



## COVID-19 Changed How We Administer the Housing Choice Voucher Program

As with many workplaces across the United States, COVID-19 restrictions initially created uncertainty within our department as we struggled to determine the best way to serve our voucher holders and assist our partners. With limited staff in the office and a new telecommuting environment, we had to adjust quickly to a new way of doing business.

In addition to the changes occurring in the world, we were also moving our office from Water Street across Augusta to our new home at 26 Edison Drive. I am very proud of our team; their flexibility and patience was the key to a smooth transition into this new environment.

Through all of this, some things have changed. MaineHousing is not currently open to the public, and approximately 30% of MaineHousing staff are working in the office with the other 70% telecommuting. We've limited inspections for occupied units. We created a customer service line (207-624-5789) and email (section8hcv@mainehousing.org).

However, many things have stayed the same. Our team continues to process monthly Housing Assistance Payments to landlords. We are increasing our voucher utilization each month and continue to process timely rent adjustments. We are issuing new vouchers and conducting tenant briefings. We are providing (virtual) training to our social service partners.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you, our landlords and partners, who have helped us maintain housing stability for so many Maine people during a time when the importance of housing couldn't be more clear. Without your support we would not be able to get through these trying times. Please continue to communicate any vacancies you have with our staff and remember to list them (for free!) at [MaineHousingSearch.org](http://MaineHousingSearch.org).

We hope you and yours are well,  
Allison Gallagher, Director of Housing Choice Vouchers

## Heat Pumps for Less!

You could have a heat pump installed at a reduced cost in your home or your rental units through Efficiency Maine.

Efficiency Maine offers a \$1,500 rebate for residential (1-4 unit buildings; commercial programs also available) heat pumps. Heat pumps are an energy efficient way to save on heating costs and help with cooling and dehumidifying as well.



Outdoor heat pump unit, courtesy of Efficiency Maine

[Learn more by visiting Efficiency Maine's website](#), which includes information on the program, how to apply, and a wealth of knowledge about heat pumps!



## We Want to Hear From You!

We know that COVID-19 has been hard on Maine people in so many ways - and tenants and landlords are having to make really difficult choices.

We want to hear from you - how is COVID-19 affecting you and your tenants? We want to make sure we have a good sense of what landlords see and experience as we discuss policy changes with our partners across Maine. [Send us an email to let us know!](#)



## Did you know?

You may have heard about the federal eviction moratorium. [Here are some answers](#) to frequently asked questions.

**We have a new HCV security deposit program for new applicants who were issued a voucher** and are leasing for the first time with the program. Current program participants who are moving do not qualify for the security deposit program and should use the security deposit they paid at their previous unit.

**MaineHousing's HCV program requires a 60-day notice to process a request for a rent increase.** When we receive a request, the HCV department compares the gross rent (rent + utilities) to rents for non-assisted units of similar size and location to determine if the rent increase can be approved.

**MaineHousing's HCV program requires notice and a transfer of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract before an owner sells their property.** Please contact us as soon as possible and before the sale is finalized to start the transfer process.

**Don't forget about our Landlord Repair Program!** 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. [Email us for more information!](#)

## HEAP Helps!

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 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. People apply for HEAP through local Community Action Agencies (CAAs). 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](#).

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