

**Future of Section 8 Voucher Program:
Second Webinar for Voucher Tenants**

NATIONAL HOUSING LAW PROJECT
(NHLP)
JANUARY 28, 2010

HOUSING JUSTICE

National Housing Law Project www.nhlp.org

GoToWebinar Interface

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Outline for Today

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- **Choice of where to live**
 - Portability
 - Communities of Opportunity
 - Mobility counseling
- **Services for Voucher Families**
- **Engagement of voucher participants at the local level**
- **Issues selected as they are issues the Secretary discussed with public housing residents, which are also applicable to voucher participants**
 - Additional issue: any other key protections that participants have that are unique to the voucher program

What Questions is HUD Asking?

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- **Regarding the issue of resident choice of where to live**
 - Most of the questions related to whether public housing residents should get access to vouchers and if access is provided should it be dependant upon a waiting period and/or completion of training or services
 - Several questions are relevant for voucher tenants
 - How difficult is it to get on waiting lists for subsidized housing?
 - Should there be one stop shopping for all subsidized housing?
 - If there is one waiting list, how large should the area be?

What Questions is HUD Asking?

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- **Regarding services that best promote resident success**
 - How do you define success? Does the definition differ for families with children, with elderly members, with disabled members?
 - What services could best help families reach their goals
 - Assuming a limited amount of money for housing and services, what are the trade offs to get better services?
 - What do voucher participants recommend?
 - What is the best way to access the services?

What Questions is HUD Asking?

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- **Regarding participation of voucher residents?**
 - Have there been any efforts in your area to organize voucher tenants? Do you think it can be done?

Opportunity Use a Voucher Anywhere

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- Participant must find a unit in order to use the voucher
- The search time is at least 60 days
 - Is that sufficient time? Are extensions easy or hard to get?
- The unit must
 - Pass housing quality standards (HQS)
 - ✦ Are the standards too strict or too lenient?
 - ✦ Should neighborhood conditions be considered?
 - The rent must be reasonable
 - ✦ In comparison to what?

How Much Help Does the PHA Provide?

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1. Adequate description of how voucher works so that family may find a unit that does not exceed 40% of income
2. List of available units where voucher may be used in a range of neighborhoods
3. Description of neighborhoods
4. Transportation assistance
5. Assistance with rental application process
6. Assistance with explaining the voucher program to landlords
 - Easy to understand handouts for landlords that tenants may distribute
7. Negotiate rent with landlords
8. Assistance with or referrals to agencies that assist with security deposits
9. Timely inspections of units
10. Inform the voucher participant if the landlord does not complete paper work (return lease and/or HAP contract)

Question

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- Does your local public housing agency (with or without the assistance of other agencies) provide
- None of these services
- 1—3 of these services
- 4—6 of these services
- 6—10 of these services

Voucher Portability

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- Voucher portability means that a participant may use the subsidy in another town, county or state as long as there is a public housing agency (PHA) operating a voucher program in that area.
- *Initial* public housing agency is the PHA that issues the voucher
- *Receiving* PHA is the agency with authority in the area to which the family moves

Voucher Portability

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- Portability maybe complicated for the voucher participant
 - Family gets information about porting from the initial PHA
 - Initial PHA must give the family information about how to contact the receiving PHA
 - Family must promptly contact the receiving PHA
 - × Receiving PHA may conduct additional review of the family
- Family may lose voucher
 - If income ineligible in the area of the receiving PHA
 - The search time is not extended by the receiving PHA
 - Due to prior criminal activity that the receiving PHA considers, which the initial PHA did not
 - Billing issues between the PHAs

Voucher Portability, cont.

