

CHAPTER 8

VOUCHER ISSUANCE AND BRIEFINGS

[24 CFR 982.301,982.302]

INTRODUCTION:

The NBHA's goals and objectives are designed to assure that families selected to participate are equipped with the tools necessary to locate an appropriate housing unit. Families are provided sufficient knowledge and information regarding the program and how to achieve maximum benefit while complying with program requirements. When eligibility has been determined, the NBHA will conduct a mandatory briefing to ensure that families are provided clear information on how the program works. The briefing will provide a broad description of owner and family responsibilities, NBHA procedures, and how to lease a unit. The family will also receive a briefing packet that provides more detailed information about the program including the benefits of moving outside areas of poverty and minority concentration. This chapter describes how briefings will be conducted, the information that will be provided to families, and the policies for how changes in the family composition will be handled.

A. FUNDING AVAILABILITY:

When funding is available, the NBHA will issue vouchers to applicants whose eligibility has been determined. The number of vouchers issued must ensure that the NBHA stays as close as possible to fully utilizing the funding provided by HUD. The NBHA performs a monthly review to determine number of units leased and dollars spent, applications that can be processed, the number of vouchers that can be issued, and to what extent the NBHA can over-issue if at all.

The NBHA may over-issue vouchers only to the extent necessary to meet leasing goals, provided that NBHA does not experience a funding reduction from HUD. If the NBHA finds it is over-leased, it must adjust future issuance of vouchers in order not to exceed the ACC budget limitation over the fiscal year. Over issued vouchers will be honored if possible. Based on funding, the NBHA may have to terminate vouchers. New voucher holders will be required to remain in New Britain for one year before porting out.

B. BRIEFING TYPES AND REQUIRED ATTENDANCE: [24CFR 982.301]

Initial Applicant Briefing:

A full HUD-required briefing will be conducted for applicant families who are determined to be eligible for assistance. The briefings will be conducted in groups. Families who attend group briefings and still have the need for individual assistance will be referred to designated staff.

Briefings will be conducted in English. Briefings will also be conducted in Spanish as needed.

The purpose of the briefing is to explain how the program works and to explain the documents in the voucher holder's packet to families, so that they are fully informed about the program. This will enable families to utilize the program to their advantage, and it will prepare them to discuss the benefits of the program with potential owners and property managers.

The NBHA will not issue a voucher to a family unless the head of household has attended a briefing and signed the voucher. Applicants who provide prior notice of inability to attend a briefing will automatically be scheduled for the next briefing. Applicants who fail to attend two

scheduled briefings, without prior notification and approval of the NBHA, may be denied admission based on failure to supply information needed for certification.

Briefing Packet: [24 CFR 982.301(b)]

The documents and information provided in the briefing packet for the voucher program will comply with all HUD requirements. The family is provided with the following information and materials.

- The term of the voucher, and the NBHA policy for requesting extensions or suspensions of the voucher (referred to as tolling).
- A description of the method used to calculate the housing assistance payment for a family, including how the NBHA determines the payment standard for a family; how the NBHA determines total tenant payment for a family and information on the payment standard and utility allowance schedule. How the NBHA determines the maximum allowable rent for an assisted unit. Where the family may lease a unit. For family that qualify to lease a unit outside the NBHA jurisdiction under portability procedures, the information must include an explanation of how portability works.
- The HUD required tenancy addendum, which must be included in the lease.
- The Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) form, and a description of the procedure for requesting approval for a tenancy.
- An explanation of security deposit requirements.
- A statement of the NBHA Policy on providing information about families to prospective owners.
- The NBHA Subsidy Standards including when and how exceptions are made and how the voucher size relates to the unit size selected.
- The HUD brochure on how to select a unit and the HUD brochure “A Good Place to Live” on how to select a unit that complies with HQS.
- The HUD pamphlet on lead-based paint entitled “*Protect Your Family From Lead in Your Home*”. Information on Federal, State and Local equal opportunity laws and a copy of the housing discrimination complaint form (HUD 903). The NBHA will also include the pamphlet “Fair Housing; Its Your Right” and other information about fair housing laws and guidelines and the phone numbers of the local fair housing agency and the HUD enforcement Office.
- A list of landlords or other parties willing to lease to assisted families or help in the search of known units available for the voucher issued. The list includes landlords or other parties who are willing to lease units or help families find units outside areas of poverty or minority concentration.
- If the family includes a person with disabilities, notice that the NBHA will provide a list of available accessible units known to the NBHA.
- The family obligations under the program.
- The grounds on which the NBHA may terminate assistance for a participant family because of family action or failure to act.

- NBHA informal hearing procedures including when the NBHA is required to offer a participant family the opportunity for an informal hearing, and how to request the hearing.
- Information packet including an explanation of how portability works, including a list of neighboring housing agencies with the name, address and telephone number of a portability contact person at each agency for use by families who move under portability.
- The family's rights as a tenant, and a program participant.
- Requirements for reporting changes between annual recertifications.

If the family includes a person with disabilities, the NBHA will ensure compliance with 24 CFR 8.6 to ensure effective communication.

