

HOUSING AUTHORITY OF TRAVIS COUNTY

*Improving Quality of
Life for a Better
Tomorrow!*

Housing Choice Voucher Participation & Housing Quality Standards

502 East Highland Mall
Blvd. Ste. 106 B
Austin, Texas 78752

Phone: 512-854-8245
Fax: 512-854-1899
www.hatctx.com

Housing Choice Voucher Participation

What are the benefits for a participating Landlord?

- **Steady Monthly Rental Payments** – The rent subsidy or the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is directly deposited into the landlord’s bank account on or about the first of every month but no later than the 5th.
- **Potential Greater Pool of Tenants** – Families move frequently making the voucher program a significant pool of potential tenants.
- **Stability** – Once Housing Choice Voucher families find a good place to live, they tend to stay, which translates to less turnover.
- **Free Rental Advertising** – Landlords can utilize www.gosection8.com to advertise the rental property. Each participating family wanting to relocate to another unit receives a listing of available units from gosection8.com.
- **Free inspections** – Landlords may request complaint inspections throughout the lease term to ensure tenant is complying with HQS and repairing items beyond normal wear and tear.
- **For landlords willing to participate in the Continuum of Care Program (COC), the following benefits are applicable:**
 - Upon landlord request, HATC may pay up to two months of rent for the tenant’s security deposit;
 - Upon landlord request, HATC may pay equivalent of 1 month advance payment for the last month’s rent; and
 - Upon landlord request, HATC may pay equivalent of 1 month of rent for damages caused by the tenant upon move out.

What are Payment Standards?

A Payment Standard is defined as: the maximum monthly assistance payment for a family assisted in the voucher program before deducting the total tenant payment by the family (24 CFR 982.4). The payment standards reflect rents if the landlord paid all the utilities for the program participant. Additionally, the rent must be reasonable compared to other similar unassisted units.

Can I increase the rent after the first year?

Yes. Federal Regulation 24 CFR 983.308(g)(4) states “the owner must notify the PHA of any changes in the amount of the rent at least (60) sixty days before any such changes go into effect, and any such changes shall be subject to rent reasonableness requirements.

How do I become a Housing Choice Voucher Landlord?

Simply list your rental property on www.gosection8.com and potential tenants will have access to your listing.

What forms/ documents are required to lease a unit under the

HCV program?

A direct deposit authorization form, completed W-9 Taxpayer form, banking information such as a voided check or direct deposit slip, and proof of ownership or management agreement will be required. Additionally, the tenant interested in your property will provide you with a *Landlord Packet* which includes forms to be completed such as: Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA) and Lead Base Paint Certification.

How do I find a Housing Choice Voucher Participant?

The Housing Authority of Travis County serves over 700 tenants annually. Each month housing specialists recertify tenants based on the end of their lease. Re-certification's occur 90-120 days prior to the end of their current lease. Once a tenant specifies that they wish to relocate to another unit, a voucher is issued to the tenant. Each tenants voucher amount varies depending on their individual circumstances. The tenant will reach out to you by your advertisement on www.gosection8.com. If they are interested in renting your home, a *Landlord Packet* will be provided to you by the tenant for completion.

Compliance with Housing Quality Standards

The housing authority will inspect the unit biennially after the first year of tenancy. The housing authority may also conduct a complaint inspection if it is determined that an owner or tenant is not maintaining the unit. If deficiencies are found, a notice will be mailed to the owner and the tenant with a deadline to complete the repairs. The owner or property manager is required to repair any failed items within 30 days or 24 hours for life-threatening deficiencies. The family is responsible for any tenant-caused damages beyond normal wear and tear.

If the landlord does not comply, the housing assistance payment will be abated on the first of the month following the corrective period and the HAP contract will be subject to termination. If the tenant does not comply, the tenant would be subject to termination for failing to maintain the unit according to HQS.

Key Points:

- ✓ You are responsible for screening the tenant's credit and criminal background.
- ✓ The housing authority is not responsible for tenant's behavior or conduct during tenancy.
- ✓ You must follow the terms of your lease.
- ✓ You must comply with fair housing practices and equal opportunity requirements.
- ✓ You must provide any eviction notices or lease violations to the housing authority.
- ✓ The housing authority is not responsible for damages caused by housing choice voucher recipients.

