damage to an assisted unit can be considered a lease violation. If the damage is other than ordinary wear and tear, it must be repaired. Damages that are determined to be caused by the participant must be repaired by the participant. If the owner repairs the item, the participant may be billed by the owner for the repair. Should damages be present at move out, the participant's housing assistance may be terminated for lease violations.

Lease Termination

The owner may terminate the lease if the tenant violates the lease, is involved in drug-related or violent criminal activity, or for other good cause. Other good cause may be a history of disturbing the neighbors, destroying property, or damaging the unit or property. Owners must provide to the Housing Authority a copy of any notices sent to the tenant, including notice to move or eviction notice. The owner and the tenant may mutually decide to terminate the lease at any time. Under these circumstances, the owner and tenant must sign and provide to the Housing Authority a Mutual Rescission of Lease. The owner has the option not to renew the lease at the end of any term.

Portability

Portability enables housing choice voucher participants the ability to move to any jurisdiction within the United States or its territories that has a Housing Choice Voucher program. If you are a resident or employed in Prince George's County at the time of your initial interview, you will qualify for portability immediately, if not, you must wait one year before you can exercise your portability rights. You must follow the Housing Authority's moving requirements when you vacate your current unit. This includes giving your current owner a 30 day written notice with a copy to the Housing Authority, rent must be paid through the end of your vacate date, your current unit must be in good, clean condition, return the keys to the owner and pay your utilities in full.

Mandatory Denial of Admission/Termination of Assistance

The Housing Authority must permanently deny assistance to applicants, and terminate assistance of participants for the following:

- Persons convicted of manufacturing or producing methamphetamine on the premises of federally assisted housing.
- If the Housing Authority determines that any household member is currently engaging in illegal use of a drug.

- If the Housing Authority determines that any member of the household is subject to a lifetime registration requirement under a sex offender registration program.
- When required under the regulations to establish citizenship or eligible immigration status.
- If the Housing Authority determines that it has reasonable cause to believe that a household member's illegal drug use or a pattern of illegal drug use may threaten the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises by other residents.
- If any member of the family fails to sign and submit consent forms for obtaining information in accordance with 24 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 5, subparts B and F.

The Housing Authority must terminate program assistance for the following:

- If a family is evicted from assisted housing under the program for one or more serious violations of the lease.

Grounds for Denial or Termination of Assistance

The Housing Authority will deny program assistance for an applicant, or terminate program assistance for a participant, for any of the following reasons:

1. If any family member violates any family obligation under the program as listed in 24 CFR 982.551.
2. If any family member has violated the family obligation under 24 CFR 982.551 not to engage in drug-related or violent criminal activity.
3. If any Housing Authority has ever terminated assistance under the program for any member of the family.
4. If any family member commits fraud, bribery, or any other corrupt or criminal act in connection with federal housing programs.
5. If the family currently owes rent or other amounts to the Housing Authority or to another Housing Authority in connection with Section 8 or public housing assistance under the 1937 Act.
6. The family participating in an FSS program fails to comply, without good cause, with the family's FSS contract of participation.
7. If the family fails to fulfill its obligation under the Section 8 Welfare to Work voucher program.
8. If the family has engaged in or threatened abusive or violent behavior toward Housing Authority personnel.
9. If the family has engaged in criminal activity that threatens the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of their residence by persons residing in the immediate vicinity of the premises.
10. If the family has engaged in or threatened abusive or violent behavior toward the owner or management staff.
11. If any member of the family engages in, or has engaged in drug or alcohol abuse that interferes with the health, safety or peaceful enjoyment of other residents.

