

RENTAL ASSISTANCE AND SECTION 8 RENTAL SUBSIDIES

Key Concepts

Rental assistance, defined generally, can be any program – funded by public or private funds – that provides money to individuals and families to prevent eviction or foreclosure. Emergency rental assistance, often obtained through a local church or similar organization, is usually for a time-limited period (1-3 months). Many Ten-Year Plans to End Homelessness include a rental and/or mortgage assistance component to prevent individuals and families from falling into homelessness. Rental assistance may also involve help in securing an apartment after an individual or family has spent time in a shelter. Such programs may include money to pay the first, last, and deposit on an apartment; delinquent rent or mortgage payments, back real estate taxes, or back homeowners' insurance payments, among other things. Interest is often not charged on this assistance but the amount of assistance is also generally capped. Sometimes money is also available if **utilities** are being shut off.

However, rental assistance may also mean a rental *subsidy* program, such as HUD's **Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program**, which subsidizes the rents paid by low, very low, and extremely low income individuals such that none pay more than 30% of their total income per month in housing expenses. The Section 8 program provides rental assistance to help eligible families and individuals live in safe and decent housing of their choice. With funding provided by HUD and administered by local public housing authorities, this program utilizes privately owned existing housing stock.

Families, elderly, disabled and single people whose income falls within the income guidelines qualify for this program. After a person applies and is determined eligible, they are placed on a waiting list until funds become available to assist them. When funding becomes available, a certificate or voucher is issued from the Housing Authority.

A certificate or voucher is the written guarantee of Housing Authority to the tenant or prospective landlord that the certificate or voucher holder is eligible for participation in the program. The certificate or voucher is used by the holder in locating a house or apartment of his/her choosing. The certificate or voucher sets forth the bedroom size the family/individual needs and outlines the family's/individual's obligations under the program and the period of time the family has to locate suitable housing. With a **tenant-based voucher**, the family/individual may retain the voucher and move to another unit. With a **project-based voucher**, the subsidy is attached to the unit itself and if the tenant moves, the subsidy is lost.

EXAMPLES AND COMMON SOLUTIONS

Program	SHARE/Homeless Intervention Program (Prince William County, VA)
Web Information	http://www.co.prince-william.va.us/
Practice Used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County department of social services offers short-term rental and mortgage assistance to households “experiencing an unforeseen financial crisis” • State-funded program • Provides interest-free loans for temporary rental, mortgage, and security deposit payments for those who meet program criteria and have an income at least 80% of AMI or less • All other resources must be exhausted before such assistance can be used • Use is limited to once-in-a-lifetime • Housing counseling is also included in the program, including budgeting classes and credit counseling in order to facilitate long-term financial independence • Applicants must be homeless or in imminent threat of becoming homeless and this must be verifiable by a “pay or quit” notice, unlawful detainer notice, letter from a shelter, or 30-day notice from a mortgage company • The family or individual must have an “unavoidable crisis,” such as an illness, lay-off from employment, loss of transportation to a job, etc.; this crisis must be temporary and not chronic • The family or individual must have been self-sufficient prior to the crisis and be able to be self-sufficient after receiving the assistance (plus the housing counseling), where self-sufficiency is defined as having steady employment, a stable rental/mortgage history, timely payment of bills • Applicants must have current, verifiable income • A phone interview initiates the process, followed by a pre-screening interview on designated days where verifications of the crisis and potential loss of housing are made • Once verifications are received, the SHARE/HIP committee determines if the applicant meets the criteria; if yes, the applicant then meets with a housing counselor

Program	City of Pleasanton Rental Assistance Programs (Alameda County, CA)
Web Information	http://www.ci.pleasanton.ca.us/hsg04.html
Practice Used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs which offer direct financial assistance to households for the payment of monthly rental costs are highly competitive in the Bay Area and the amount of assistance available is limited. • The primary form of rental assistance in Alameda County is the Section 8 program, in which the government pays a portion of the monthly rent for households which meet certain eligibility requirements (e.g., income). • In Pleasanton (as well as in Dublin), the Section 8 program is administered by the Housing Authority of the County of Alameda (HACA) which is based in Hayward. HACA currently receives funding to subsidize rents for approximately 4,000 households in the portions of Alameda County served by the agency through the “Housing Choice Voucher Program.” Under the program, the tenant pays 30% to 40% of the gross adjusted monthly household income for rent, while the balance is subsidized up to a maximum set by the government. • The City of Pleasanton, in collaboration with the City of Livermore and Allied Housing, Inc., provides limited temporary rental assistance through the Tri-Valley Housing Scholarship Program to participants in job training programs. This program, which was begun in 1998, provides monthly rent subsidies to households that are homeless or at risk of being homeless. Subsidies are provided while the head of household is undergoing job training and are gradually phased out after employment is secured. Information on applying for this program can be obtained by contacting Allied Housing. • ECHO Housing, a Bay Area nonprofit agency, also provides a limited Rental Assistance Program (RAP). The program provides assistance with move-in costs or helps residents with delinquent rent due to a temporary financial setback. ECHO helps by arranging a guaranteed repayment contract between the tenant and the landlord. Financial assistance is subject to the availability of funds.

SELECTED RESOURCES

Online Resources

HUD Housing Choice Vouchers

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/index.cfm>

HUD Shelter plus Care program

<http://www.hud.gov/>

National Alliance to End Homelessness (New Jersey practice)

<http://www.endhomelessness.org/best/Atlantic.html>

National Alliance to End Homelessness (Minnesota practice)

<http://www.endhomelessness.org/best/actioncouncil.htm>

Coalition for the Homeless

http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/spotlight/rental_assistance.html

Corporation for Supportive Housing

<http://www.csh.org/>

New Hampshire Department of Health & Human Services Emergency Assistance Program

<http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/RENTUTILITYHELP/default.htm>

Communities in Pennsylvania Housing Assistance

<http://www.inventpa.com>

HomeBase

www.homebaseccc.org

Publications

Up Against a Wall Housing Affordability for Renters: An Analysis of the 2003 American Community Survey (2004), National Low Income Housing Coalition, available at www.nilhc.org.

A Report on State-Funded Rental Assistance Programs: A Patchwork of Small Measures (2001), National Low Income Housing Coalition, available at www.nilhc.org.