At what point do I know if a Section 8 client is approved to move-in?

Once the *landlord packet* is completed, return to the housing authority. An HQS Inspector will schedule an initial inspection and review the proposed rent for rent reasonableness. If the inspection passes and you agree with the approved rent, then the tenant is eligible to move in on the date of passed inspection or after.

What are the steps after inspection has passed in order to receive rental payment?

A final lease signed by the tenant and the landlord must be provided to the housing authority.

A Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract will then be executed by the Housing Specialist and submitted to you for review and signature. The HAP contract is an agreement between the Housing Authority and owner of the unit occupied by the assisted family. The contract must be executed within 60 days from the beginning of the lease term.

The first payment can take up to 60 days depending on how quickly the forms are signed and returned.

Rental payment will be direct deposited retroactively from the date of move in after a passed inspection and a signed HAP contract and lease is executed.

Key Points:

- ✓ The lease is between you and the tenant and each of you must agree to those terms.
- ✓ A lease must be executed the first year of tenancy. It is your choice to execute another lease after the first year or renew based on the terms of the first lease.
- ✓ An HQS Inspection must pass before the tenant moves in and if the tenant decides to remain in your unit, an inspection will be conducted yearly.
- ✓ The unit must be maintained according to HQS standards during the term of the contract and lease by both tenant and landlord.
- ✓ Only two inspections will be conducted on any unit.
- ✓ A Housing Assistance Payment Contract must be executed between the landlord and the housing authority before any rental payments are issued.
- ✓ The lease terms and the contract must be the same.
- ✓ The tenant's rental portion will be determined by the housing authority and notice will be provided to you.
- ✓ The landlord may not collect rent or late fees from the tenant for non-payment of rent from the housing authority. Non-payment of rent from the housing authority does not constitute an eviction or a lease violation for the tenant.
- ✓ If a tenant fails to meet his/her obligation to pay his/her portion of the rent, the owner/agent may initiate eviction proceedings. All evictions must be by a court action. The tenant must be notified and a copy of all written notices and lease violations must be forwarded to the housing authority.

The Housing Quality Standards Inspection

HUD requires that all units occupied by families receiving Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) assistance meet HUD's Housing Quality Standards (HQS). The unit must pass an HQS inspection. There are four different types of inspections: Initial, Annual, Complaint and Quality Control. The initial inspection is conducted prior to the tenant moving into a new unit. An annual is conducted each year a tenant decides to remain in the same unit. A complaint inspection can be requested by either the tenant or landlord for breach of HQS. A sample of inspections will be selected and conducted by a supervisor randomly every year for quality control.

Living Room: Space and Security

The unit must have a living room. It must have at least one bedroom or a living/ sleeping room for every two persons.

There must be at least one window in both the living room and each sleeping room and they must open if designed to be open.

Unit windows that are accessible (within 6 feet off ground) from outside must be lockable.

Exterior doors to the unit must be lockable and compliant with current Texas Property Code requirements (Keyless deadbolt locks are required).

The living room and each sleeping space/bedroom must have at least two electrical outlets in proper operating condition or one outlet and one permanently installed ceiling or wall light fixture.

Kitchen

The dwelling must have an operable oven and a stove or range. All knobs and handles must be present on stove/oven/range.

An operable refrigerator must be present and must maintain a temperature low enough to prevent food from spoiling over a reasonable period of time. It must have some capacity for storing frozen foods.

The unit must have an operable kitchen sink with hot and cold running water and a drain, properly connected to an approvable system, with a gas trap or P trap.

It must have one electrical outlet and an operable permanent ceiling or wall light fixture.

Facilities and services for the sanitary disposal of food waste and refuse is required.

Bathroom

Each unit must have a bathroom and it must be in a separate room with a flush toilet in operating condition. The unit must have a fixed basin with a sink trap and hot and cold water in operating condition. The unit must have a shower or tub with hot and cold water in operating condition.

These facilities must be connected to an approvable disposal system. Bathroom must have one window able to open or adequate exhaust ventilation.

Electricity and Illumination

The bedroom/sleeping room must have at least two electrical outlets in operating condition.

Permanently installed overhead or wall mounted light fixtures may count as one of the required outlets. All other rooms used for living require a means of natural or artificial illumination such as a light fixture, a wall outlet, a window, or adequate lighting from an adjacent room.

