



HOUSING SERVICES DIVISION

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK



Equal Housing Opportunity

1. Introduction

The *Participant Handbook* contains important information about the Housing Choice Voucher Program administered by the City of Mesa Housing Services Division. (Housing Services). This handbook provides an explanation of participant, landlord, and housing agency responsibilities and is to be used as a guide for families who have been issued a voucher. Please read the information provided and feel free to submit questions by contacting the Housing Services by phone, email, or in writing. Other help resources include the *Arizona Residential Landlord Tenant Act*, Housing Services' website www.cityofmesa.org/housing, the Administrative Plan, and 24 CFR 982 (federal regulations). Printed documents are available for review by contacting the office at (480)644-3535.

2. Section 8 Program Responsibilities

Family Obligations

Families who participate in the Housing Choice Voucher Program are required to comply with HUD regulations listed on the Voucher. Failure to comply is grounds for termination of assistance. The list of Family Obligations is as follows:

- Any Information provided by the family must be true and complete.
- The family must supply any information Housing Services or HUD determines necessary for administration of the program, and to certify or recertify a family is eligible. This includes evidence of citizenship or eligible immigration status, as well as information about a family's household composition, income, expenses, and assets, as well as disclosing and verifying social security numbers.
- Family members age 18 and older must sign and submit consent forms for obtaining information.
- The family must use the assisted unit for its residence and it must be their only residence. They may be asked to supply information to verify the family is residing in the unit and/or a household member is absent from the unit.
- The family must immediately notify Housing Services in writing of any absence from the unit by any family member away from the unit for more than two weeks.
- The family must allow Housing Services to inspect the unit at reasonable times, after reasonable notice. Failure to present for a scheduled inspection is grounds for termination of assistance.
- The family must give the landlord and Housing Services written notice of intent to vacate at least 30 days and no more than 60 days before the move out date.
- Housing Services must approve all household members. The family must promptly notify Housing Services (in writing) of the birth, adoption, or court-awarded custody of a minor child. The family must request prior approval before adding any other person as an occupant of the unit.
- The household must promptly (within 10 working days) notify Housing Services in writing if a household member no longer lives in the unit. If a household member is temporarily absent from the unit for an extended period of time (more than two weeks), the family must notify Housing Services in writing.
- The household must promptly provide copies to Housing Services of any notices received from the owner/landlord.
- The household must pay utility bills and supply appliances that the owner is not required to supply under the lease. Failure to pay utility bills resulting in disconnection of service is grounds for termination of assistance.
- The family, including any member of the household, must not own or have any interest in the unit.
- The household cannot rent from a family member related by blood or marriage to any member of the household (parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, sister or brother) unless there is a need for reasonable accommodation for a disabled family member.
- The household must not commit any serious violations of the lease.
- The household must not commit any fraud, bribery or any other corrupt or criminal act in connections with the program.
- The household members must not engage in drug-related criminal activity or violent criminal activity or any other criminal activity that disturbs the neighbors.

- The household must not sublease, sublet, or allow another family to live in the unit. The family must not assign the lease or transfer the unit (or any part of the unit, including renting a room to a boarder).
- An assisted household, or member of the household, must not receive Section 8 rental assistance while receiving another housing subsidy for the same unit (or any other unit at the same time).
- The household must not damage the unit or premises or permit guests to damage the unit or premises.
- The household must not abuse alcohol in a manner that would disturb neighbors.

Owner Obligations

- Screen and approve or deny families who apply to determine if they will be good renters.
- Comply with fair housing laws, and not discriminate against any family.
- Maintain the housing unit by making necessary repairs in a timely manner.
- Comply with the terms of the Housing Assistance Payment Contract and the lease agreement.
- Collect the rent due by the family and enforce the terms of the lease.

Housing Services Obligations

- Determine applicant eligibility for the program.
- Issue assistance.
- Approve the unit, the owner, and the tenancy.
- Make housing assistance payments to the owner in a timely manner.
- Ensure that both the family and the unit continue to qualify under the program.
- Ensure that owners and families comply with the program rules.
- Provide the names and addresses of the landlord's for the last two units in which the tenant lived, if available.

