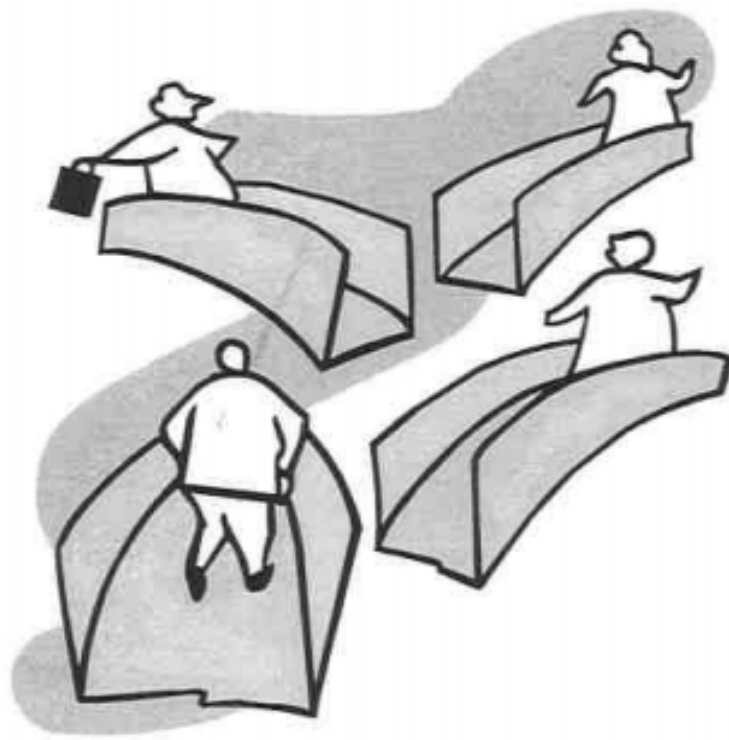


# **Owner's Guidebook to the Housing Choice Voucher Program**



**Conway Housing Authority  
Conway, AR**



This informational pamphlet has been prepared by the Conway Housing Authority (hereafter referred to as CHA) to answer most frequently asked questions by owners of rental property. Portions of the above answers are contained in your contract with the CHA or the lease with the family. The CHA encourages you to read and understand both documents.

The CHA thanks you for your participation in the Section 8 Housing Assistance Program. Without the cooperation and assistance of private property owners, hundreds of Faulkner County residents would have to rely upon substandard or inadequate housing. The authority recognizes and commends your personal contribution to our community.

If you have a question not covered in this guidebook, or if we can be of any assistance in any way, please do not hesitate to call upon the staff. You may visit the Section 8 Office at 1875 Lucille Street, Conway, AR, or the main office at 335 South Mitchell Street, Conway, AR or phone (501) 327-0156.

Diedra Levi, Executive Director

Lorna Simmons, Deputy Director & HCV Administrator

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CHA administers a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. Section 8 is a program for low-income people who wish to live in privately owned housing and receive assistance with their rent. The term "Section 8" is used because of the federal law that created the program is Section 8 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974.

Families, elderly, handicapped, disabled and single people as defined in the regulations, who make less than 80% of the median income limit of this area may qualify for rental assistance. Applicants who are eligible are placed on a waiting list. The waiting list is quite extensive, however, CHA may have preferences for which the family may qualify. If a family qualifies for a preference, they may receive housing assistance quicker than a family that does not qualify for a preference. Rental assistance for eligible families is provided through the issuance of a Housing Choice Voucher, which will be covered in this guidebook.

This guidebook provides answers to most frequently asked questions by owners about the program. This guidebook refers to owners. This definition includes owners and property managers.

## **1. WHAT TYPE OF HOUSING IS ELIGIBLE?**

Any type of housing that meets Housing Quality Standards (hereafter referred to as HQS) may be utilized. Ineligible units are: nursing homes, units within the grounds of penal, reformatory, medical, mental and similar public or private institutions, and facilities providing continual psychiatric, medical or nursing services.

