

Landlord Handbook



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Denver, CO 80204

OFFICE HOURS
Tuesday - Friday: 8:00 am. – 4:30 pm.

Monday: Closed to the Public



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OUR MISSION

DHA's mission is to develop and provide high-quality, affordable housing with responsive services, enabling people and communities to thrive.

We sincerely appreciate you taking part in the Housing Choice Voucher Program and your valuable support of Denver families in need. Landlord engagement is vital to ensuring our ability to fulfill our mission and effectively serve our community.

WELCOME

The Denver Housing Authority (DHA) has created this handbook to provide detailed information to property owners, managers and Housing Providers about the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, formerly known as the Section 8 Housing Assistance Program.

Housing Choice Voucher Program

What is the HCV Program?

The Housing Choice Voucher Program is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and is administered through Public Housing Agencies (PHAs). The program was established to provide rental assistance to very low-income families for housing located in areas of opportunity, i.e., access to healthcare, education, transportation, fresh food, etc.

Random Choice Lottery Process

Interested persons apply online to participate in the DHA HCV Lottery. The Random Choice Lottery opens annually during the third week of each September. Public notice of the Lottery opening is published in local newspapers, DHA's website, and other venues throughout the city. Interested persons are encouraged to apply online at www.denverhousing.org. DHA will conduct random drawings from the Lottery pool based on available funding.

Application Process

Once selected, the Lottery recipient receives an "Invitation to Apply" letter which is followed by an intake process to determine program eligibility.

Basic Eligibility Requirements:

- **Citizenship:** U.S. Citizen (at least one family member)
- **Income Limits:** Household income within 30% - 50% of Area Median Income
- **Criminal Screening:** Prohibit persons currently engaged in illegal drug activity, fugitive felons, federal property methamphetamine convictions, permanent/lifetime registered sex offenders, etc.

Applicants can be denied for violent criminal activity, unlawful sexual behavior, or conviction of manufacturing or otherwise producing methamphetamine.

Seeking Denver Landlords

The HCV Program is always seeking Denver landlords to join the team. Please share the program's highlights with other housing providers.

Tenant Background

HCV conducts the initial tenant screening for all adult family members including verification of family members' names, birth date, Social Security number, income and family composition. Landlords should conduct screening for suitability based on the criteria required for non-subsidized families.

Property Listings

Housing Providers can list and remove properties at no cost.

Direct Deposit

Housing Assistance Payments are deposited monthly directly into the landlord's accounts.

Landlord Web Portal

Landlords can conveniently log on to view and track payment history and more.

Compliance Conferences

Experienced HCV team members meet with families to discuss compliance issues.

Financial Support

Financial support is provided for HCV Participants who suffer from job changes or economic challenges.

HQS Inspections

Housing Inspectors conduct biennial inspections per Housing Quality Standards and will notify both the Housing Provider and renter of any concerns.

Emergency Inspections

HQS items requiring immediate attention are addressed quickly by HCV inspectors. HCV Inspectors will conduct emergency inspections within 24 hours and immediately notify both the family and Housing Provider of issues.

Program Education for Participants

New Admission Orientation sessions are conducted to share information regarding the program's policies and procedures. The orientation includes, but is not limited to:

- How to find safe, decent and affordable housing
- How to complete a Request for Tenancy Approval
- Review of Housing Quality Standard (HQS) guidelines
- How to navigate the Move-in/Lease-up process
- Review of HCV program Participant obligations



Gold Star Renters Club

Through this voluntary training, our goal is to support, empower and educate HCV Participants in the art of being a "Gold Star Renter" while also encouraging their participation in various DHA programs designed to foster financial fitness and economic self-sufficiency.

HCV Participants that complete the Gold Star course are awarded a Certificate of Completion. The certification demonstrates to Housing Providers that these tenants took the initiative to learn how to be a great resident and a "Gold Star Renter."



FAMILY OBLIGATIONS

Families are required to uphold HUD Family Obligations to participate in the HCV Program. In addition to the HUD obligations, families must also comply with DHA procedures and policies, all of which are covered during the family orientation. Select family obligations are summarized below.

Annual Re-Certification

HCV Participants are obligated to verify their income and family composition annually. This process is initiated and tracked by the HCV division. A family's failure to comply with this process is grounds for termination from the HCV Program.