3. Steps to Assistance

- Step 1. Family determined eligible by Housing Services
- Step 2. Family attends briefing conducted by Housing Services and is issued a Housing Choice Voucher.
- Step 3. Family searches and finds unit
- Step 4. Landlord approves the family and completes Request for Inspection forms
- Step 5. Family returns Request for Inspection forms to Housing Services
- Step 6. Request for Inspection paperwork approved by Housing Services
- Step 7. Housing Services contacts landlord to schedule Initial Inspection
- Step 8. Housing Quality Standards Inspection done on unit
- Step 9. Landlord/tenant notified unit passes inspection
- Step 10. Housing Services generates move-in paperwork and HAP contract
- Step 11. Family notified of approval of unit and rental portion by Housing Services
- Step 12. Family signs lease and owner signs HAP contract
- Step 13. Family pays tenant portion to owner, Housing Assistant Payment made by Housing Services
- Step 14. Family completes Change Report form to report any changes in household composition, income assets and expenses
- Step 15. Unit inspected annually, usually 3 to 4 months before the anniversary date
- Step 16. Family's eligibility for continued assistance reviewed annually, usually 9 to 11 months before anniversary date

4. Housing Choice Voucher

The Housing Choice Voucher issued by Housing Services to the family provides basic information to help a family begin searching for a unit. By signing the voucher, the family is agreeing to abide by the Family Obligations listed on Page 2 of the voucher and any future regulations, policies and procedures deemed necessary for HUD. The voucher specifies the time frame for which the voucher is valid and the bedroom size is issued to the family based on Housing Services' subsidy standards. The voucher size directly affects the subsidy amount.

Voucher Issuance and Expiration

THE VOUCHER IS VALID FOR 60 DAYS. Families issued a voucher must submit a Request for Tenancy Approval on or before the expiration date of the voucher. If the voucher expires, the family will not be eligible for rental assistance and will need to reapply when applications are being accepted. Housing Services' policy is not to grant voucher extensions. Extension requests must be submitted in writing prior to expiration date and shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and may only be granted to voucher holders based on extenuating circumstances that hindered the family from searching for a unit, or because of a disabled or elderly household. The total term of the voucher must not exceed 120 calendar days, except in cases of tolling where the expiration of the voucher is suspended because the family has submitted a Request for Tenancy Approval. If the unit is not approved, the clock on the voucher resumes with suspended days added to the expiration date.

Voucher Bedroom Size (Subsidy Standards)

The voucher size is based on the assumption that each bedroom will reasonably accommodate no more than two persons regardless of gender, age, or familial status. An approved live-in aide shall be allowed a separate bedroom. Housing Services may grant exceptions to the established subsidy standard of the exception is considered a reasonable accommodation. Exception requests to the subsidy standard must be submitted in writing. The following subsidy standards will determine each family's voucher unit size:

Number in Household	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Voucher Size Issued	1	1	2	2	3	3	4	4	5	5
Live in Aide = Eligible for own bedroom										

5. Income, Expenses, Assets

Annual Income

Annual Income is defined as the anticipated total annual income that a household may receive from ALL sources. Although some types of income are not counted, the family must still report all sources of income and benefits for the entire household.

Examples of Income: Employment (full-time, part-time, temporary); unemployment; TANF/AFDC (cash assistance); Social Security/SSI benefits; disability benefits; Worker's Compensation benefits; child support; pension benefits (VA, company retirement, etc.); alimony; military pay; relocation payments; net business income; annuities; interest in assets (checking/savings/IRAs/dividends); regular contributions and/or gifts from family, friends or persons outside the household; net income from property (real, personal).

Sanctioned TANF/AFDC (cash assistance/welfare)

Families are required to report income sanctioned by the Department of Economic Security (DES) as well as the net benefit amount received by the family. Housing Services is required to count the full or gross amount and to verify the amount, the term, and the reason for the sanction. Sanctions are usually a result of a family's noncompliance with program rules.

Other Reportable Income

Families must also report any regular benefits or awards received by anyone in the household, even if it is not countable income. The types of reportable income include, but are not limited to: Food Stamps; educational grants, scholarships, and loans; jobs held by minors (17 years of age and under); job held by full-time students.