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- Number of bedrooms is determined by the receiving PHA and may not be the same as the initial PHA
- Additional complications if the porting family ports again
- Assisting porting families is unusual and PHA staff maybe unfamiliar with what to do, when, and how
- System not set up to allow the family time to shop for a unit
 - Must get that additional time from the receiving PHA
- Some PHAs have cooperation agreements between neighboring PHAs, which may make porting easier

Mobility Programs Assist with Moves to Communities of Opportunity

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- A “community of opportunity” has
 - Good schools
 - Low crime
 - Good public transportation
 - Greater employment opportunities
 - Low poverty and/or low rate of unemployment
 - Diverse neighborhood with a mix of people of different races, cultures, backgrounds

Housing Mobility Counseling

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- Pre-Search counseling
 - To assist with credit repair or improvement
 - Improve a voucher participant’s housing resume
- Housing Search Assistance
 - Community tours of the new areas
 - Recruit landlords in new areas
 - Matching families to apartments
- Exception payment standard above the basic range of 110% of FMR
- Security deposit assistance

Housing Mobility Counseling

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- Support services for mobility participants
 - Financial literacy:
 - To assist with handling utilities, and other expenses etc
 - Individual Family plan and referrals: work force centers, adult education/job training, youth recreation and summer programs, health benefits
- Transportation: Vehicles to find a unit and to assist with living in a new area and driver education fees
- Post-placement assistance for several years
 - May include assistance with second move
 - Help with landlord problems during tenancy
- Regional administration of vouchers

Major Challenges to Effective Mobility

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- Housing market changes
- Overcoming resistance to the program
 - Landlord, neighbors, politicians, others
- Lowering of or inadequate Fair Market Rents
- Use of credit scores to screen applicants
- Lack of sufficient funds for security deposits
- Insufficient rental units in the higher opportunity areas
- Lack of source of income laws, which prevent discrimination based upon use of voucher

Keys to Mobility Program Success

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- Regional administration of the voucher program to avoid portability issues
- Exception payment standards so that the subsidy is sufficient to find a unit
- Voluntary nature of the program
- Geographic targeting of the vouchers to areas that do not have a lot of assisted housing or vouchers

Services for Voucher Participants

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- Assistance with finding the unit
- Credit improvement and improvement of housing resume
- Negotiating with the landlord
- Security deposit assistance
- Family self sufficiency (FSS)
- Other?

Participation in Decisions Regarding the Program

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- Limited participation by voucher holders at the local level
 - Little input given to PHAs on practices and policies
 - Difficult to get involved in the PHA Annual or 5 Year Plan Process
 - Few voucher holders are selected to be PHA resident commissioners
- Little or no participation at the national level

Voucher Participation: Boston Experience

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Expectations Regarding this Process

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- The schedule is very full
- We would like to have as many participants on the calls as possible, BUT
- You have other obligations
- Therefore, the calls and webinars will be recorded
- If a voucher participant misses a call/webinar, she should listen to the recording and ask for clarification, if necessary
- NHLP will send out a list of those who participated after each call and you must let us know if the list is accurate. if we missed a participant.

Expectations regarding this process

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- NHLP with the assistance of the Steering Committee will be making decisions regarding who should attend the March meeting
 - By mid-February
- We will circulate that list to everyone
- We hope that everyone will continue to participate in the process as it should be long term and engaging

Expectations regarding this process

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- The criteria for selecting those invited to attend the meeting will include:
 - Geographic diversity,
 - Diversity as to family type (including with members who have children, and/or are elderly or disabled)
 - Diversity with respect to experiences with the program, such as
 - Received Mobility Counseling
 - Experienced difficulty finding a willing landlord
 - Family self sufficiency program, etc
 - Diversity in the type of community where the voucher is used
 - Big city, small city, suburb, rural and type of neighborhood
 - Engagement with the local public housing agency

Next Steps

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The schedule has been changed. *The meeting with the Secretary set for the beginning of March is postponed and a new date has not been set.*

We will provide additional information when we get it.

There will be a call on Tuesday, February 9, 2010 to plan next steps and to continue this process. It will not include HUD staff.

Thank you for participating

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