

Tenant's Role: When a family selects a housing unit, and DCA approves the unit and lease, the family signs a lease with the landlord for at least one year. After the first year the landlord may offer the family a new lease or may tell the family to relocate. The family is expected to comply with the lease and the program requirements, pay its share of rent on time, maintain the unit in good condition and notify DCA of any changes in income or family composition.

Landlord's Role: The role of the landlord in the voucher program is to provide decent, safe, and sanitary housing to a tenant at a reasonable rent. The dwelling unit must pass the program's housing standards and be maintained up to those standards as long as the owner receives housing assistance payments.

DCA's Role: DCA administers the voucher program locally. DCA provides the family with the rental assistance that enables the family to seek out suitable housing. DCA enters into a contract with the landlord to provide rental assistance payments on behalf of the family. If the landlord fails to meet his/her obligations under the lease, DCA has the right to terminate assistance payments to the landlord.

HUD's Role: To cover the cost of the program, HUD provides funds to allow DCA to make housing assistance payments on behalf of the families. HUD also pays DCA a fee for the costs of administering the program.

Where Are the Rental Assistance Offices Located?

The addresses and telephone numbers for the five regional Rental Assistance Offices are listed below on the next page.

Albany Regional Office
121 N Front Street
P.O. Box 1248
Albany, GA 31702-1248
229-430-4117
888-340-706

Eastman Regional Office
21 Industrial Boulevard
Eastman, GA 31023
478-374-6962
888-340-6112

Athens Regional Office
485 Newton Bridge Road
Athens, GA 30607-1169
706-369-5636
888-318-0354
706-369-5634 (Waiting List Opening Information)

Waycross Regional Office
960-A City Boulevard
P.O. Box 719
Waycross, GA 31501-4239
912-285-6280
888-879-2549

Carrollton Regional Office
185 Parkwood Circle
Carrollton, GA 30117-0609
770-838-2600
888-340-4481

This brochure prepared in November of 2007 gives you general information, not legal advice. You can get legal advice only from a lawyer. Deadlines are extremely important in most legal matters. Please see a lawyer about specific questions. For more information on the Georgia Legal Services Program you can go to www.glsp.org or call 1-800-498-9469 to find a Georgia Legal Services Office

What You Need to Know About: Housing Vouchers



The Housing Choice Voucher Program is operated by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA). This program is administered by DCA in 149 of Georgia's 159 counties by five regional offices located around the State. The remaining 10 counties are served by their local housing authority. This program is funded totally by the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Department of Community Affairs provides a subsidy payment directly to the landlord on behalf of the voucher holder. The amount of the subsidy is based upon the voucher holder's income and local housing costs.

How Does the Housing Voucher Program Help Pay Rent?

If eligible, the family or individual will receive a rental voucher in which DCA agrees to pay a rental subsidy directly to the landlord for the family's rent. The family then pays the difference between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount paid by DCA.

How Much of My Rent Will the Voucher Pay?

The amount of rental assistance you receive will depend on your household size, your income and the rent your landlord charges. The amount DCA agrees to pay toward your rent does not affect the amount of rent a landlord may charge. DCA has established a payment standard for each county. A payment standard is the maximum amount that DCA will pay based on location and unit size. A family which receives a rental voucher

can select a unit which rents below or above the payment standard. If the family rents a unit with rent greater than the payment standard, the rental family will end up paying more than 30% of its monthly adjusted gross income for rent and utilities. However, the family would pay only 30% of its monthly adjusted gross income, if it rented a unit that charged a rent less than or equal to the payment standard. Of course, the family's rent share also changes when its income or family circumstances change.

Who Is Eligible?

Georgia residents whose income does not exceed 50 percent of the area median income for their family size are eligible to participate. Eligibility is determined by DCA based on the total annual gross income and family size and is limited to U.S. citizens and specified categories of noncitizens who have eligible immigration status. DCA posts the income guidelines at its web site at <http://www.dca.state.ga.us/housing/RentalAssistance/programs/downloads/incomelimits.pdf>. The regional DCA office serving your community can provide you with the income limits for your area and family size.

How Do I Apply for the Program?

To apply for rental assistance in the Housing Voucher program, each interested person should contact DCA's toll-free general information number 1 (888) 858-6085 or 404-299-4591. If a waiting list is open for a county, the individual will then receive information about the program guidelines and application procedures. An application will be mailed to the individual or family. The application must be returned to the DCA office. The applicant will be placed on the waiting list for available housing. Once your application is returned and placed on the waiting list, DCA reviews the client's application, family composition and income, and determines if the applicant is eligible for assistance. During this

process DCA will collect information on your family income, assets, and family composition. DCA will verify this information with other local agencies, your employer and bank, and will use the information to determine eligibility and the amount of your rental assistance payment. If you are eligible, when assistance becomes available DCA will use the waiting list to determine who to contact. If you apply and are told you are not eligible, you may request an informal review of that decision.

How Does the Waiting List Operate?

Since the demand for housing assistance often exceeds the limited resources available, long waiting periods are common. In fact, DCA may close its waiting list when it has more families on the list than can be assisted in the near future. DCA maintains waiting lists for each county. When selecting a family from its waiting list, DCA will give preferences to those with the following characteristics: (1) when the household lives, works or has been hired to work in the county in which they applied or (2) the head of household is 62 or older. Families who qualify for these two preferences will move ahead of other families on the list who do not qualify for any preference. If you are not given a preference and you feel that you qualify for one of the above, you can request an informal review by DCA of the decision denying you a preference.

What Types of Housing Will the Voucher Pay For?

The Housing Voucher Program places the choice of housing in the hands of the individual family. A family that is issued a rental voucher is responsible for finding and selecting a suitable rental unit. Each voucher holder is encouraged to consider all types of housing to secure the best rental housing for its needs. Voucher holders can use vouchers to lease privately owned housing, including single-family homes, townhouses and

apartments. The voucher holder is free to choose any housing that meets the requirements of the program and is not limited to units located in subsidized housing projects. The only requirement is that the rental unit must meet an acceptable level of health and safety. When the voucher holder finds a unit and the landlord agrees to participate in the Housing Voucher Program, DCA must inspect the dwelling and review the lease for approval.

Where Can I Use My Voucher?

If in receiving your voucher you claimed a preference based on your living in a specific county, you must use your voucher in that county for one year before you can be relocated. If you did not claim such a preference, you can use your voucher in any county with a payment standard equal to or less than that of the county in which you received your voucher. A request to move with your voucher to another county must be made in writing at the DCA Office currently handling your voucher. DCA does not permit moves during the initial term of the lease, usually the first year of the lease. The move may be approved during the first year if there are emergency circumstances that make the move necessary such as domestic violence, medical reasons, crime, repair issues, or mutual agreement with the landlord. The family must notify DCA ahead of time, terminate its existing lease according to the appropriate lease provisions, and find acceptable alternate housing

What Happens Once I Find a Unit and it Passes Inspection?

Once DCA approves an eligible family's lease and housing unit, the family and the landlord sign a lease and, at the same time, the landlord and DCA sign a housing assistance contract which runs for the same term as the lease. This means that everyone -- tenant, landlord and DCA-- has obligations and responsibilities within the voucher program.