Adjusted Annual Income

After determining the total Annual Income for the household, Housing Services will make necessary adjustments to the Annual Income in accordance with HUD regulations. There are five possible deductions and allowances. HUD-approved deductions and allowable expenses are subtracted from the Annual Income to calculate the family's Annual Adjusted Income.

Assets

Families are required to report all assets; bank accounts, and security accounts held by all persons in the household. (Usually only interest from assets will be considered countable income.) Assets include, but are not limited to: Checking, savings, and money-market accounts; IRAs; stocks; bonds; and real property (excluding automobiles).

Deductions & HUD Allowable Expenses

Some households may be eligible for deductions depending on certain criteria. The following is a list of applicable deductions:

- **Dependent deduction** \$480 for each person under the age of 18 and for the household members 18 years of age and older who are full-time students or who are disabled and not the head of household or spouse.
- **Elderly/Disability Allowance** \$400 per household for families whose head of household or spouse is either 62 years of age or older, or is a person with disabilities.
- **Medical Expenses** Out-of-pocket medical expenses that exceed 3% of the Gross Annual Income for a household where the head of household or spouse is at least 62 years of age or disabled.
- **Disability Assistance Expenses** Expenses for a disabled family member exceeding 3% of Gross Annual Income that enable another family member to work.

6. Calculation Examples

Maximum Allowable Rent Calculation Formula (40% Rule – for initial moves)

Gross Annual Income – Deductions/Allowable Expenses = Adjusted Annual Income
 Adjusted Annual Income ÷ 12 = Adjusted Monthly Income
 Adjusted Monthly Income X 10% = 10% of Adjusted Monthly Income
 Payment Standard for Voucher Size + 10% Adjusted Monthly Income = Maximum Allowed with Utilities Included
 Maximum Allowable with Utilities Include – Utility Allowance = **Maximum Allowable Rent**

EXAMPLE OF ELIGIBLE RENT CALCULATION	
Household Income & Composition: Head of household earns \$12,000 per year, 1 minor child	
Child care out of pocket : \$75 per week x 52 weeks = <u>\$3,900</u> total allowable deduction	
Gross Annual Income	\$ 12,000
Dependent Deduction	- 480
Childcare Deduction	- <u>3,900</u>
Adjusted Annual Income	\$ 7,620
Divided by 12 months	÷ <u>12</u>
Adjusted Monthly Income	\$ 635
X 10% (for Maximum Allowable calculation)	\$ 64
X 30% (Total Tenant Payment - TTP)	\$ 191
Estimate - Maximum Allowable Rent	
Payment Standard	\$ 770
Add 10%	+ <u>64</u>
Maximum Allowable with Utilities Included	\$ 834
Utility Allowance	- <u>206</u>
Maximum Allowable Rent	\$ <u><u>628</u></u>

Tenant Rent/Housing Assistance Payment Calculation Formula

Gross Annual Income – Deductions/Allowable Expenses = Adjusted Annual Income
 Adjusted Annual Income ÷ 12 = Adjusted Monthly Income
 Adjusted Monthly Income X 30% = Total Tenant Payment (TTP)
 Total Rent to Owner (including taxes) + Utility Allowance = Gross Rent
 Lessor of Posted Payment Standard and Gross Rent = Payment Standard

Payment Standard – Total Tenant Payment = **Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)**
 Total Rent to Owner – Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) = **Tenant Rent**

EXAMPLE OF Tenant Rent & Housing Assistance Payment Calculation			
	Payment Standard	\$	770
	Minus Total Tenant Payment	-	<u>191</u>
	Maximum Housing Assistant Payment	\$	579
Example - Unit # 1		Example - Unit # 2	
	Rent to Owner	\$	671
	Housing Assistance Payment	-	<u>579</u>
	Tenant Payment to Owner	\$	<u>92</u>
	Rent to Owner	\$	575
	Housing Assistance Payment	-	<u>579</u>
	Tenant Payment to Owner	\$	<u>0</u>

7. Finding a Unit

Unit Size & Payment Standard

The family is encouraged to find a unit that is the same size as the voucher size; however, the family may search for a unit that is larger or smaller than the size issued on the voucher as long as the unit meets the Maximum Allowable Rent and other HQS requirements. The Payment Standard used in rental portion calculations is the lesser of the Payment Standard for the voucher size, unit size, or Gross Rent. Families should consider that a larger unit would require higher utilities, resulting in a lower Maximum Allowable Rent. Housing Services sets the Payment Standard between 90% and 100% of the Fair Market Rent.