## **2. HOW DOES THE PROCESS BEGIN?**

Once a family has gone through the waiting list and has been approved for housing assistance, the family is issued a Housing Choice Voucher. It is the family's responsibility to locate a rental unit suited to its needs and the owner agrees to participate in the program. The owner and family will sign a Request for Lease Approval, and the housing inspector will schedule an inspection. If there are any deficiencies found, a list will be sent to the owner. After the repairs are completed, a final inspection will be done. The owner and family will be required to come to the housing assistance office to sign the contract and lease agreement, etc. Payment will begin once paperwork has been signed by all parties.

## **3. HOW MUCH RENT CAN I EXPECT FOR MY PROPERTY?**

There is a maximum amount that CHA may pay for the family portion of the rent. This amount is the difference between 30% of the family's adjusted income, or a minimum of \$50.00, and the applicable payment standard. The family must agree to pay any amount above the subsidy. The family cannot pay more than 40% of their adjusted income for their portion of the rent and utilities.

#### **4. WHAT OTHER ADVANTAGES DOES THE PROGRAM OFFER THE RENTAL PROPERTY OWNER?**

CHA has a number of certified applicants that qualify under the program, so an owner's eligible property is less likely to remain vacant for very long.

Since a family pays no more than 40% of their monthly income, or a minimum of \$50.00, the family's portion of the rent payment is easier for them to meet and not as likely to become delinquent. Also, the owner is assured of receiving the balance directly from the authority each month.

#### **5. CAN I CHOOSE WHO I RENT TO?**

CHA screens potential families for program eligibility only. We do not screen families for suitability as a tenant. It is the responsibility of the owner to do this. You may check credit and personal references or use any other screening process you would use to decide on a private market renter.

By participating in a federal program, the owner agrees not to discriminate on the basis of race, creed, sex, religion, handicap or national origin.

#### **6. HOW IS THE HOUSING SELECTED, AND WHERE CAN IT BE LOCATED?**

Each qualified family is responsible for finding their own housing. A HUD-approved lease is required between the family and the owner. All rental units must be inspected and approved by CHA.

The requirements are: (1) the housing meets CHA's HQS inspection, (2) the Owner be willing to participate in the program, (3) the unit must be located in Faulkner County, and (4) the unit contract rent be reasonable with similar rental units in the same area not on the housing assistance program.

## **7. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF THE PROPERTY?**

The owner is responsible for all management and maintenance of the property. Rental assistance cannot be paid on substandard property, so it is the owner's responsibility to see that the property meets HQS guidelines at all times.

The owner should make every effort to continue upgrading their property and should visit the property each month to ensure that the family still lives in the property and is taking care of the property. Unattended property encourages damage and misuse.

## **8. HOW MUCH SECURITY DEPOSIT CAN I COLLECT?**

The owner may collect a security deposit from the family in an amount equal to the amount collected for unassisted rental property.

## **9. IS CHA RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FAMILY'S SHARE OF THE RENT?**

No. The owner is responsible for collecting the family's portion of the rent. Utility responsibilities are spelled out in the lease between the owner and family. Any change in agreement between the family and owner could affect key provisions for rental assistance. Do not enter into an agreement to terminate the lease, furnish (or unfurnish) a unit, or change who pays for what in the way of utilities without first notifying the CHA.

**10. HOW CAN I APPLY FOR AN INCREASE IN THE MONTHLY CONTRACT RENT?**

Under the rental assistance program after the first year, the owner must give at least 60 days written notice to the family and the authority before rent is increased. The family would have to agree to pay the increase. Otherwise, the authority may issue another voucher for the family to relocate.

**11. SHOULD I REPORT COMPLAINTS ABOUT INCREASED RESIDENTS LIVING IN THE DWELLING?**

Yes. Please notify the authority PROMPTLY if you receive information about any changes in the number of permanent residents in the dwelling, or any changes in the family income.

