
How does the Section 8/Housing Choice Voucher program work?

Note: Section 8 and Housing Choice Voucher Program are two different names for the same program.

Housing Choice Voucher Program is a federally funded assistance program to help low-income people pay their rent that is administered through a local housing authority. People with Housing Choice vouchers find their own housing and pay a percentage of their income towards rent. The Housing Choice Voucher Program pays the remainder of the rent directly to the landlord.

It is a three-way partnership between the resident, the landlord and the housing authority. The lease is the contract between the resident and the landlord. The Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Contract is the document that governs the relationship between the landlord and the housing authority. The Family Obligations is the document between the resident (also referred to as voucher holder/participant) and the housing authority.

What agencies administer the Housing Choice Voucher Program in Boulder County?

Currently, there are five agencies that administer vouchers within Boulder County.

Boulder County Housing Authority –

303.441.1000 – landlords@bouldercounty.org

Boulder Housing Partners – 720-564-4610 –

landlords@boulderhousing.org

Longmont Housing Authority – 303-651-

8581 – landlords@longmontha.com

Mental Health Partners – Longmont contact -
303-247-8724, Rest of county contact 303-545-
0818 – landlords@mhpcolorado.org

Imagine! – 303-665-7789

What are some of the benefits of being a landlord in the program?

- Residents may be more diligent in paying their rent, maintaining their property, and other program requirements so as not risk losing their housing assistance
- The landlord maintains the right (and responsibility) to screen and choose their tenants
- The portion of rent assistance paid by the program is paid on time to the landlord monthly
- Participation can increase the pool of potential residents through marketing by the housing authority
- The required periodic property inspections can help insure that the property is well-maintained
- Many landlords derive personal satisfaction by renting to program participants because they are providing housing for low-income individuals/households

Landlords have the following responsibilities. They must:

- Use their own lease. The Housing Choice Voucher Program may require and provide lease addendums. The landlord must provide a copy of the lease to the resident's Voucher/Occupancy Specialist.
- Sign and return all required documentation in a timely manner.
- Sign, submit and provide updates for documentation and information as required, such as taxpayer identification information, change of address, change of name, and/or change of the

- building owner.
- Contact the resident's Voucher/Occupancy Specialist to alert them immediately of any lease violations.
- Provide copies of any eviction notices, if applicable, to the Voucher/Occupancy Specialist at the time the notice is sent to the resident.
- Perform all necessary maintenance to ensure the unit meets HUD's Housing Quality Standards.
- Allow the unit to be inspected and correct all report failures within the specified time period. Failure to make repairs may result in either the Housing Assistance Payment not being paid or termination of the HAP Contract.
- Comply with Fair Housing laws.

Steps involved in renting to a Housing Choice Voucher holder:

- A family with a current voucher views your apartment or home and wants to rent it.
- You screen the residents to make sure they are suitable.
- You agree to lease to the residents and contact the Voucher/Occupancy Specialist for approval.
- The Voucher/Occupancy Specialist checks to make sure the family can afford the rent, the rent is reasonable compared to other rents in the community, and the lease must contain certain information (including but not limited to names of owners and residents, address of rented unit, term of the lease, amount of monthly rent to owner, list of which utilities and appliances are to be supplied by the owner). The lease should be the same lease you would use for other non-assisted residents.
- The Voucher/Occupancy Specialist sends an inspector to check your apartment to make sure it meets Housing Quality Standards.
- After the apartment passes inspection, you will need to sign the Housing Assistance Payment Contract.
- The lease is signed with your residents, and the family moves in.
- The resident(s) pays their portion of the rent and the program pays the balance, usually through direct bank deposits.
- This process can generally take up to 10 business days, depending on when the unit is ready for inspection and the anticipated move-in date. The first payment is usually made within 10 business days (this may be different for each agency).

[You can view the program forms on the HUD web site:](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv)

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Housing Choice Voucher authorizes a family to look for an apartment and specifies the size of the voucher. <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/52646.PDF>

Request for Tenancy Approval is submitted to the office after the landlord agrees to rent to the tenant <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/52517.PDF>

Inspection Form is used to determine if the apartment meets the Housing Quality Standards <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/52580-A.PDF>

Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) contract is the contract between the landlord and the housing authority <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/52517.PDF>

(These forms require [Adobe Reader](#).)

