WASHINGTON COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY
PROPERTY OWNER HANDBOOK
Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program
2026

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"Partnering with Property Owners to Provide Safe, Decent, and Affordable Housing Throughout Washington County."

Equal Housing Opportunity

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This handbook has been developed by the Washington County Housing Authority (WCHA) to provide property owners and management agents with general information regarding participation in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. The information contained in this publication is intended as a practical reference and does not replace federal regulations, HUD guidance, applicable state or local law, or the Washington County Housing Authority Administrative Plan.

The Washington County Housing Authority reserves the right to revise or update this handbook at any time to reflect changes in federal regulations, HUD notices, administrative policies, or program requirements.

Participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program is governed by federal law, including Title 24 of the Code of Federal Regulations, guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Housing Assistance Payments Contract, the HUD-required Tenancy Addendum, and the Washington County Housing Authority Administrative Plan.

Property owners are encouraged to contact the Washington County Housing Authority whenever questions arise regarding specific program requirements or individual participant circumstances.

Disclaimer

This handbook is intended to serve as an informational resource for property owners participating in the Washington County Housing Authority's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. It summarizes many of the policies and procedures commonly encountered during program participation; however, it is not intended to be a comprehensive statement of every applicable law, regulation, or policy.

Nothing contained in this handbook creates contractual rights or replaces the requirements contained within:

- Federal statutes.
- HUD regulations.
- HUD Notices.
- HUD Guidebooks.
- The Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Contract.
- The HUD-required Tenancy Addendum.
- The Washington County Housing Authority Administrative Plan.
- Applicable federal, state, and local laws.

In the event of a conflict between this handbook and applicable law or regulation, the applicable law, HUD regulation, or official Washington County Housing Authority policy shall control.

References to HUD regulations and administrative requirements are provided throughout this handbook for informational purposes. Regulatory requirements are subject to change, and property owners are encouraged to consult the most current HUD guidance or contact the Washington County Housing Authority for assistance.

The Washington County Housing Authority appreciates the continued partnership of participating property owners and recognizes the important role they play in providing quality affordable housing opportunities to families throughout Washington County.

Welcome

A Message from the Executive Director

On behalf of the Washington County Housing Authority, I would like to thank you for your interest in participating in the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Property owners are essential partners in our mission to provide safe, decent, and affordable housing to eligible families throughout Washington County. Your willingness to participate in the program expands housing opportunities within our communities while helping families obtain stable housing that supports employment, education, health, and long-term success.

The Housing Choice Voucher Program is built upon a partnership between the Washington County Housing Authority, participating families, and property owners. Each partner has specific responsibilities, and successful participation depends upon communication, professionalism, and mutual respect.

This handbook has been prepared to explain the Housing Choice Voucher Program from the property owner's perspective. Whether you are participating for the first time or have worked with the program for many years, you will find information regarding the leasing process, inspections, Housing Assistance Payments, owner responsibilities, and other topics that are important to successful program participation.

We encourage you to review this handbook carefully and to contact our staff whenever questions arise. Our goal is to make participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program as straightforward and successful as possible while ensuring compliance with HUD requirements and maintaining quality housing for participating families.

Thank you for your continued partnership with the Washington County Housing Authority and for your commitment to providing quality housing throughout our community.

Sincerely,

Executive Director
Washington County Housing Authority

About the Washington County Housing Authority

The Washington County Housing Authority (WCHA) is committed to expanding access to safe, decent, sanitary, and affordable housing throughout Washington County, Pennsylvania.

Through the administration of federally funded housing programs, WCHA assists eligible low-income families, older adults, individuals with disabilities, veterans, and other qualifying households in obtaining and maintaining stable housing.

Among the programs administered by WCHA, the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program is the largest rental assistance program. Under this program, eligible families receive rental assistance that allows them to lease privately owned housing from participating property owners throughout the community.

Rather than owning or managing the assisted properties, WCHA administers the program by determining family eligibility, conducting inspections, calculating rental assistance, administering Housing Assistance Payments, and monitoring compliance with applicable federal regulations.

Property owners voluntarily choose to participate in the Housing Choice Voucher Program by leasing eligible dwelling units to voucher holders. WCHA values these partnerships and strives to provide timely, professional service to both property owners and participating families.

How to Use This Handbook

This handbook has been organized to guide property owners through each stage of participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

The chapters generally follow the same sequence that property owners experience during participation—from deciding to participate in the program through leasing, inspections, payment administration, and eventually ending a tenancy.

Although many property owners read the handbook from beginning to end, each chapter has been designed to serve as an independent reference. Property owners may refer directly to the chapter addressing the topic or situation they are experiencing.

Throughout this handbook, references to federal regulations are provided to assist property owners in locating additional guidance. Questions regarding the interpretation or application of program requirements should be directed to the Washington County Housing Authority.

The Housing Choice Voucher Program is subject to periodic regulatory and policy changes. Property owners should always rely upon current written guidance issued by WCHA whenever changes occur.

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CHAPTER 1

Understanding the Housing Choice Voucher Program

Introduction

The Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, commonly referred to as the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program, is the federal government's largest rental assistance program for low-income families. Administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the program enables eligible families to obtain safe, decent, and sanitary housing in the private rental market while providing participating property owners with a reliable source of rental assistance.

The Washington County Housing Authority (WCHA) administers the Housing Choice Voucher Program throughout Washington County in accordance with federal regulations, HUD guidance, and the WCHA Administrative Plan.

The program is designed to create a partnership among three parties:

- The participating family.
- The property owner.
- The Washington County Housing Authority.

Each party has distinct rights and responsibilities that contribute to the successful administration of the program.

The Purpose of the Housing Choice Voucher Program

The Housing Choice Voucher Program was established to assist eligible low-income families in obtaining safe, decent, and sanitary housing while allowing them to choose housing in the private rental market.

Unlike traditional public housing, the Housing Choice Voucher Program does not require families to live in housing owned by a housing authority. Instead, eligible families locate privately owned rental housing, and WCHA provides rental assistance directly to participating property owners on behalf of eligible families.

The program benefits both families and property owners by creating housing opportunities that might not otherwise be available.

How the Program Works

After determining that a family is eligible for assistance, WCHA issues the family a Housing Choice Voucher.

The family is then responsible for locating suitable housing that:

- Meets program requirements.
- Is located within an area where the voucher may be used.
- Is owned by a property owner willing to participate in the program.
- Meets HUD inspection requirements.
- Has rent that is determined to be reasonable.

Once a family selects a unit and the property owner agrees to participate, the leasing process begins.

Before rental assistance can start:

- The property owner and family complete a Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA).

- WCHA reviews the proposed tenancy.
- The proposed rent is evaluated for rent reasonableness.
- The unit is inspected under HUD's National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE).
- The lease is executed.
- The Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Contract is signed.

After all program requirements have been satisfied, WCHA begins making monthly Housing Assistance Payments directly to the property owner.

Roles and Responsibilities

Successful administration of the Housing Choice Voucher Program depends upon cooperation among HUD, WCHA, property owners, and participating families.

Each participant has specific responsibilities.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

HUD administers the Housing Choice Voucher Program at the federal level by:

- Establishing federal regulations.
- Providing funding.
- Issuing program guidance.
- Monitoring housing authority performance.
- Conducting oversight of participating agencies.

HUD establishes the regulatory framework under which all housing authorities administer the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Washington County Housing Authority (WCHA)

The Washington County Housing Authority administers the Housing Choice Voucher Program within Washington County.

Responsibilities include:

- Determining family eligibility.
- Issuing Housing Choice Vouchers.
- Conducting inspections.
- Determining rent reasonableness.
- Calculating Housing Assistance Payments.
- Executing Housing Assistance Payments Contracts.
- Administering annual and interim recertifications.
- Monitoring compliance with HUD regulations.
- Providing assistance to participating property owners and families.

WCHA serves as the local administrator of the program but is not a party to the lease agreement between the property owner and the participating family.

Property Owners

Participation by property owners is voluntary.

Property owners who choose to participate agree to:

- Lease decent, safe, and sanitary housing.
- Maintain the unit throughout the tenancy.
- Comply with the Housing Assistance Payments Contract.
- Comply with applicable HUD regulations.
- Cooperate with inspections.
- Notify WCHA of changes affecting the tenancy.
- Collect only the rent approved by WCHA.

Property owners retain responsibility for managing their rental property in accordance with the lease agreement and applicable landlord-tenant law.

Participating Families

Families receiving Housing Choice Voucher assistance are responsible for:

- Searching for suitable housing.
- Paying their required share of the rent.
- Maintaining the dwelling unit.
- Complying with the lease agreement.
- Reporting required changes to WCHA.
- Allowing inspections.
- Following Housing Choice Voucher Program requirements.

Failure to comply with these responsibilities may affect continued program eligibility.

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)

One of the most significant advantages of participating in the Housing Choice Voucher Program is the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).

Each month, WCHA pays the approved Housing Assistance Payment directly to the property owner on behalf of the participating family.

The family pays its required portion of the rent directly to the property owner.

Together, these two payments equal the approved contract rent.

The amount of the Housing Assistance Payment depends upon several factors, including:

- Household income.

- Family composition.
- The approved contract rent.
- Utility responsibilities.
- Applicable payment standards established by WCHA.

Because family circumstances may change over time, the Housing Assistance Payment may also change during the tenancy following an annual or interim recertification.

The Leasing Timeline

Although every tenancy is unique, most Housing Choice Voucher leases follow the same general sequence:

1. WCHA determines family eligibility and issues a voucher.
2. The family searches for suitable housing.
3. The property owner agrees to participate.
4. The Request for Tenancy Approval is submitted.
5. WCHA reviews the proposed tenancy.
6. Rent reasonableness is completed.
7. The unit passes the required NSPIRE inspection.
8. The lease is signed.
9. The Housing Assistance Payments Contract is executed.
10. Housing Assistance Payments begin on the approved effective date.

Understanding this process helps property owners anticipate each step and avoid unnecessary delays.

Common Misconceptions

Property owners who are new to the Housing Choice Voucher Program often have misconceptions regarding how the program operates.

Misconception: WCHA is the landlord.

WCHA is not the landlord. The lease agreement is between the property owner and the participating family. WCHA administers rental assistance but is not a party to the lease.

Misconception: WCHA guarantees the tenant.

Participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program does not constitute a guarantee regarding a family's future conduct or lease compliance. Property owners remain responsible for applying their normal screening criteria in a fair and nondiscriminatory manner.

Misconception: WCHA performs property management.

WCHA does not perform maintenance, collect the tenant's rent portion, enforce lease provisions, or manage the property. These responsibilities remain with the property owner.

Misconception: Housing Assistance Payments continue regardless of unit condition.

Housing Assistance Payments depend upon continued compliance with HUD program requirements. Failure to maintain the unit in accordance with applicable standards may affect future payments.

Regulatory References

- 24 CFR Part 5
- 24 CFR Part 982
- HUD Housing Choice Voucher Guidebook
- HUD NSPIRE Standards
- WCHA Administrative Plan

CHAPTER 2

Why Property Owners Participate

Introduction

The Housing Choice Voucher Program offers property owners the opportunity to expand their pool of prospective tenants while partnering with the Washington County Housing Authority to provide quality housing throughout the community.

Thousands of property owners across the country successfully participate in the Housing Choice Voucher Program because it provides access to qualified applicants, reliable Housing Assistance Payments, and ongoing support from local housing authorities.

This chapter discusses the advantages of participating in the Housing Choice Voucher Program, addresses common misconceptions, and outlines the responsibilities associated with program participation.

Benefits of Program Participation

Property owners participate in the Housing Choice Voucher Program for a variety of reasons. While every rental business is unique, many owners find that the program offers financial stability, a larger pool of prospective tenants, and support throughout the tenancy.

Participation remains voluntary, and property owners continue to make their own business decisions regarding tenant selection, lease enforcement, and property management.

Reliable Housing Assistance Payments

One of the most significant advantages of the Housing Choice Voucher Program is the monthly Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) made by WCHA directly to the property owner.

These payments:

- Are made in accordance with the Housing Assistance Payments Contract.
- Represent the portion of rent approved by WCHA.
- Continue as long as the family remains eligible and the unit continues to comply with program requirements.
- Are issued through Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), when available.

Although Housing Assistance Payments may change following recertifications or other approved adjustments, many property owners appreciate the predictability of receiving a portion of the monthly rent directly from WCHA.

Access to a Larger Pool of Prospective Tenants

Voucher holders actively search for housing throughout Washington County.

By participating in the Housing Choice Voucher Program, property owners expand the number of prospective tenants who may be interested in renting their property.

This can be particularly beneficial when:

- Filling vacancies.
- Marketing newly renovated units.
- Expanding rental opportunities.
- Reducing vacancy periods.

Participation increases visibility among families seeking rental housing through the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Freedom to Screen Applicants

Participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program does not require property owners to abandon their normal tenant screening procedures.

Property owners may continue to apply reasonable screening standards that are applied consistently to all applicants and comply with applicable fair housing laws.

