



HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER FACT SHEET

The Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program is the federal government's major program for assisting very low-income families, the elderly and the disabled to afford decent, safe and sanitary housing in the private market. Since housing assistance is provided on behalf of the family or individual, participants are able to find their own housing, including single-family homes, townhomes and apartments. The participant is free to choose any housing that meets the requirements of the program and is not limited to units located in subsidized housing projects.

The Housing Authority of East Baton Rouge Parish receives federal funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to administer the voucher program in East Baton Rouge Parish and the City of Plaquemine. A family that is issued a housing voucher is responsible for finding a suitable housing unit of the family's choice where the owner agrees to rent under the program. This unit may include the family's present residence. Rental units must meet minimum standards of health and safety, as determined by the Housing Authority. A housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by the Housing Authority on behalf of the participating family. The family then pays the difference between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by the program.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE (ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS)?

Eligibility for a housing voucher is determined based on the total annual gross income and family size and is limited to US citizens and specified categories of non-citizens who have eligible immigration status. Applicants must also pass a criminal background screening and cannot be subject to a lifetime sex offender registration. In general, the family's income may not exceed 50% of the median income established for East Baton Rouge Parish, although the Housing Authority targets assistance to those families at the extremely low-income level.

HOUSING VOUCHERS – HOW DO THEY FUNCTION?

The HCV program places the choice of housing in the hands of the individual family. Families are encouraged to consider several housing choices to secure the best housing for the family's needs. A housing voucher holder is advised of the unit size for which s/he is eligible based on family size and composition.

HOW DO I APPLY?

When the determination is made to accept applications, the HOUSING AUTHORITY advertises through advertisement in the local newspaper and the agency website (www.ebrpha.org) stating the date(s), location(s) and all other pertinent information needed to apply. Since the demand for housing assistance often exceeds the limited funding available to the Housing Authority, long waiting periods are common. In fact, the Housing Authority will close its waiting list when it has more families on the list than can be assisted in the near future. The Housing Authority does not provide emergency housing.

THE RENT SUBSIDY

The Housing Authority calculates the maximum amount of housing assistance allowable. The HCV family must pay 30% of its monthly adjusted gross income for rent and utilities. By law, at no time may a family pay more than 40% of their adjusted monthly income towards rent and utilities. The Housing Authority will pay the difference in rent to the owner on your behalf.

TENANT'S OBLIGATION

When a family selects a housing unit, and the Housing Authority approves the unit and lease, the family signs a lease with the landlord for at least one year. The tenant may be required to pay a security deposit to the landlord. After the first year, the landlord may initiate a new lease or allow the family to remain in the unit on a month-to-month lease. When the family is settled in a new home, the family is expected to comply with the lease and the program requirements, pay its share of rent on time, maintain the unit in good condition and notify the Housing Authority of any changes in income or family composition.

LANDLORD'S OBLIGATION

The role of the landlord in the HCV program is to provide decent, safe and sanitary housing to a tenant at a reasonable rent. The dwelling unit must pass the program's housing quality standards and be maintained up to those standards as long as the owner receives housing assistance payments. In addition, the landlord is expected to provide the services agreed to as part of the lease signed with the tenant and the contract signed with the Housing Authority.

