

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SECTION 8 HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM

1. What is the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program?

The housing choice voucher program is a housing assistance program funded by the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and administered locally by the Guam Housing and Urban Renewal Authority. The program assists very low-income families to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing. Eligible families are issued a voucher and responsible for finding a suitable housing unit of their choice. Upon agreement with the owner, a housing assistance contract is executed between GHURA and the owner. The housing subsidy is then paid to the owner directly on behalf of the participating family. The family pays the difference between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by the program.

2. How do I apply for Section 8?

Interested applicants must apply online to apply for the Section 8 HCV Program. The Housing Authority will announce the opening and closing of the waitlist through a widely circulated media source when applications are being accepted and how applications should be submitted.

3. How do I qualify for the Section 8 Program?

To qualify for housing assistance, you must meet the following criteria:

- The applicant must be 18 years of age or older
- Meet the very low-income limit for your family size (based on annual gross income); and
- Require adequate housing

4. What can I expect after I apply online?

All applications received online by the closing date will undergo a random selection process to establish a two-year waitlist. GHURA uses a lottery system to develop a two-year waitlist, and applicants will be randomly selected through a computer-generated process, ranked, and placed on the waitlist. Applicants who were selected will be notified in writing of their selection. Those applicants who were not selected will not get a notification, and their names will be discarded.

5. How is eligibility determined for the Section 8 HCV Program?

The following factors determine applicant eligibility: (1) the family's annual household income must not exceed the HUD income limit for the family size; (2) The applicant must meet the Citizenship requirement; and (3) Each family member must disclose a Social Security Number. GHURA will also perform additional screening for criminal history and past evictions from other housing-assisted programs.

6. What is a Voucher?

The voucher (form HUD-52646) is a document issued to an eligible applicant before admission to the Section 8 HCV Program. The voucher authorizes the family to search

for an appropriate housing unit to rent. The voucher document will include the name of the family, the unit size the family qualifies for, the date the voucher is issued, the voucher's expiration date, and any extensions that may be granted. The document also explains the Section 8 HCV Program, the types of units that will be approved or disapproved, illegal discrimination by landlords, and outlines the family's obligations.

7. When can I expect to receive a voucher?
A family will receive a voucher upon selection from the waitlist and must attend a mass screening orientation and a voucher briefing. The voucher document is issued during the voucher briefing.
8. How and when can I follow up on the status of my application?
An applicant may follow up on the status of their application anytime by going to the GHURA website at www.ghura.org and clicking on "application status ."The applicant must enter their last name and the last four digits of their social security number. The website will display the family's number on the waitlist and the waitlist numbers currently being processed by GHURA.
9. Am I guaranteed to receive housing assistance if my name is on the waitlist?
No, being placed on a waiting list does not guarantee the applicant to receive housing assistance. It simply means they have passed the essential pre-eligibility requirement for the program. The applicant will receive housing assistance only when their name reaches the top of the waitlist, is screened, and is deemed eligible.
10. Am I required to submit any documentation with my application?
No, submission of documents is not required with the application. Upon admission, GHURA will notify the family of their selection and instructions on when and what type of documents to submit.
11. If my family information has changed, do I report it to GHURA?
Applicants must report changes to the family's contact number and mailing address. The applicant needs to update their information at least every six months. When the applicant's name reaches the top of the waitlist, GHURA will use the information to contact the family about their selection and pending requirements. GHURA will notify the family in writing, followed by a phone call. GHURA will make at least three attempts to try to reach the family. If unsuccessful attempts, GHURA will drop the family from the waitlist and move on to the next applicant.
12. What should I expect when I am selected to receive Section 8 Housing Assistance?
When the family is notified of their selection to receive Section 8 housing assistance, they must immediately respond to the notification. The applicant must submit all requested documents promptly and attend all scheduled briefings and appointments. If

the family fails to respond, GHURA will assume the family is no longer interested in receiving housing assistance and will move on to the next applicant family on the waitlist.

13. Am I required to attend the orientations and briefings?

Attending the mandatory orientations and voucher briefings is a prerequisite for admission to the Section 8 HCV Program. Participating in the orientation and briefings provides the family with important information about the Housing Choice Program, how the program works, how to find a suitable unit, how to recognize if you are being discriminated against, and to know your rights as an applicant and participant.

14. If I am denied housing assistance, what are my rights as an applicant?

GHURA will notify a family who is ineligible to receive housing assistance in writing. The notification will include the reasons for the denial, information on the applicant's right to an informal review, and instructions on requesting an informal review.