Examples of screening criteria may include:

- Rental history.
- Credit history.
- References.
- Prior lease compliance.
- Income sufficient to meet the tenant's financial obligations.
- Criminal history, when considered in accordance with applicable law.

Property owners remain responsible for making independent leasing decisions.

Lease Enforcement

The lease agreement remains a private contract between the property owner and the participating family.

Property owners continue to enforce:

- Lease provisions.
- Property rules.
- Rent collection.
- Maintenance obligations assigned to the tenant.
- Other lawful lease requirements.

Participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program does not prevent owners from taking appropriate action when lease violations occur.

Long-Term Tenancies

Many participating families remain in assisted housing for extended periods.

Stable tenancies may reduce:

- Advertising costs.

- Vacancy losses.
- Turnover expenses.
- Unit preparation costs.

As with any tenancy, continued occupancy depends upon lease compliance and continued eligibility for Housing Choice Voucher assistance.

Professional Support from WCHA

Throughout the tenancy, WCHA serves as the administrator of the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Property owners may contact WCHA regarding:

- Leasing questions.
- Inspection scheduling.
- Rent increase requests.
- Housing Assistance Payments.
- Ownership changes.
- Program requirements.
- Family eligibility questions affecting the tenancy.
- Other administrative matters.

WCHA staff are available to explain program requirements and assist property owners in understanding Housing Choice Voucher policies.

Responsibilities of Participating Property Owners

Participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program also includes important responsibilities.

Property owners agree to:

- Maintain the dwelling unit in compliance with HUD standards.
- Comply with the Housing Assistance Payments Contract.
- Charge only the rent approved by WCHA.
- Report changes affecting the tenancy.
- Cooperate with inspections.
- Complete required repairs within established timeframes.
- Maintain accurate records relating to the tenancy.

These responsibilities help ensure continued compliance with federal program requirements.

Common Misconceptions

Misconception: The Housing Choice Voucher Program is difficult to participate in.

While the program includes specific administrative requirements, many property owners successfully participate for years by maintaining communication with WCHA and following established procedures.

Misconception: WCHA manages my rental property.

Property management remains the responsibility of the property owner.

Owners continue to:

- Collect the tenant's rent portion.
- Respond to maintenance requests.
- Enforce lease provisions.
- Schedule repairs.
- Maintain the property.

Misconception: Every inspection results in failure.

Most inspections identify only routine maintenance items or confirm that the unit continues to meet HUD requirements.

Routine preventative maintenance significantly reduces inspection deficiencies.

Misconception: Housing Choice Voucher tenants are different from other tenants.

Participating families are expected to comply with their lease agreement just like any other tenant.

Property owners should apply their screening standards consistently while complying with applicable fair housing laws.

Building a Successful Partnership

Successful participation depends upon cooperation among:

- Property owners.
- Participating families.
- WCHA.

Open communication, timely reporting of changes, prompt completion of repairs, and a clear understanding of program requirements contribute to successful long-term participation.

WCHA values the partnership of participating property owners and recognizes the important role they play in providing affordable housing opportunities throughout Washington County.

Regulatory References

- 24 CFR Part 982
- Housing Assistance Payments Contract
- HUD Housing Choice Voucher Guidebook
- WCHA Administrative Plan

CHAPTER 3

Becoming a Participating Property Owner

Introduction

Participating in the Housing Choice Voucher Program begins when a property owner agrees to lease a dwelling unit to an eligible voucher holder. Before rental assistance can begin, WCHA must verify ownership, collect required documentation, review the proposed tenancy, determine rent reasonableness, and ensure that the unit meets HUD inspection requirements.

Although the enrollment process is straightforward, timely submission of complete and accurate information helps avoid unnecessary delays in lease approval and Housing Assistance Payments.

Owner Eligibility

Most property owners may participate in the Housing Choice Voucher Program provided they are legally authorized to lease the dwelling unit and comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws.

Owners may include:

- Individual property owners.
- Partnerships.
- Limited Liability Companies (LLCs).
- Corporations.
- Trusts.
- Estates.
- Other legally recognized ownership entities.

The owner or authorized representative must have the legal authority to execute the lease and the Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Contract.

Property Eligibility

Not every rental unit is automatically eligible for participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Before assistance can begin, the dwelling unit must:

- Be located within an area where the voucher may be used.
- Meet HUD's NSPIRE inspection requirements.
- Have a rent that is determined to be reasonable.
- Comply with applicable building and housing codes.
- Meet all program requirements established by HUD and WCHA.

Participation in the program is tied to the approval of both the property owner and the dwelling unit.

Required Owner Documentation

To establish participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program, WCHA requires documentation verifying ownership and payment information.

Depending on the ownership type, required documentation may include:

- Completed Property Owner Information Form.
- IRS Form W-9.
- Proof of property ownership.
- Government-issued identification, when requested.
- Direct Deposit (EFT) Authorization.
- Banking information for electronic payments.
- Management agreement, if applicable.
- Any additional documentation required by WCHA.

Submitting complete documentation at the beginning of the process helps reduce delays in lease approval.

Ownership Verification

Before executing a Housing Assistance Payments Contract, WCHA must verify that the individual or entity requesting participation has the legal authority to lease the property.

Ownership may be verified using documentation such as:

- Recorded deed.
- County tax records.
- Settlement documents.
- Trust documents.
- Letters of administration.
- Corporate records.
- Other documentation acceptable to WCHA.

If ownership changes during the tenancy, the new owner must provide updated documentation before future Housing Assistance Payments can be redirected.

Authorized Representatives

Some property owners designate another individual or company to manage the rental property on their behalf.

Examples include:

- Property management companies.
- Licensed real estate professionals.
- Attorneys.
- Family members acting under legal authority.
- Other authorized agents.

The designation of an authorized representative does not relieve the property owner of responsibilities established under the Housing Assistance Payments Contract unless otherwise permitted by WCHA.

Owners remain responsible for ensuring that authorized representatives comply with Housing Choice Voucher Program requirements.

Property Management Companies

Property owners may employ a management company to administer day-to-day operations of the rental property.

Management responsibilities often include:

- Marketing vacant units.
- Screening applicants.
- Executing leases.
- Collecting rent.
- Coordinating maintenance.
- Responding to tenant concerns.
- Communicating with WCHA.

Whenever a management company changes, WCHA should be notified promptly so program records remain accurate.

Direct Deposit Enrollment

WCHA issues Housing Assistance Payments through Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) whenever possible.

Before payments can begin, property owners should provide:

- Bank name.
- Routing number.
- Account number.
- Completed Direct Deposit Authorization.
- Any supporting banking documentation required by WCHA.

Direct deposit provides timely and secure payment of Housing Assistance Payments.

If banking information changes during participation, owners should notify WCHA immediately.

Tax Reporting Requirements

Housing Assistance Payments constitute rental income.

Property owners are responsible for providing accurate taxpayer identification information so WCHA may comply with applicable IRS reporting requirements.

Failure to provide accurate tax information may delay payment processing.

Property owners should consult their tax advisor regarding reporting obligations.

The Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA)

Once a voucher holder selects a rental unit, the property owner and prospective tenant complete a Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA).

The RFTA provides WCHA with information necessary to evaluate the proposed tenancy.

Information typically includes:

- Property address.
- Proposed monthly rent.
- Utility responsibilities.
- Appliances supplied by the owner.
- Proposed lease effective date.
- Owner contact information.
- Management information, if applicable.

The RFTA begins WCHA's formal review of the proposed tenancy.

What Happens After the RFTA Is Submitted?

After receiving the Request for Tenancy Approval, WCHA begins several administrative reviews before approving the tenancy.

These reviews generally include:

- Verification of owner information.
- Review of proposed lease terms.
- Rent reasonableness determination.
- Utility allowance review.
- Scheduling the initial NSPIRE inspection.
- Review of required documentation.
- Preparation of Housing Assistance Payments Contract documents.

Timely responses from both the property owner and the prospective tenant help keep the approval process moving efficiently.

Maintaining Current Information

Throughout participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program, property owners are responsible for keeping WCHA informed of changes affecting their participation.

Examples include:

- Mailing address changes.
- Telephone number changes.
- Email address changes.
- Banking information updates.
- Ownership changes.

- Property management changes.
- Taxpayer identification updates.

Maintaining current information helps ensure timely communication and uninterrupted Housing Assistance Payments.

Regulatory References

- 24 CFR Part 982
- Housing Assistance Payments Contract
- IRS Form W-9 Requirements
- WCHA Administrative Plan

CHAPTER 4

Selecting a Tenant

Introduction

Selecting the right tenant is one of the most important decisions a property owner makes. Although WCHA determines whether a family is eligible to receive Housing Choice Voucher assistance, the decision to rent a unit remains with the property owner.

Participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program does not require a property owner to accept every voucher holder. Property owners retain the right to establish and apply reasonable screening criteria, provided those criteria comply with applicable fair housing laws and are applied consistently to all applicants.

This chapter explains the tenant selection process, discusses fair housing requirements, and describes the responsibilities of both property owners and voucher holders before a lease is executed.

WCHA Determines Program Eligibility

Before receiving a Housing Choice Voucher, each family must meet eligibility requirements established by HUD and administered by WCHA.

Eligibility determinations generally include verification of:

- Income.
- Family composition.
- Citizenship or eligible immigration status, when required.
- Criminal background requirements, as applicable.
- Other eligibility criteria established by HUD.

A family's eligibility for voucher assistance does not constitute approval by WCHA for tenancy at a specific property.

Property Owner Tenant Screening

The decision to rent a dwelling unit belongs to the property owner.

Property owners are encouraged to conduct the same screening process for voucher holders that they use for any other applicant.

Typical screening criteria may include:

- Rental history.
- Credit history.
- Employment history.
- References from previous landlords.
- Payment history.
- History of lease compliance.
- Criminal history, when considered in accordance with applicable law.
- Ability to meet the tenant's financial obligations.

Applying consistent screening standards to all applicants helps ensure fair and objective leasing decisions.

Consistent Screening Standards

Property owners should establish written screening criteria whenever possible.

Using consistent standards helps:

- Promote fairness.
- Reduce discrimination complaints.
- Improve leasing decisions.
- Document the basis for applicant approval or denial.

Screening policies should be applied uniformly regardless of whether an applicant participates in the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Fair Housing Requirements

Participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program does not change a property owner's responsibilities under federal, state, and local fair housing laws.

Property owners must not discriminate against applicants or tenants based on any protected characteristic under applicable law.

Federal protected classes include:

- Race.
- Color.
- Religion.
- Sex.
- National origin.
- Disability.
- Familial status.

Additional protections may exist under Pennsylvania law and local ordinances.

Property owners should ensure that advertising, screening, leasing, and management practices comply with all applicable fair housing requirements.

Criminal History Considerations

Property owners may consider criminal history as part of their screening process when permitted by applicable law.

When using criminal history information, owners should:

- Apply screening standards consistently.
- Consider relevant facts and circumstances.
- Avoid blanket policies that may conflict with applicable law.
- Comply with federal, state, and local fair housing requirements.

WCHA's determination that a family is eligible for Housing Choice Voucher assistance does not prevent a property owner from conducting independent screening.

Rental History

Previous rental history often provides valuable information regarding an applicant's tenancy.

Property owners may wish to verify:

- Timely payment of rent.
- Lease compliance.
- Property maintenance.
- Notice requirements.
- Prior evictions.
- References from previous property owners.

Past rental performance may assist owners in making informed leasing decisions.

Credit History

Many property owners review credit information as part of their normal screening process.

Credit history may provide information regarding:

- Payment history.
- Outstanding debts.
- Collection accounts.
- Financial obligations.

Property owners should apply any credit standards consistently to all applicants.

Security Deposits

Property owners may collect a security deposit in accordance with the lease agreement and applicable Pennsylvania law.

The Housing Choice Voucher Program does not establish the amount of the security deposit, nor does WCHA collect, hold, or administer security deposits.

Property owners should apply their normal security deposit policies consistently to all applicants.

Applicant Interviews

Many property owners choose to meet prospective tenants before making a leasing decision.

Applicant interviews may provide an opportunity to discuss:

- Lease expectations.
- Property rules.
- Maintenance procedures.
- Parking policies.
- Occupancy standards.
- Move-in expectations.

Interviews should be conducted in a professional and nondiscriminatory manner.

Approval of the Applicant

Once the property owner decides to rent to a voucher holder, the owner and prospective tenant begin the Housing Choice Voucher approval process.

The next step is completion of the Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA).

Submission of the RFTA does not authorize the family to move into the unit or permit Housing Assistance Payments to begin.

The tenancy must first satisfy all Housing Choice Voucher Program requirements.

Denial of an Applicant

If a property owner chooses not to rent to an applicant, the owner should document the business reasons supporting that decision.

Examples may include:

- Unsatisfactory rental history.
- Failure to satisfy established screening criteria.
- Incomplete application information.
- Credit standards that are consistently applied.
- Other lawful business reasons.

Maintaining documentation helps demonstrate that leasing decisions were based upon legitimate business considerations rather than unlawful discrimination.

