

# **THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF WAYNE COUNTY**



## **INFORMATION/GUIDELINE HANDBOOK FOR RENTERS & OWNERS**

THE WAYNE COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY HAS JURISDICTION OF  
BOTH WAYNE AND PIKE COUNTIES

### **HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM**

The Wayne County Housing Authority and the Department of Housing and Urban

Development welcome your participation in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.

This handbook will explain the program requirements and the steps you must take to receive assistance.

The Section 8 Program is designed to provide federally subsidized housing to eligible income families including elderly and single individuals, while allowing the maximum freedom in unit selection. Every rental unit has the possibility of being included in the program if certain requirements are met.

Please refer to this handbook whenever you have a question about the program or your rights and responsibilities under it. Also, remember that your Housing Authority is willing to assist you with any and all problems or answer any questions not answered in this handbook. You may reach them at (570) 488-6069 between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

### **THE "HAP" PROGRAM**

The Housing Assistance Program (or HAP as we will refer to it) uses Federal money to provide assistance to very low income families and elderly.

All applicants shall be required to fill out an application to quickly eliminate ineligible households and provide others with essential information regarding the program. An Authorization for Release of Information form will also be signed. Verifications shall be done when it is anticipated that the applicant will be provided with Housing Assistance within 30 days.

Verification forms will include the following:

- a. Income of all family members
- b. Full-time student status (over 18)
- c. Assets
- d. Medical expenses for elderly and disabled families only
- e. Handicapped assistance expenses
- f. Family type (family or elderly)
- g. Other factors
  - Family composition
  - Family medical needs
- h. Child care expenses

All verifications shall be in written form. Applicants shall be advised of the necessity of providing full, complete and accurate information. Insofar as possible, all verifications shall be by third parties.

Applicable documents may be photocopied except when prohibited by law. Notarized statements may be requested only when other methods of verification have failed.

The application shall be given the next number in the application log and placed on the computer by date and time.

When a Housing Voucher becomes available, the next applicant will be processed and the applicant will be scheduled for an interview.

An eligible family will be issued a Housing Choice Voucher of Participation and then may seek an apartment, house or mobile home vacant in the private rental market which is suitable and meets the applicants needs and certain requirements.

Based on the family income, the participating tenant will pay a portion of the monthly rent, and the Wayne County Housing Authority will pay the balance of this rent directly to the landlord each month.

### **INTRODUCTORY BRIEFINGS**

Whether held for a group or for a single person, the Housing Authority has scheduled for participants explanatory meetings to assist in all facets of participation in the program.

Information presented will include:

- (1) Terms or definitions you'll need to know
- (2) How to determine the right unit size
- (3) How to figure housing and utility costs
- (4) How payments are made
- (5) How to find and inspect an unit
- (6) How to secure a lease
- (7) Security deposits
- (8) What if you want to stay in your present unit?
- (9) What if you want to move?
- (10) How to explain the program to a landlord
- (11) You've found the unit -- now what?
- (12) The family's rights and responsibilities

- (13) The owner's rights and responsibilities
- (14) The Housing Authority's responsibilities
- (15) How your eligibility is determined
- (16) Discrimination: What it is and how to deal with it.

In the event that numerous families have difficulty in finding suitable units once they decide to move, the Housing Authority may also schedule a meeting on how to find a suitable unit. If enough participants express an interest or need, the Authority may decide to offer an additional program detailing landlord-tenant relationships, leases, and contracts and equal opportunity.

But remember, a member of the Wayne County Housing Authority will always be available and happy to help you with your individual problems.

### **DEFINITIONS OF TERMS YOU'LL HEAR USED IN REFERENCE TO**

**SECTION 8 HAP** - Housing Assistance Payments

**VERY LOW INCOME** - A family with an income 50% or less of the median income for that area as determined from the U.S. Census.

**FAIR MARKET RENT** - That rent determined by HUD to be fair for a geographic area including costs for utilities.

**HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER OF FAMILY PARTICIPATION** - The voucher awarded to you by Wayne County Housing Authority declaring you to be eligible for the program and describing the terms and conditions for that participation.

**LEASE** - A written, legal document describing the relationship to exist between landlord and tenant.

*Terms used in reference to payment of rents by you and the Housing Authority include:*

**GROSS RENT** - The amount of money not to be exceeded for rent on any unit including utilities.

**TOTAL TENANT PAYMENT** - The amount paid every month by the participating family for rent and utilities. This amount is calculated based on family income, size, and utility deduction.