Once the Annual Re-Certification is completed both the head of household and housing provider are notified of the results via a Contract Change Clause form. The form will detail the HCV Participants' portion of the contract rent and DHA's portion of the contract rent.

(See Example Below)



Interim Re-Determination

HCV Participants who experience a change in their income or family composition are required to report the change to the HCV department. Changes may adjust the portion that the family and housing authority pay towards the contract rent. When these changes occur, Housing Providers and Families are issued a Contract Change Clause by the HCV office.

Changes to the household composition require the Housing Provider to acknowledge the household changes..

If the family experiences an income decrease, the change will be effective the month following the date the change was reported. Unless there is a case of fraud, income increases allow at least a 30-day notice of change.

Grounds for Termination

HCV Participants are expected to uphold their obligations to the HCV Program. Failure to comply will result in a termination of their housing assistance.

If the HCV Participants' housing is being terminated, DHA will notify the HCV Participant via certified mail with a proper 30-day notice.

Reasons for termination may include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to supply requested information to DHA by the due date
- Verification of unauthorized occupants living in the home
- Evidence of violent criminal activity
- Documentation of eviction (Executed Writ of Restitution)
- Vacating a unit without notice

Hearing Process

In most cases, terminated families have the opportunity to dispute the termination via an Informal Hearing. The hearing must occur before the effective date of termination, or the termination date will be extended. The HCV Participant must request a hearing within ten (10) business days. Informal Hearings are conducted with a third-party hearing officer, where both DHA and the HCV Participant discuss the termination.

The hearing officer has ten (10) business days to find a determination of whether the housing assistance should be reinstated or remain terminated.

If the termination is overturned, the HAP payments will resume as normal. If the termination is upheld, the original 30-day notice of termination still applies, and no future payments for that HCV Participant will be made.

Vouchers and Lease-Ups

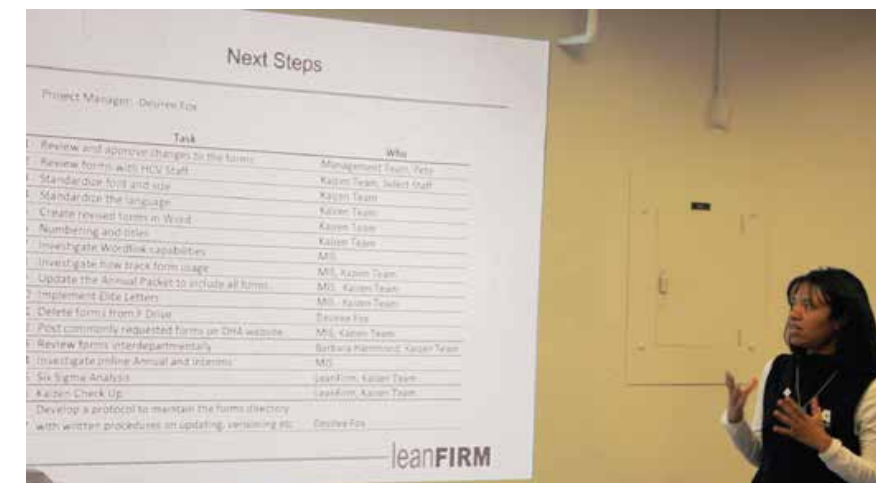
All HCV Participants are issued a voucher valid for at least 60 days, with the option to request extensions for a total of 120 days. During that period the HCV Participants:

1. Must identify a suitable unit from the open market,
2. Have an inspection completed, and
3. Begin the lease-up process.

Failure to find a unit within sixty (60) days may result in the loss of the voucher. The availability of extensions varies; however, extensions may be requested as a Reasonable Accommodation and are granted as qualified.

After a unit is selected, the HCV participant seeks approval to rent the unit from the Housing Provider. The family follows the same application and screening process as non-subsidized applicants. Once approved by the Housing Provider to lease a unit, an unexecuted copy of the rental lease and the Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) packet is submitted to the housing authority for review and approval.

After the Request for Tenancy Approval form is approved, a unit inspection is conducted.