Regulatory References

- Fair Housing Act
- 24 CFR Part 982
- HUD Housing Choice Voucher Guidebook
- HUD Fair Housing Guidance
- WCHA Administrative Plan

CHAPTER 5

The Leasing Process

Introduction

Once a property owner has selected a voucher holder, the Housing Choice Voucher leasing process begins. Several administrative steps must be completed before Housing Assistance Payments may start. These steps ensure that the proposed tenancy complies with HUD regulations, that the rent is reasonable, and that the unit meets HUD's National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE).

Although each tenancy is unique, understanding the leasing process helps property owners prepare the required documentation and avoid unnecessary delays.

Overview of the Leasing Process

After a property owner approves a voucher holder for tenancy, several administrative steps must be completed before WCHA can approve the unit for participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

The general leasing process consists of:

1. Property owner selects an eligible voucher holder.
2. The Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) is completed and submitted to WCHA.
3. WCHA reviews the proposed tenancy.
4. WCHA determines whether the proposed rent is reasonable.
5. Utility responsibilities are reviewed.
6. An initial NSPIRE inspection is scheduled and completed.
7. Any required repairs are completed.
8. The lease is executed.
9. The Housing Assistance Payments Contract is executed.
10. Housing Assistance Payments begin on the approved effective date.

Completion of these steps is necessary before rental assistance may begin.

Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA)

The Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) is the document that officially begins WCHA's review of the proposed tenancy.

The RFTA provides information necessary to determine whether the unit and proposed lease satisfy Housing Choice Voucher Program requirements.

Information typically includes:

- Property address.
- Property owner's name.
- Management company information, if applicable.
- Proposed monthly rent.
- Utility responsibilities.

- Appliances provided by the owner.
- Proposed lease effective date.
- Number of bedrooms.
- Contact information.

The RFTA should be completed accurately and submitted as soon as practical after the owner and family agree to lease the unit.

Incomplete or inaccurate forms may delay processing.

WCHA Review

Upon receipt of the RFTA, WCHA reviews the proposed tenancy to ensure compliance with HUD regulations and WCHA policy.

The review generally includes:

- Verification of owner eligibility.
- Review of required owner documentation.
- Confirmation of voucher eligibility.
- Preliminary review of proposed lease information.
- Utility responsibility review.
- Rent reasonableness determination.
- Scheduling of the initial inspection.

WCHA may request additional information if clarification is needed before the approval process can continue.

Rent Reasonableness

Federal regulations require WCHA to determine that the proposed rent is reasonable before approving a tenancy.

Rent reasonableness helps ensure that Housing Choice Voucher funds are used appropriately and that assisted units are not rented at amounts exceeding comparable unassisted units in the local market.

When conducting a rent reasonableness determination, WCHA considers factors such as:

- Location.
- Unit size.
- Number of bedrooms.
- Building type.
- Property condition.
- Age of the dwelling.
- Amenities.
- Services provided.
- Utilities included in the rent.
- Current market rents for comparable unassisted units.

If the proposed rent is determined not to be reasonable, WCHA will notify the property owner and discuss available options.

Utility Responsibilities

Utility responsibility affects both the family's rental obligation and the calculation of Housing Assistance Payments.

The lease must clearly identify responsibility for utilities such as:

- Electric service.
- Natural gas.
- Water.
- Sewer.
- Trash collection.
- Heating fuel.
- Cooking fuel.

Utility responsibility also includes identifying which appliances are supplied by the property owner and which are supplied by the tenant.

Accurate utility information is essential because WCHA uses approved utility allowances when calculating rental assistance.

Initial NSPIRE Inspection

Before assistance can begin, the dwelling unit must successfully pass an initial inspection conducted in accordance with HUD's National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE).

The purpose of the inspection is to verify that the unit is safe, sanitary, and suitable for occupancy.

The inspection evaluates conditions affecting resident health and safety, including:

- Structural integrity.
- Smoke alarms.
- Carbon monoxide alarms.
- Electrical systems.
- Plumbing systems.
- Heating equipment.
- Windows and doors.
- Kitchens and bathrooms.
- Stairs and handrails.
- Other required health and safety standards.

If deficiencies are identified, WCHA will provide the property owner with a report identifying the required corrections.

Repairs Before Approval

When deficiencies are identified during the initial inspection, the property owner must complete the required repairs before the unit may be approved.

After repairs have been completed, WCHA may conduct a reinspection to verify compliance.

Housing Assistance Payments cannot begin until the unit has successfully passed the required inspection and all other leasing requirements have been satisfied.

Prompt completion of repairs helps avoid delays in lease approval.

Lease Requirements

Once the unit has been approved, the property owner and participating family execute a written lease.

The lease establishes the legal relationship between the owner and tenant and should include provisions addressing matters such as:

- Monthly rent.
- Security deposit.
- Lease term.
- Occupancy.
- Utility responsibilities.
- Maintenance responsibilities.
- Rules governing the tenancy.

The lease must include the HUD-required Tenancy Addendum, which becomes part of every Housing Choice Voucher lease.

If a conflict exists between the lease and the Tenancy Addendum, the Tenancy Addendum controls.

Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Contract

In addition to the lease, WCHA and the property owner execute a Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Contract.

The HAP Contract establishes the terms under which WCHA provides monthly Housing Assistance Payments on behalf of the participating family.

The HAP Contract addresses matters including:

- Approved contract rent.
- Housing Assistance Payments.
- Owner obligations.
- Unit maintenance requirements.
- Compliance with HUD regulations.
- Circumstances under which payments may stop or be adjusted.

The HAP Contract is separate from the lease agreement and is executed between WCHA and the property owner.

Effective Date of Assistance

Housing Assistance Payments begin only after all required conditions have been satisfied.

These conditions include:

- Approval of the Request for Tenancy Approval.
- Completion of the rent reasonableness review.
- Successful completion of the initial NSPIRE inspection.
- Execution of the lease.
- Execution of the Housing Assistance Payments Contract.

- Receipt of all required documentation by WCHA.

The effective date of assistance is established by WCHA and communicated in writing to both the property owner and the participating family.

Property owners should not permit occupancy under the Housing Choice Voucher Program with the expectation of retroactive Housing Assistance Payments unless specifically authorized by WCHA.

Delays in the Leasing Process

Although many tenancies are approved quickly, delays may occur for a variety of reasons.

Common causes include:

- Incomplete owner documentation.
- Incomplete Request for Tenancy Approval forms.
- Proposed rent requiring revision.
- Inspection deficiencies requiring repairs.
- Delays in scheduling inspections.
- Missing signatures.
- Utility information requiring clarification.

Responding promptly to WCHA requests and completing required repairs without delay helps keep the leasing process on schedule.

Regulatory References

- 24 CFR Part 982
- Housing Assistance Payments Contract
- HUD Tenancy Addendum
- HUD NSPIRE Standards
- WCHA Administrative Plan

CHAPTER 6

NSPIRE Inspection Standards

Introduction

Providing safe, decent, and sanitary housing is a fundamental requirement of the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Before rental assistance can begin—and throughout the tenancy—the assisted dwelling unit must comply with HUD's National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE).

NSPIRE emphasizes conditions that directly affect the health and safety of residents while establishing nationally consistent inspection standards for assisted housing.

This chapter explains the purpose of NSPIRE inspections, inspection requirements, common deficiencies, owner responsibilities, and the inspection process followed by the Washington County Housing Authority.

Purpose of NSPIRE

The National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE) were developed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to establish a consistent inspection standard for federally assisted housing.

The primary goal of NSPIRE is to ensure that assisted housing remains safe, functional, and habitable throughout the tenancy.

Unlike previous inspection standards that focused heavily on cosmetic conditions, NSPIRE places greater emphasis on deficiencies that directly affect resident health and safety.

Property owners who perform regular maintenance throughout the year generally experience fewer inspection deficiencies and reduce the likelihood of payment interruptions.

When Inspections Are Conducted

WCHA conducts inspections at various stages of participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Inspections may include:

Initial Inspections

An initial inspection is conducted before Housing Assistance Payments begin.

The unit must successfully pass the inspection before WCHA can approve the tenancy and execute the Housing Assistance Payments Contract.

Biennial or Triennial Inspections

After the tenancy has been approved, WCHA conducts periodic inspections in accordance with HUD regulations and WCHA policy to verify that the dwelling unit continues to meet NSPIRE standards.

Property owners and participating families will receive advance notice of scheduled inspections whenever required.

Special Inspections

WCHA may conduct a special inspection when information is received indicating that conditions within the assisted unit may present health or safety concerns.

Examples include:

- Complaints regarding unsafe living conditions.
- Reports of significant property damage.
- Allegations of health or safety hazards.
- Other situations requiring verification.

Special inspections focus on the reported conditions and any other deficiencies observed during the inspection.

Quality Control Inspections

HUD requires housing authorities to conduct quality control reviews to ensure inspection consistency and compliance with federal inspection standards.

Quality control inspections help maintain uniform inspection practices and improve program administration.

Preparing for an Inspection

Preparing the unit before an inspection helps reduce delays and increases the likelihood of a successful inspection.

Property owners are encouraged to complete a walkthrough before the scheduled inspection and verify that the dwelling unit is in good condition.

Items to review include:

- Smoke alarms are properly installed and operational.
- Carbon monoxide alarms are installed where required and functioning properly.
- Heating equipment operates safely.
- Plumbing fixtures function correctly without leaks.
- Electrical outlets, switches, and light fixtures are operational
- Water heater safety devices are properly installed.
- Windows open, close, and lock properly.
- Exterior doors provide secure entry.
- Interior doors function properly.
- Floors are free of significant trip hazards.
- Handrails are secure where required.
- Stairs are structurally sound.
- Owner-supplied appliances are operational.
- Bathrooms and kitchens are fully functional.
- Utilities are connected and operational.
- The property address is clearly visible from the street.

Performing routine maintenance throughout the tenancy often prevents inspection deficiencies.

What Inspectors Evaluate

During an NSPIRE inspection, WCHA evaluates the overall condition of the assisted dwelling unit, emphasizing resident health and safety.

Inspectors evaluate three primary areas:

Exterior

The exterior inspection generally includes:

- Foundation.
- Roof.
- Exterior walls.
- Windows.
- Doors.
- Steps.
- Porches.
- Railings.
- Walkways.
- Address identification.
- Site conditions affecting safety

Interior

The interior inspection generally includes:

- Floors.
- Walls.
- Ceilings.
- Windows.

- Doors.
- Kitchens.
- Bathrooms.
- Smoke alarms.
- Carbon monoxide alarms.
- Plumbing fixtures.
- Electrical systems.
- Heating equipment.
- Owner-supplied appliances.

Building Systems

Inspectors also evaluate building systems necessary for safe occupancy, including:

- Electrical service.
- Plumbing systems.
- Water heating equipment.
- Mechanical systems.
- Ventilation, where applicable.
- Other systems affecting resident health and safety.

Deficiency Classifications

NSPIRE classifies deficiencies according to the seriousness of the condition identified during the inspection.

The classification determines the timeframe within which the deficiency must be corrected.

Life-Threatening Deficiencies

Life-threatening deficiencies are conditions that present an immediate danger to residents.

Examples include:

- Gas leaks.
- Exposed energized electrical conductors.
- Missing or inoperable required smoke alarms.
- Carbon monoxide hazards.
- Blocked emergency exits.
- Severe structural failures.
- Active fire hazards.

These deficiencies generally require immediate correction within the timeframe established by HUD.

Severe Deficiencies

Severe deficiencies present significant health or safety concerns that require prompt correction.

Examples include:

- Unsafe stairways.
- Missing required handrails.

- Major plumbing failures.
- Damaged exterior doors affecting security.
- Significant structural damage.
- Large holes in flooring creating fall hazards.

Moderate Deficiencies

Moderate deficiencies affect the condition or function of the dwelling unit but generally do not present an immediate threat to resident safety.

Examples include:

- Minor plumbing leaks.
- Damaged flooring.
- Worn finishes.
- Damaged cabinetry.
- Minor deterioration of building components.

Low Deficiencies

Low deficiencies generally consist of routine maintenance items that should be addressed to preserve the condition of the property.

Examples include:

- Cosmetic wear.
- Loose hardware.
- Minor surface damage.
- Small maintenance items that do not affect health or safety.

Although these deficiencies may not result in immediate enforcement action, timely correction helps maintain the property's condition and reduces future repair costs.

Inspection Results

Following completion of the inspection, WCHA provides the property owner with an inspection report identifying the results.

If the unit passes inspection, WCHA will continue processing the tenancy or ongoing participation.

If deficiencies are identified, the report will generally include:

- The location of each deficiency.
- A description of the condition.
- The required corrective action.
- The correction deadline.
- Whether a reinspection is required.

Property owners should review the report carefully and begin corrective action promptly.

Owner Responsibilities After an Inspection

If deficiencies are identified during an inspection, the property owner is responsible for correcting owner-caused deficiencies within the timeframe established by HUD and WCHA.