Rental Amount

At each initial move, the family’s rental portion and utilities may not exceed 40% of the household’s adjusted monthly income. The 40% Maximum Allowable Rent amount will be calculated by Housing Services and provided to the family. Families **CANNOT PAY** the difference between Maximum Allowable Rent and the amount the landlord is requesting. If a unit exceeds the limit, the family may negotiate with the landlord or find a different unit. The rental amount should include applicable taxes. The Utility Allowance is a pre-set schedule and does not reflect the actual cost of utilities for a specific unit.

Choosing a Unit

Families may search for suitable housing within the City of Mesa boundaries. (Be aware of “county islands” that will have a Mesa address but are not within Mesa’s jurisdiction.) Participants may be eligible to lease in-place if the unit is an appropriate size for the family, passes the HQS Inspection, has a reasonable rent, and the owner is willing to participate in the program. Housing Services will not approve a unit if the owner is the parent, child, grandparent, grandchild, sister of brother of any member of the family, except to provide a reasonable accommodation for a disabled family member. Housing Services cannot force a landlord to participate in the program. Refer to the booklet *A Good Place to Live* included in the briefing packet for more information on eligible units and inspection criteria.

Contacting a Prospective Landlord

Telephone the Landlord Before calling a prospective landlord, write down a list of general questions such as the bedroom size of the unit, rental amount, who pays the utilities, what appliances are provided, deposits, etc. Do not immediately ask if the landlord accepts Section 8 – get an appointment to see the unit first. Do not provide personal information (employment, finances, social security numbers) over the telephone; that information will most likely be part of a leasing application. The landlord is not required to accept Section 8. Remember to always be polite!

Meeting with the Landlord BE ON TIME! Be polite. Dress appropriately. Do not take children to a meeting. Be willing to offer personal references in writing with telephone numbers and addresses. Before going any further in the leasing process, be prepared to ask appropriate questions such as: What is the rental amount including taxes? How much is the security deposit? Who pays the utilities and what appliances are included in the rent? Does the

landlord or manager live on-site or nearby? How is regular and emergency maintenance handled and what are the office hours? How long have the other tenants lived in the complex? Does the landlord participate in Mesa's crime free neighborhood program?

Factors to Consider

Be prepared to devote a good deal of time searching for suitable housing. Things to consider when choosing a unit include: The interior and exterior condition of the unit; condition of the neighborhood; parking and laundry availability; distance to public transportation, medical facilities, grocery stores, employment, and childcare facilities; school districts; and whether the neighborhood is in a high crime or high poverty area. (Low poverty areas generally have a lower crime rate.)

Tips to Locate Suitable Housing

Property managers and owners advertise rental properties a different way. Some ideas on where to start the search are: Housing Services courtesy list provided in the briefing packet; friends, neighbors, community members; bulletin board advertisements in supermarkets, churches; newspapers, real estate agents/property management companies; "For Rent" signs; internet; and various "For Rent" magazines.

Security Deposit & Application Fees

Landlords may charge a non-refundable application fee, usually ranging between \$25 and \$75, to cover credit report fees and processing charges. Security deposits should only be paid after Housing Services has approved the unit and should not exceed what the landlord would normally collect from a non-Section 8 tenant (generally on full month's rent). Security deposits must be paid to the landlord before moving into the unit, unless other arrangements have been made with the landlord. Most families who are leasing in-place paid a security deposit at the initial move-in and may not need to pay an additional amount. Housing Services does not contribute to, or set, the security deposit. Information on security deposit requirements and limitation are provided in the *Arizona Residential Landlord Tenant Act* in the briefing packet.

