

Protect Your Valuable Voucher

To protect your voucher, you must know & follow the Section 8 rules.

Communicate

- Report all changes in your income & family composition within 10 days.
- Respond to Section 8 letters promptly. Provide requested information if you have it or explain why you can't provide it.
- Keep a copy of all papers you give to & get from Section 8.
- Keep appointments — and call ahead of time if you can't make it.
- Put everything in writing — don't depend on phone messages.
- Keep written notes on everything you do.

You are not allowed to:

- Miss a rent payment;
- Let persons not on the voucher live in your home;
- Damage the property;
- Do drugs or other crimes;
- Disturb your neighbors;
- Lose utilities you are responsible for paying for.

Unauthorized Occupant

One of the most common grounds for voucher termination is “unauthorized occupant.” This means that Section 8 believes someone is living in your home who is not on the voucher. This could be either a friend or a relative. Report all changes timely and don't let friends or family “use your address” for any purpose.

Your landlord is not allowed to:

- Demand that you pay more than your Section 8 rent share or make other side payments;
- Demand that you pay Section 8's share of the rent;
- Fail to make repairs;

Tell your housing specialist if the landlord does any of these things. If not resolved, call Legal Aid.

Rent Adjustments

Your share of Section 8 rent should never be more than 40% of your income, including an allowance for any utilities you are responsible for paying. When your income goes up, your rent should go up, and when your income goes down, your rent should go down.

Duty to Report Changes

Section 8 rules require you to report increased income within 10 days after you start receiving the new income.

- It is your job to report the income. It is Section 8's job to verify your income by getting documents from your employer or other income source.
- If you report new income late, Section 8 can back-date your rent increase to when it would have started if you had reported timely.

But

If you lose income and delay reporting, your lower rent will not be back dated. It should go down the month after you report.

Rent Adjustment Delayed or Rent Too High?

- Contact your Housing Specialist.
- If Not Resolved
- Ask Section 8 for an Informal hearing.
- Put your request in writing.
- Collect all papers you need to document your income.

What happens when your Landlord fails a Section 8 inspection

Rent Abatement

Section 8 will pay your Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) as long as the landlord maintains the premises in good condition. If your landlord won't make repairs, call Section 8 for an inspection.

Here's what should happen if the landlord fails a Section 8 inspection:

- The inspector gives the landlord a deadline to make repairs.
- If repairs aren't complete, Section 8 may suspend the rent payments. This is called "abatement."
- Payments will resume only after the home passes another inspection. Section 8 will not pay the landlord rent for months that have been abated.
- The landlord is not allowed to demand that you pay the Section 8 share of rent.

But

- You **MUST** continue paying your share of the rent to the landlord.

Contract Termination

If abatement does not work, CMHA will terminate its contract with the landlord. This also terminates your lease.

- Section 8 should give you a Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA) form, with a deadline for taking your voucher to a new landlord.
- If you stay in the home after the termination deadline, the landlord will probably want you to pay the full market rent.

Voucher Termination

When Section 8 believes you broken rules, it will send you a termination notice. The notice must explain why you are being terminated and how to appeal if you want to fight the termination. If you appeal:

- Move fast. The termination notice will give you a deadline for appealing, usually only 10 days.
- If you appeal, Section 8 will schedule an "informal hearing"—which is like a trial.
- The hearing will generally be around a table at the Section 8 office. A housing authority "hearing officer" acts as judge, hears from both you and the Section 8 representative, and decides whether Section 8 can terminate you.
- Section 8 must continue paying your landlord until the hearing officer issues a decision.
- If the hearing officer rules in your favor, the termination will be canceled.
- To appeal the hearing officer's decision against you, you must sue the housing authority in Common Pleas Court. You have 30 days to file.
- If you stay in the home after the voucher has been terminated, you will owe the landlord full market rent.

Crimes & Drugs

Like public housing, Section 8 has very strong rules against crimes involving violence or drugs. You can lose your voucher for even a pot ticket.

And even if your grandson or friend is the one who got the ticket, your voucher could be terminated if they either lived with you or did something illegal at your home.