Property owners should:

- Review the inspection report promptly.
- Identify all required repairs.
- Schedule repairs as soon as possible.
- Notify WCHA when repairs have been completed, if required.
- Ensure contractors have completed all work before the reinspection.
- Maintain documentation of repairs for their records.

Delays in completing repairs may affect the unit's continued eligibility for Housing Assistance Payments.

Family Responsibilities

Participating families also have responsibilities for maintaining the assisted dwelling unit.

Examples of tenant responsibilities may include:

- Maintaining the unit in a clean and sanitary condition.
- Preventing tenant-caused damage.
- Promptly reporting maintenance issues to the property owner.
- Providing access for inspections and repairs.
- Maintaining required utilities.
- Complying with lease requirements.

When deficiencies are determined to be the responsibility of the participating family, WCHA will notify the family regarding the required corrective action.

Access for Inspections

Property owners and participating families must permit WCHA reasonable access to the assisted dwelling unit for required inspections.

Failure to provide access may delay inspections and could affect program participation.

Property owners should coordinate with tenants whenever necessary to ensure inspectors can access all required areas of the dwelling.

Reinspection's

If deficiencies requiring correction are identified, WCHA may schedule a reinspection to verify that repairs have been completed.

During the reinspection, the inspector generally evaluates:

- Previously identified deficiencies.

- Repairs completed since the initial inspection.
- Any additional deficiencies observed during the visit.

If all required repairs have been completed, the inspection will be closed as compliant.

If deficiencies remain, WCHA will determine the appropriate next steps based upon HUD requirements and WCHA policy.

Emergency Repairs

Certain deficiencies require immediate attention because they present a significant health or safety risk.

Examples include:

- Gas leaks.
- Electrical hazards.
- Inoperable smoke alarms.
- Carbon monoxide hazards.
- Lack of required heat during applicable seasons.
- Major plumbing failures affecting habitability.
- Conditions creating an immediate risk of injury.

Property owners should respond to emergency maintenance requests immediately and take appropriate action to protect occupants until permanent repairs are completed.

Preventive Maintenance

Routine preventive maintenance is one of the most effective ways to reduce inspection deficiencies.

Examples include:

- Testing smoke alarms regularly.
- Replacing smoke alarm batteries, when applicable.
- Testing carbon monoxide alarms.
- Inspecting handrails and stairways.
- Repairing plumbing leaks promptly.
- Servicing heating equipment.
- .
- Checking doors and windows for proper operation.
- Maintaining weather protection around the building.
- Inspecting electrical outlets and fixtures.
- Addressing minor repairs before they become major problems

Preventive maintenance benefits both property owners and tenants by reducing repair costs and improving housing quality.

Housing Assistance Payments and Inspections

Continued receipt of Housing Assistance Payments depends upon the assisted unit remaining in compliance with HUD inspection standards.

If required repairs are not completed within established timeframes, WCHA may be required to take administrative action in accordance with HUD regulations.

Depending on the circumstances, this may include:

- Abatement of Housing Assistance Payments.
- Suspension of future payments until compliance is achieved.

- Termination of the Housing Assistance Payments Contract, when required by HUD regulations.

Whenever possible, WCHA works with property owners to achieve timely compliance before more significant administrative action becomes necessary.

Common Inspection Deficiencies

Although every inspection is unique, several deficiencies are observed more frequently than others.

Examples include:

- Missing or non-functioning smoke alarms.
- Missing or non-functioning carbon monoxide alarms.
- Missing or loose handrails.
- Electrical outlets with missing cover plates.
- Plumbing leaks.
- Damaged flooring creating trip hazards.
- Broken windows.
- Doors that do not properly latch or lock.
- Missing address numbers.
- Peeling or deteriorated surfaces affecting safety.
- Inoperable owner-supplied appliances.
- Water heater discharge piping deficiencies.
- Missing GFCI protection where required.
- Exposed wiring.
- Loose toilets or plumbing fixtures.
- Damaged stairs or porches.

Many of these deficiencies can be identified and corrected through routine maintenance before the scheduled inspection.

Inspection Tips for Property Owners

Property owners can improve inspection outcomes by incorporating routine maintenance into their regular property management practices.

Helpful practices include:

- Inspect units periodically between annual or biennial visits.
- Encourage tenants to report maintenance concerns promptly.
- Respond to repair requests in a timely manner.
- Maintain records of completed repairs.
- Replace worn safety devices before they fail.
- Verify that utilities remain operational.
- Conduct a walkthrough before the scheduled inspection.

Maintaining the property throughout the year is generally more efficient than making numerous repairs immediately before an inspection.

Regulatory References

- 24 CFR Part 5
- 24 CFR Part 982
- HUD NSPIRE Standards

- HUD NSPIRE Administrative Guidance
- Housing Assistance Payments Contract
- WCHA Administrative Plan

CHAPTER 7

Repairs, Reinspection's, and Property Maintenance

Introduction

Maintaining a rental property in good condition is an ongoing responsibility throughout participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Timely repairs, routine preventive maintenance, and prompt responses to inspection deficiencies help protect the health and safety of residents while ensuring continued compliance with HUD requirements.

This chapter explains property owner maintenance responsibilities, repair expectations, reinspection procedures, and how maintenance issues may affect Housing Assistance Payments and continued program participation.

Maintaining the Assisted Unit

Property owners are responsible for maintaining assisted dwelling units in compliance with HUD requirements throughout the term of the Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Contract.

Routine maintenance should not be delayed until an inspection is scheduled. Regular maintenance helps preserve the value of the property, improves tenant satisfaction, and reduces the likelihood of inspection deficiencies.

Owners should establish a preventive maintenance program that includes routine inspections of the property and timely correction of maintenance issues.

Owner Maintenance Responsibilities

Property owners are responsible for maintaining all owner-supplied equipment and building components in safe and proper working order.

Owner responsibilities generally include:

- Maintaining the structural integrity of the dwelling.
- Repairing roofs, walls, ceilings, and floors.
- Maintaining exterior doors and windows.
- Maintaining plumbing systems.
- Maintaining electrical systems.
- Maintaining heating equipment.
- Maintaining owner-supplied appliances.
- Maintaining smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms as required by applicable law and HUD standards.
- Repairing damaged stairways, porches, decks, and handrails.
- Addressing water intrusion and moisture problems.
- Correcting health and safety hazards.

Owners remain responsible for repairs unless the damage or deficiency is determined to be the responsibility of the participating family.

Tenant Maintenance Responsibilities

Participating families are responsible for maintaining the dwelling unit in accordance with the lease agreement and Housing Choice Voucher Program requirements.

Tenant responsibilities generally include:

- Maintaining housekeeping.
- Properly disposing of trash.
- Preventing avoidable damage.
- Reporting maintenance concerns promptly.
- Allowing reasonable access for repairs.
- Maintaining utilities required under the lease.
- Following lease provisions regarding care of the property.

Tenants should report maintenance concerns as soon as they become aware of them. Prompt reporting often prevents minor issues from becoming costly repairs.

Determining Responsibility for Repairs

Not every repair is automatically the responsibility of the property owner.

When maintenance concerns arise, WCHA considers the nature of the deficiency and available information to determine whether responsibility rests with the owner or the participating family.

Examples of owner-responsible items may include:

- Plumbing failures caused by normal wear.
- Heating system failures.
- Roof leaks.
- Electrical problems.
- Broken owner-supplied appliances.
- Structural deterioration.

Examples of tenant-responsible items may include:

- Tenant-caused damage.
- Failure to maintain housekeeping.
- Damage caused by negligence or misuse.
- Utilities disconnected because of nonpayment when the tenant is responsible for the utility account.
- Damage caused by unauthorized occupants or guests.

Responsibility is determined based upon the facts of each situation.

Reporting Maintenance Requests

Property owners should establish a clear procedure for tenants to report maintenance concerns.

Tenants should know:

- How to report routine maintenance requests.
- How to report emergency repairs.
- Office hours.
- Emergency contact information.
- Expected response times.

Providing clear communication procedures helps resolve maintenance issues more efficiently.

Routine Repairs

Routine maintenance should be completed within a reasonable period after the owner becomes aware of the issue.

Examples of routine repairs include:

- Repairing leaking faucets.
- Replacing damaged fixtures.
- Repairing doors and locks.
- Replacing broken window glass.
- Repairing damaged flooring.
- Servicing appliances.
- Repairing cabinets.
- Minor plumbing repairs.

Completing routine repairs promptly helps prevent larger maintenance problems.

Emergency Repairs

Emergency repairs involve conditions that present an immediate threat to health, safety, or habitability.

Examples include:

- No heat during required heating seasons.
- Gas leaks.
- Electrical hazards.
- Active water leaks causing significant damage.
- Sewer backups.
- Lack of potable water.
- Fire damage.
- Structural failures.
- Carbon monoxide hazards.

Property owners should respond immediately to emergency situations and take appropriate measures to protect occupants until permanent repairs can be completed.

Contractor Responsibilities

Property owners may perform repairs themselves or hire qualified contractors.

Regardless of who performs the work, owners remain responsible for ensuring that:

- Repairs are completed properly.
- Applicable building codes are followed.
- Required permits are obtained when necessary.
- Work is completed safely.
- The dwelling continues to comply with HUD inspection standards.

Reinspection Process

When deficiencies identified during an inspection require correction, WCHA may schedule a reinspection.

The purpose of the reinspection is to verify that previously identified deficiencies have been corrected.

During the reinspection, inspectors may:

- Verify completed repairs.
- Confirm that health and safety concerns have been resolved.
- Observe any additional deficiencies visible during the inspection.

If all required repairs have been completed satisfactorily, the unit will return to compliance.

If required repairs remain incomplete, WCHA will proceed in accordance with HUD regulations and WCHA policy.

Failure to Complete Repairs

Failure to complete owner-responsible repairs within the required timeframe may result in administrative action.

Depending on the circumstances, WCHA may be required to:

- Delay approval of a new tenancy.
- Abate Housing Assistance Payments.
- Suspend future payments until compliance is achieved.
- Terminate the Housing Assistance Payments Contract if required by HUD regulations.

The specific action taken depends upon the nature of the deficiency and applicable HUD requirements.

Preventive Maintenance Best Practices

Preventive maintenance reduces repair costs, extends the life of building systems, and improves inspection outcomes.

Examples of preventive maintenance include:

- Changing HVAC filters regularly.
- Inspecting roofs for damage.
- Cleaning gutters and downspouts.
- Servicing heating equipment annually.
- Inspecting plumbing for leaks.

- Testing smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms.
- Repairing loose handrails immediately.
- Sealing windows and doors against water intrusion.
- Inspecting exterior steps and walkways.
- Addressing moisture concerns before mold develops.

A well-maintained property generally requires fewer emergency repairs and experiences fewer inspection deficiencies.

Communication with Tenants

Maintaining open communication with tenants helps identify maintenance concerns before they become significant problems.

Property owners are encouraged to:

- Respond promptly to maintenance requests.
- Keep tenants informed regarding repair schedules.
- Notify tenants when contractors will enter the unit.
- Encourage tenants to report safety concerns immediately.
- Document significant maintenance requests and repairs.

Good communication often contributes to successful long-term tenancies.

Recordkeeping

Property owners should maintain records related to maintenance and repairs, including:

- Work orders.
- Contractor invoices.
- Inspection reports.
- Reinspection reports.
- Maintenance logs.
- Warranty information.
- Photographs of completed repairs, when appropriate.

Accurate records help demonstrate compliance with program requirements and may assist in resolving future questions regarding maintenance history.

Regulatory References

- 24 CFR Part 5
- 24 CFR Part 982
- HUD NSPIRE Standards
- Housing Assistance Payments Contract
- WCHA Administrative Plan

CHAPTER 8

Successful Tenancies

Introduction

A successful tenancy benefits everyone involved in the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Property owners receive reliable rental income, participating families enjoy stable housing, and WCHA fulfills its mission of providing safe, decent, and affordable housing opportunities throughout Washington County.

Most successful tenancies are built on clear communication, timely maintenance, mutual respect, and a thorough understanding of each party's responsibilities. Property owners continue to manage their rental property, enforce the lease, and maintain the dwelling, while participating families are expected to comply with their lease obligations and program requirements.

This chapter discusses best practices for maintaining positive landlord-tenant relationships, addressing concerns early, and promoting long-term successful participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Building a Positive Landlord-Tenant Relationship

A successful tenancy begins with clear expectations and consistent communication.

Property owners are encouraged to establish professional relationships with tenants by:

- Clearly explaining lease requirements.
- Providing maintenance request procedures.
- Responding to questions promptly.
- Treating tenants fairly and consistently.
- Addressing concerns before they escalate.
- Maintaining professional communication.

Likewise, participating families are expected to:

- Pay their portion of the rent on time.
- Comply with all lease provisions.
- Maintain the dwelling unit.
- Report maintenance concerns promptly.
- Respect neighbors and the community.
- Cooperate with required inspections.

Mutual communication and respect contribute significantly to long-term tenancy success.

