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1. WHAT ARE SECTION 8 HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHERS?

The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program (HCVP) is the federal government's major program for assisting very low income families, the elderly, and the disabled to rent decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market. Since the housing assistance is provided on behalf of the family or individual, participants are able to find and rent privately owned housing, including single-family homes, townhouses, 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.

Housing choice vouchers are administered locally by public housing agencies (PHAs).

The PHAs receive Federal funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to administer the voucher program. A family that is issued a housing voucher is responsible for finding and selecting 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 PHA. A housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by

the PHA 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.

2. AM I ELIGIBLE?

Eligibility for a housing voucher is determined by the PHA based on total annual gross income and family size and is limited to U.S. citizens and specified categories of non-citizens who have eligible immigration status. In general, the family's total income may not exceed 50% of the median income for the county or metropolitan area in which the family chooses to live. By law, a PHA must provide 75 percent of its vouchers to applicants whose incomes do not exceed 30 percent of the area median income. Median income levels are published by HUD and vary by location. The PHA serving your community can provide you with the income limits for your area and family size. If the PHA determines that your family is eligible, the PHA will put your name on a waiting list, unless it is able to assist you immediately. Once your name is reached on the waiting list, the PHA will contact you, verify your eligibility, and issue a voucher. During the family verification process, the PHA will collect information on family income, assets and family composition. The PHA will verify this information with other local agencies, your employer, and bank and will use this information to determine program eligibility and the amount of the housing assistance payment.

3. HOW DO I APPLY?

If you are interested in applying for a voucher, contact your local PHA. There are approximately 130 Local Housing Authorities (LHAs) throughout Massachusetts that administer housing choice vouchers. Each HA has its own policies regarding when applications are accepted and in what manner these applications are collected and processed. The HCVP is also administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) through eight regional administering agencies, each of which serves a number of cities and towns, and the Lynn Housing Authority. A list of these agencies is attached. In order to apply for the HCVP, call the PHA and/or regional administering agency in your area to find out if they have a HCVP program, and if they are currently accepting applications.

4. LOCAL PREFERENCES AND WAITING LISTS; WHAT ARE THEY AND HOW DO THEY AFFECT ME?

Since the demand for housing assistance often exceeds the limited resources available to HUD and the local housing agencies, long waiting periods are common. In fact, a PHA may close its waiting list when it has more families on the list than can be assisted in the near future.

PHAs may establish local preferences for selecting applicants from its waiting list. For example, PHAs may give a preference to a family who is (1) homeless or living in substandard housing, (2) paying more than 50 percent of income for rent, or (3) involuntarily displaced. Families who qualify for any such local preferences may be able to move ahead of other families on the list that do not qualify for any preference. Each PHA has the discretion to establish local preferences to reflect the housing needs and priorities of its particular community.

To best manage the hundreds, or even thousands, of applicants on the housing voucher

waiting list, PHAs regularly “update” the list, and eliminate any applicants who are no longer interested in the program. Keep in mind that people may apply to many different PHAs, and be on many waiting lists at the same time. Few applicants take the time to inform the PHA on their own that they are no longer interested in obtaining a voucher. Therefore, many PHAs update their waiting list once a year or perhaps even every six months to keep it as current as possible. To stay on the waiting list, it is important to respond to any PHA inquiries and inform the PHA of any change in address or preference status.

5. HOUSING VOUCHERS -- HOW DO THEY WORK?

When an applicant has been selected from the waiting list and has been determined to be eligible, he or she will be notified by the PHA and told to come in for a housing voucher Briefing. At the Briefing, the voucher will be “issued” to the applicant, and all of the rules and procedures about locating and leasing units and participating in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program will be explained. Applicants are also asked to update their income and housing status at this time.

Once the voucher is issued, the individual usually has 60 days to find a place to rent that meets the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program guidelines. If circumstances warrant, one or two additional 30-day extensions may be granted (for a total of 120 days). The PHA has the ability to create a policy that allows for further extensions under certain circumstances. If appropriate housing is not found during the established time period, the voucher expires and is subsequently issued to the next eligible household on the waiting list.