**12. HOW SOON SHOULD I NOTIFY CHA WHEN A FAMILY VACATES?**

Immediately! When an owner endorses the rental assistance check, they certify that the contract family still lives in the property and the property still meets HQS. To continue to accept rental assistance checks under false pretense is considered fraud and the owner will be subject to full prosecution under FEDERAL LAW.

**13. WHAT IF THE FAMILY MOVES WITHOUT GIVING NOTICE?**

CHA cannot emphasize enough the importance of checking your property. It is the owner's responsibility to inform CHA when a family moves from their property. CHA cannot pay assistance when the lease or contract has been broken. When an owner accepts the monthly check from CHA, they are certifying that the family whose name appears on the lease or contract, is a resident of the property and the property is in compliance with HQS. To continue accepting rent that you are not entitled to is considered fraud.

#### **14. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR EVICTIONS?**

CHA does not participate in the eviction process. The owner may evict a family from the unit only by initiating a court action under State law and cannot evict a family except for serious or repeated violations of the lease, breach of federal, state or local law, or Other Good Cause including: failure to accept HUD approved Lease Addendum, history of disturbing neighbors, poor housekeeping, violent criminal activity, or owner's desire to take unit out of the program for business or personal reasons (but not during the first year of the lease); and must notify the CHA of any pending eviction action.

#### **15. WHAT IF THE SECURITY DEPOSIT IS NOT ENOUGH TO COVER UNPAID RENT?**

Both the family and the owner are expected to abide by the conditions of the lease. Should the family break the lease and vacate, the owner may keep the rent for the month the family vacates, and the authority makes no further rent payments. If the security deposit is not enough to cover unpaid rent, the owner shall abide by federal, state, and local laws in pursuing the unpaid rent through the court system.

#### **16. HOW SOON SHOULD I CASH THE ASSISTANCE CHECKS?**

Please cash your checks promptly! Housing assistance checks are valid for a period of 90 days. Please do not hold on to the checks beyond this point.

#### **17. HOW OFTEN WILL MY PROPERTY BE INSPECTED?**

Initially, the property must pass inspection to ensure that the property meets housing quality standards and is in a decent, safe and sanitary condition, before CHA will sign a contract with the owner.

Your property may be selected for secondary inspection by management personnel of the authority or by the HUD staff. These additional inspections are required to assure compliance with the HQS.

Your property will be re-inspected each year at least 45 days prior to lease renewal, so you, the owner, will have ample time to make any needed repairs.

### ***18. WHAT ABOUT DAMAGES TO THE PROPERTY?***

It is very important for an owner to maintain their property. If the property is damaged by the family, it is the family's responsibility to pay for the repairs. If it is normal wear and tear, the owner is responsible for the repairs. Since CHA is required to only inspect once a year, it is to the owner's advantage to inspect on a monthly basis to catch the repairs as needed instead of waiting for the family to move to have them pay for family abuse items. CHA will not pay for any damage to the property.

### ***19. CAN MY CONTRACTS BE MAILED IF IT IS INCONVENIENT FOR ME TO COME TO THE HOUSING ASSISTANCE OFFICE?***

No. It is the policy of this authority that the owner must come in to sign the papers since the program has been hampered in the past, due to failure by owners to return papers on a timely basis or papers lost in the mail. Papers can be processed faster and the authority will be able to offer better service to the owner and the family.

There could be a lapse in rental payments if the owner fails to come in and sign the contract or to make necessary repairs before contract expiration.



Also, management believes this is a good time for staff to get better acquainted with the owner, answer any questions or inform the owner about any new rules or regulations.

***20. I HAVE A RENTAL UNIT THAT HAS BEEN MODIFIED FOR AN INDIVIDUAL CONFINED TO A WHEELCHAIR THAT I WANT TO PLACE ON THE HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.***

CHA encourages owners having accessible units to list them with the authority. Your cooperation will help the authority assist eligible families that have individuals with handicaps in locating available accessible dwelling units.

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