Enforcing the Lease

Participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program does not change the property owner's right or responsibility to enforce the lease.

Property owners should consistently enforce:

- Rent payment requirements.
- Occupancy restrictions.

- Maintenance responsibilities.
- Pet policies.
- Parking regulations.
- Noise policies.
- Rules regarding damage to the property.
- Other lawful lease provisions.

Applying lease provisions consistently helps avoid misunderstandings and promotes fair treatment of all tenants.

Communication with WCHA

WCHA should be notified whenever circumstances arise that may affect the assisted tenancy.

Examples include:

- Changes in ownership.
- Changes in management.
- Lease violations that may affect program participation.
- Court-ordered evictions.
- Vacancies.
- Requests for contract changes.
- Questions regarding Housing Assistance Payments.
- Significant property damage affecting habitability.

Prompt communication allows WCHA to provide guidance and take any actions required under HUD regulations.

Maintenance During the Tenancy

Routine maintenance should continue throughout the tenancy rather than waiting until an inspection is scheduled.

Property owners should:

- Respond to maintenance requests promptly.
- Complete repairs within a reasonable timeframe.
- Maintain owner-supplied equipment.
- Address safety concerns immediately.
- Perform periodic inspections of the property, as permitted by the lease and applicable law.

Preventive maintenance helps preserve the property and reduces the likelihood of inspection deficiencies.

Handling Maintenance Requests

Tenants should understand how to report maintenance concerns and what constitutes an emergency.

Property owners are encouraged to provide:

- A primary telephone number.

- An emergency contact number.
- Office hours.
- Instructions for reporting after-hours emergencies.
- Expected response times for routine repairs.

Clear procedures help ensure maintenance issues are addressed efficiently.

Addressing Lease Violations

Occasionally, issues arise that require the property owner to address violations of the lease agreement.

Examples include:

- Late rent payments.
- Unauthorized occupants.
- Unauthorized pets.
- Property damage.
- Excessive noise.
- Failure to maintain the unit.
- Other violations of lease provisions.

Property owners should address lease violations promptly and consistently in accordance with the lease agreement and applicable law.

When lease violations may affect Housing Choice Voucher eligibility, WCHA should also be notified.

Property Inspections by the Owner

Many property owners conduct routine inspections of their rental properties in accordance with the lease agreement and applicable Pennsylvania law.

Routine inspections may identify:

- Maintenance concerns.
- Unauthorized occupants.
- Lease violations.
- Safety hazards.
- Property damage.

Periodic inspections help owners address issues before they become more significant problems.

Neighbor Relations

Property owners should encourage tenants to be respectful of neighboring residents and surrounding properties.

Topics that may be discussed include:

- Noise.
- Parking.
- Trash disposal.
- Outdoor maintenance.

- Pets.
- Respect for shared spaces.

Positive relationships between tenants and neighbors contribute to stable communities.

Resolving Concerns Early

Many tenancy concerns can be resolved through timely communication.

When concerns arise, property owners should:

- Speak with the tenant promptly.
- Clearly explain the concern.
- Document significant conversations.
- Follow up in writing when appropriate.
- Allow reasonable opportunities to correct lease violations when appropriate.

Early intervention often prevents more serious disputes.

Rent Collection

Property owners remain responsible for collecting the tenant's portion of the monthly rent.

If a tenant fails to pay their required portion:

- Follow the lease agreement.
- Follow applicable Pennsylvania landlord-tenant law.
- Maintain documentation of missed payments.
- Notify WCHA when appropriate.

WCHA does not collect the tenant's portion of the rent.

Changes in Household Composition

Participating families are required to report household composition changes to WCHA.

If a property owner becomes aware of circumstances suggesting unauthorized occupants or other occupancy concerns, WCHA should be notified so the matter can be reviewed in accordance with program requirements.

Professional Property Management

Successful property owners often develop consistent management practices, including:

- Maintaining organized records.
- Responding promptly to maintenance requests.
- Scheduling preventive maintenance.
- Communicating professionally.
- Applying lease provisions consistently.

- Staying informed about Housing Choice Voucher Program requirements.

These practices contribute to efficient property management and successful long-term participation in the program.

Regulatory References

- 24 CFR Part 982
- Housing Assistance Payments Contract
- HUD Tenancy Addendum
- WCHA Administrative Plan

CHAPTER 9

Annual Recertifications

Introduction

The Housing Choice Voucher Program requires participating families to undergo periodic recertification to ensure continued program eligibility and to determine the appropriate level of housing assistance. During the recertification process, WCHA reviews household composition, income, assets, expenses, and other eligibility factors in accordance with HUD regulations.

Although the recertification process is primarily between WCHA and the participating family, property owners play an important role by responding to requests for information, cooperating with scheduling requirements, and understanding how recertification results may affect Housing Assistance Payments and the tenant's share of the rent.

Purpose of Annual Recertifications

HUD requires WCHA to periodically verify that participating families continue to meet eligibility requirements for the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

During the recertification process, WCHA reviews information that may include:

- Household composition.
- Income from all sources.
- Assets.
- Allowable deductions and expenses.
- Student status, when applicable.
- Other eligibility factors required by HUD.

The information obtained during recertification is used to determine:

- Continued program eligibility.
- The family's portion of the monthly rent.
- The Housing Assistance Payment.
- Whether any changes to assistance are required.

WCHA's Responsibilities

WCHA administers the recertification process by:

- Notifying participating families of upcoming recertifications.
- Requesting required documentation.
- Verifying reported information.
- Calculating family income in accordance with HUD regulations.
- Determining continued eligibility.
- Calculating the family's new rent portion, if applicable.
- Issuing written notice of any approved changes.

WCHA also notifies property owners whenever changes affect the Housing Assistance Payment.

Family Responsibilities

Participating families are responsible for cooperating fully with the recertification process.

Families must:

- Attend scheduled appointments, when required.
- Submit requested documentation.
- Report all required income.
- Report changes in household composition.
- Respond to requests for additional information.
- Provide complete and accurate information.

Failure to cooperate with the recertification process may affect continued participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Property Owner Responsibilities

Although annual recertification is primarily between WCHA and the participating family, property owners also have responsibilities.

Property owners should:

- Continue collecting the tenant's portion of the rent until notified of a change by WCHA.
- Cooperate with requests for information when necessary.
- Continue maintaining the dwelling in compliance with program requirements.
- Notify WCHA of changes affecting the tenancy.
- Continue complying with the Housing Assistance Payments Contract.

Property owners should not independently adjust rent based upon conversations with the tenant.

Only written notification from WCHA authorizes changes to Housing Assistance Payments.

Verification of Income and Household Information

WCHA verifies information reported by participating families using methods authorized by HUD.

Verification may include:

- Employer information.
- Benefit providers.
- Financial institutions.
- Third-party verification.
- Enterprise Income Verification (EIV), when applicable.
- Other documentation permitted by HUD.

Verification helps ensure that Housing Assistance Payments are calculated accurately.

Changes in Income

A family's income may increase, decrease, or remain unchanged between recertifications.

Changes in income may affect:

- The family's share of the rent.
- The Housing Assistance Payment.
- Continued eligibility for the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Property owners will receive written notification if a change affects the Housing Assistance Payment.

Changes in Household Composition

Participating families must report household composition changes in accordance with WCHA policy.

Examples include:

- Birth of a child.
- Adoption.
- Court-awarded custody.
- Death of a household member.
- Approved live-in aide.
- Marriage.
- Divorce.
- Household members moving into or out of the assisted unit.

Some household changes require WCHA approval before the individual may reside in the assisted unit.

Property owners should not approve occupancy changes that require WCHA approval without confirmation from WCHA.

Interim Changes

In addition to scheduled annual recertifications, certain changes may require an interim review.

Examples may include:

- Changes in earned income.
- Loss of employment.
- Changes in disability benefits.
- Changes in Social Security benefits.
- Changes in household composition.
- Other changes required to be reported under HUD regulations or WCHA policy.

When an interim review results in a change to the family's assistance, WCHA provides written notification to both the participating family and the property owner.

Effective Date of Changes

Changes resulting from annual or interim recertifications become effective on the date established by WCHA.

Property owners should continue collecting rent according to the most recent written notice until WCHA issues revised payment information.

Property owners should never adjust the tenant's rent portion based solely on verbal information provided by the tenant.

Housing Assistance Payment Adjustments

As a result of recertification, the monthly Housing Assistance Payment may:

- Increase.
- Decrease.
- Remain unchanged.

These adjustments occur because changes in family income or household composition may affect the amount of rental assistance provided under the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

WCHA provides written notice before the adjusted Housing Assistance Payment becomes effective.

Tenant Rent Portion

The family's required monthly rent contribution may also change following recertification.

Property owners should collect only the tenant rent portion identified in WCHA's written notice.

Charging an amount different from the amount authorized by WCHA may violate the Housing Assistance Payments Contract.

Delays in the Recertification Process

Occasionally, a recertification cannot be completed on schedule because required information has not been received.

Examples include:

- Missing documentation.

- Delayed third-party verification.
- Incomplete applications.
- Failure to attend scheduled appointments.
- Additional information requested by WCHA.

If delays occur, WCHA will administer the case in accordance with HUD regulations and WCHA policy.

Property owners should continue following the most recent written payment authorization until notified otherwise.

Regulatory References

- 24 CFR Part 982
- HUD Housing Choice Voucher Guidebook
- HUD HOTMA Requirements
- Housing Assistance Payments Contract
- WCHA Administrative Plan

CHAPTER 10

Special Situations

Introduction

Most Housing Choice Voucher tenancies proceed without unusual circumstances. Occasionally, however, situations arise that require additional coordination between the property owner, the participating family, and WCHA. These situations may involve changes in occupancy, ownership, accommodations for persons with disabilities, casualty losses, or other events that affect the tenancy.

This chapter explains how WCHA administers a variety of special situations and outlines the responsibilities of property owners when these circumstances occur.

Reasonable Accommodations

The Housing Choice Voucher Program is subject to federal laws prohibiting discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities.

A reasonable accommodation is a change in a rule, policy, practice, procedure, or service that may be necessary to provide a person with a disability an equal opportunity to participate in the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Examples may include:

- Approval of a live-in aide.
- Approval of an assistance animal.
- Additional time to complete required actions, when appropriate.
- Other accommodations approved by WCHA.

Property owners should refer accommodation requests affecting Housing Choice Voucher administration to WCHA.

Assistance Animals

An assistance animal is not considered a pet under fair housing laws when approved as a reasonable accommodation for a person with a disability.

Property owners should remember:

- Assistance animals are evaluated under fair housing requirements.
- Pet fees or pet deposits generally do not apply to approved assistance animals, unless otherwise permitted by law.
- The family remains responsible for damage caused by the assistance animal.
- Assistance animals must not create a direct threat to the health or safety of others or cause substantial physical damage to the property.

Questions regarding assistance animal accommodations should be directed to WCHA when they affect Housing Choice Voucher administration.

Live-In Aides

Some families may qualify for a live-in aide as a reasonable accommodation.

A live-in aide:

- Must be approved by WCHA before residing in the assisted unit.
- Lives in the unit solely to provide necessary supportive services to a qualifying family member.
- Is not considered a member of the assisted household for eligibility purposes.
- Has no right to remain in the assisted unit after the qualifying family member no longer resides there or no longer requires the aide.

Property owners should not permit a live-in aide to occupy the assisted unit without written approval from WCHA.

Requests for an Additional Bedroom

Occasionally, a participating family may request a voucher size change due to a change in household circumstances or as a reasonable accommodation.

Examples include:

- Birth or adoption of a child.
- Court-awarded custody.
- Medical necessity approved as a reasonable accommodation.
- Approval of a live-in aide.
- Other circumstances permitted by HUD regulations and WCHA policy.

Voucher size determinations are made by WCHA in accordance with HUD requirements and WCHA's subsidy standards.

Property owners should not assume that a family's request has been approved until written notice is provided by WCHA.

Family Composition Changes

Changes in household composition may affect eligibility, subsidy calculations, and occupancy standards.

Examples include:

- Marriage.
- Divorce.
- Birth.
- Adoption.
- Death of a household member.
- Household members moving into or out of the unit.

Participating families are responsible for reporting these changes to WCHA in accordance with program requirements.

If a property owner becomes aware of an unapproved occupancy change, WCHA should be notified.

Extended Absences

Participating families are generally required to occupy the assisted unit as their principal residence.

Extended absences from the unit may affect continued eligibility for Housing Choice Voucher assistance.

If a property owner becomes aware that a unit appears to have been abandoned or is no longer being occupied by the assisted family, WCHA should be notified promptly.

Casualty Losses

Occasionally, a dwelling unit may become partially or completely uninhabitable because of events beyond the control of the owner or tenant.

Examples include:

- Fire.
- Flooding.
- Severe storms.
- Structural collapse.
- Other significant casualty events.

When a casualty loss occurs, the property owner should:

- Protect the property from further damage.
- Notify WCHA as soon as practical.
- Advise the tenant regarding habitability.
- Complete necessary repairs before the unit is reoccupied, if applicable.