8. Start the Lease-Up Process

Submit a Request for Inspection (or Request for Tenancy Approval)

The prospective landlord must complete in full the Request for Inspection packet, which includes the *Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA)* form, the *Disclosure of Lead-based Paint*, and the *W-9 Request for Taxpayer Identification and Certification*. These forms are provided to you stapled together with a cover sheet entitled *Request for Inspection*. It is the family's responsibility to return the completed forms to Housing Services. Housing Services will review the paperwork and do a preliminary approval, then the inspector can contact the landlord to schedule an appointment. The unit must pass inspection before it can be subsidized.

Approval of Tenancy and Unit

A unit must meet the following criteria before Housing Services can approve the tenancy and the unit: The Request for Tenancy Approval has been submitted; the unit has passed inspection, the utilities are on; and the rental amount is within the guidelines (40% maximum amount allowable) and reasonable. Housing Services must have a signed lease agreement and Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract on file before the housing payment can be made to the landlord.

9. Lease Agreement & HAP Contract

Lease Agreement

The lease agreement is between the tenant and the landlord and must have the same dates as the HAP Contract. When the HAP Contract and lease agreement conflict, the HAP Contract will take precedence over the lease agreement. Housing Services is NOT a party to the lease. Housing Services must have a signed copy on file before any payment will be made on the tenant's behalf. The lease agreement is a valid, legal document and any violation of the agreement is grounds for eviction and/or termination of assistance. The initial term of the lease is one year – to coincide with the dates, rental amount, and breakdown of utility responsibility of the HAP Contract. The lease agreement automatically terminates on the expiration date and may be renewed each year, or convert to a month-to-month basis. A lease agreement may also be terminated if both the tenant and landlord mutually agree to terminate the lease by signing a Mutual Rescission form available at the Housing Services office. A tenant must

provide at least a 30-day written notice to the landlord and Housing Services of intent to vacate the unit at the end of the lease agreement or if the lease is currently on a month-to-month basis.

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract is between Housing Services and the landlord. Housing Services must have a signed HAP Contract on file before any payment will be made on the tenant's behalf. When the HAP Contract and lease agreement conflict, the HAP Contract will take precedence over the lease agreement.

10. Reporting Changes/Interim Reexaminations

Change Reports

ALL CHANGES IN HOUSHOLD INCOME OR COMPOSITION MUST BE REPORTED ON A CHANGE FORM WITHIN TEN (10) WORKING DAYS OF THE OCCURRENCE. Change Reports are available at the Housing Services' office and may be mailed to the family. The family's rental portion is based on household composition, income, and deductions. Failure to report changes is grounds for termination of rental assistance. It is the family's responsibility to report changes; other agencies do not provide this information to Housing Services.

Changes to Household Composition

Additions to the household must be approved by both Housing Services and the landlord prior to move-in. No more than one person may be added to the household at one time. Exception: Marriage of the head of household to a person with minor children. Circumstances are reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

To add a person 18 years of age or older to the household. (1) Contact Housing Services to schedule an appointment. (2) Provide required documentation: Proof of citizenship (birth certificate); a Social Security card; picture identification; income, asset, and expense information; complete and sign Personal Declaration packet; Change Report forms; and other documentation requested by Housing Services. (3) Comply with fingerprinting for criminal background check. (4) Submit documentation from the landlord granting permission for the addition to the household.

To add a person under 18 years of age to the household. (1) Complete a Change Report form and Section 214 Immigration Status form. (2) Provide required documentation: Proof of citizenship (birth certificate), Social Security card, and information of any assets or income of the person being added, such as Social Security Disability Benefits. (3) If applicable, legal documentation showing custody or guardianship.

Effective Date of Changes

Report changes as soon as possible. Changes that will lower tenant rent will be effective on the first day of the month after Housing Services receives a Change Report. Changes that will increase the tenant portion of the rent will be effective no earlier than 30 days after the Change Report has been received. (Example: For December 31st Change Report, decreases are effective January 1st and increases will be effective February 1st.)