Leasing

HUD mandates that the leasing process from the time of a request to payment shall be no more than 60 days from the lease effective date. DHA's goal is 30 days or less. The approval process consists of the following:

- Review of the Request for Tenancy Approval form to ensure completeness.
- Affordability test to ensure that the family can afford to lease the unit. Participants are not allowed to pay more than 40% of their income towards rent and utilities during the initial lease term.
- W9: Review for completeness.
- Housing Provider Obligation: Review for signature.
- Housing Provider & Participant Certification: Review of signature.
- Review of Unexecuted Lease Agreement to confirm that the family and Housing Provider rent, utility and appliance responsibilities agree with the RFTA.
- Lead-based Paint (LBP): Review for completeness.
- Rent Reasonableness: Ensure that the requested contract rent is reasonable compared to similar unsubsidized units within a .25-mile radius or less.
- HAP Contract: Contractual agreement between the Housing Provider and DHA.



More About Determining Rent Reasonableness

DHA may determine the Rent Reasonableness of a contract rent at any time. Rent Reasonableness determination should confirm that the requested rent amount is appropriate.

To ensure that the rents charged by Housing Providers are reasonable, DHA will compare:

1. The rent amount for the voucher-assisted unit to the rent amounts for similar unassisted units in the market-place.
2. The rent amounts to those for similar units on the premises or nearby.

DHA considers location, quality, size, unit type, amenities, housing services, maintenance, utilities and age of the unit when determining Rent Reasonableness.

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Housing Provider Denials and Cancellation of HAP Contracts

DHA can cancel Housing Assistance Payments if the Housing Provider:

- Has a history of failing to terminate tenancy for drug-related or violent criminal activity.
- Exhibits abusive or threatening behavior towards DHA personnel.
- Fails to maintain the rental unit in accordance with HQS guidelines (*excludes tenant-caused damages*).
- Fails to enforce the lease.
- Makes a "side-arrangement" to charge additional rent in excess of the DHA approved amount.
- Personally engages in drug-related or violent criminal activity.

Once the tenant vacates the unit the HAP contract is automatically terminated, effective on the date the unit is vacated.

Important Things to Remember

- As a landlord, you should treat HCV renters as you would any non-subsidized renter.
- DHA is NOT a party to the lease agreement; the contract is between the landlord and the tenant.
- Landlords should collect a damage deposit that they deem appropriate.
- The landlord should always enforce the lease for renters that are not complying with the lease agreement. (*Provide copies of correspondence or documents to DHA*).
- The landlord performs evictions per state and local laws.
- Landlords should conduct periodic inspections of their unit to ensure that the renter is maintaining the unit.
- The issue of damages to the unit is between the landlord and the tenant. It is also the responsibility of the landlord to maintain the unit in proper living condition.

Rental Increases

- Housing Providers may request a rent increase at the end of the initial lease term for each unit.
- The Housing Provider must give DHA and the client sixty (60) days written notice of the new proposed rent increase amount.
- Each rent Increase must meet Rent Reasonableness to be approved and processed.
- Client/tenant has the option to move rather than accept the new rental amount.