Forms of denial of assistance may include: the PHA declining to place the applicant's name on the waitlist; denying or withdrawing the family a voucher; refusing to enter into a HAP contract, to approve a lease, or refusing the applicant's request to port to another jurisdiction.

GHURA is not required to provide the applicant the opportunity for an informal review for the following:

- Discretionary administrative determination by the PHA
- General policy issues or class grievances
- A decision on the family unit size under the PHA subsidy standards
- A PHA determination not to approve an extension of the voucher term
- A PHA determination not to approve the tenancy; and
- A PHA determination that a unit selected by the applicant is not in compliance with Housing Quality Standards.

15. What are some common reasons for the denial of housing assistance?

Specific reasons an applicant may be denied housing assistance are as follows:

- The applicant's annual household income exceeds the income limit
- The applicant refuses to disclose or does not have an assigned Social Security Number
- The applicant has a criminal record for a drug or violent-related crime
- The applicant owed money to the PHA
- The applicant was previously evicted from an assisted housing program
- The applicant was threatening or abusive toward a PHA employee; and
- The applicant's voucher expired.

16. Do I have an assigned caseworker while on the waitlist as an applicant?

No, applicants on the waitlist are not assigned a caseworker (Housing Specialist).

17. What do I do when I find the unit I want to rent?

Upon finding the right home to rent and all parties agree to the lease terms, the owner must complete the required documents in the landlord packet. The owner must contact the housing authority to make an appointment to register the unit and schedule the inspection of the unit. When the unit passes inspection, the owner and GHURA will schedule an appointment for contract signing. The participant may move in on the agreed-upon date, and all utility services are connected.

Housing assistance will commence only when a contract has been executed, and all utility services have been installed. The participant is responsible for rent if the family moves in before the execution of a contract. GHURA will not approve or execute a contract if the unit fails the Housing Quality Standards inspection.

18. What is a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract?

A HAP contract is an agreement between the owner and GHURA. The agreement outlines explicitly when housing assistance will be paid to the owner on behalf of the Section 8 participant.

19. What is my role as a Section 8 HCV Program tenant?

As a Section 8 tenant, you are responsible for finding an appropriate unit to rent and for abiding by the requirements of the lease agreement. The lease agreement is an agreement between the owner and the tenant, which describes the responsibilities of the owner and tenant. As a Section 8 tenant, you and your family must also comply with program rules defined in part C of the HAP contract.

20. What is the landlord's role under the Section 8 Program?

The owner or landlord is responsible for screening the unit's potential renter and enforcing the lease agreement. The owner/landlord must also ensure the rental unit is well maintained at all times.

21. What is GHURA's role under the Section 8 Program?

GHURA administers the Section 8 Housing choice voucher program following program regulation and the Administrative Plan. GHURA is responsible for screening applicants for eligibility and ensuring housing assistance payments are made on time.

22. How is the level of assistance calculated?

The maximum assistance GHURA can provide a family is the lesser of the payment standard minus 30 percent of the family's monthly adjusted income or the gross rent for the unit minus 30 percent of adjusted monthly income.

23. Do participants pay a share of the rent?

Participants pay 30 to 40 percent of the family's monthly adjusted income.

24. What is the Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspection, and why is it mandatory?

The Housing Quality Standards (HQS) are the prescribed HUD minimum standards a unit must pass to qualify for Section 8 tenant occupancy. HQS standards are required both at initial occupancy and during the lease term. HQS standards apply to the building, premises, and unit. The HQS inspection is mandatory for all assisted units under the Section 8 program. The HQS is essential because it ensures the family occupies a safe, decent, clean home.

25. Who is responsible for security deposit and utility service connections?

The Section 8 participant is responsible for paying the security deposit and connection of utility services. The participant is also responsible for making timely monthly utility service payments. When a unit's essential utility services are disconnected, the family may risk losing their housing assistance unless services are reconnected within 24 hours.

26. Does my housing assistance include a utility allowance?

Yes, if the Section 8 family is responsible for tenant-paid utilities they will receive a utility allowance.

27. Can I request to move to another unit?

After the first initial 12 months under the assisted unit's contract, the family may request to move to another unit or to move to another jurisdiction under the portability option. The family must notify GHURA and the landlord at least 30 days before their intent to move.

28. What must I do to prepare for a move?

The family should adequately plan their move, starting by notifying the landlord and the housing authority at least 30 days before the move. The family should clean and make necessary repairs to the unit and save money for moving expenses, the security deposit, and utility hookups.

29. What restrictions can deny my request to move?

A participant's family may not move unless the 12 months of their initial contract is up. GHURA may deny a request to move if the family is not in good standing with their current lease and has not complied with the family obligations as stated in part C of the tenancy addendum.