11. Annual Activities/Annual Reexaminations

Steps to Annual Activities

- Step 1 Approximately 90 days in advance family will receive Annual Reexamination packet
- Step 2 Family completes, signs, and returns packet to Housing Services
- Step 3 Unit may be inspected at that time*
- Step 4 Housing Services will verify income, assets, and expenses
- Step 5 Landlord will notify tenant if a new lease is requested
- Step 6 Approximately 30 days in advance, tenant will receive notification letter of new rental amount
- Step 7 Tenant signs lease, if applicable

**Each subsidized unit must be inspected every 12 months or less. The inspection may or may not coincide with the annual reexamination of assistance.*

Annual Reexaminations & Inspections

Cooperation is mandatory. HUD requires an Annual Reexamination of each family's eligibility for housing assistance. Housing Services will start the process approximately three months before the anniversary date by requesting the family complete and return paperwork by mail. All applicable areas must be completed and signed

by all household members 18 years of age or older. HUD also requires an Annual Inspection of each unit. Families will be notified in writing of the date and time of the Annual Inspection for the Housing Quality Standards compliance. Failure to cooperate is grounds for the termination of rental assistance.

12. Portability & Moving

Steps to Moving

- Step 1 Provide 30-day written notice to landlord or obtain a signed Mutual Rescission
- Step 2 Contact caseworker to schedule appointment to obtain moving paperwork
- Step 3 Provide any outstanding income, expense, asset, or household composition documentation
- Step 4 Search for a unit based on estimated maximum allowed
- Step 5 New Landlord approves tenant and Request for Inspection packet is returned to Housing Services
- Step 6 Housing Services will approve or deny tenancy
- Step 7 Housing Services will contact landlord to inspect unit
- Step 8 Unit is inspected for federal Housing Quality Standards
- Step 9 Housing Services will contact tenant with approval to move into unit and rental portion
- Step 10 Tenant signs lease and pays security deposit and tenant rental portion

Moving with Continued Assistance

A family must not move without first notifying Housing Services. For mid-lease moves, both the tenant and landlord must mutually agree to terminate the lease signing a Mutual Rescission form available at the Housing Services office. A tenant must provide at least a 30-day written notice to the landlord and Housing Services of intent to vacate the unit at the end of the lease agreement or if the lease is currently on month-to-month basis.

Portability

The HUD term for the ability to move between jurisdictions is called *Portability*. The Housing Choice Voucher is usually transferable to any city that has a Housing Choice Voucher Program. Families requesting portability must meet the minimum qualifications of either living in Mesa at the time of application or living in Mesa for at least one year after receiving Section 8 housing assistance. A Portability Request form has been provided as part of the briefing packet.

A request for portability will not extend the time available on the Voucher. For instance, if a voucher is due to expire in 20 days and portability is requested, the voucher holder will still have only 20 days remaining on the Voucher.

Steps to Portability Move-Out

- Step 1 Provide 30-day written notice to landlord or obtain a signed Mutual Rescission
- Step 2 Contact caseworker to schedule appointment to obtain portability paperwork and voucher
- Step 3 Housing Services will mail or fax paperwork to new housing agency. **OTHER HOUSING AGENCIES WILL NOT DISCUSS SPECIFICS OR SCHEDULE APPOINTMENTS WITHOUT RECEIVING PAPERWORK FIRST!!!**
- Step 4 Family must contact new housing agency to schedule briefing appointment
- Step 5 Family must attend briefing appointment and follow new housing agency's rules

Regarding Other Housing Agencies

Other housing agencies may have different rules, policies, procedures, Payment Standards, utility allowances, and income limits. The voucher size may change and the housing agency may not accept the voucher. For movers with continued assistance who are currently participating in the FSS Program, discuss portability with Mesa's FSS Program Coordinator before moving. If a participant cannot fulfill the FSS obligations in the new location of the new housing agency does not have an FSS Program, the FSS contract may be terminated and escrow balances forfeited.

13. Fraud & Program Integrity

Fraud, Penalties & Program Integrity

The Department of Housing and Urban Development is seriously concerned about fraud in the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Making false statements or providing false information are serious violations of the program rules, as well as violations of State and Federal Criminal Laws. Participants who supply false or incomplete information to Housing Services' staff either verbally or in writing may be: Terminated from rental assistance, required to repay overpaid rental assistance, fine up to \$10,000, imprisonment for up to 10 years, and/or prohibited from receiving future rental assistance. Incidents of fraud and questions regarding fraud and program integrity should be reported to the Housing Services office at (480)644-3535.

