

Housing Authority of the City of Tucson/Pima County
Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program
NEWSLETTER

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DOCUMENTO EN ESPANOL, LLAME AL
TELEFONO 791-4739

JUNE, 2008

Summer Greetings, everyone!

This edition of our Newsletter provides information on current policies as well as updates on policy changes.

Our Landlord's Corner offers articles of interest to both landlords and clients, as our objective is to keep all parties informed.

Also, we are introducing a section on "Employee Spotlights" which will provide information on who we are and what our job is at the Housing Authority.

I welcome your comments and/or suggestions on these and any other topics you would like to see addressed in future issues. Please feel free to email me at Peggy.Morales@tucsonaz.gov or call me at 791-4739.

Oversubsidization Policy

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has issued regulations regarding oversubsidization (over-housing) in the Section 8 Program.

Effective with annual recertifications for 10/1/08, our PHA will begin evaluating the number of bedrooms for which the family is eligible and will make the necessary changes at the next annual recertification for families determined to be over-housed.

We understand implementing these regulations may result in some families having to pay more rent in their current unit or in some cases having to relocate to a smaller unit. However, our local policy must comply with this Federal requirement.

The following guidelines, per the PHA's Administrative Plan, will be used to determine each family's unit size without overcrowding or over-housing:

Number of Bedrooms	Number of Persons	
	Minimum	Maximum
0	1	1
1	1	3
2	2	5
3	4	7
4	6	9
5	8	11

These standards are based on the assumption that each bedroom will accommodate two (2) persons.

Every family member is to be counted as a person. In determining bedroom size, the PHA will include the presence of children to be born to a pregnant woman, children who are in the process of being adopted, children whose custody is being obtained, or children who are temporarily away at school or temporarily in foster care. An individual head of household may choose not to share a bedroom with his or her other family members.

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Your Section 8 “Team”

Effective March 1, 2008, our Lease and Contract Section was reorganized into teams. This change was made in order to meet our #1 goal of providing our clients – participants and landlords -with great customer service. So, instead of your file being assigned to one staff person, we are now taking the “**team approach**” to serving your housing needs.

To reach your team, please call one of the following hotlines: **Team A – 837-5432** or **Team B – 837-5431**. If you require assistance and don’t know which team your case has been assigned to, please inquire at our main phone number – 791-4739.

Over the next few months, we will be closely evaluating how well this concept works for our clients, and will keep you informed of our progress.

Employee Spotlight

Lease & Contract Section



Pictured here are the Supervisors responsible for oversight of the Teams – Anita Lange (Team A) and Gloria Wesson (Team B). Together, these ladies have a combined experience of 46 years with the program, and are expertly qualified to answer all of your concerns.

Anita also wears another “hat” – that of Program Compliance Officer. Anita investigates reports of fraudulent activities in connection with the Section 8 program.

Portability Team



Vanessa Gonzalez and Lisa Higgins work together in assisting participants who wish to move (or port) to another Housing Authority area, as well as families who are coming into Tucson from another area. If you have questions regarding your portability options, please call the **portability hotline at 837-5430**.

Vanessa does double duty as the agent who answers questions and concerns addressed on the Team G Hotline. While Lisa also assists landlords with check problems addressed on the Landlord Hotline.



Achieving Your Dream of Homeownership May Be Closer Than You Think!!

Use your Section 8 housing assistance to pay a mortgage on your own home instead of renting! A limited number of qualified Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher holders will be offered this outstanding opportunity. To be considered, you must

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be a participant in the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program.

The FSS program offers you a chance to save money in an escrow account. After you enroll in FSS, if you have increased income due to employment, money is put aside each month in an account. This account can build over time, and when you successfully complete the program, the savings account goes to you. Some FSS participants have graduated and received \$10,000 or more from their account! Just think – this could be a wonderful opportunity to save for a home.

In the FSS Program, a case manager will work with you to set goals, and help you work toward them, step-by-step. Your FSS case manager will work closely with you to solve problems that might get in the way of achieving those goals. The FSS program also has scholarships available to attend school. Although FSS is a five-year program, you have the option to achieve your goals in less time and graduate early from the program. It's up to you.

If you would like more information, please call 791-4742 and ask to speak with someone from the FSS staff.

Mind Changers *New Item*

If you provide notice to our office of your decision to move and later change your mind, please be sure to **notify our office immediately in writing of this change.** Failure to do so could result in a suspension of your housing assistance benefit. This means you could end up paying the full contract rent on your unit until it passes inspection.

If you've already received a voucher and packet to move, your landlord must submit the Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA) from your packet in order for us to schedule the annual inspection of your unit.

Rent Change Policy *New Item*

Effective immediately, requests for rent or household composition changes **must be submitted in writing to the office.** A phone call will not be acceptable. Documentation to support the change (example: pay

check stubs, benefit award letter, birth certificates) must also accompany your written request.

Annual Inspections *New Item*

Please be aware that an adult family member (18 or older) **must be present at your unit for the annual HQS inspection.** Otherwise, we will not be able to conduct the inspection and will consider it a missed appointment. Our policy, as stated in the PHA's Administrative Plan, explains that we will take action to terminate the family's housing assistance if the family fails to allow inspection after two scheduled appointments.