Each electrical outlet must be permanently installed in the baseboard, wall, or floor.

Structure and Building Exterior

Interior ceilings, walls, and floors must not have any serious defects such as severe bulging, leaning, large holes, severe buckling, missing parts, loose surface materials, or other serious damage.

Floors, stairs, halls, porches, and walkways must be free of tripping hazards.

The roof must be structurally sound and weather proof.

The exterior wall structure and foundation must not be unsound or hazardous and must not have any serious defects or damages that may result in air infiltration or vermin infestation.

Elevators must be working safe and compliant with locally enforced codes.

Manufactured homes must be securely anchored by a tie down device which distributes and transfers the loads imposed by the unit to appropriate ground anchors so as to resist wind overturning and sliding.

Heating and Plumbing

There must be a safe operable system for heating and cooling that adequately provides heat and cooling to each room directly or indirectly.

The unit must not contain unvented room heaters that burn gas, oil, or kerosene. Electric heaters are acceptable.

General Health and Safety

The unit must have private access.

The building/unit must have an alternate means of exit that meets local or state regulations in case of fire such as fire stairs, fire escape or fire ladder, a back door opening on to a porch with a stairway leading to the ground, or an open able window if easily accessible to the ground.

The unit must have at least one battery operated or hardwired some detector that is in proper operating condition on each level of the unit.

Smoke detectors must be installed in accordance with and meet the requirements of the National Fire Protection Association Standard 74 or its successors.

For hearing impaired tenants, smoke detectors must have an alarm system designed for hearing impaired persons as specified in NFPA 74.

The unit must be free from dangerous air pollution levels from carbon monoxide, sewer gas, fuel gas, dust, or other harmful pollutants.

There must be adequate air circulation in the dwelling unit.

The unit must be free of rodents and accumulations of trash, garbage, or other debris that may harbor vermin.

Entry/Exits must not be blocked by debris, stored items, non working locks, or doors nailed shut or otherwise obstructed.

The site and neighborhood may not be subject to serious adverse natural or manmade environmental conditions such as dangerous walks or steps, instability, flooding, poor drainage, sewer hazards, vermin, or fire hazards.

Lead Based Paint

A dwelling unit constructed before 1978 that is occupied by a family that includes a child under the age of six years must include a visual inspection for deteriorated paint surfaces. Deteriorated paint includes any painted surface that is peeling, chipping, chalking, cracking, damaged or otherwise separated from the substrate. Deteriorated paint, if found, must be treated.

Utilities

All utilities must be on before an inspection can be conducted. All gas appliances must have pilots lit before an inspection can be conducted.

Rent Reasonableness

The requested rent amount must be reasonable as compared to other similar unassisted units. All proposed rent amounts must be approved by the inspector.

Common HQS Failed Items:

- Missing or cracked electrical outlet cover plates
- Trip hazards caused by improperly installed floor coverings

- Cracked or broken window panes
- Loose wires such as electrical or cable that may pose a trip hazard on floor
- Missing knobs or handles on stove
- Inoperable burners on stove or inoperable range hood
- Leaking faucets or plumbing issues
- No ventilation system in bathroom such as window or exhaust fan
- No temperature pressure relief valve on water heaters with an appropriate discharge line
- Cracked door jambs
- Missing keyless deadbolt locks on **all** exterior doors
- Missing peephole/door viewers on all exterior doors unless the door has a window
- Missing sliding door pin locks on each exterior sliding glass door; Missing a sliding door handle latch or a sliding door security bar on each exterior sliding glass door
- Non functional smoke detectors
- Railings not present where required
- Utilities shut off/ no running water
- Gas leak
- Exposed electrical wiring

Inspection process

If a unit fails the inspection, an inspection report with all failed items will be mailed. When the repairs are completed, the landlord must contact the housing authority for a re-inspection. The repairs must be completed within 30 days or 24 hours for life threatening emergencies. The family is responsible for any family caused damages beyond normal wear and tear. For annual inspections, if repairs are not made by the specified deadline, the housing assistance payments will be abated. The unit must be move in ready and either vacant or occupied by the tenant applying for the unit for the inspection to be conducted.

Thank you for participating in the Housing Choice Voucher Program!