Failure to Report Changes

Failure to report all changes in household composition, income, assets, and expenses within 10 days of the occurrence is considered fraud. When reporting changes families should include: All income received, or expected to be received, by all household members (report income from second jobs, child support, babysitting, odd jobs, welfare, Social Security benefits, etc.): changes in household size; and the current and expected names of everyone who will reside in the household during the next year.

Side Agreements/Payments

Side agreements between the tenant and landlord are not permitted!!! The tenant must not pay more rent than calculated by Housing Services and the total amount paid by both the tenant and Housing Services must not exceed the amount listed in the lease agreement and HAP Contract. If the landlord asks the tenant to pay more than determined by Housing Services, the tenant should report this immediately. Housing Services will determine if the extra payments are illegal and appropriate action will be taken. The tenant's eligibility for the program will not be affected as long as they are not party to the fraud.

14. Terminations & Maximum Time on the Program

Terminations

Housing Services may terminate rental assistance, but cannot evict a tenant from a unit. A family may be terminated for the following reasons: Violation of family obligations listed on the Housing Choice Voucher, committing fraud in relation to a housing program, failing to report changes, tenant owes money to a housing agency, anyone in the household participates in criminal activity either on the premises or at another location, and family is evicted through a court proceeding. Families shall be informed in writing of a proposed termination and the participant may request an informal hearing on the proposed action within 10 days. The participant will be informed of the right to present witnesses, review the file, make objections, and/or be represented by counsel and will generally have at least a 30 day notice of any proposed termination.

Mandatory Permanent Ineligibility

Housing Services must permanently deny eligibility or terminate the assistance of any person convicted of manufacturing or producing methamphetamine, commonly referred to as "speed". There is also a lifetime ban on anyone convicted of, and registered as, a sex offender.

Maximum Time on the Program

HUD does not limit the amount of time a family may stay on the program as long as the family does not violate the Family Obligations, is still eligible, and funding allows. A family is eligible for rental assistance as long as the tenant portion of the rent does not exceed the Rent to Owner. For example, a family member reports a wage increase. After reporting the change to Housing Services, the family is recertified. The family's new rent now exceeds or equals the total rent paid to owner. At this point, the family's voucher will be valid for 180 calendar days at zero assistance. (Housing Services no longer making payments to the landlord.) At the end of the 180 days, the family's rental assistance and the HAP Contract with the landlord are terminated. If during the 180-day period, the family's income decreases, a new reexamination would be completed and assistance would resume. A family can leave the rental assistance program at any time by notifying Housing Services in writing so that no further payments are to be made to the landlord. Once a family leaves a program, they must reapply in order to participate again.

15. Informal Hearings

Informal Hearings

An Informal Hearing may be requested to dispute some decisions made by Housing Services due to the following circumstances only: Denial of assistance, proposed termination of assistance, the voucher bedroom size issued, and the tenant rent or total tenant payment. Participant may request an informal hearing on the proposed action within 10 days and has the right to present witnesses, review the file, make objections, and/or be represented by counsel.

Housing Services is not required to provide an informal hearing for the following circumstances: Review of administration decision, general policies, or grievances; decision by that a unit does not comply with the Housing Quality Standards (HQS), that the owner has failed to maintain or operate a unit based on HQS, or that a unit does not meet HQS because of a change in family size; and review of the decision to abate, withhold, or terminate payment to the owner.

An Informal Hearing shall not be scheduled sooner than 10 days from the request unless the participant so wishes. The participant will be notified in writing of the time, date and place of the hearing.

