



**Director's Message**

Welcome to our new Mainely Landlords newsletter! As our efforts to go digital and be more responsive to our clients and landlords grow, we made the leap to digitize our semiannual newsletter. We are happy to hear comments about this newsletter - and anything else about our work.

As we continue into 2020, there are a number of exciting initiatives across our agency. MaineHousing will be moving our office from 353 Water Street in Augusta to 26 Edison Drive in Augusta. More information coming on that soon!

We are excited to offer a new program that we hope will help increase landlord participation in our Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. **Through hearing your concerns and the concerns of potential landlords, we've added the Landlord Damage Reimbursement Program.** This program is now offered to landlords whose unit is damaged by a voucher holder beyond normal wear and tear. Damages must exceed the amount covered by a security deposit.

We will continue to offer two programs to best support you and our voucher holders:

**Landlord Repair Program:** This program is offered to landlords who are interested in working with our inspection standards to pass an initial housing inspection but who may need assistance in funding the repairs. Learn more below!

**Security Deposit Program:** This program offers up to one month's rent for new voucher holders toward their security deposit. It is not to exceed the amount of one month's rent, and will hopefully help more families and individuals lease up more quickly.

**In other news, in September the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) published the 2019 Fair Market Rents (FMRs) with an effective date of October 1, 2019.** Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) including MaineHousing are allowed to set their voucher payment standards between 90%-110% of the FMRs and must do so within 90 days of the effective date.

MaineHousing is committed to establishing payment standards that offer the most benefit to the voucher holder and utilize the maximum amount of funding per unit. Effective January 1, 2020 MaineHousing has set its payment standards at 110% of the FMR statewide.

Maine's 23 Public Housing Authorities each will establish their payment standards according to their budgets and policies. As a result, the payment standards may differ between PHAs.

We acknowledge that the FMRs went down in several areas of the state. We submitted comment to HUD regarding the impact this could have on our voucher holders who are searching for a home they can afford. Leased voucher holders will maintain the levels of subsidy they currently have as long as they remain housed.

You can find FMRs and voucher payment standards [on our website](#).

**Together we increased voucher utilization by 120 families in 2019 and have a goal to increase another 200 this year.** We look forward to continuing our partnership and thank you for your dedication to the success of our programs and the families we serve. We couldn't administer this program and help thousands of Mainers without you.

**Home Energy Assistance Program**

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) helps qualified homeowners and renters pay for heating costs, including people who live in subsidized housing. The program is not intended to pay for all heating costs, but to help in pay heating bills.



HEAP assists with paying for a variety of heating fuel types, including: oil, kerosene, propane, natural gas, electricity, wood, wood pellets, bio-bricks, corn and coal. Individuals may apply for HEAP even if heat is included in their rent.

The amount of help a household may get through HEAP is based on the household's size, income, and energy costs. Individuals apply for HEAP through local Community Action Agencies (CAAs). Applications are taken in person or may be completed through a phone interview process. There have been recent changes with income eligibility levels, so more households may be eligible for HEAP. To learn more about how to apply for HEAP, including contact information for CAAs, [please visit MaineHousing's website](#).



**Landlord Repair Program**

Though we expect units will be move-in ready for the initial inspection, we know that things don't always go to plan. Through our landlord outreach efforts, we've also learned that repairs aren't always something you can pay for in the moment.

As a result, we created our Landlord Repair Program. This program is offered to landlords who are interested in working with our inspection standards to pass an initial housing inspection and need assistance in funding the repairs. In 2019 MaineHousing processed 46 landlord requests for reimbursement from the Landlord Repair Program totaling \$131,555.47.

To be part of the Landlord Repair Program, a landlord must participate in our HCV Program and fail their initial inspection. Following that initial inspection fail, MaineHousing will reimburse the landlord up to \$5,000 after the landlord pays \$250 toward the repair. Only failed inspection items qualify for reimbursement. The unit must then pass inspection, and a one-year lease and Housing Assistance Payment Contract must be executed before payment can be made.

Qualifying failed items include (but are not limited to):

- Bedroom windows that do not meet egress
- Deteriorated paint
- Installation of hard-wired smoke detectors
- Installation of sprinkler system
- Roofing
- Tie downs

For more information about this program, contact:

**Barbara Brann**  
Inspection Services Manager  
624-5725



**A note about initial inspections**

Although our Landlord Repair Program is available for landlords to help make repairs for failed items called out during an initial inspection, we still expect that the unit will be move in ready on the day the initial inspection is scheduled for.

Here is a short list of some items that are often found as a fail at the initial inspection. If you have questions, [please contact us!](#)

- The power needs to be on.
- The unit needs to be properly cleaned and ready for the tenant to move in.
- The unit needs proper smoke and CO2 detectors.
- At least one window in any room used for sleeping needs to measure at least 24 inches in height and 20 inches in width when in the open position.
- Mobile homes need to have tie downs.
- Boilers or furnaces need to have been serviced within the past year and a current tag needs to be available for proof of service.
- All exits need to be free of items/debris.
- All outlets in the bathroom, any outlet above a counter and/or within 6 feet of any water source need to be GFCI protected.



**New Housing Navigator Position**

As we work toward meeting our goals of housing more Mainers, MaineHousing decided to invest in a new position in the Housing Choice Voucher department.

**Sarah Johnson**, who has worked at

MaineHousing since 2006 and in our HCV department for the last 6 years, is **our new Housing Navigator**. Sarah will assist voucher holders currently searching for housing by helping them through the process and making referrals to necessary stabilization services. She will support clients through outreach to landlords, property managers, realtors, public housing authorities, and permanent/supportive housing providers.

Sarah will work with clients referred to her by our Occupancy Specialists to develop individualized housing plans to address any barriers to obtaining and maintaining permanent housing. Please join us in welcoming Sarah to her new role!

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