The housing choice voucher program places the choice of housing in the hands of the individual family. A very low-income family who has been selected by the PHA to participate is encouraged to consider several housing choices to secure the best housing for its needs. A housing voucher holder is advised of the unit size for which it is eligible based on family size and composition.

The PHA determines a payment standard that is the amount generally needed to rent a moderately-priced dwelling unit in the local housing market and that is used to calculate the amount of housing assistance a family will receive; however, the payment standard does not affect the amount of rent a landlord may charge or the family may pay. A family that receives a housing voucher can select a unit with a rent that is below or above the payment standard. The housing voucher family must pay 30% of its monthly adjusted gross income for rent and utilities, and if the unit rent is greater than the payment standard the family is required to pay the additional amount. By law, whenever a family moves to a new unit where the rent exceeds the payment standard, the family may not pay more than 40 percent of its adjusted monthly income for rent.

The housing unit selected by the family must meet an acceptable level of health and safety before the PHA can approve the unit. When the voucher holder finds a unit that it wishes to occupy and reaches an agreement with the landlord over the lease terms, the PHA must inspect the dwelling, review the lease for approval and determine that the rent requested is reasonable. If the unit is found to meet all voucher inspection requirements, the participant signs a lease with the landlord. The participant may be required to pay a security deposit to the landlord.

6. THE RENT SUBSIDY

Under the housing choice voucher program, a family may choose a unit that rents for more than the payment standard and may pay more than 30% of its monthly adjusted income for rent. The PHA calculates the maximum amount of housing assistance allowable. The maximum housing assistance is generally the lesser of: 1) the payment standard minus 30% of the family's monthly-adjusted income; or, 2) the gross rent for the unit minus 30% of monthly adjusted income. The family pays the landlord the difference between the total rent and the maximum amount of rental assistance. The amount of rental assistance paid by the HA changes with the payment standard while the amount the tenant pays varies with the actual rent. For example, if a family locates a unit that rents below the payment standard, it would pay 30% of its monthly-adjusted income for rent. On the other hand, if a family decides to rent a unit above the payment standard, it would pay over 30% of its monthly-adjusted income for rent. The family's rent share also changes when its income or family circumstances change.

7. CAN I MOVE AND CONTINUE TO RECEIVE HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER ASSISTANCE?

A family's housing needs change over time with changes in family size, job locations, and for other reasons. The housing choice voucher program is designed to allow families to move without the loss of housing assistance. Moves are permissible as long as the family notifies the PHA ahead of time, terminates its existing lease within the lease provisions, and finds acceptable alternate housing.

Under the voucher program, new voucher-holders may choose a unit anywhere in the United States if the family lived in the jurisdiction of the PHA issuing the voucher when the family applied for assistance. Those new voucher-holders not living in the jurisdiction of the PHA at the time the family applied for housing assistance must initially lease a unit within that jurisdiction for the first twelve months of assistance. A family that wishes to move to another PHA's jurisdiction must consult with the PHA that currently administers its housing assistance to verify the procedures for moving.

ROLES: THE TENANT, THE LANDLORD,

8. THE HOUSING AGENCY, & HUD

Once a PHA approves an eligible family's housing unit, the family and the landlord sign a lease and, at the same time, the landlord and the PHA sign a housing assistance payments contract that runs for the same term as the lease. This means that everyone – tenant, landlord, and PHA has obligations and responsibilities under the voucher program.

Role of the Tenant:

When a family selects a housing unit, and the PHA 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 program requirements, pay its rent share on time, maintain the unit in good condition and notify the PHA of any changes in income or family composition.

Role of the Landlord:

The role of the landlord in the voucher program is to provide decent, safe, and sanitary housing to tenants 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 PHA.

