

NEWS FOR OWNERS AND MANAGERS IN THE RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Making the Move Smooth!

Step-By-Step Guide for Leasing to Tenants with Vouchers

When it's time to lease your unit, everyone involved wants to proceed as quickly as possible. You, the owner, are anxious to keep rent revenues flowing. The tenant is eager to move in. And, if a voucher is involved, the San Diego Housing Commission strives to accommodate both your needs. In that spirit, here are some tips to help ensure an efficient lease-up.

Select your tenant. Always conduct careful screenings just as you would with a non-assisted family. Also, make sure they have a Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) packet, as this is your proof that the tenant has a voucher and is eligible to move.

Set the rent. It will be approved as long as it is reasonable (consistent with rents for comparable unassisted units in the area) and the tenant's portion isn't more than 40 percent of the household's gross monthly income.

Help coordinate the inspection. Once the tenant has completed and turned in the RFTA packet, staff will schedule the inspection. They will check the unit's physical condition and whether the requested rent is approved. You will learn the outcome in two business days.

Sign and submit the contract and lease. You and the tenant need to complete, sign and turn in the Housing Commission's Housing Assistance Payment Contract and your lease agreement. Be sure not to alter any part of the contract. (If you feel an adjustment is needed, contact the Senior Housing Assistant assigned to your move.)

Have your tenant move in. Once the unit passes inspection and the rent has been approved, the Housing Assistance Contract will go into effect (as long as utilities have been turned on, the tenant has possession of the unit, and the tenant's previous lease is terminated).

Start receiving rent payments. Approximately two weeks after the Housing Commission has received the completed Housing Assistance Payment Contract and Lease Agreement, it will mail the Housing Commission portion of your first rent payment. Any retroactive payments will be made from the established effective date.



San Diego Housing Commission inspector Eric Smith tells owner Raymond Pacheco that his rental property passed inspection. The new tenants are now set to move into the 1930s-era North Park house.



Vouchers vs. Open Rental Market

How does the Housing Commission’s Rental Assistance Program compare to the open rental market? As you will see, they are the same in most regards – with additional benefits available through the voucher program.

TOPIC	OPEN RENTAL MARKET	VOUCHER PROGRAM
Tenant Selection	Landlord screens and selects tenant.	No difference
Landlord Rights and Responsibilities	Landlord maintains all rights and responsibilities accorded under state and federal laws.	No difference
Lease Termination	May be terminated for serious or repeated lease violations.	No difference
Evictions	If the tenant violates the lease, the landlord may evict in accordance with state law.	No difference
Security Deposit	Landlord may collect a security deposit in an amount up to twice the monthly rent for unfurnished units.	No difference
Lease Duration and Process	Landlord provides lease and selects the term.	Landlord provides lease and selects the term. Initial terms may be six months or one year, with renewals month to month. Unit must first pass inspection and have reasonable rent rate. Both parties sign Housing Assistance Contract.
Rental Vacancies	Landlords advertise by own means.	ADDED BENEFIT: Free online vacancy listing service.
Inspections	California law prohibits landlords from entering a rental unit for the sole purpose of inspecting a rental property. As a result, they may not learn of problems.	ADDED BENEFIT: Housing Commission inspects unit to ensure it meets health and safety standards. Landlords learn of problems ahead of time.
Rent Payments	Tenant pays 100 percent of rent. Payments might be late or missed.	ADDED BENEFIT: Owner receives Housing Commission’s portion of the rent by direct deposit on the first of every month. Voucher holder pays difference based on income.
Tenant Turnover	Some tenants may not be able to maintain monthly rent payments if faced by job or income loss.	ADDED BENEFIT: Subsidies enable voucher holders to afford their rent indefinitely because the Housing Commission’s portion goes up whenever a tenant’s income decreases.



VIEWpoint is published by the Rental Assistance Department as a way to keep rental owners/ managers updated on issues and policies regarding our programs. If you have any ideas for future stories – or if you would like extra issues sent to your staff – please contact Communications Specialist Janine Rojas at janiner@sdhc.org.



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