Housing Assistance Payments may be affected if the unit is no longer habitable.

Condemnation or Loss of Habitability

If a governmental agency determines that a dwelling unit is unsafe for occupancy, or if the unit otherwise becomes uninhabitable, WCHA should be notified immediately.

Depending upon the circumstances, WCHA may:

- Suspend Housing Assistance Payments.
- Assist the participating family in locating another eligible unit.
- Take other administrative action consistent with HUD regulations.

Death of the Property Owner

If a property owner dies during the term of the Housing Assistance Payments Contract, WCHA should be notified promptly.

The individual administering the owner's estate or other authorized representative should provide documentation establishing legal authority to act on behalf of the owner.

Housing Assistance Payments cannot be redirected until ownership or legal authority has been verified.

Sale or Transfer of the Property

If ownership of an assisted property changes, the new owner should notify WCHA immediately.

Before future Housing Assistance Payments can be issued to the new owner, WCHA generally requires:

- Documentation verifying ownership.
- A completed IRS Form W-9.
- Direct Deposit (EFT) enrollment information.
- Any additional documentation required by WCHA.

The Housing Assistance Payments Contract will be administered in accordance with HUD requirements governing ownership changes.

Bankruptcy

If a property owner files for bankruptcy or becomes aware of legal proceedings that may affect ownership of an assisted property, WCHA should be notified promptly.

Timely notification helps ensure that Housing Assistance Payments are administered appropriately while ownership and payment authority are clarified.

Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking (VAWA)

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) provides important protections for eligible victims of:

- Domestic violence.
- Dating violence.
- Sexual assault.
- Stalking.

WCHA administers these protections in accordance with HUD requirements.

Property owners should promptly notify WCHA when a tenancy may involve VAWA protections so that appropriate procedures can be followed.

Military Service

If a participating family member is called to active military service or returns from active duty, WCHA administers the case in accordance with applicable HUD requirements and WCHA policy.

Families should notify WCHA of changes that may affect program eligibility or household composition.

Fraud or Misrepresentation

If a property owner becomes aware of information suggesting fraud or misrepresentation involving an assisted tenancy, the information should be reported to WCHA.

Examples may include:

- Unauthorized occupants.
- Unreported income, when observed through tenancy-related interactions.
- False occupancy information.
- Falsified documents.
- Other information that may affect program eligibility.

WCHA reviews reported information and conducts any necessary investigation in accordance with HUD requirements.

Regulatory References

- 24 CFR Part 5
- 24 CFR Part 982
- Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)
- Fair Housing Act
- Housing Assistance Payments Contract
- WCHA Administrative Plan

CHAPTER 11

Rent Changes and Contract Changes

Introduction

During the course of a tenancy, circumstances may arise that require changes to the lease, the approved contract rent, or the Housing Assistance Payments Contract. Federal regulations establish when these changes may occur and the procedures that must be followed before they become effective.

This chapter explains how property owners request rent increases, how WCHA evaluates those requests, and how ownership changes, lease modifications, and other contract changes are administered.

Rent Increases

Property owners may request an increase in the contract rent in accordance with the lease, the Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Contract, HUD regulations, and WCHA policy.

Approval of a rent increase is **not automatic**. Before any increase may take effect, WCHA must determine that:

- The request complies with HUD requirements.
- Required notice has been provided.
- The proposed rent is reasonable.
- The family remains eligible for continued assistance.
- Sufficient program funding is available.

Property owners should continue collecting the previously approved rent until WCHA provides written approval of the requested increase.

Requesting a Rent Increase

To request a rent increase, property owners should submit a written request to WCHA.

The request should include:

- Property address.
- Tenant's name.
- Current contract rent.
- Proposed contract rent.
- Requested effective date.
- Owner contact information.
- Any documentation requested by WCHA.

Requests should be submitted sufficiently in advance to allow WCHA time to complete the required review before the requested effective date.

Required Notice

HUD regulations and the lease require property owners to provide any required advance notice before a rent increase may become effective.

Property owners should provide notice to:

- The participating family, when required.
- WCHA.

The effective date of any approved increase will be established by WCHA after all applicable requirements have been satisfied.

Rent Reasonableness Review

Every proposed rent increase is subject to a new rent reasonableness determination.

WCHA compares the proposed contract rent with comparable unassisted rental units in the local market.

Factors considered may include:

- Location.
- Unit size.
- Number of bedrooms.
- Building type.
- Property condition.
- Amenities.
- Utilities provided.
- Services included.
- Age of the dwelling.
- Current market conditions.

If the proposed rent exceeds the reasonable market rent for comparable unassisted units, WCHA cannot approve the requested amount.

Approval or Denial of the Request

After completing its review, WCHA will notify the property owner in writing whether the rent increase request has been:

- Approved.
- Approved at a different amount.
- Denied.

If additional information is required before a determination can be made, WCHA will contact the property owner.

No increase becomes effective until written approval has been issued.

Changes to Housing Assistance Payments

An approved rent increase may change:

- The Housing Assistance Payment.
- The family's required rent contribution.
- Both.

WCHA calculates these amounts in accordance with HUD regulations and provides written notification to both the property owner and the participating family before the change becomes effective.

Lease Amendments

From time to time, changes to the lease may be necessary.

Examples include:

- Changes to house rules.
- Utility responsibility changes.
- Occupancy changes.
- Other lawful lease modifications.

Lease amendments affecting an assisted tenancy must comply with HUD requirements and the Housing Assistance Payments Contract.

Property owners should notify WCHA before implementing lease changes that affect program administration.

Ownership Changes

When ownership of an assisted property changes, the new owner must provide documentation establishing legal ownership before Housing Assistance Payments can be redirected.

Documentation generally includes:

- Proof of ownership.
- IRS Form W-9.
- Direct Deposit (EFT) information.
- Any additional documentation required by WCHA.

Housing Assistance Payments remain payable only to the verified owner recognized by WCHA.

Property Management Changes

If a property owner hires a new management company or changes authorized representatives, WCHA should be notified promptly.

Updated information may include:

- Management company name.
- Contact information.
- Mailing address.
- Telephone number.
- Email address.
- Authorized representative documentation.

Keeping contact information current helps prevent delays in communication and payment processing.

Banking Information Changes

Property owners should immediately notify WCHA whenever banking information changes.

Updated Direct Deposit (EFT) information generally requires:

- A new authorization form.
- Updated banking documentation.
- Verification by WCHA before future payments are redirected.

Prompt notification helps avoid delays in Housing Assistance Payments.

Changes Affecting the Lease Term

If the lease is renewed or extended, property owners should ensure that all required documentation is completed in accordance with WCHA procedures.

Renewal of the lease does not automatically change:

- The contract rent.
- Housing Assistance Payments.

- Program requirements.

Any changes affecting these items require review and approval by WCHA.

Changes in Utility Responsibilities

Changes regarding responsibility for utilities or owner-supplied appliances may affect Housing Assistance Payments because utility allowances are used when calculating assistance.

Before implementing changes affecting utility responsibility, property owners should notify WCHA so the proposed changes can be reviewed.

Changes That Require WCHA Notification

Property owners should notify WCHA whenever changes occur involving:

- Ownership.
- Property management.
- Mailing address.
- Banking information.
- Lease amendments affecting program administration.
- Utility responsibilities.
- Contract rent requests.
- Property name changes, when applicable.

Timely notification helps ensure accurate program administration.

Regulatory References

- 24 CFR Part 982
- Housing Assistance Payments Contract
- HUD Housing Choice Voucher Guidebook
- WCHA Administrative Plan

CHAPTER 12

Housing Assistance Payments

Introduction

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is the monthly subsidy that WCHA pays directly to the property owner on behalf of an eligible participating family. The HAP is one of the defining features of the Housing Choice Voucher Program and provides property owners with a reliable source of rental income while helping families afford safe, decent, and sanitary housing.

This chapter explains how Housing Assistance Payments are administered, when payments begin, circumstances that may affect payments, and the responsibilities of both property owners and WCHA regarding payment processing.

What Is a Housing Assistance Payment?

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is the portion of the monthly contract rent that WCHA pays directly to the property owner on behalf of an eligible participating family.

The participating family is responsible for paying the remaining tenant portion of the rent directly to the property owner.

The amount of the Housing Assistance Payment varies from family to family based upon factors including:

- Family income.
- Household composition.
- Utility responsibilities.
- The approved contract rent.
- HUD program requirements.

Payment Authorization

Housing Assistance Payments begin only after:

- The dwelling unit has passed the required initial NSPIRE inspection.
- The lease has been executed.
- The Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Contract has been executed.
- All required owner documentation has been received.
- WCHA has approved the tenancy.

Housing Assistance Payments are not authorized before these requirements have been satisfied.

Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)

WCHA issues Housing Assistance Payments through Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) whenever possible.

Direct deposit provides:

- Secure payment processing.
- Faster receipt of funds.
- Reduced risk of lost or delayed checks.
- Improved payment accuracy.

Property owners should notify WCHA immediately whenever banking information changes.

Monthly Payment Process

Each month, WCHA processes Housing Assistance Payments for eligible assisted units that remain in compliance with program requirements.

Payments are based upon:

- The approved contract rent.
- The current Housing Assistance Payment calculation.

- The effective dates established by WCHA.
- Continued eligibility.
- Compliance with the Housing Assistance Payments Contract.

Property owners should review payment information regularly and promptly report any concerns to WCHA.

Tenant Rent Portion

The Housing Assistance Payment does not represent the entire monthly rent.

The participating family remains responsible for paying the tenant portion of the monthly rent directly to the property owner.

Property owners should:

- Collect only the tenant rent portion authorized by WCHA.
- Maintain records of rent received.
- Notify WCHA when significant payment issues affect the tenancy.

Property owners may not charge the family additional rent beyond the amount authorized by WCHA unless specifically permitted under the lease and applicable HUD requirements.

Payment Changes

Housing Assistance Payments may change during the tenancy.

Common reasons include:

- Annual recertification.
- Interim income changes.
- Changes in household composition.
- Approved rent increases.
- Utility allowance changes.
- Other changes required under HUD regulations.

Whenever a payment changes, WCHA provides written notification identifying:

- The new Housing Assistance Payment.
- The family's revised rent portion, if applicable.
- The effective date of the change.

Property owners should continue collecting the previously authorized amount until the effective date stated in WCHA's notice.

Payment Effective Dates

Changes to Housing Assistance Payments become effective on the date established by WCHA.

Property owners should not:

- Estimate future payment amounts.

- Collect revised rent amounts before the effective date.
- Rely solely on verbal information from the tenant regarding payment changes.

Written notification from WCHA controls the effective date of all payment adjustments.

Housing Assistance Payment Abatement

HUD regulations require WCHA to take appropriate action when owner-responsible deficiencies are not corrected within required timeframes.

If required repairs remain incomplete, WCHA may place Housing Assistance Payments into abatement.

During an abatement:

- Housing Assistance Payments are suspended.
- The family remains responsible for the tenant portion of the rent identified by WCHA.
- Payments generally do not resume until the unit returns to compliance, subject to HUD requirements and WCHA policy.

Abatement is intended to encourage timely correction of owner-responsible deficiencies affecting housing quality.

Termination of Housing Assistance Payments

Housing Assistance Payments may terminate under various circumstances, including:

- The family leaves the assisted unit.
- The Housing Assistance Payments Contract ends.
- The family is no longer eligible for assistance.
- The owner no longer complies with program requirements.
- The dwelling unit is no longer eligible.
- Other circumstances permitted by HUD regulations.

WCHA provides written notice whenever Housing Assistance Payments are terminated.

Vacancies

Housing Assistance Payments generally end when the assisted family permanently vacates the unit.

Property owners should notify WCHA promptly when they become aware that:

- The tenant has moved.
- The unit has been abandoned.
- Possession has been returned to the owner.
- A court has restored possession of the property.

Prompt notification helps prevent incorrect Housing Assistance Payments.

Overpayments

Occasionally, Housing Assistance Payments may be issued in error.

Examples include:

- Payments made after the family vacates the unit.
- Duplicate payments.
- Administrative errors.
- Payments made after termination of the Housing Assistance Payments Contract.

If an overpayment occurs, WCHA will notify the property owner and explain the process for repayment or adjustment.

Property owners are responsible for returning Housing Assistance Payments to which they were not entitled.

Returned or Rejected Payments

If an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) is rejected because of incorrect banking information, WCHA may require updated documentation before reissuing the payment.

Property owners should promptly notify WCHA whenever banking information changes to minimize payment delays.

Payment Records

Property owners should maintain accurate financial records relating to Housing Assistance Payments.

Recommended records include:

- Monthly payment statements.
- Direct deposit confirmations.
- Lease agreements.
- Housing Assistance Payments Contract.
- Rent ledgers.
- Correspondence regarding payment adjustments.
- Notices received from WCHA.

Maintaining organized records assists with property management, tax reporting, and reconciliation of payment questions.

Questions About Payments

If a property owner believes a Housing Assistance Payment is incorrect, WCHA should be contacted promptly.