Role of the HA:

The PHA administers the voucher program locally. The PHA provides a family with the housing assistance that enables the family to seek out suitable housing and the PHA enters into a contract with the landlord to provide assistance payments on behalf of the family. If the landlord fails to meet his/her obligations under the lease, the PHA has the right to terminate assistance payments. The PHA must reexamine the family's income and composition at least annually and must inspect each unit at least annually to ensure that it meets minimum housing quality standards.

Role of HUD:

To cover the cost of the program, HUD provides funds to allow PHAs to make housing assistance payments on behalf of the families. HUD also pays the PHA a fee for the costs of administering the program. When additional funds become available to assist new families, HUD invites PHAs to submit applications for funds for additional housing vouchers. Applications are then reviewed and funds awarded to the selected PHAs on a competitive basis. HUD monitors PHA administration of the program to ensure program rules are properly followed.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND OTHER SUBSIDY PROGRAMS

For additional information about the voucher program, contact either the local PHA serving your community or the Public Housing Division in the HUD office located in your state or community. There may be a long wait for assistance under the housing voucher program. If the PHA also administers the public housing program or Indian housing programs, applicants for the housing choice voucher program may also ask to be placed on the waiting list for the public housing or Indian housing programs. HUD also administers other subsidized programs and you may obtain a list of projects in your area from the Office of Housing at your local HUD office. Under the HUD administered programs, families apply directly to the owner or management agent of the subsidized project. A list of LHAs and DHCD regional administering agencies that manage housing voucher programs in Massachusetts is attached.

9. DHCD'S BUREAU OF FEDERAL RENTAL ASSISTANCE, THROUGH ITS EIGHT REGIONAL ADMINISTERING AGENCIES, ADMINISTERS THE FOLLOWING SPECIAL SECTION 8 PROGRAMS

The Family Unification Program (FUP)

DHCD, in conjunction with the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS), administers 711 Section 8 Family Unification Program subsidies, targeted to the following populations:

Battered women and their children who have been displaced because of domestic abuse and have not secured permanent, standard, replacement housing; and Families with children in placement who have substantially complied with all DSS service plan tasks but do not have permanent or adequate housing to which their children can be returned.

Youths at least 18 years old and not more than 21 years old

(have not reached 22nd birthday) who left foster care at age 16

or older and do not have adequate housing. (This is a small pilot program with the

capacity to serve only 20 youths)

Applicants in the first two categories must have an open DSS case at the time of referral/application, at the time of selection, and at the time a subsidy is issued. DSS area offices make all referrals to this program. The family must be otherwise Section 8 eligible.

Veterans Affairs Supported Housing (VASH)

DHCD administers 62 HCVP vouchers as part of a program established by HUD and the federal Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) that serves homeless veterans with psychiatric and/or substance abuse disorders. The program combines a set-aside allocation of HCVP vouchers provided by HUD, and ongoing case management and clinical services provided by a component of the VA: Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH).

Housing vouchers allocated to DHCD in connection with this program can only be issued to eligible applicants referred to DHCD by the VASH staff.

The VASH program is located in Bedford, MA. DHCD's regional administrator in Boston manages most VASH subsidies. However, VASH participants may live in other regions so long as the Bedford VA determines that it is able to provide services to these participants. These vouchers are reissued at turnover to eligible veterans referred by the VASH program.

The Housing Options Program (HOP)

DHCD administers 345 Vouchers targeted to homeless disabled households residing in the greater Boston area as part of a one time only set-aside program established by Congress in 1994. DHCD's set-aside is known as the Housing Options Program (HOP), and is administered in collaboration with a number of state human service commissions and several nonprofit housing and supportive service organizations. The purpose of HOP is to supplement rental assistance funds with ongoing supportive services in order to facilitate successful tenancies for those homeless disabled persons selected to participate in the program.

Project Based Assistance (PBA) AIDS program

DHCD administers 38 Section 8 project-based units targeted to persons with AIDS and HIV. Provider agencies are responsible for assuring that participants are linked with appropriate services. This program includes: 6 single room occupancy (SRO) units located in Springfield, MA and 1) 21 SROs; 2) 8 two-bedroom; 3) 1 three-bedroom; and 4) 2 four-bedroom unit, located in Boston, MA.

Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)

This DHCD initiative, administered in each of DHCD's Section 8 regions, provides 229 Housing Choice Vouchers for persons living with HIV/AIDS. This program links rental assistance and appropriate supportive services. The goal of this supported housing program is to assist individuals and families with AIDS or HIV by helping them to stabilize their lives, enhance their ability to cope with their illness, and promote living with dignity.

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McKinney Section 8 SRO Moderate Rehabilitation

DHCD administers five McKinney Section 8 SRO Mod Rehab projects targeted to homeless individuals as follows:

44 units in Springfield

38 units in Worcester

15 units in Gardner - This project is designated for veterans with support services provided by the Veterans Administration (VA).

19 units in Haverhill. This project is designated for veterans with support services provided by the Veterans Administration (VA).

8 units in Lowell. It is designed for persons living with AIDS and HIV. Services are provided by Catholic Charities.

JOBLink

The JOBLink Welfare-to-Work Program is part of the national Welfare-to-Work Housing Voucher Program, authorized by Congress and implemented in 2000. It provides 2000 vouchers to families making the transition from public assistance to employment by providing tenant-based rental assistance to meet critical housing needs. JOBLink is operated by DHCD and the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). All applicants must be referred to the appropriate regional administering agency by DTA staff. Families interested in applying for the JOBLink Housing Voucher Program should contact their current or former DTA worker or office to request that a JOBLink referral be made. Referred families are placed on the JOBLink waiting list, and will be contacted for further application processing as vouchers become available.

Raising the Next Generation

The purpose of the Raising the Next Generation Program (RNG) is to provide housing assistance to very low-income elderly (or near elderly) persons who are responsible for raising young children. RNG is a unique program that links federal rental assistance in the form of Section 8 Vouchers with support services designed for grandparents raising children in Boston's metropolitan area. Both the DHCD and the Boston Aging Concerns Young and Old (BACYOU) initiated this program in 1998 and are responsible for the management of support services. Very low-income families with a head of household 50 years of age or older and who is the custodian responsible for raising young children, and are otherwise Section 8 eligible may apply. All applicants must be referred to DHCD by BACYOU staff.

Mainstream Housing

The Mainstream Housing Program provides tenant-based housing assistance in the form of a Housing Choice Voucher to very low income disabled families and individuals. The Mainstream program provides tenant-based Housing Choice Vouchers to families where the head of household or spouse has a disability. Households are directly referred by providers of services to persons with disabilities, who in turn provide assistance to the

household. Referrals must be otherwise HCVP eligible. Currently there are 275 Mainstream subsidies distributed throughout the Commonwealth.

Designated Housing

The Designated Housing Program (DSG) is a collaborative effort of the DHCD and MassHousing. DSG provides tenant-based Housing Choice Vouchers for non-elderly disabled individuals who are on the waiting lists at specific MassHousing developments. The purpose of DSG is to provide alternative housing opportunities for those disabled persons who may not receive assistance at developments that have established preferences for the admission of elderly families. If there are not enough applicants on the MassHousing waiting lists, non-elderly disabled individuals who are referred by providers of services to persons with disabilities are then eligible for consideration, but will only be served if there are no other eligible applicants from the MassHousing lists. Referrals must be otherwise HCVP eligible. Currently, there are 600 Designated vouchers distributed throughout the Commonwealth.

Department of Mental Health Voucher Program

The Department of Mental Health Voucher Program (DMHVP) is a collaborative effort of DHCD and the Department of Mental Health to provide increased community-based housing options to individuals with disabilities. This program utilizes 125 Section 8 vouchers and is administered throughout the Commonwealth by DHCD's Section 8 regional administering agencies. DMHVP is an integral part of the Commonwealth's housing continuum that provides permanent housing for persons with disabilities.

