

Mainely Landlords

For landlords with tenants who have Housing Choice Vouchers from MaineHousing

Spring 2012





Another Inspection?


Several efforts are underway to improve MaineHousing's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, and each involves inspections. Nearly one third of the housing units of clients with HCVs will have been inspected by the end of April.


Because units are randomly selected, it is possible that the same unit is the subject of more than one inspection. We understand and are sorry for any inconvenience that this may cause.

The efforts behind the inspections:

 The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) Office of the Inspector General is randomly selecting an expected 110 rental units for inspection, as part of a larger audit of MaineHousing's HCV Program administration; their inspections are due to be completed at the end of April.

 HUD's Office of Public Housing, Boston regional office is conducting a program audit which includes the random selection of 50 units for inspection. These inspections were completed at the end of March.

 To help assess the quality of both program inspections and the housing units of people with vouchers, MaineHousing contracted with an independent third party to inspect nearly 500 units; this process will be completed in early April.

 In addition, we have stepped up our own inspections, accelerating our inspection schedule for units that have been under our direct administration (the five counties of Kennebec, Somerset, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, and Franklin).

Once these inspections are completed, we will have a better understanding not only of housing

conditions, but also where different inspectors might interpret the same standards differently. We hope to use the findings to clarify our inspection standards and ensure more consistency going forward.

We also hope to have good data on common reasons for failure that we can share with landlords and tenants to increase the pass rate and improve housing conditions going forward.

Our initial review of the inspection data is that most of the rental unit failures are in the electrical hazards category. As a result, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Public Housing has asked us to share a technical assistance notice that provides guidelines related to electrical outlets. We will be sending that to all HCV landlords during the first week of May.

Changes in MaineHousing's Housing Choice Voucher Program

MaineHousing is bringing its Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program in-house to improve program control, administrative efficiency, and customer service.

Historically, MaineHousing has contracted with local agents to deliver its HCV program to consumers. MaineHousing currently delivers the program directly to consumers in 7 counties, having brought 2 counties in-house in March.

In 2012, MaineHousing will be phasing out its remaining contracts with local agents and will be assuming responsibility for directly delivering its HCV program in all 16 counties.

Check your mail

Look in your mail for Guidelines Related to Electrical Outlets—how to comply with Housing Quality Standards.

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Welcome the HCV Department Team

Bringing the entire HCV program in-house is no small job, and MaineHousing has been actively recruiting and staffing up the new HCV Department. HCV Department management is now in place, and we expect the HCV Department to be fully staffed by May 2012.

Denise Lord is the new HCV Director and her contact information is 207-626-4609; dlord@mainehousing.org. Denise is committed to building productive, collaborative relationships with landlords, tenants, and other stakeholders so that we can pursue opportunities and address needs before they become problems.

All HCV inspections will be managed within the new department; **Mike Baran** joins us as the Inspection Services Manager and will be overseeing and coordinating our inspections of HCV units. Mike can be reached at mbaran@mainehousing.org or 207-624-5725. **Maureen Brown** will continue her responsibilities as HCV Programs Manager and can be reached at mbrown@mainehousing.org or 207-626-4695. Maureen will be assisted by two regional managers: **Allison Gallagher** will manage Region I and **Lauren Bustard** will manage Region II.

Region definitions and the timeline for MaineHousing bringing administration in-house:

Region I

Aroostook – June 30, 2012
Franklin – administered by
MaineHousing
Hancock – September 30, 2012
Kennebec – administered by
MaineHousing
Lincoln – administered by MaineHousing
Penobscot – September 30, 2012
Piscataquis – September 30, 2012
Somerset – administered by
MaineHousing
Waldo – September 30, 2012
Washington – September 30, 2012

Region II

Androscoggin – as of March 31, 2012
Cumberland – May 31, 2012
Knox – September 30, 2012
Oxford – as of March 31, 2012
Sagadahoc – administered by
MaineHousing
York – May 31, 2012

Please call 1-866-357-4853 if you have any questions about the transition.

What's Ahead?

In addition to bringing the program in-house, the HCV action plan includes:

- Updating of inspection procedures
- A centralized tenant complaint system
- Improved community notification
- Tenant rights education
- Improved communication with landlords

For more information

Contact the HCV team at 624-5789 or 1-866-357-4853.

Tips about Leases

The lease agreement is between the landlord and the tenant. We offer these tips to help you in crafting these agreements with your tenants.

The core components required in a valid lease are:

- The names of the owner and all adult renters, along with the signatures (dated) of all parties.
- The unit address, including unit number.
- The amount of the monthly (MaineHousing-approved) contract rent to the owner.
- The responsibility breakdown of utilities and appliances—those supplied by the owner; those supplied by the tenant. **
- The HUD Tenancy Addendum (Form 52641 A) must be attached to the lease before the lease is executed.

***In order to meet program guidelines, the responsibility for utilities, appliances, and optional services must correspond to those provided on the Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA).*

Other things to remember:

- The landlord must use the same lease for subsidized renters as used for all other renters.
- The landlord, not HUD/MaineHousing, provides the lease.
- The landlord is responsible for enforcing the terms of the lease.
- The landlord must screen applicants for suitability, while MaineHousing screens for program eligibility only.

- All household members 18 years of age or older must sign the lease.
- The initial term for the lease must be one year.
- The landlord may request (in writing) a rent increase at the end of the initial lease term.
- All rent increases must be pre-approved by MaineHousing before they can go into effect.
- The landlord is prohibited from making separate side payment arrangements that would charge a renter more than the approved rent.
- Renters are responsible for abiding by the lease and abiding by HUD regulations.

April is Fair Housing Month

April is Fair Housing Month, the time of the year when the nation commemorates the passage of the 1968 Fair Housing Act and celebrates the right of every person to live where they choose free from discrimination.



“Creating Equal Opportunity in Every Community,” the theme for this year’s Fair Housing Month, makes clear the importance of fair housing in our nation today and its impact in every community. This year marks the 44th anniversary of the enactment of the Fair Housing Act.

Leadership Changes at MaineHousing

Peter Merrill, who has been MaineHousing’s Communications and Planning Director for many years, is now Acting Director of MaineHousing. MaineHousing’s former Director, Dale McCormick, resigned her position last month. Peter will serve as Acting Director until a new permanent Director is appointed.

MaineHousing’s Director is appointed by the Governor, and approved by the Legislature. The new Director will serve at the pleasure of MaineHousing’s Board of Commissioners.

We Want to Hear from You

We are committed to making our new HCV Department as good as it can be. If you have suggestions or comments about opportunities for improvement, please contact us at 1-866-357-4853.



MaineHousingSearch.org is a free rental listing service that links people who need housing with the housing they need.

Housing Choice Voucher region definitions and the timeline for MaineHousing bringing administration in-house:

Region I

Aroostook – June 30, 2012
Franklin – administered by MaineHousing
Hancock – September 30, 2012
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Lincoln – administered by MaineHousing
Penobscot – September 30, 2012
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MaineHousing does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, physical or mental disability, or familial status in the admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs, and activities. MaineHousing will provide appropriate communication auxiliary aids and services upon sufficient notice. MaineHousing will also provide this document in alternative formats upon sufficient notice. MaineHousing has designated the following person responsible for coordinating compliance with applicable federal and state nondiscrimination requirements and addressing grievances: Louise Patenaude, Maine State Housing Authority, 353 Water Street, Augusta, Maine 04330-4633, Telephone Number 1-800-452-4668 (voice in state only), 207-626-4600 (voice), 1-800-452-4603 (TTY in state only), or 207-623-2985 (TTY).



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