**CONTRACT RENT** - The amount agreed upon by the tenant and the owner as the monthly rent for an unit.

**UTILITY ALLOWANCE** - The amount to be considered fair payment for utilities whether paid for by the tenant or owner. Such allowances will vary according to size of units and geographic area.

### **DECIDING WHERE TO LIVE**

When your application has been verified, you will be issued a Voucher which is valid for 60 days. You must then choose a unit. Under the Housing Assistance Program, you may stay in your present unit provided that it meets HUD quality and performance requirements of being decent, safe, and sanitary and an acceptable unit size, or you may look for another unit and plan to move. You must live in a unit which is large enough for your family.

The Housing Authority has determined the appropriate unit size by applying the following criteria:

(1) The bedroom size assigned should not require more than two (2) persons to occupy the same bedroom.

(2) The bedroom size assigned should not require persons of the opposite sex, other than husband and wife, to occupy the same bedroom other than infants or very young children.

These principals result in the following standings:

<u>No. of Bedrooms</u>	<u>Minimum Size Family</u>	<u>Maximum Size Family</u>
0	1	1
1	1	2
2	2	4
3	4	6
4	6	8

Some additional facts for you to keep in mind as a participant in the Housing Assistance Program:

(1) Your Voucher of Participation is issued to you for 60 days and will expire at the end of that time. If you have been unable to find a unit within 60 days, it will be necessary to talk with a representative from Housing Authority to seek an extension of time to locate a unit. When you seek an extension, you must give adequate reason for your inability to find a unit.

(2) All units must conform to the standards concerning lead paint. If a child under age 6 has an Elevated Blood Level (EBL), the Housing Authority must be notified immediately before a Voucher can be issued.

(3) A unit rent should be reasonable in relation to location, condition, and service.

(4) An owner may collect a security deposit not to exceed one (1) month's contract rent. So as not to burden the tenant, we are requesting the owner to accept as security one (1) month's Total Tenant Payment, or \$50.00, whichever is greater at the time of admission to the program unless the tenant has occupied and/or made a security deposit prior to involvement with the Housing Assistance Program. Deposits for keys, mailbox keys, pets, etc., are not included in the Section 8 guidelines. If it is the policy of the owner to charge additional deposits, these will have to be negotiated between tenant and owner.

All complaints must be forwarded to the Housing Authority in writing, and the Authority will follow-up within a reasonable time.

The Authority recommends that the tenant carry Renters Insurance to cover any tenant's belongings.

The Authority also recommends that the tenant make arrangements with their utility companies to be enrolled in a utility budget plan.

The Authority's responsibilities become effective when all necessary paperwork is completed by both the owner and tenant.

All units subsidized through the Wayne County Housing Authority must be kept in DECENT, SAFE AND SANITARY CONDITION which would include but not limited to good housekeeping.



## **A LEASE IS NECESSARY**

A lease is required between the tenant and landlord under the Housing Assistance Program. The initial term of the lease will be for one year. After the initial term, the lease will prevail on a month to month basis. A lease can be a simple and easily understood agreement between the tenant and landlord which spells out everyone's obligations and responsibilities. The Housing Authority will supply the tenant and landlord with a sample lease which would be acceptable. If the landlord has a lease, Wayne County Housing Authority must approve the lease before it would be accepted for use in the Housing Assistance Program and the lease must be in accordance with HUD Regulations.

## **STAYING IN YOUR PRESENT UNIT**

You may wish to stay in the unit you now occupy. If that is the case and your present unit meets HUD quality and performance requirements, it can be arranged very easily. Your present unit must be of a size allowed you and your family under the program regulations.

If your rent and utilities are no higher than the allowed amount and if your present unit meets HUD quality and performance standards and requirements, then go to your landlord and explain that you have been issued a Voucher for Participation in the Housing Assistance Program and you also wish to have him participate.

If you wish to stay in your present unit but your unit is larger than one which would be allowed for your size family, you may stay. However, the Housing Authority can only approve a rent based upon your family's need and the unit size authorized to you.

## **PLAN ON MOVING?**

If you decide to move, you should carefully consider where you want to live. You should consider how easy it will be to arrive at shopping areas, to work, school or church. Is there public transportation? If you have children, will they have to change schools? You may decide to move to another unit in your own neighborhood.

### **MAKING AN APPOINTMENT WITH A PROSPECTIVE LANDLORD**

First impressions make a big difference!

- Be prompt for your appointment. If you cannot meet at the scheduled time, be sure to call the landlord well ahead of time to reschedule.

- It is best to go to your appointment by yourself or with your partner. If possible, leave young children at home with a sitter.

- Dress neatly and be patient with the landlord.

Check the local papers often and watch only for the units which fit your needs.

