

# Mainely Landlords

*For landlords with tenants who have Housing Choice Vouchers from MaineHousing*



SPRING 2019

[www.mainehousing.org](http://www.mainehousing.org)



## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

# Voucher use down as need for affordable housing increases



**Allison Gallagher**  
HCV Program  
Director

MaineHousing's Housing Choice Voucher Department currently supports an average of 3600 households each month with rental subsidies. This is down from 3800 over the past two years. Additionally, many MaineHousing voucher holders can't find an affordable place to live.

The National Low Income Housing Coalition's 2018 annual report suggests rental costs versus Maine wages are a big factor in the lack of affordable housing options. Rental costs are rising at a pace that often leaves

units unaffordable for low income Mainers. In some areas, short-term rentals are decreasing the number of landlords interested in renting to full-time residents.

We know there are Mainers in need and that we have the ability to help them. Rental subsidies are key to helping tenants remain stably housed, and yet we know that subsidies alone cannot solve the problem.

MaineHousing partners with agencies across Maine to provide services to voucher holders and support housing stability. Some of our key partnerships include:

- Community Action Agencies & Public Housing Authorities
- Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
- Property management companies & landlords
- Veterans' service organizations
- Homeless service organizations, including shelters
- Youth & adult case management service providers

Landlords are our most important partner in increasing the use of our program. We know how hard each of you work to help families find a safe and warm place to live. Many of our ongoing initiatives support our voucher holders and landlords. These initiatives are part of what it takes to maintain and increase available housing. Some of our initiatives include:

**Landlord Repair Program:** Offered to landlords who are

interested in working with our inspection standards to pass an initial housing inspection, but may need help funding repairs.

**Owner Excellence Program:** Several benefits are available to landlords who qualify under our Owner Excellence Program standards, including:

- Paid membership fee to your local landlord organization
- Self-certification of minor Housing Quality Standards fail items
- Biennial inspections and consolidation inspections for multiple units
- Participation in the Security Deposit Program where up to \$500 is offered to new voucher holders for payment toward the security deposit requested by the landlord

**Partner Portal:** A secure web portal where landlords can access up to 6 months of payment history, unit information, and the ability to access frequently used forms (see page 3).

**MaineHousingSearch.org:** A platform that provides a place for tenants to search for housing and a place for landlords to advertise vacancies. The site is advertised throughout Maine to renters searching for housing. For landlords, it is a great resource where information about their units is entered once and then is simply updated as vacancy information changes.

Together we can make a difference in the lives of low income Mainers by providing safe and affordable housing. We look forward to continuing our partnership and thank you for your dedication to Maine families!



# Frequently Asked Questions

Our office gets many questions each day about what is allowed and what is not under the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Below we've listed a few frequently asked questions with answers. As always, we are here to answer your questions as they come up for you.

## Can the tenant move during the initial lease term?

During the initial year of tenancy, the family may move from the unit once MaineHousing confirms the move-out date and mutual termination of the lease with the family and owner.

## What is the process when a voucher tenant wants to move from my unit after the initial lease term?

There are a few parts to this process:

1. The family must provide a 30-day written notice to you and a copy to MaineHousing.
2. MaineHousing will send a Certification of Tenant Status form for you to complete and return to us within 10 business days.
3. MaineHousing will pay the Housing Assistance Payment in full for the final month of the family's occupancy.

## What if I cannot complete the Certification of Tenant Status form within 10 days because I need to wait until the tenant vacates the unit to determine damages?

Complete the form with the information you have and indicate if you anticipate additional damages. Return the form by the required deadline and update MaineHousing moving forward.

## What if the family does not leave by the end of their 30-day notice?

You must work with the family to determine if the 30-day notice can be rescinded or move forward under state law to regain possession of the unit.

MaineHousing will resume the Housing Assistance Payment and continue to pay the Housing Assistance Payment until the tenant vacates the unit or is terminated from the voucher program.

## What if the family does damage to the unit or has not paid their rental portion?

MaineHousing will restrict elective moves by the tenant if they are not in good standing. Not in good standing is defined by owing back rent (not to exceed 3 months of tenant portion) or doing damage to the unit that exceeds the security deposit by \$1500.

You can supply information about back rent or damages owed by completing the Certification of Tenant Status form. Include supporting documentation such as payment history, photos of damage, and copies of receipts or estimates for damage repairs.

MaineHousing is unable to provide reimbursement for tenant-caused damages, but will assess whether a family should be allowed to use their voucher to obtain a new unit.



## A quick note about fair housing

As you may know, April is Fair Housing Month, which is the perfect time to note another question we get: **Can you mention concerns you may have to a potential tenant related to anything about their protected category identity?\***

You may not mention your concerns. Even if a comment is made in good faith (such as "I'm worried about you moving in to such a high traffic area - you have little kids" to a family with children, or "There are a lot of people who don't like gay people in this neighborhood and I'm worried about your safety" to a gay couple) it could be considered housing discrimination. It's best to avoid these comments, because it could end up being an issue for you down the road.

**\*Protected categories:** race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, disability, familial status, or receipt of public assistance

The Housing Choice Voucher Department has joined an agency-wide effort to incorporate continuous improvement initiatives so we can deliver the best service to our partners. As a result, we are moving towards paperless payment processing, including direct deposit. We have set a goal to help all of our partners to sign up for direct deposit by the end of 2019.