Family Obligations 24 CFR 982.551

1. The family must supply any information that the Housing Authority or HUD determines is necessary in the administration of the program, including submission of required evidence of citizenship or eligible immigration status (as provided by 24 CFR 982.551). "Information" includes any requested certification, release or other documentation.
2. The family must supply any information requested by the Housing Authority or HUD for use in a regularly scheduled reexamination or interim reexamination of family income and composition in accordance with HUD requirements.
3. The family must disclose and verify Social Security Numbers (as provided by 24 CFR 5.216) and must sign and submit consent forms for obtaining information in accordance with 24 CFR 5.230.
4. All information supplied by the family must be true and complete.
5. The family is responsible for an HQS breach caused by the family as described in 982.404(b).
6. The family must allow the Housing Authority to inspect the unit at reasonable times and after reasonable notice.
7. The family may not commit any serious or repeated violations of the lease.
8. The family must notify the owner and, at the same time, notify the Housing Authority before the family moves out of the unit or terminates the lease upon notice to the owner.
9. The family must promptly give the Housing Authority a copy of any owner eviction notice.
10. The family must use the assisted unit for residence by the family. The unit must be the family's only residence.
11. The Housing Authority must approve the family composition of the assisted family residing in the unit. The family must promptly inform the Housing Authority of the birth, adoption or court-awarded custody of a child. The family must request Housing Authority approval to add any other family member as an occupant of the unit.
12. The family must promptly notify the Housing Authority if any family member no longer resides in the unit.
13. If the Housing Authority has given approval, a foster child or a live-in aide may reside in the unit. If the family does not request approval or Housing Authority approval is denied, the family may not allow a foster child or live-in aide to reside with the assisted family.
14. Members of the household may engage in legal profit-making activities in the unit, but only if such activities are incidental to primary use of the unit as a residence by members of the family.
15. The family must not sublease or let the unit.
16. The family must not assign the lease or transfer the unit.
17. The family must supply any information or certification requested by the Housing Authority to verify that the family is living in the unit, or relating to family absence from the unit, including any Housing Authority requested information or certification on the purposes of family absences. The family must cooperate with the Housing Authority for this purpose. The family must promptly notify the Housing Authority of absence from the unit.
18. The family must not own or have any interest in the unit.
19. The members of the family must not commit fraud, bribery or any other corrupt or criminal act in connection with any Federal housing program.
20. The household members may not engage in drug-related criminal activity or violent criminal activity or other criminal activity that threatens the health, safety or right to peaceful enjoyment of other residents and persons residing in the immediate vicinity of the premises. The members of the household must not abuse alcohol in a way that threatens the health, safety or right to peaceful enjoyment of other residents and persons residing in the immediate vicinity of the premises. An assisted family, or members of the family, may not receive Section 8 tenant-based assistance while receiving another housing subsidy, for the same unit or for a different unit, under any duplicative (as

determined by HUD or in accordance with HUD requirements) federal, State or local housing assistance program.

The family may not:

1. Receive housing choice voucher program housing assistance while receiving another housing subsidy, for the same unit or a different unit under any other Federal State or local housing assistance program.
2. Damage the unit or premises (other than damage from ordinary wear and tear) or permit any guest to damage the unit or premises.
3. Receive housing choice voucher program housing assistance while residing in a unit owned by a parent, child, grandparent, grandchild, sister or brother of any member of the family, unless the Housing Authority has determined (and has notified the owner and the family of such determination) that approving rental of the unit, notwithstanding such relationship, would provide reasonable accommodation for a family member who is a person with disabilities.

Criminal Penalties for False Statements

Title 18, Section 1001 of the U.S. Code states that a person is guilty of a felony for knowingly and willingly making false or fraudulent statement's to any Department of the United States Government.

In April 2002, the Maryland State Legislature passed a new law that is effective October 1, 2002. Families are subject to 3 years imprisonment and/or a \$5000.00 fine for false statements to a Housing Authority at application or during the term of program assistance. A person may not knowingly make a false statement of a material fact for the purpose of influencing a housing agency regarding:

- An application for housing assistance; or
- An action affecting housing assistance already provided.

Review/Informal Hearing Process

Reviews are provided for applicants who are denied assistance before the effective date of the Housing Assistance Payments Contract. The exception is when an applicant is denied assistance for citizenship or eligible immigrant status the applicant is entitled to an informal hearing.

The Housing Authority must provide participants with the opportunity for an informal hearing before termination of assistance. The family may, at their own expense, have legal representation.

Owner or Family Debts to the Housing Authority

When families or owners owe money to the Housing Authority, the Housing Authority will make every effort to collect it. The Housing Authority will use a variety of collection tools to recover debts including, but not limited to:

- Requests for lump sums
- Civil Suits
- Payment Agreements
- Abatements
- Reductions in Housing Assistance Payments contract
- Collection agencies
- Credit Bureaus
- Income Tax Set-off Programs