

Mainely Landlords

For landlords with tenants who have Housing Choice Vouchers from MaineHousing

September 2009



New Maine law requires photoelectric smoke detectors

A new Maine law requires the use of carbon monoxide and photoelectric smoke detectors. The Maine Legislature recently passed into law Public Law, Chapter 162 "An Act to Protect Maine Residents from Home Fires and Carbon Monoxide." This law becomes effective September 12, 2009 and requires that all single-family homes and multi-apartment buildings sold or rented in the state and all newly constructed single-family dwellings have smoke detectors and at least one carbon monoxide detector in bedrooms or the areas providing access to bedrooms. The detectors used in multifamily dwellings and newly constructed single-family dwellings must be hardwired with battery backup. Any smoke detector located within 20 feet of a kitchen or a bathroom containing a tub or shower must be a photoelectric-type smoke detector.

The State Fire Marshall's Office is developing an implementation plan. In the meantime, for more information, see the law as approved, at: www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/bills_124th/chapters/PUBLIC162.asp.

Save the Date

Maine Affordable Housing Conference

October 19, 2009

The Housing Choice Voucher Program offers much more than vouchers

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has expanded the options available to tenants under the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Did you know that:

-  An eligible tenant with a Housing Choice Voucher can buy a house and use the voucher to assist with mortgage payments if they choose our Homeownership Option?
-  A tenant can become self-sufficient while building a savings account if they join our Family Self-Sufficiency Program?
-  A family may be eligible for assistance under the Family Unification Program if they are homeless and are in danger of losing their children, or their children have been placed with the foster care system?
-  A family may be eligible for assistance under the VASH (Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing) Program if the head or spouse is a homeless veteran?

Please contact Lynne Rodrigue (lrodrigue@mainehousing.org or 207-624-5755) at MaineHousing for more information on these programs.

This newsletter is provided by MaineHousing's Asset Management Department. For more information, contact the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher team at 624-5789 or 1-866-357-4853.

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www.mainehousing.org



How to make the Housing Choice Voucher Program work for you

MaineHousing is committed to making the Housing Choice Voucher rental experience a success for tenants and landlords, and has put together a list of tips for landlords on how to make the Housing Choice Voucher Program work for you.

 *Screen applicants for suitability.* The first step in a successful tenancy is screening your applicants for suitability. Housing agencies screen for program eligibility only, and it is up to you to evaluate whether the potential tenant is a good match.

 *Contact the Housing Choice Voucher Program agent right away.* If a potential tenant requests the unit, wishes to use their Housing Choice Voucher, and gives you the “landlord packet,” get in touch with the agency that provided the voucher right away.

 *Collect a security deposit.* Collect a security deposit before the tenant moves into the unit.

 *Use a standard lease.* A model lease is provided as part of the Maine Attorney General’s Consumer Law Guide – see www.maine.gov/ag/consumer/consumer_law_guide.shtml and select item # 16- Attorney General’s Model Landlord-Tenant Lease. You also can find a standard lease form at most stationery stores.

The following information must be addressed in the lease:

- The names of the owner and the tenant
- The unit rented (address, apartment number, and any other information needed to identify the contract unit)
- The term of the lease (initial term and any provisions for renewal)
- The amount of the monthly rent to owner
- Information on what utilities and appliances are to be supplied by the owner, and what utilities and appliances are to be supplied by the family

(The Tenancy Addendum provided in the landlord packet must be attached to the lease.)

 *It is the landlord’s responsibility to enforce the lease.* The lease is an agreement between the landlord and the tenant. The agency that issues the Housing Choice Voucher is not a party to the lease.

 *Charge a reasonable rent.* The rent charged by the owner must be reasonable compared to other market rents. The rent cannot be more than the amount you would charge a tenant who does not have a voucher. Landlords must not make separate agreements with renters or charge more than the approved rent.

 *Inspect the property regularly.* Let the tenant know that in addition to the annual inspection by the housing authority that you will make periodic inspections as well.

 *Provide adequate notice of rent increases.* Notify the tenant and the housing authority 60 days before you expect a rent increase.

 *Ensure the contract with MaineHousing/Agent.* The contract with the housing agency defines the program requirements. Be sure that the contract includes correct tenant name, address, and rent.

 *Notify MaineHousing/Agent if:*

- The tenant commits a violation of the lease that will cause eviction
- The family composition changes
- The tenant moves out of the unit
- You have any questions – we would like to hear from you



New online rental listing service for landlords and renters

MaineHousingSearch.org is a new online rental listing service – and it is free. Detailed listings can include pictures, maps, eligibility requirements (if applicable) and much more.

New protections for tenants in foreclosure situations

A new federal law offers protection for tenants living in foreclosed buildings. This spring, Congress passed Public Law 111-22: “Helping Families Save Their Homes Act of 2009” that went into effect immediately.

The law is self-executing, which means no federal agency is responsible for implementation. It is up to all of us to make sure that tenants, landlords, public housing authorities, courts, the legal community, and others involved in the foreclosure process are aware of these new tenant rights.

The new law provides that all tenants must get a 90-day notice before being evicted as a result of foreclosure. In addition (with some exceptions) tenants that have leases can continue to live in their homes until the end of the term of their lease.

The rights of Section 8 tenants also are protected because the new owner at foreclosure must accept both the tenant’s lease and the housing assistance payment (HAP) contract.



MaineHousingSearch.org

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

MaineHousing, in collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and in partnership with 211 Maine, is sponsoring the website as a public service.

Currently there are over 700 listings with 7,284 units, including 475 vacancies, statewide, with some in every county. MaineHousing and DHHS are encouraging Maine landlords to list their apartments on the site.

MaineHousingSearch.org is



FREE, fast and easy to use with both simple and detailed search options



Available online 24-7 and supported by a toll-free, bilingual call center, Mon - Fri, 9 am to 8 pm EST



Continuously updated by call center and email contact with landlords

On the *first day* the service was made available to renters, more than 650 people conducted more than 2,400 searches.

To register or to learn more, see MaineHousingSearch.org or contact SocialServe at info@socialserve.com, or 1-877-428-8844.

Agents for the Housing Choice Voucher Program are:

for Aroostook County:

Aroostook County Action Program, Inc.
207/768-3023
207/764-3721 Voice/TTY
1-800-432-7881
Susan O'Clair
soclair@acap-me.org

for Androscoggin and Oxford Counties:

Avesta Housing
207/744-4046
1-800-521-6003
Judy Arsenault
jarsenault@avestahousing.org

for York and Cumberland counties:

Avesta Housing
207/282-0032
1-888-294-3551
1-800-339-6516 TTY/Voice
Laura Hebert
lhebert@avestahousing.org

for Kennebec, Lincoln, Franklin, Sagadahoc and Somerset counties:

Maine State Housing Authority
207/624-5789
1-866-357-4853
1-800-452-4603 TTY
Melinda Folsom
mfolsom@mainehousing.org

for Waldo, Knox, Piscataquis, and Penobscot counties:

Penquis Community Action Program
207/973-3500
207/973-3520 TTY
1-888-424-0151
Diane Dunham
ddunham@penquis.org

for Washington and Hancock Counties:

Washington-Hancock Community Action
207/664-2424
1-800-828-7544
1-800-339-9422 TTY
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