



## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### Q: What is the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program?

**A:** The San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC) helps more than 15,000 low-income households—including families, Veterans, seniors and individuals with disabilities—pay their rent in the City of San Diego through the federally funded Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.

### Q: How does the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program work?

**A:** Households that receive federal rental assistance from SDHC are responsible for paying a predetermined amount of their monthly rent based on the makeup of the household and income. SDHC pays the remainder of the contract rent, up to the applicable payment standard, directly to the landlord.

The payment standard is the maximum subsidy payment that a Housing Choice Voucher would pay for a rental housing unit. If the contract rent is more than the payment standard, the household pays the difference.

### Q: What is the process for renting to a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program participant?

**A:** Landlords pre-screen and select Housing Choice Voucher tenants in the same way they screen and select other tenants. Program participants look for rental housing of their choice and ask the landlord to accept them as a tenant.

If the landlord agrees to accept the program participant, the landlord and the participant complete the Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) form and submit the completed form to SDHC.

SDHC will review the RFTA, and arrange with the landlord to inspect the unit to determine if it meets program standards and to determine if the rent is reasonable

Following SDHC approval of the unit, the landlord and the tenant will sign the landlord's lease agreement. The landlord and SDHC sign a Housing Assistance Payment Contract, which identifies:

- Total rent
- Portion of the total rent paid by the tenant
- Portion of the total rent paid by SDHC

After the final contract is signed, SDHC authorizes the tenant to move into the rental housing unit.

The tenant is required to pay their portion of the total rent to the landlord monthly, and SDHC makes its monthly rental assistance payments directly to the landlord through direct deposit.

### Q: What is the purpose of the inspection?

**A:** SDHC is required to ensure that all housing units occupied by Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance participants meet certain health and safety standards that are set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Housing Quality Standards (HQS) were developed to ensure that housing through the program is decent, safe and sanitary.

### Q: What rental units will qualify for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program?

**A:** The following types of housing can be rented by the rental assistance participant:

- Single-Family Homes
- Duplexes
- Townhomes
- Apartments
- Mobile homes

All rental housing units must pass Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspections. The HQS inspection ensures that the unit is maintained in decent, safe, and sanitary condition.



## **Q: How are rents determined in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program?**

**A:** SDHC conducts a unit-to-unit comparison of the landlord's proposed rent for the unit with the rent charged for units with similar features and amenities in the same market area for families who do not receive rental assistance.

SDHC takes into account critical market factors that impact rent, such as the location, quality, size, unit type and age of the contract unit, as well as any amenities, housing services, maintenance and utilities to be provided by the landlord in accordance with the lease.

SDHC notifies the landlord of the rent that can be approved based upon the analysis. If the landlord disagrees with this analysis, the landlord may submit information for three comparable units within a two-mile radius from the assisted unit. SDHC will consider this information and notify the landlord of a final rent determination.

## **Q: How do landlords request a rental increase on a property?**

**A:** The landlord must provide the participant and SDHC rental assistance staff with a 60-day written notice of the proposed rent increase. If approved, the rent increase will be effective on the date specified by the landlord or on the first of the month following a full 60-day notice to the tenant and SDHC, whichever is later.

Rents for existing Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance tenants may not exceed the rents charged for units with tenants who do not receive rental assistance.

To initiate the rent increase process, the landlord is required to submit a **Rent Increase Application** along with a copy of the written notice provided to the tenant.

## **Q: What are the landlord's responsibilities?**

**A:** The landlord's responsibilities are similar to renting to a tenant without rental assistance. Responsibilities in the Housing Choice Voucher program include:

- Screening and selecting the tenant
- Maintaining the rental property in good condition according to federal Housing Quality Standards
- Making repairs as needed
- Paying for utilities, maintenance and services as specified in the lease agreement with the tenant
- Following the terms of the lease agreement and the Housing Assistance Payments contract, including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Tenancy Addendum
- Complying with applicable fair housing laws.

## **Q: How do landlords list their properties available for rent to Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program participants?**

**A:** Landlords have free access to SDHC's online searchable listing service. **GoSection8.com** lists the rental properties to rental assistance participants.

## **Q: What are a landlord's options if a tenant seriously and/or repeatedly violates lease agreement?**

**A:** Landlords are responsible for addressing lease violations committed by Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program participants in the same manner as tenants who do not receive rental assistance and in accordance with applicable laws. The lease is between the tenant and the landlord. Only the landlord is legally able to enforce the lease.

SDHC advises the landlord to notify the Housing Choice Voucher tenant in writing of any lease violations and provide the family with reasonable and appropriate due process. If the household repeatedly violates the lease, the landlord is encouraged to enforce the lease in accordance with the appropriate legal process. SDHC recommends that the landlord inform SDHC of the lease violations. Landlords are also encouraged to contact SDHC to report allegations of program abuse or possible fraud. The tenant may lose their Housing Choice Voucher if they are evicted for these violations.

## **Q: How do I evict a tenant?**

**A:** It is the responsibility of the landlord to evict a tenant by complying with the terms of the lease that govern the eviction process. The eviction process must comply with applicable federal, state and local laws. If a landlord evicts or plans to evict a program participant, they are required to notify SDHC of the eviction action prior to doing so.