Move Briefing:

A move briefing may be held for participants who will be reissued a voucher to move (and who have been recertified within the last 120 days). This briefing includes incoming and outgoing portable participants. The NBHA may require a recertification within 120 days of a move.

C. ENCOURAGING PARTICIPANTION IN AREAS WITHOUT LOW-INCOME OR MINORITY CONCENTRATION:

At the briefing, families are encouraged to search for housing in non-impacted areas and the NBHA will provide assistance to families who wish to do so.

The NBHA has areas of poverty and minority concentration clearly delineated in order to provide families with information and encouragement in seeking housing opportunities outside highly concentrated areas.

The NBHA has maps that show areas outside of poverty and minority concentration and has assembled information regarding the characteristics of these areas (such as job opportunities, schools, transportation, and other services) to use in briefings to inform voucher holders of the full range of areas to search for housing.

The NBHA will analyze when voucher holders are experiencing difficulties locating or obtaining housing units outside the areas of concentration.

The assistance provided to such families includes:

- Direct contact with landlords;
- Providing information about services in various non-impacted areas;
- Formal or informal discussions with landlords groups;
- Formal or informal discussions with social services agencies;
- Meeting with rental referral companies or agencies.

D. **ASSISTANCE TO FAMILIES WHO CLAIM DISCRIMINATION:**

The NBHA will give participants a copy of HUD Form 903 to file a complaint.

E. **SECURITY DEPOSIT REQUIREMENTS:** [24 CFR 982.313]

The owner is not required to, but may collect a security deposit from the tenant.

Security deposits charged by the owner may not exceed the maximum prescribed by state or local law. (Currently, for residents under 62, 2 months plus current month; over 62, one month plus current month)

For lease-in-place families, responsibility for first and last month's rent is not considered a security deposit issue. In these cases, the owner should settle the issue with the tenant prior to beginning of assistance.

F. **VOUCHER ISSUANCE:** [24 CFR 982.204 (d), 982.54 (d) (2)]

During the briefing session, each household will be issued a voucher that authorizes the family to search for a suitable unit. The voucher is evidence that the NBHA has determined the family eligible for the program and plans to subsidize the family if the family selects a unit that can be approved under program requirements. The voucher specifies the unit size for which the family is qualified for and briefly describes how the program works and explains the family obligations under the program. Admission to the program occurs when the lease and contract become effective.

Term of Voucher: [24 CFR 982.303, 982.54(d) (11)]

Vouchers will be issued for a term of 60 days. The family must submit a Request for Tenancy Approval within this period.

Extension for Reasonable Accommodations:

Subject to funding availability the NBHA will approve extensions to the search term, in 30 day increments. Families who want an extension must submit their request in writing prior to expiration. If the family needs and requests an extension of the initial voucher term as a reasonable accommodation. The NBHA may request a copy of the family search record, i.e. (1) list of housing searches and (2) Must provide temporary medical certification. The NBHA will extend the voucher term up to the term reasonably required for the purpose of making the program accessible to a family member who is a person with disabilities.

Tolling / Suspension of Search Time:

The voucher term will be suspended (the clock on the family's voucher is stopped) from the date a Request for Tenancy Approval is received until the NBHA approves or denies the request.

Assistance to Voucher Holders:

Families who require additional assistance during their search may call the NBHA Office to request assistance. Voucher holders will be notified at their briefing session that the NBHA periodically updates the listing of available units and how the updated list may be obtained.

The NBHA will assist families with negotiations with owners and provide other assistance related to the families' search for housing.

G. **VOUCHER ISSUANCE DETERMINATION FOR SPLIT HOUSEHOLDS**
[24 CFR 982.315]

In those instances when a family assisted under the Section 8 Program or an applicant becomes divided into two otherwise eligible families due to divorce, legal separation, or the division of the family, and the new families cannot agree as to which new family unit should continue to receive the assistance; lacking a determination by a court, the supervisor shall consider the following factors to determine which of the families will continue to be assisted:

- Which of the two new family units has custody of dependent children.
- Which family member was the head of household when the voucher was initially issued (listed on the initial application).
- The composition of the new family units, and which unit contains elderly or disabled members.
- Whether domestic violence was involved in the breakup.
- Which family members remain in the unit.
- Recommendations of social service professionals.

H. **REMAINING MEMBER OF TENANT FAMILY – RETENTION OF VOUCHER**
[24 CFR 982.315]

To be considered the remaining member of the tenant family, the person must have been previously approved, by the NBHA, to be living in the unit. A live-in attendant, by definition is not a member of the family and will not be considered a remaining member of the family.

In order for a minor child to continue to receive assistance as a remaining family member.

- The court has to have awarded emancipated minor status to the minor, or
- The minor is considered able to legally enter into a lease or rental agreement under Connecticut State Law, or
- The NBHA has to have verified that social services and/or the Juvenile Court has arranged for another adult to be brought into the assisted unit to care for the child(ren) for an indefinite period.

A reduction in family size may require a reduction in the voucher family subsidy size. Documentation of these factors will be the responsibility of the requesting parties.

If documentation is not provided, the NBHA will terminate assistance on the basis of failure to provide information necessary for a recertification.