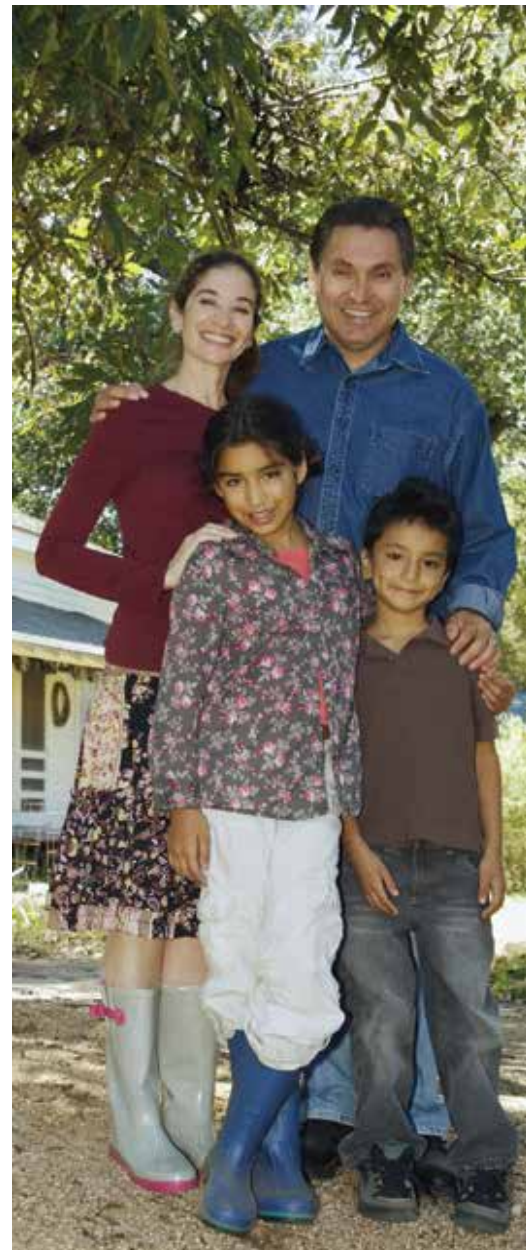
Portability

HCV Participants who live in the City and County of Denver at the time of application may request to transfer their HCV voucher assistance from city-to-city or state-to-state.

HCV Participants who are transferring their voucher into Denver must follow the same regulations, PHA processes and policies. These regulations include mandatory orientations, procedures and notification to the housing authority before they can lease-up.

Landlord Changes (Ownership/Management/ Address)

Notice of the change must be submitted to DHA in writing with supporting documents. If an agent is added, a copy of the management agreement must be filed with DHA.



HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS (HQS) INSPECTIONS

HUD regulations require DHA to conduct a basic housing quality standards (HQS) inspection of all units before Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) are executed on behalf of the family.

There are currently 14 critical aspects of HQS performance requirements and acceptability criteria. They include requirements for all types of housing units, including single and multifamily dwelling units as well as specific requirements for single room occupancy, shared housing and group residences.

Initial Inspection: Occurs when DHA approves a request received by the HCV Participant to lease a specific housing unit by submitting an RFTA packet to DHA.

Biennial Inspection: Conducted every two years to ensure the housing unit continues to meet the HQS guidelines throughout the tenancy of the HCV Participant.

Special Inspection: Either a complaint or quality control inspection. If a complaint is filed by a tenant, owner or member of the general public, an HQS inspector will evaluate the home. Quality control inspections examine a random sample of housing units for auditing each year.

Emergency Inspections: If a unit is considered unsafe due to lack of utilities, flood, fire, structural damages or any other item deemed as an emergency. This inspection is typically scheduled within one business day. Corrective action must take place within 24 hours of inspection.

14 KEY ASPECTS OF HQS

- Sanitary Facilities
- Food Preparation and Refuse Disposal
- Space and Security
- Thermal Environment
- Illumination and Electricity
- Structure and Materials
- Interior Air Quality
- Water Supply
- Lead-Based Paint
- Access
- Site and Neighborhood
- Sanitary Condition
- Smoke Detectors
- Water Supply



Lead-Based Paint

Lead-based paint requirements apply to all dwelling units built **before January 1, 1978**, and occupied, or to be occupied, with one or more children under the age of 6.

Please ensure the unit does not have defective paint surfaces prior to the HQS inspection.

HQS inspections include a visual assessment of defective paint for interior and exterior surfaces of the unit.

Defective paint is defined as peeling, chipping, chalking, cracking paint and damaged substrates.

Lead-Based Surfaces

Interior Surfaces: de minimis level is larger than two square feet in any one interior room including floors, walls, and the ceiling.

Exterior Surfaces: de minimis are a total of 20 square feet on all exterior surfaces.

If the deteriorated paint exceeds the minimum for either interior or exterior, the deteriorated surfaces require lead hazard testing. If lead hazards are detected, safe work practices and clearance must be performed.

Lead-Based Paint

Clearance examinations must be performed by a person who has EPA or State-approved training and is licensed or certified to perform clearance examinations.

It is the responsibility of the property owner to:

- Obtain a certified inspector
- Protect the residents and their belongings
- Conduct cleanup and submit the clearance certification to DHA once completed

Lead-Based Paint and Lead-Based Paint Hazard

The landlord and HCV Participant are both required to sign the *Disclosure of Information on Lead-Based Paint and Lead-Based Hazards*. The Lead Listing provides the names of firms that can provide clearance testing:

Call 1-800-424-LEAD or log on to www.epa.gov/lead.



GLOSSARY

Acronyms Used in the Housing Choice Voucher Program

DHA	Denver Housing Authority
HAP	Housing assistance payment
HCV	Housing choice voucher
HQS	Housing quality standards
HUD	Department of Housing and Urban Development
LBP	Lead-based paint
PHA	Public Housing Agency
RFTA	Request for tenancy approval