Department of Mental Retardation Voucher Program

The Department of Mental Retardation Voucher Program (DMRV) is a collaborative effort of DHCD and the Department of Mental Retardation to provide increased community-based housing options to individuals with disabilities, whose placements are a part of either the Rolland or Boulet settlement agreements. This program utilizes 144 Section 8 vouchers and is administered throughout the Commonwealth by DHCD's Section 8 regional administering agencies. DMRV is an integral part of the Commonwealth's housing continuum that provides permanent housing for persons with disabilities.

Independent Living Program

The Independent Living Program (ILP) is a collaborative effort of DHCD and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission to provide increased community-based housing options to individuals with disabilities. This program utilizes 130 Section 8 vouchers and is administered throughout the Commonwealth by DHCD's Section 8 regional administering agencies. ILP is an integral part of the Commonwealth's housing continuum that provides permanent housing for persons with disabilities.

Greater Plymouth Area Supportive Housing Program

The Greater Plymouth Area Supportive Housing Program (GPASHP) is a unique collaboration between DHCD and the South Shore Housing Development Corporation (SSHDC). The GPASHP program is targeted to those families who can live independently within the community, but need case management and support services in order to achieve and maintain successful tenancies. The GPASHP program is a unique

collaboration between DHCD, and the South Shore Housing Development Corporation (SSHDC). The GPASHP provides 10 Section 8 vouchers to very low-income, homeless families with either a disabled parent or child. In addition to administering the rental subsidy, SSHDC will also provide case management and coordinate the support services.

For more information about any of these programs, contact the Bureau of Federal Rental Assistance at (617) 573-1150.

10. REGIONAL NON-PROFIT AGENCIES THAT ADMINISTER THE SECTION 8 HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM

[BERKSHIRE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CORP. \(BHDC\)](#) 413-499-1630
FAX 413-445-7633
74 NORTH STREET
PITTSFIELD, MA 01201

[COMMUNITY TEAMWORK, INC. \(CTI\)](#) 978-459-0551
FAX 978-453-9150
167 DUTTON STREET
LOWELL, MA 01852

[HAP, INC. \(HAP\)](#) 413-233-1500
FAX 413-731-8723
322 MAIN STREET
SPRINGFIELD, MA 01105

[HOUSING ASSISTANCE CORPORATION \(HAC\)](#) 508-771-5400
FAX 508-775-7434
460 WEST MAIN STREET
HYANNIS, MA 02601

[FRANKLIN COUNTY REG
HSG REDEVELOPMENT AUTH \(HRA\)](#) 413-863-9781
FAX 413-863-9289
42 CANAL STREET
TURNERS FALLS, MA 01376

[METROPOLITAN BOSTON HSG
PARTNERSHIP, INC. \(MBHP\)](#) 617-859-0400
FAX 617-426-4256
125 LINCOLN STREET
BOSTON, MA 02111-2503

