

Section 8 - Housing Choice Voucher Program

The Section 8 Housing Assistance program was created by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 to assist lower income families in obtaining a decent place to live at a rent that they can afford. Under this program, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) administers a citywide Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program that is the largest Section 8 voucher program in the nation with more than 83,000 active Section 8 tenants and over 29,000 owners currently participating in the program. NYCHA pays part of the rent each month directly to the landlord for an eligible family, which has been given a **Voucher**, in accordance with regulations of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD provides the funding for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.

The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program works as a rent subsidy allowing families to pay a reasonable share of income for rent with the government making up the difference up to a specific limit. The subsidy paid to the landlord, called housing assistance payment (HAP), is usually the difference between 30% of household income and the contract rent. Tenant selection and occupancy policies permit landlords and NYCHA to examine an applicant's history, including criminal background, to ensure selection of a responsible tenant. NYCHA has the power to deny admission of individuals with a history of use or abuse of drugs or alcohol, or of criminal behavior that interferes with the peaceful enjoyment of the premises by other residents. Eligibility for assistance under the program is limited to U.S. citizens and some categories of non-citizens and is determined based on total annual gross income and family size.

Families select housing of their choice in neighborhoods of their choice. They can also choose to move to anywhere else in the United States, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands so long as there is a Section 8 Program being administered in that locality. When a prospective apartment is found, the rent must be reasonable relative to comparable market rate housing in the area, and the apartment must meet Housing Quality Standards (HQS) set by HUD. A family may choose a unit with a higher rent than the maximum limit allowed for subsidy (known as the payment standard) and pay the owner the difference. However, a family cannot pay more than 40% of income when initially moving to a new unit. Section 8 participants are also required by federal law to submit household income documentation each year to determine continued eligibility in the program. This process is called the recertification or the annual review.

An annual apartment inspection is conducted by NYCHA Inspectors to ensure compliance with HUD HQS. The apartment must pass an HQS inspection before the family may move into the apartment and it must be inspected at least once every 12 months while the unit remains in the Section 8 Program.