Violence Against Women Act

In our January edition, we provided information on the **Violence Against Women Act** and Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005. If you or a member of your family is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence or stalking please file a report with the proper authorities. The Housing Authority may be able to provide housing options once you have submitted the required documentation.

For you information, we are providing the following list of agencies that assist victims of domestic violence:

AZ Department of Economic Security – Family Connections Phone: 594-6354

The Brewster Center Domestic Violence Services, Inc. Phone: 881-7201

Tucson Centers for Women and Children, Inc. Phone: 795-8001

Our Family Services Phone: 327-4583

Wingspan – Anti-Violence Project Phone: 624-0348

Southern Arizona Center Against Sexual Assault Phone: 327-7273

Catholic Community Services – Counseling Program Phone: 623-0344

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Southern Arizona Legal Aid Phone: 623-9465

Landlords, please be aware the Law provides specific guidance regarding denial of moves for this reason. Also, your Housing Assistance Payments Contract speaks to termination of the lease and contract, as well as bifurcation of the lease (HAP Contract, Part C, Tenancy Addendum, 8e) in these cases. For additional reference, the Arizona Residential Landlord and Tenant Act can be accessed at: <http://www.supreme.state.az.us/info/brochures/landlord.htm>

Landlord's Corner

- If you haven't received your monthly housing assistance payment or need to make a change in your landlord information, please leave a message on our **Landlord Hotline** at **837-5420**. A staff person will call you back to resolve the matter.

- **Landlords & Participants** – If you have a question about a check you received from our office, please call the **Landlord Hotline** before cashing it. Doing so, could eliminate the need to reimburse our Housing Authority at a later date.

- Our last **Landlord Briefing** was held on April 16th and was well attended. We are committed to presenting information relevant to your interests as well as changes in our program. We welcome your suggestions for topics at future meetings. The next briefing is planned for October, so watch for our notices to come in the mail!

- As a reminder, our PHA has these **additional items to HQS requirements:**

- Hot water pressure relief valve.
- Double deadbolt locks on all egress doors shall be readily operable from the side from which egress is to be made without the use of a key or special knowledge or effort.
- All bedrooms must have a door and closet, and be at least 81 sq. ft.

- Your **Housing Assistance Payments Contract** requires that you give 60-day notice to your tenant and the PHA before any change in rent goes into effect.

In order to facilitate this requirement, we send Decision Forms with the annual renewal paperwork so that ample time is provided to assure this requirement is met and to determine that the rent increase is reasonable. Your cooperation in completing and returning the Decision Forms by the established deadline is critical to finalizing the change in a timely manner.

If you are considering a rent increase at any time other than at the annual renewal, keep in mind that that the rent may not be increased during the initial term of your lease.

- An exciting change is occurring in our **process for issuing Housing Assistance Payments (HAP)** to landlords. For several months, we have been working closely with the City of Tucson's Accounting and Information Technology Departments to automate the process for issuing your monthly checks. The new process will allow for the electronic transfer of data for your monthly payments between our respective offices and will make for a more efficient and expedient processing of your payments.

In order to assure that your payments are accurate and up-to-date, your diligence in reporting changes - move-outs, evictions, etc. – as they happen will be imperative. Under this new automated system, over payments could automatically be deducted from your next HAP check without prior notice.

- **Have you considered EFT's?**

Have you heard the great news? Payment by electronic funds transfer (direct deposit) are now available to all landlords that receive housing assistance payments on behalf of their tenants!

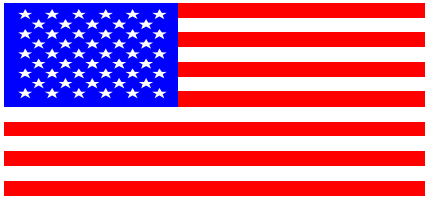
You can now have direct deposit without having an e-mail account. For those who want e-mail notification of payments, there are no restrictions on

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service providers – you can use your Hotmail or Yahoo e-mail account.

- *EFT payments are safer than checks.*
- *EFT eliminates lost or stolen checks.*
- *EFT payments are faster than checks, with funds available on the date payment is due.*
- *EFT payments are easy and convenient.*
- *EFT payments eliminate need to obtain and deposit or cash your check.*
- *EFT payments facilitate on-line banking at your bank or credit union.*

To enjoy the benefits of direct deposit, please call Tina Pizano at 837-5356. Tina will be happy to provide you with the requirements.



Good News for the City of Tucson and Pima County!

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Veterans Affairs (VA), in a joint effort developed a new initiative – the **HUD-VASH Program** to assist homeless veterans. The initiative will provide supportive housing for an estimated 10,000 homeless veterans nationwide!

The City of Tucson was one of 132 VA medical center/supportive service sites from across the country selected to partner with our Housing Authority to provide rental assistance to seventy (70) homeless veterans. Ongoing VA case management, health, and other supportive services will be provided by the VA and its medical centers.

Since this is a **special program for special people**, we are asking for your help. **If you, as a property owner/manager are interested in participating in this program by listing your rentals for VASH participants, please email Peggy.Morales@tucsonaz.gov.**