Examples include:

- Missing payments.
- Incorrect payment amounts.
- Incorrect effective dates.
- Banking issues.
- Questions regarding payment adjustments.

Timely communication helps resolve payment concerns efficiently.

Regulatory References

- 24 CFR Part 982
- Housing Assistance Payments Contract
- HUD Housing Choice Voucher Guidebook
- WCHA Administrative Plan

CHAPTER 13

Program Integrity

Introduction

The Housing Choice Voucher Program depends on the integrity of property owners, participating families, and the Washington County Housing Authority to ensure that federal housing assistance is administered fairly, accurately, and in compliance with HUD regulations.

Program integrity includes maintaining accurate records, reporting changes promptly, complying with lease and contract requirements, and safeguarding public funds. WCHA is responsible for administering the program in accordance with federal regulations while investigating potential violations when credible information suggests noncompliance.

This chapter explains the responsibilities of property owners in maintaining program integrity, identifies common program violations, and outlines the reporting and review process for suspected fraud, abuse, or misuse of Housing Choice Voucher assistance.

Maintaining Program Integrity

The Housing Choice Voucher Program is funded with federal tax dollars and administered under strict HUD regulations. Maintaining program integrity helps ensure that assistance is provided only to eligible families and that Housing Assistance Payments are made accurately.

Property owners contribute to program integrity by:

- Providing accurate information to WCHA.
- Maintaining truthful records.
- Reporting required changes promptly.
- Complying with the Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Contract.
- Maintaining the assisted unit in compliance with HUD standards.
- Cooperating with inspections and program reviews.

Property Owner Responsibilities

Property owners participating in the Housing Choice Voucher Program are expected to conduct business honestly and in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws.

Property owners are responsible for:

- Executing accurate lease documents.
- Charging only the rent approved by WCHA.

- Collecting only the tenant rent portion authorized by WCHA.
- Reporting ownership or management changes.
- Reporting vacancies promptly.
- Maintaining the dwelling unit in compliance with NSPIRE standards.
- Cooperating with WCHA requests for information.
- Returning Housing Assistance Payments received in error.

Failure to comply with program requirements may result in administrative action.

Prohibited Practices

Property owners may not engage in activities that violate HUD regulations or the Housing Assistance Payments Contract.

Examples include:

- Charging rent in excess of the amount approved by WCHA.
- Accepting side payments or undisclosed rent payments from the participating family.
- Knowingly accepting Housing Assistance Payments after the assisted family has permanently vacated the unit.
- Submitting false or misleading information.
- Falsifying documents.
- Misrepresenting ownership information.
- Failing to disclose required information affecting program participation.

These actions may result in repayment obligations, termination from the program, or other remedies available under applicable law.

Accurate Reporting

Prompt and accurate reporting helps WCHA administer the program properly.

Property owners should notify WCHA promptly regarding:

- Vacancies.
- Ownership changes.
- Property management changes.
- Banking information changes.
- Changes affecting the lease.
- Significant damage affecting habitability.
- Court-ordered evictions.
- Other changes affecting the assisted tenancy.

Timely reporting helps prevent incorrect Housing Assistance Payments and unnecessary administrative delays.

Reporting Suspected Fraud

Property owners are encouraged to report information that may indicate fraud, abuse, or misuse of Housing Choice Voucher assistance.

Examples include:

- Unauthorized occupants.
- Falsified information.
- Unreported household members.
- Suspected abandonment of the assisted unit.
- Misrepresentation affecting eligibility.
- Other information that may affect program participation.

Reports should be made to WCHA as soon as practical.

WCHA evaluates all information received and determines whether additional review is necessary.

WCHA Program Reviews

As part of its administrative responsibilities, WCHA routinely reviews program information to ensure compliance with HUD regulations.

Reviews may include:

- File reviews.
- Income verification.
- Ownership verification.
- Inspection records.
- Payment records.
- Lease documentation.
- Housing Assistance Payment calculations.
- Other administrative records.

These reviews help maintain program accuracy and accountability.

Investigations

When credible information suggests that program requirements may not have been followed, WCHA may conduct an administrative review or investigation.

Depending on the circumstances, WCHA may:

- Request additional documentation.
- Review payment history.
- Verify information with third parties.
- Conduct additional inspections.
- Review lease documentation.
- Take administrative action permitted by HUD regulations.

Property owners are expected to cooperate with requests for information during these reviews.

Overpayments

If WCHA determines that Housing Assistance Payments were issued incorrectly, the property owner may be required to repay funds received in error.

Examples include:

- Payments issued after the tenant permanently vacated the unit.
- Duplicate payments.
- Payments issued because required changes were not reported.
- Administrative adjustments required under HUD regulations.

WCHA will provide written notice explaining the reason for the overpayment and the repayment process.

Recordkeeping

Property owners should maintain organized records relating to assisted tenancies.

Recommended records include:

- Executed leases.
- Housing Assistance Payments Contracts.
- Rent ledgers.
- Inspection reports.
- Maintenance records.
- Payment records.
- Notices provided to tenants.
- Correspondence with WCHA.
- Documentation relating to ownership.

Maintaining complete records assists with program administration and helps resolve questions that may arise during or after the tenancy.

Cooperation During Reviews

When WCHA requests documentation or clarification regarding an assisted tenancy, timely cooperation helps prevent unnecessary delays.

Examples of requested documentation may include:

- Lease agreements.
- Rent payment records.
- Proof of ownership.
- Banking information.
- Maintenance documentation.
- Court records related to the tenancy, when applicable.

Providing complete and accurate information supports efficient administration of the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Consequences of Noncompliance

Failure to comply with program requirements may result in administrative action.

Depending on the circumstances, WCHA may:

- Require corrective action.
- Suspend or abate Housing Assistance Payments.
- Recover Housing Assistance Payments issued in error.
- Terminate the Housing Assistance Payments Contract.
- Refer matters to HUD or other appropriate authorities when required.

Administrative actions are taken in accordance with HUD regulations, the Housing Assistance Payments Contract, and WCHA policy.

Regulatory References

- 24 CFR Part 5
- 24 CFR Part 982
- Housing Assistance Payments Contract
- HUD Housing Choice Voucher Guidebook
- WCHA Administrative Plan

CHAPTER 14

Ending a Tenancy

Introduction

Eventually, every tenancy comes to an end. A Housing Choice Voucher tenancy may end because the family chooses to move, the property owner elects not to renew the lease, the lease is terminated for cause, the family loses eligibility for assistance, or other circumstances require the tenancy to end.

Although the reasons for ending a tenancy vary, property owners should follow the lease agreement, applicable Pennsylvania landlord-tenant law, HUD regulations, and the Housing Assistance Payments Contract when ending an assisted tenancy.

This chapter explains common reasons for ending a tenancy, required notifications, Housing Assistance Payment considerations, and the responsibilities of property owners and WCHA during the termination process.

Reasons a Tenancy May End

A Housing Choice Voucher tenancy may end for a variety of reasons.

Common examples include:

- The family voluntarily moves.
- The lease expires and is not renewed.
- The property owner terminates the lease for cause.

- The family loses eligibility for Housing Choice Voucher assistance.
- The family abandons the unit.
- The property is sold and the tenancy ends.
- The dwelling unit becomes uninhabitable.
- Mutual agreement between the owner and tenant.
- Death of the sole remaining household member.

Regardless of the reason, the tenancy should be concluded in accordance with the lease agreement, Pennsylvania law, HUD regulations, and the Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Contract.

Family Moves

When a participating family decides to move, the family must provide any required notice under the lease and comply with WCHA's move procedures.

Property owners should notify WCHA when they receive notice that the family intends to vacate the assisted unit.

Notification should include:

- Property address.
- Tenant name.
- Expected move-out date.
- Any additional information requested by WCHA.

Prompt notification helps ensure Housing Assistance Payments end on the appropriate date.

Non-Renewal of the Lease

If a property owner elects not to renew a lease at the end of its term, the owner must comply with:

- The lease agreement.
- Applicable Pennsylvania landlord-tenant law.
- HUD requirements.
- The Housing Assistance Payments Contract.

Property owners should provide any required notices to both the tenant and WCHA within the timeframes required by law and program policy.

Lease Termination for Cause

Property owners may terminate a tenancy for serious or repeated violations of the lease or for other lawful grounds permitted under the lease agreement and applicable law.

Examples may include:

- Repeated failure to pay rent.
- Significant lease violations.
- Serious property damage.

- Criminal activity affecting the tenancy.
- Unauthorized occupants.
- Repeated violations of property rules.
- Other lawful grounds recognized under Pennsylvania law.

Property owners should provide WCHA with copies of notices related to lease termination whenever required by HUD regulations or WCHA policy.

Eviction Proceedings

Participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program does not change Pennsylvania's legal eviction process.

Property owners remain responsible for initiating and pursuing eviction proceedings through the appropriate court when necessary.

When eviction proceedings are filed involving an assisted tenancy, property owners should notify WCHA and provide copies of notices or court filings when required.

Abandonment of the Unit

If a property owner believes that the assisted unit has been abandoned, WCHA should be notified promptly.

Examples of possible abandonment may include:

- Removal of personal belongings.
- Utilities disconnected.
- Statements indicating the family has moved.
- Extended unexplained absence.
- Return of possession to the owner.

WCHA will review the circumstances and determine the appropriate administrative action.

Death of a Participant

If the property owner becomes aware that the sole remaining assisted household member has died, WCHA should be notified immediately.

Housing Assistance Payments generally cannot continue after the tenancy has ended.

Prompt notification helps prevent overpayments and allows WCHA to administer the case in accordance with HUD requirements.

Move-Out Inspection

Although not required by the Housing Choice Voucher Program, many property owners conduct a move-out inspection after the tenant vacates the unit. The housing authority is not responsible for conducting this type of inspection.

A move-out inspection may assist in documenting:

- The condition of the dwelling.
- Normal wear and tear.
- Tenant-caused damage.
- Repairs required before the next tenancy.

- Security deposit considerations.

Photographs and written documentation are recommended.

Security Deposits

Security deposits are administered between the property owner and the tenant in accordance with the lease agreement and applicable Pennsylvania law.

WCHA does not:

- Collect security deposits.
- Hold security deposits.
- Determine security deposit deductions.
- Resolve disputes regarding security deposits.

Questions regarding security deposits should be addressed under the lease and applicable state law.

Housing Assistance Payments After Move-Out

Housing Assistance Payments generally end when the assisted tenancy ends.

Property owners should not retain Housing Assistance Payments issued for periods after the family permanently vacates the dwelling unit or after the Housing Assistance Payments Contract has terminated.

If a payment is received in error, the property owner should notify WCHA immediately.

Returning Overpayments

If WCHA determines that Housing Assistance Payments were issued after the tenancy ended or otherwise paid in error, the property owner will receive written instructions regarding repayment.

Prompt repayment helps resolve the matter efficiently and ensures compliance with program requirements.

Preparing the Unit for a New Tenancy

After an assisted tenancy ends, property owners should inspect the dwelling and complete any necessary repairs before leasing the unit again.

Recommended activities include:

- Cleaning the unit.
- Completing maintenance repairs.
- Servicing owner-supplied equipment.
- Testing smoke alarms.
- Testing carbon monoxide alarms.
- Repairing safety hazards.
- Inspecting plumbing and electrical systems.

Routine turnover maintenance helps prepare the unit for future occupancy.

Record Retention

Property owners should retain records relating to completed tenancies.

Recommended records include:

- Lease agreements.
- Housing Assistance Payments Contracts.
- Notices provided to the tenant.
- Court documents, when applicable.
- Move-out inspection reports.
- Photographs.
- Rent payment records.
- Correspondence with WCHA.

Maintaining organized records may assist in resolving future questions regarding the tenancy.

Regulatory References

- 24 CFR Part 982
- Housing Assistance Payments Contract
- HUD Housing Choice Voucher Guidebook
- Pennsylvania Landlord-Tenant Law
- WCHA Administrative Plan

CHAPTER 15

Resources and Reference

Introduction

The Washington County Housing Authority is committed to providing property owners with the information and assistance needed to successfully participate in the Housing Choice Voucher Program. This chapter identifies important resources, contact information, and reference materials that property owners may use throughout their participation in the program.

It also summarizes key contacts and commonly referenced HUD resources that support the administration of the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Washington County Housing Authority

The Washington County Housing Authority (WCHA) administers the Housing Choice Voucher Program throughout Washington County in accordance with HUD regulations and the WCHA Administrative Plan.

Property owners are encouraged to contact WCHA whenever they have questions regarding:

- Leasing procedures.
- Inspections.
- Housing Assistance Payments.
- Rent increase requests.
- Ownership changes.

- Program compliance.
- Tenant moves.
- General Housing Choice Voucher Program administration.

Washington County Housing Authority
100 South Franklin Street
Washington, PA 15301

Telephone: (724) 228-6060

Website: www.wchapa.org

Office hours are subject to change. Current contact information and business hours are available on the WCHA website.