Check regularly with real estate agents which advertise unit rentals. Leave your name and phone number. If the agent does not have an unit for you one day, he may have the next.

Check the areas of Wayne and Pike Counties in which you would like to live. Not all empty units are advertised in the paper or with an agent. Look for "For Rent" signs or empty units.

Ask your friends if they know of any units for lease. Let it be known to friends and relatives that you are interested in moving.

The Housing Authority has compiled a list of units available by owners and managers who have indicated a willingness to participate in the Housing Assistance Program; check with us. Also check with neighborhood centers and your church.

Elderly persons should check with organizations committed to assisting the elderly.

### **PRESENTING THE PROGRAM TO OWNERS**

If you are unit hunting or if you are going to stay right where you are, you have to know how to present the facts about this program to an owner who may be your next landlord.

Before deciding to lease a unit, you may want to ask the landlord more questions about the unit.

- What are the rules and regulations in the building?
- Whom should you contact when you need maintenance repairs?
- What are the security arrangements in the building?
- Are pets allowed?
- If you have small children, ask if the building has ever been tested for lead paint. If it was tested, what were the results?
- If the tenant is responsible for paying for some or all utilities, ask the landlord to estimate the average monthly cost of each utility.

**REMEMBER TO:**

Ask the owner exactly what the monthly rent will be for the unit.

(1) Explain to the owner that you have been issued papers from the Housing Authority; and as a program participant, you would like to rent his unit.

(2) Tell the owner he will receive a portion of the rent every month from you and a portion of the rent from the Housing Authority.

(3) Explain to the owner that a contract will be in effect between himself and the Wayne County Housing Authority.

(4) Mention that a lease of not less than one (1) year will be required to be signed between yourself and the owner with monthly renewals after the first year.

(5) Tell the owner that the Housing Authority must make an inspection of the dwelling, using HUD form entitled "Section 8 Existing Housing Program Inspection Checklist."

(6) Tell the owner that the Housing Authority is always prepared to take all the time necessary to explain the program in depth to help throughout the term of the lease.

Before deciding to lease a unit, you may also want to check the neighborhood.

- Is the neighborhood safe? Is the street lighted?
- Where are the laundry facilities?
- Is there heavy traffic in the area?
- If you have a car, where can you park the car?
- Are there yards, tot lots or playgrounds nearby?

## FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

You must decide whether you are willing and able to pay your share of the rent and utilities in the unit you select. To figure out your monthly costs you need to know:

- The rent per month.
- The utilities that you must pay each month.
- The amount of assistance that you will receive from the Authority.

After you have this information, you can figure out your monthly costs.

Add: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ + \$ \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Monthly Rent      Estimated Monthly      Total Cost of Unit  
                                 Utility Costs that  
                                 Tenant will pay

Then Subtract:  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ - \$ \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Total Cost      Housing subsidy      Total Monthly Cost  
Of Unit      Landlord receives      Tenant will pay for Unit

- Can you pay you total monthly costs without much trouble?
  - When you move in, will you be able to pay your security deposit?

## WHEN YOU FIND A UNIT

### Leasing Procedures:

If a program participant has chosen a rental unit, it is understood that all agreements will be between the landlord and participating family.

Following issuance of a Voucher to an eligible family or individual the following must be submitted to the Housing Authority:

- (1) Request for Lease Approval signed by owner and family.
- (2) Copy of proposed lease and any lease stipulations.

- (3) Other required documents presented in Briefing appointment.

After the above documents are submitted to the Authority:

- (1) The Housing Authority will notify the owner and/or tenant of the date and time the property and unit will be inspected.

- (2) You will be informed on the determination regarding inspection and lease approval.

- (3) When unit passes inspection, the owner will be sent a contract, lease and lease addendum, which requires both landlord and tenant(s) signatures. After the Housing Authority receives the original signed documents in office, assistance will begin the first of the following month after the unit passes inspection.

- (4) If applicable, schedule a mover, start packing and move into your new unit.

- (5) Start paying your share of the rent and utility expenses.

### **RESPONSIBILITY OF THE FAMILY**

You have certain responsibilities which you must live up to after you have signed the lease:

- (1) Respond promptly to written communications from the Wayne County Housing Authority and your landlord.

- (2) Make sure your owner and the Housing Authority is able to contact you; notify them of your telephone number, if you have one, and current or new mailing address.

- (3) Live up to the terms of your lease.

- (4) Pay the owner on the first of the month and utility companies when due.

- (5) Respect the property in which you reside.

(6) Give a minimum of thirty (30) days notice of intent to move to both the owner and Housing Authority.