Does the housing agency screen Housing Choice Voucher participants?

The housing agency does not screen Housing Choice Voucher participants in terms of suitability as a resident, however screening is done for eligibility for the program. The housing authority does conduct a criminal background check on all applicants prior to issuing a voucher assistance and using screening criteria specific to the Housing Choice program. As a landlord, it is imperative that you conduct your normal process, just as you would screen any residents. You are encouraged to ask for references, current and previous landlords, credit history, employment history, criminal record, etc., and check the information carefully. You may also contact the housing authority to verify previous landlord contact information.

There are many services available to help you screen tenants. These services can check to see if the prospective tenant has a criminal record, has been evicted, or has bad credit. When checking references, always contact the previous landlord as well as the current landlord, because the current landlord may want the residents to move out. The housing agency's main requirement is checking that the applicant meets the income limits and other program eligibility requirements. Screening the resident is the landlord's responsibility.

Who pays the security deposit?

If you want a security deposit, you must collect this from the resident. The Housing Choice Voucher program has no responsibility for damages, unpaid resident rent, or other claims you might have against the resident.

The security deposit you may collect is usually equal to one month's rent and is what would be charged to other non-assisted residents.

Do I sign a lease with the resident?

You must sign a lease with the resident for a minimum of one year. The lease should include:

- names of the landlord and resident
- address of the rental unit
- term of the lease and how it will be renewed
- monthly rental amount
- utilities that are paid by the resident
- appliances that are provided by the resident
- Tenancy Addendum (included with HAP Contract & located on HUD website)

You may include any other conditions that you normally include in your lease, if they do not violate any laws.

What kind of inspection is done?

Your rental unit will be inspected to make sure that it meets the Housing Quality Standards of the Housing Choice Voucher program. The inspector will examine the exterior of the building, the plumbing

and heating systems, the exits and hallways, and each room in the apartment to make sure the unit is safe, clean, and in good condition. The unit must be vacant at the time of the first inspection, and all utilities must be turned on. The inspector must have access to the unit itself, the basement, and all common areas.

The inspector uses a checklist form provided by HUD, the federal agency in charge of the Housing Choice Voucher program. For each item on the list, the inspector marks if the unit passes or fails (or not sure). If repairs are needed, the inspector marks this on the form.

A family will not be allowed to rent your unit (or execute the lease agreement or HAP contract) until you have made any needed repairs and the unit passes the inspection.

The rental unit will be re-inspected each year. If problems are found, you must make repairs within the time allotted or Housing Assistance Payments will stop. Extensions may be requested depending on the situation.

How much rent can I charge?

The rent you charge must be reasonable compared to other units of similar size in your community. The Voucher/Occupancy Specialist will compare your rent to their payment standards, which are based in part on the fair market rents in your city or town. The fair market rents are the average gross rents (rent plus utilities) being paid in your community for modest apartments of varying sizes.

If the gross rent (rent plus utilities) for your apartment is less than or equal to the payment standard, the residents pay approximately 30% of their monthly income towards rent and the program pays the rest. If the rent is higher, the residents must make up the difference. However, they are not allowed to pay more than 40% of their income towards rent when they first rent an apartment. (Boulder Housing Partner does allow households to pay more than 40% of their income towards rent, if they so choose to do so. The agreement is that if they cannot afford the rent and are evicted for non-payment of rent, they will lose their rental assistance.)

If you want to increase the rent when you renew the lease, you must request the increase in writing for approval, 60 days in advance from Voucher/Occupancy Specialist. The increase in rent must be reasonable, and in line with other units of the same size and with the same type of amenities in the area.

How are utilities handled?

If your lease states that the resident pays the utility provider directly, their portion of the rent they pay is reduced by a standard utility allowance.

What happens if the resident is unable to pay their utilities?

There are resources in the community that may assist residents to pay their utilities. Resources include:

Low Income Energy Assistance (LEAP) Program – 303-441-1000
Emergency Family Assistance – 303-442-3042
OUR Center – 303-772-5529
Sister Carmen – 303-665-4342

How do I get paid?

The Housing Choice Voucher Program will use either direct deposit or mail a check for the housing authority portion of the rent at the beginning of each month. They will continue to do so as long as the resident remains eligible for the program and your apartment meets program standards.