When to Contact WCHA

Property owners should contact WCHA regarding matters such as:

- Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) questions.
- Inspection scheduling.
- Inspection results.
- Rent increase requests.
- Housing Assistance Payment questions.
- Ownership or management changes.
- Changes to banking information.
- Vacancies.
- Suspected program violations.
- Questions regarding Housing Choice Voucher requirements.

Prompt communication helps prevent delays and ensures accurate program administration.

Common Housing Choice Voucher Forms

During participation in the program, property owners may encounter forms including:

- Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA).
- Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Contract.
- HUD Tenancy Addendum.
- Direct Deposit (EFT) Authorization.
- IRS Form W-9.
- Property Owner Information Form.
- Request for Rent Increase.
- Ownership Change Documentation.

- Inspection Reports.
- Reinspection Reports.

WCHA will provide the appropriate forms as needed throughout the tenancy.

Helpful HUD Resources

Property owners may find additional information through HUD publications and guidance relating to the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Common resources include:

- Housing Choice Voucher Program regulations.
- HUD NSPIRE inspection standards.
- Fair Housing guidance.
- Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) guidance.
- Housing Assistance Payments Contract.
- HUD Tenancy Addendum.
- Housing Choice Voucher Guidebook.

Current HUD publications are available through HUD's official website.

Frequently Used Terms

Abatement

The temporary suspension of Housing Assistance Payments when owner-responsible deficiencies are not corrected within required timeframes.

Contract Rent

The total monthly rent approved by WCHA and identified in the Housing Assistance Payments Contract.

Family Share (Tenant Rent)

The portion of the monthly rent paid directly by the participating family to the property owner.

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)

The monthly payment WCHA makes to the property owner on behalf of an eligible participating family.

Housing Assistance Payments Contract (HAP Contract)

The agreement between WCHA and the property owner governing Housing Assistance Payments and owner responsibilities.

NSPIRE

HUD's National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate used to evaluate the condition of assisted housing.

Owner

The individual or legal entity that owns the assisted dwelling unit and executes the Housing Assistance Payments Contract.

Participant

A family that has been determined eligible for Housing Choice Voucher assistance and is receiving rental assistance through WCHA.

Payment Standard

The maximum subsidy standard established by WCHA in accordance with HUD requirements for a particular voucher size and geographic area. Payment standards are used in calculating Housing Assistance Payments but are not the same as the contract rent.

Reasonable Accommodation

A change in a rule, policy, practice, or procedure that may be necessary to provide a qualified person with a disability an equal opportunity to participate in the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Rent Reasonableness

The determination that the proposed contract rent is comparable to rents charged for similar unassisted units in the local market.

Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA)

The document completed by the property owner and prospective tenant requesting WCHA approval of a proposed assisted tenancy.

Tenant

The eligible family that leases the assisted dwelling unit from the property owner.

Utility Allowance

The allowance established by WCHA for tenant-paid utilities that is used when calculating Housing Assistance Payments.

Voucher

The document issued by WCHA that authorizes an eligible family to search for housing under the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Regulatory References

- 24 CFR Part 5
- 24 CFR Part 982

- HUD Housing Choice Voucher Guidebook
- HUD NSPIRE Standards
- Fair Housing Act
- Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)
- Housing Assistance Payments Contract
- HUD Tenancy Addendum
- WCHA Administrative Plan

Frequently Asked Questions

Is participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program mandatory for property owners?

No. Participation is voluntary unless otherwise required by applicable law.

Does WCHA select my tenant?

No. Eligible families receive vouchers and search for housing independently. Property owners retain responsibility for tenant screening consistent with applicable fair housing laws.

Who signs the lease?

The lease is signed by the property owner and the participating family. WCHA is not a party to the lease but executes a separate Housing Assistance Payments Contract with the property owner.

How long does the approval process take?

The time required varies depending upon the timely submission of required documentation, inspection scheduling, completion of necessary repairs, and satisfaction of all program requirements.

May I refuse to participate in the Housing Choice Voucher Program?

Participation is voluntary unless otherwise required by applicable law.

May I use my normal tenant screening process?

Yes. Property owners may apply reasonable screening criteria consistently and in compliance with applicable fair housing laws.

Does WCHA guarantee rent for damages caused by a tenant?

No. Property owners remain responsible for addressing damages and enforcing lease provisions in accordance with the lease agreement and applicable law.

What if I have questions during the tenancy?

Property owners are encouraged to contact WCHA whenever they need assistance understanding Housing Choice Voucher Program requirements.

May I participate if I own only one rental property?

Yes. Property owners with a single rental unit may participate provided the property and owner meet program requirements.

May someone else sign documents on my behalf?

Yes, if they have legal authority to act for the property owner and WCHA has received appropriate documentation recognizing that authority.

Do I have to accept every voucher holder who contacts me?

No. Property owners retain the right to screen applicants using lawful, nondiscriminatory screening criteria that are applied consistently.

What happens if my ownership changes after the lease begins?

Notify WCHA immediately. Housing Assistance Payments cannot be redirected until ownership has been verified and required documentation has been received.

Does WCHA tell me whether I should rent to a family?

No. WCHA determines Housing Choice Voucher eligibility but does not select tenants for property owners.

Must I change my screening standards because an applicant has a voucher?

No. Property owners may continue using their established screening criteria, provided they comply with applicable fair housing laws and are applied consistently.

Does WCHA collect the security deposit?

No. Security deposits are administered directly between the property owner and the tenant.

When may the family move into the unit?

The family may move into the unit only after WCHA has approved the tenancy, the lease and Housing Assistance Payments Contract have been executed, and all program requirements have been satisfied

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The family may move into the unit only after WCHA has approved the tenancy, the lease and Housing Assistance Payments Contract have been executed, and all program requirements have been satisfied.

Does every inspection require the owner to be present?

No. While owner attendance is not always required, many property owners choose to attend inspections or designate a representative. Someone must provide access to the unit if the tenant is unavailable.

What happens if the tenant causes the deficiency?

If WCHA determines that a deficiency is the responsibility of the participating family, the family will generally be required to correct the condition in accordance with program requirements. WCHA will advise both the owner and the family of the required corrective action.

How long do I have to complete repairs?

Correction timeframes depend upon the type and severity of the deficiency and are established by HUD and WCHA. The inspection report will identify the applicable deadline.

Can Housing Assistance Payments stop if repairs are not completed?

Yes. HUD regulations require WCHA to take appropriate action when owner-responsible deficiencies are not corrected within the required timeframe, which may include abatement or termination of Housing Assistance Payments.

Must I repair damage caused by the tenant?

Property owners remain responsible for maintaining the dwelling unit in compliance with HUD standards. However, owners may pursue remedies available under the lease and applicable law for tenant-caused damages.

How quickly should emergency repairs be completed?

Emergency repairs should be addressed immediately. Certain health and safety deficiencies are subject to correction timeframes established by HUD and WCHA.

Will WCHA tell me what repairs are required?

Yes. Following an inspection, WCHA provides an inspection report identifying the deficiencies that require correction and the applicable repair deadlines.

Should I keep maintenance records?

Yes. Maintaining repair records, invoices, inspection reports, and photographs can assist with property management and demonstrate compliance with program requirements.

May the family move into the unit before WCHA approves the tenancy?

The owner and family may enter into arrangements permitted by law; however, Housing Assistance Payments do not begin until all Housing Choice Voucher Program requirements have been satisfied and WCHA has approved the tenancy.

What happens if the unit fails the initial inspection?

WCHA will provide an inspection report identifying the required repairs. After the repairs are completed, the unit may be reinspected.

Who determines whether the proposed rent is reasonable?

WCHA performs the rent reasonableness determination using HUD requirements and comparable unassisted units in the local rental market.

When does the Housing Assistance Payments Contract become effective?

The Housing Assistance Payments Contract becomes effective on the date established by WCHA after all required leasing conditions have been satisfied.

Should I contact WCHA every time there is a lease violation?

Routine lease enforcement remains the responsibility of the property owner. However, WCHA should be notified of significant lease violations, court-ordered evictions, vacancies, or other circumstances that may affect the family's participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Who collects the tenant's portion of the rent?

The property owner is responsible for collecting the tenant's required portion of the monthly rent.

May I inspect my rental property during the tenancy?

Yes. Property owners may inspect their property in accordance with the lease agreement and applicable Pennsylvania law regarding notice and entry.

What should I do if I become aware of an unauthorized occupant?

The property owner should address the issue in accordance with the lease agreement and notify WCHA if the occupancy may affect Housing Choice Voucher eligibility or program compliance.

Will I receive notice if the tenant's portion of the rent changes?

Yes. WCHA provides written notification whenever a recertification results in a change to the Housing Assistance Payment or the family's required rent contribution.

Should I accept a different rent amount if the tenant tells me their payment has changed?

No. Property owners should continue collecting the previously authorized amount until WCHA provides written notification of the change.

May I request information about the tenant's income?

No. Income verification is administered by WCHA. Property owners receive only the information necessary to administer the tenancy and Housing Assistance Payments.

What should I do if I become aware of a possible unreported household member?

Notify WCHA. The Housing Authority will review the information and determine whether further action is necessary under HUD regulations and WCHA policy.

May I approve a live-in aide myself?

No. A live-in aide must receive written approval from WCHA before residing in the assisted unit.

What should I do if my rental property is sold?

Notify WCHA immediately and provide the documentation required to verify the ownership change so future Housing Assistance Payments can be processed correctly.

What happens if the assisted unit is destroyed by fire?

Notify WCHA as soon as possible. Housing Assistance Payments and the family's assistance will be administered in accordance with HUD regulations and the habitability of the unit.

Should I report suspected fraud?

Yes. Property owners are encouraged to report information that may affect Housing Choice Voucher eligibility or program compliance. WCHA will review the information and determine what action, if any, is appropriate.

When will my first Housing Assistance Payment be issued?

Housing Assistance Payments begin only after the tenancy has been approved, the required documents have been executed, the unit has passed inspection, and WCHA has established the effective date of assistance.

Can I collect additional rent from the tenant?

No. Property owners may collect only the tenant portion of the rent authorized by WCHA and any other charges specifically permitted under the lease and applicable HUD requirements.

What should I do if I receive a payment after the tenant has moved?

Notify WCHA immediately. If the payment was issued in error, WCHA will provide instructions regarding repayment or adjustment.

What happens if my banking information changes?

Notify WCHA immediately and submit updated Direct Deposit (EFT) information before future Housing Assistance Payments are issued.

What should I do if I believe I received an incorrect Housing Assistance Payment?

Contact WCHA immediately. Payment questions should be resolved as soon as possible to avoid additional adjustments.

Should I report suspected unauthorized occupants?

Yes. If you become aware of information that may affect a family's eligibility or compliance with program requirements, notify WCHA.

How long should I keep Housing Choice Voucher records?

Property owners should retain records in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local requirements, as well as their own business record retention practices.

What happens if I accidentally receive an overpayment?

Notify WCHA promptly. WCHA will provide instructions regarding repayment or adjustment if an overpayment has occurred.

Where should I direct questions about my Housing Assistance Payment?

Questions regarding Housing Assistance Payments should be directed to WCHA's Housing Choice Voucher Department.

Where can I obtain Housing Choice Voucher forms?

Required forms are available from WCHA and may also be available through the WCHA website.

Where can I learn more about HUD regulations?

HUD regulations governing the Housing Choice Voucher Program are found primarily in **24 CFR Part 982** and related HUD guidance.

What if I cannot find the answer in this handbook?

Contact the Washington County Housing Authority. WCHA staff are available to answer questions and provide guidance regarding Housing Choice Voucher Program requirements.

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May I increase the rent whenever I choose?

No. Rent increases must comply with HUD regulations, the lease, the Housing Assistance Payments Contract, and WCHA policy. Written approval from WCHA is required before an increase becomes effective.

Why does WCHA perform another rent reasonableness review?

HUD requires WCHA to ensure that assisted units are not rented above comparable unassisted market rents each time a proposed contract rent increase is considered.

What if I sell my rental property?

Notify WCHA immediately. Housing Assistance Payments cannot be redirected until ownership has been verified and all required documentation has been received.

May I change utility responsibilities during the lease?

Changes affecting utility responsibility should be reviewed by WCHA before implementation because they may affect utility allowances and Housing Assistance Payments.

Should I notify WCHA when a tenant gives notice to move?

Yes. Prompt notification helps ensure Housing Assistance Payments are administered correctly and allows WCHA to coordinate the family's move, when applicable.

Does WCHA handle evictions?

No. Property owners remain responsible for pursuing eviction proceedings in accordance with the lease agreement and Pennsylvania law. WCHA should be notified of actions affecting the assisted tenancy as required by HUD regulations and WCHA policy.

What if I receive a Housing Assistance Payment after the tenant has moved?

Notify WCHA immediately. If the payment was issued in error, WCHA will provide instructions regarding repayment or adjustment.

Does WCHA determine security deposit deductions?

No. Security deposits are administered between the property owner and the tenant in accordance with the lease agreement and applicable Pennsylvania law.

End of Handbook