The procedure for all informal hearings required under this policy shall be as follows:

- The hearing may be conducted by any person or persons designated by the Housing Director, other than a person who made or approved the decision or a subordinate of such person. Housing Services will provide the hearing officer with a copy of these hearing requirements prior to the hearing. Housing Services will give the participant a copy of all documents presented as evidence to the hearing officer.
- An attorney or their representative, at his/her own expense, may represent the participant.
- The person who conducts the hearing shall regulate the conduct of the hearing in accordance with these Housing Services Division's hearing procedures. The hearing officer shall control the presentation of evidence to limit the issues raised at the hearing to those cited in the notice.
- Housing Services and the participant shall be given the opportunity to present evidence, and may question any witness. Evidence may be considered without regard to admissibility under the rules of evidence applicable to judicial proceedings.
- The family must be given the opportunity before the hearing to examine any Housing Services' documents that are directly relevant to the hearing. The family must be allowed to copy any such documents at the family's expense. If the documents are not available for examination on request by the Housing Services Division, the family may not rely on the documents at the hearing.
- The family must submit any directly relevant documents before the hearing for review by Housing Services. If the family does not make the document available for examination on request by the Housing Services Division, the family may not rely on the documents at the hearing.
- The person who conducts the hearing shall issue a written decision, stating briefly the reasons for the decision, and the facts upon which it was based. Factual determinations relating to the individual circumstances of the participant shall be based only on the evidence presented at the hearing and related to the reasons for termination stated in the notice. A copy of the hearing decision shall be furnished promptly to the participant. Housing Services will notify the family in writing of the final decision after the informal hearing. If the decision is to terminate a voucher, then the notice will state the effective date of the termination, at the end of a monthly term, but not earlier than 30 days from the date of the hearing decision.

Informal Hearing Decision Not Binding

Housing Services is not required to abide by the decision of the hearing officer if the decision is contrary to HUD regulations, requirements, or guidelines; contrary to federal, state or local law; or deemed not to be in the best interest or generally accepted standards held by the agency. If Housing Services determines that it is not bound by a hearing decision, the family shall be promptly notified of the determination and of the reasons for such a determination.

16. Terms You Should Know

Adjusted Income: Income after deductions.

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP): The payment to the owner is equal to the lower of either: the Payment Standard minus the TTP, or the gross rent minus the TTP. (Gross rent includes the Rent to Owner plus any allowance for tenant-paid utilities.)

Initial Housing Agency: The housing agency sending the family to another jurisdiction under portability.

Maximum Amount Allowable: The Rent to Owner cannot exceed this amount on an initial move-in. The amount is based on a family's household composition, income, assets and allowable deductions, and voucher size.

Payment Standard: An amount used to calculate the monthly housing assistance payment for a family. The Payment Standard used in rental portion calculations is the lesser of the Payment Standard for the voucher size or unit size, or the Gross Rent (Rent to Owner plus Utility Allowance). The housing agency establishes its own Payment Standards using the Fair Market Rent schedule published by HUD. A family cannot pay any difference between the Maximum Allowable Rent and the Rent to Owner a landlord may be asking.

Portability: The ability of Housing Choice Voucher holders to move to a different jurisdiction.

Receiving Housing Agency: The housing agency "receiving" the family who has requested portability. The Receiving Housing Agency may choose to administer the voucher and bill the Initial Housing Agency, or absorb the voucher, at which time the family will become a participant of the Receiving Housing Agency.

Rent to Owner: The total rent the owner charges for rent for the unit, including any taxes.

Tenant Rent: The amount the tenant is required to pay the owner based on the TTP calculation, the voucher size, the unit size, and the Payment Standard.

Total Tenant Payment (TTP): The Total Tenant Payment (TTP) for the voucher program is the greater of: (1) 30% of the family's monthly adjusted income; (2) 10% of the family's gross monthly income; or (3) Mesa minimum rent of \$50. TTP includes the tenant's rent and the pre-calculated Utility Allowance for the unit. The TTP may or may not be 30% of the family's adjusted monthly income depending upon the type of utilities in the unit and how is responsible for paying the utilities, in addition to any supplied appliances (I.e., stove, refrigerator).

Utility Allowance: The estimate of the average monthly utility bills for a unit based on the type of unit, size of unit, utility provider, and tenant-paid utilities. Utility allowances have been calculated using the rates of the utility companies providing services in Mesa.

Utility Reimbursement Payments (URP): Those families whose 40% of adjusted income is less than the utility allowance for the unit they have selected, may be eligible for a utility reimbursement payment (URP) each month. This payment is the difference between 40% of income and utility allowance for the unit. Those families receiving a utility reimbursement do not pay any rent to the landlord.