You are responsible for collecting the resident portion of the rent each month.

May I evict a Housing Choice Voucher participant?

You may evict a voucher holder in the same way you would evict a non-Housing Choice Voucher resident. The same laws apply.

In that event, you must notify the housing authority in writing of the resident's lease violations and eviction actions and provide all documentation of legal notices and warning letters provided to the resident(s). If notice is provided to the housing authority at the same time as the resident, the Voucher/Occupancy Specialist may be able to assist with compliance issues. You may not, however, evict a resident for non-payment of the Housing Assistance Payment, unless assistance has been terminated through fault of the resident. If Housing Assistance Payments have been stopped due to landlord's responsibility, the resident is not responsible for the Housing Assistance Payment.

What if I have a problem with a resident?

You should interact with your resident as you would with any resident you have. The exception is that the resident's Voucher/Occupancy Specialist should be notified in circumstances such as unpaid rent; additional household members not listed on the lease; the use, sale or manufacturing of illegal drugs; violence and/or domestic abuse; or police involvement. You should communicate with your resident on other lease issues such as property maintenance, noise issues, pet concerns, parking issues, and property entrance agreements. If you are uncertain about which issues should be brought to staff, please contact the Voucher/Occupancy Specialist. They are available to assist you in enforcing your lease by discussing these issues with the residents and reminding them of their obligations under your lease.

How are residents currently supported?

A small portion of vouchers do come with supportive services, which are available (but not mandatory) for the household. These services are usually directed at a specific population. For example, there are vouchers specifically for family unification situations (when the Child Protection Agency is trying to reunite a child(ren) with their parent, or households who have been chronically homeless.

Voucher/Occupancy Specialists are also available to assist with issues and encourage residents to remain lease compliant, which is a program requirement. If households are not lease compliant, the household may lose their housing assistance. The housing authority is a partner in this three-way relationship and will assist where we are able. Housing authorities are not able to enforce the lease.

How often the housing authority check in with residents?

All housing authorities (except for Boulder Housing Partners) conducts an annual recertification of voucher households (BHP checks in every two – three years depending on household type). A recertification includes checking family composition and income and conducting an HQS inspection.

At times there are changes in the family composition or income that required a change in the amount of rent the resident needs to pay. Landlords will be notified in writing as soon as possible, and usually with a 30-day written notice, which is sent to both the resident and the landlord.

When does the HAP contract terminate?

The following are situations when the HAP contract would terminate:

- When the lease is terminated
- In the case of the death of a single-person household, assistance payments must stop as of the last day of the month in which the person passed away.
- If the entire household moves out without notice, the assistance payments will stop as of the last day of the month in which they left the unit.
- In the case of an eviction, assistance payments will stop once possession has been restored to the owner.

What do I do if I sell my property?

You must inform the housing authority if you there are any changes in ownership, preferably prior to the sale of the property. The Housing Assistance Payment Contract, like the lease, must be assumed by the new owner through the end of the lease term. The new owner will need to complete the W-9 form so the housing authority can make payments to the correct owner.

How do I update my information with the Housing Authority?

Changes need to be submitted in writing to the housing authority, and can be sent via mail, email or fax:

Boulder County Housing Authority –
3460 N Broadway, Boulder, CO 80304 –
landlords@bouldercounty.org – 720-564-2283

Boulder Housing Partners –
4800 N. Broadway, Boulder, CO 80304 –
landlords@boulderhousing.org – 303-302-1658

Longmont Housing Authority –
1228 Main Street, Longmont CO 80501–
landlords@longmontha.com – 303-651-8581

Mental Health Partners –
1000 Alpine Boulder, CO 80304 –
landlords@mhpcolorado.org – 720-880-3083

Imagine! – 1400 Dixon Avenue, Lafayette, CO
80026 – 303-665-7789

I have questions that have not been answered in this FAQ, who can I contact?

Boulder County Housing Authority

Kelly Gonzalez, HCV Program Manager
303-441-4944
landlords@bouldercounty.org

Boulder Housing Partners

Karen Kreutzberg, MTW and Federal Policy Director
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Longmont Housing Authority

Monique Antillon, Asset Manager
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