### Benefits:

- Funds are automatically deposited into your account each month.
- It's a secure, convenient, and efficient way to receive payment.
- No more waiting for the postal service to deliver your check.
- Statements are stored and can be accessed any time through our online portal.

Note: Direct deposit is a one way transaction. MaineHousing cannot access funds from your account. If you are currently receiving a check from us, you may have received our April 2019 mailing with the form needed to sign up. Please call our office at 207-624-5789 if you have any questions.



## Partner Portal for Our Landlord Partners

MaineHousing's Housing Choice Voucher Program offers participating landlords a way to access unit and payment information online!

### Access the Partner Portal at

<https://partnerportal.mainehousing.org> and create an account following the directions on the page.

An automatic message will be sent to your email inbox. MaineHousing will have to approve you as a user before you will be able to sign in. Once you receive an email notification telling you that you have been approved to use Partner Portal you may log in.

### What are the features of Partner Portal?

Information to help you be a successful Section 8 HCV landlord is listed in the following features:

- My Families: Families you have

housed through our program.

- My Units: The units in which you have housed tenants through the HCV program.
- My Payments: All payments made to you through the HCV program. Click on the (->) symbol to expand the information.
- My Profile: The detailed setup information you entered when signing up for Partner Portal. At the bottom of this screen is a link where you can subscribe or unsubscribe to MaineHousing's newsletter.
- Holds and Abatements: A list of units on payment hold or in abatement, along with a general reason.
- Communications: Many informational forms can be found here, including: W-9 forms, owner's information sheet, ACH direct deposit form, move-in inspection

checklist, radon information and form, landlord disclosure/ acknowledgement form, and any updates.

You can view your information in an Excel spreadsheet by entering the check/ direct deposit number or range of dates for more than one payment. Click "Go," followed by the Excel icon, open, and then print document.

**Questions?** Please direct any questions or concerns to Wendy Gosselin at 207-626-4696 or [wgosselin@mainehousing.org](mailto:wgosselin@mainehousing.org) or Melinda Folsom at 207-626-4664 or [mfolsom@mainehousing.org](mailto:mfolsom@mainehousing.org).

**Multiple properties?** Entities that manage more than one property using different Tax IDs will need to contact either Wendy Gosselin or Melinda Folsom to set up their account.

## Maine Lead Paint Hazard Abatement Program

The new state-funded Maine Lead Paint Hazard Abatement Program launched in December 2018. The program provides grants to assist homeowners (up to \$30,000 for single-family, owner-occupied homes) and owners of residential rental units (up to \$15,000 per unit) to make their homes and apartments lead safe. The program is designed to get rid of lead-based paint hazards in housing occupied by income-eligible households. Owners of residential rental units who participate in the program commit to renting to households with annual incomes at or below 100% of the Area Median Income and to keeping rents affordable for a four-year period. MaineHousing administers the program through contractual relationships with three Community Action Agencies (CAA):

### Aroostook County Action Program

Aroostook

Phone: (207) 764-3721

Toll Free: (800) 585-3053

### Community Concepts, Inc.

Androscoggin, Cumberland, Franklin, Oxford, York

Phone: (207) 795-4065

Toll Free: (800) 866-5588

### Penquis Community Action Program

Hancock, Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Sagadahoc, Somerset, Waldo, Washington

Phone: (207) 973-3500

Toll Free: (800) 215-4942

Key components of the program include:

1. Conducting activities in housing units or housing projects consisting of households with incomes up to 100% of the Area Median Income as established by the U.S. Dept of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
2. Annual rent for a housing unit or housing project receiving project funds may not exceed Fair Market Rent as established by HUD for 4 years after completion of abatement.

3. Housing that serves as a child care location for children under 6 years of age is eligible as long as the owner has an annual income at or below 100% of the Area Median Income as established by HUD.
4. All lead abatement performed pursuant to the program must comply with industry standards for lead abatement.
5. An owner of housing that receives lead abatement assistance under the program shall pay a portion of the abatement costs as follows:
  - a. Properties not under lead abatement order: 10% owner match.
  - b. Properties under lead abatement order: 25% owner match.

For more information about the program, please contact the CAA serving your area.



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## Mainly Landlords



We are excited to welcome Jackson & Diane Hibbert to our Owner Excellence Program! They have one unit located in Porter and joined the program in January 2019.

**Be part of MaineHousing's  
Owner Excellence Program!**

**Learn more at [MaineHousing.org](http://MaineHousing.org)**

## Mark Your Calendars! MaineHousing's Partner Forum, an event for landlords, June 13

This year, our landlord Partner Forum will focus on medical marijuana and other challenges landlords face. We are excited to welcome Amy Sneirson, Executive Director of the Maine Human Rights Commission and Peter Marcinuk, a successful property manager in central and western Maine as our guest speakers.

We will also have many vendors on site with information about their programs and products, so come with your questions and get ready to soak up a lot of information!

The event will be held at the Augusta Bangor Savings Bank (5 Senator Way) on June 13 from 1pm-3pm. There is no cost to attend, but we would appreciate a note if you plan to attend.

Maine State Housing Authority ("MaineHousing") does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, national origin, ancestry, physical or mental disability, age, familial status or receipt of public assistance in the admission or access to or treatment in its programs and activities. In employment, MaineHousing does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, ancestry, age, physical or mental disability or genetic information. 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) or Maine Relay 711.