(7) Report changes in family income or family size to the Housing Authority within ten (10) days of occurrence so that your total tenant payment can be adjusted.

(8) Submit to an annual recertification to determine that you are still eligible to receive housing assistance.

(9) Have only the people on your lease living and staying in your unit at all times.

All tenants being subsidized through the Wayne County Housing Authority cannot pay their landlord any more money than their tenant payment which is calculated by the Housing Authority.

**\*\*ANY TENANT WHO MAKES FALSE CLAIMS OR STATEMENTS IN THEIR APPLICATIONS FOR BENEFITS MAY BE ASSESSED UP TO \$5,000.00 IN FINES, EVEN IF NO BENEFITS HAVE BEEN PAID, AND UP TO DOUBLE DAMAGES IF BENEFITS HAVE BEEN PAID.**

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OWNER**

An owner who has agreed to participate in the Housing Assistance Program also has responsibilities to live up to. You will be dealing directly with the tenant. Units must be maintained to HUD quality standards and an initial inspection of the unit must show that the rental unit meets HUD quality and performance standards before a lease can be signed.

Inspection will be made by the Wayne County Housing Authority or its designee. Once a unit has been approved, a lease of not less than one year will be signed by you and your tenant(s).

**OWNERS MUST:**

- (1) Keep his rental unit up to decent, safe and sanitary standards and certify this monthly (this is done by simply endorsing your monthly HAP check).
- (2) Perform all management and maintenance functions.
- (3) Adhere to HUD requirements of non-discrimination in housing according to state and federal laws.
- (4) Live up to obligations under the terms of the lease signed between you and the tenant.
- (5) Request written permission from the Housing Authority to evict a tenant and have a justified reason.

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE WAYNE COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY**

The Housing Authority also has responsibilities for the Section 8 Housing Assistance Program...IT MUST:

- (1) Review applications and issue vouchers of participation.
- (2) See that all participating families and owners are briefed on the specifics of the Section 8 Programs.
- (3) Maintain a list of all participating rental property owners and managers for those families being issued a papers to locate a unit.
- (4) See that an inspection is made of the unit chosen, and both tenant and owner are notified of the result.



- (5) Assist both owners and families in the preparation of all necessary forms and agreements.
- (6) Prepare and execute the HAP contract and lease addendum.
- (7) Ensure that owners are, in fact, paid the housing assistance portion of the rent before the fifth business day of each month.
- (8) Be available when needed for assistance during the continuance of the program.
- (9) Keep itself fully informed as to the Fair Market Rents and utility costs in the area for the purpose of yearly adjustments.
- (10) Generally administer the housing assistance payments program in a way which is fair and equitable to both the family and the owner.
- (11) Inspect rental units yearly for quality and performance standards.
- (12) Recertify families annually to determine their continued eligibility.
- (13) Housing Authority will notify tenants approximately 90 days prior to lease expiration for the recertification of the family.

## **FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION IN HOUSING**

It is the policy of the Wayne County Housing Authority (hereinafter referred to as WCHA or the Authority) to comply fully with Title VI of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, the Fair Housing Act, Title VII and Section 3 of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (as amended by the Community Development Act of 1974), Executive Order 11063, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and any legislation protecting the individual rights of participants, applicants or staff with may subsequently be enacted. The WCHA certifies that it will affirmatively further fair housing. This is in continuation of our longstanding anti-discrimination tradition.

WCHA will promote and provide opportunities regardless of race, color, sex, religion, disability, handicap, familial status, national origin, sexual orientation or gender identity in the leasing, rental, or other disposition of housing or related facilities (including land), included in any project or projects under its jurisdiction covered by a contract for annual contributions under the United States Housing Act of 1937, as amended, or in the use or occupancy thereof.

Discrimination is against the law. In housing, discrimination generally means:

- A denial of your right to choose the housing you want.
- Being forced to accept housing conditions which other people would not have to accept if they rent the same unit (for example, paying higher rents or paying a security deposit). If you feel that you have been discriminated against in your search for housing, please contact our office for assistance. If there is a Fair Housing Commission in your area, you should also contact the commission. You may also want to complete and submit a "Housing Discrimination Complaint Form" to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, or you may call this toll-free number: 1-800-424-8590.

If you have any more questions or need more information about the program, please do not hesitate to contact the Wayne County Housing Authority Office at (570) 488-6069 or Fax correspondence to (570) 488-6496 or you may also visit our offices at 130 Carbondale Road, Waymart, PA.

## EQUAL HOUSING

## OPPORTUNITY

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For Further Information Contact:

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130 CARBONDALE ROAD, P. O. BOX Z  
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