[RCAP SOLUTIONS, INC. \(RCAP\)](#) 978-630-6600
FAX 978-630-2751
205 SCHOOL STREET – PO BOX 159
GARDNER, MA 01440-0159

**SOUTH MIDDLESEX OPPORTUNITY
COUNCIL (SMOC)**

300 HOWARD STREET
FRAMINGHAM, MA 01701

508-620-2335
FAX 508-620-2352

**SOUTH SHORE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT
CORP. (SSHDC)**

169 SUMMER STREET
KINGSTON, MA 02364

781-422-4200
FAX 781-585-7483

**11. Local Housing Authorities that Administer the
Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP)**

Abington (781) 878-5219	Bellingham (508) 883-4999	Chelmsford (978) 256-7425	Fall River (508) 675-3500
Acton (978) 263-5339	Belmont (617) 484-2160	Chelsea (617) 884-5617	Falmouth (508) 548-1977
Adams (413) 743-5924	Berkshire Ct (413) 443-7138	Chicopee (413) 592-6132	Fitchburg (978) 343-7025
Amesbury (978) 388-2022	Beverly (978) 922-3100	Clinton (978) 365-4150	Framingham (508) 879-7562
Amherst (413) 256-0206	Billerica (978) 667-2175	Cohasset (781) 383-1948	Franklin County (508) 863-9781
Andover (978) 475-2365	Boston (617) 988-4000	Concord (978) 369-8435	Gardner (978) 632-9530
Arlington (781) 646-3400	Bourne (508) 563-7485	Danvers (978) 777-0909	Gloucester (978) 283-1234
Athol (978) 249-4848	Braintree (781) 848-1484	Dedham (781) 326-3543	Greenfield (413) 774-2932
Attleboro (508) 222-0151	Bridgewater (508) 697-7405	Dennis (508) 394-3120	Groveland (978) 352-6331
Auburn (508) 832-3852	Brockton (508) 588-6880	Dracut (978) 957-3515	Halifax (781) 294-4520
Avon (508) 588-1847	Brookline (617) 277-2022	Duxbury (781) 934-6618	Hanover (781) 826-8431
Barnstable (508) 771-7222	Burlington (781) 272-7786	Easton (508) 238-4747	Hanson (781) 293-7474
Belchertown (413) 323-4064	Cambridge (617) 864-3020	Everett (617) 387-6389	Haverhill (978) 372-1107

Holbrook	(978) 682-8607	Plymouth	(978) 851-7392
(781) 767-0024	Middleborough	(508) 746-2105	Wakefield
Holden	(508) 947-3824	Quincy	(781) 245-7328
(508) 829-9182	Milford	(617) 847-4350	Walpole
Holliston	(508) 473-9521	Reading	(508) 668-7878
(508) 429-6266	Millis	(781) 944-6755	Waltham
Holyoke	(508) 376-8181	Revere	(781) 894-3357
(413) 539-2220	Milton	(781) 284-4394	Ware
Hudson	(617) 698-2169	Rockland	(413) 967-4477
(978) 562-9268	Natick	(781) 878-4156	Warren
Ipswich	(508) 653-2971	Rockport	(413) 436-7184
(978) 356-2860	Needham	(978) 546-3181	Watertown
Lawrence	(781) 444-3011	Salem	(617) 923-3950
(978) 683-2751	New Bedford	(978) 744-4432	Wayland
Leominster	(508) 997-4800	Salisbury	(508) 655-6310
(978) 537-2861	Newburyport	(978) 462-8600	Webster
Lexington	(978) 465-7216	Sandwich	(508) 943-1634
(781) 861-0900	Newton	(508) 394-6378	Wellesley
Lowell	(617) 964-8080	Saugus	(781) 235-0223
(978) 937-3500	North Adams	(781) 233-2116	West Springfield
Lynn	(413) 663-5379	Scituate	(413) 788-0988
(781) 592-1966	North Andover	(781) 545-3375	Westfield
Malden	(978) 682-3932	Shrewsbury	(413) 568-9283
(781) 322-9460	North Attleboro	(508) 757-0323	Weymouth
Mansfield	(508) 695-5142	Somerville	(781) 331-2323
(508) 339-6890	North Reading	(617) 625-1152	Williamstown
Marlborough	(978) 664-2982	Southbridge	(413) 458-8282
(508) 624-6908	Northampton	(508) 765-5858	Wilmington
Maynard	(413) 584-4030	Springfield	(978) 658-8531
(978) 897-8738	Norwood	(413) 785-4500	Winchendon
Medford	(781) 762-8115	Stockbridge	(978) 297-2280
(781) 396-7200	Oxford	(413) 298-3222	Winchester
Medway	(508) 987-5055	Stoughton	(781) 721-5718
(508) 533-2434	Peabody	(781) 344-6599	Woburn
Melrose	(978) 531-1938	Stow	(781) 935-0818
(781) 665-1622	Pembroke	(978) 897-4100	Worcester
Merrimac	(781) 293-3088	Taunton	(508) 798-4500
(978) 346-8231	Pittsfield	(508) 823-6308	Yarmouth
Methuen	(413) 443-5936	Tewksbury	(508) 398-292

