

Owner Handbook

Metro HRA

Rent Assistance Programs



RENT Assistance programs

Metro HRA

Rent Assistance Programs

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Metropolitan Council is to develop, in cooperation with local communities, a comprehensive regional planning framework, focusing on transportation, wastewater, parks and aviation systems, that guides the efficient growth of the metropolitan area. The Council operates transit and wastewater services and administers housing and other grant programs.

The Metro HRA's mission is to assist low-income families throughout the metropolitan area to obtain decent, affordable housing, particularly in areas where there are no concentrations of poverty; stabilize families in suitable housing so that they may become more economically self-sufficient; upgrade and revitalize the region's housing stock; and collaborate with other governmental units, community-based agencies and corporations to make efficient use of public resources.



Metropolitan Council

390 Robert Street North
St. Paul, MN 55101-2229



RENT
Assistance programs

Metro HRA
Rent Assistance Programs

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390 Robert Street North
St. Paul, MN 55101-2229



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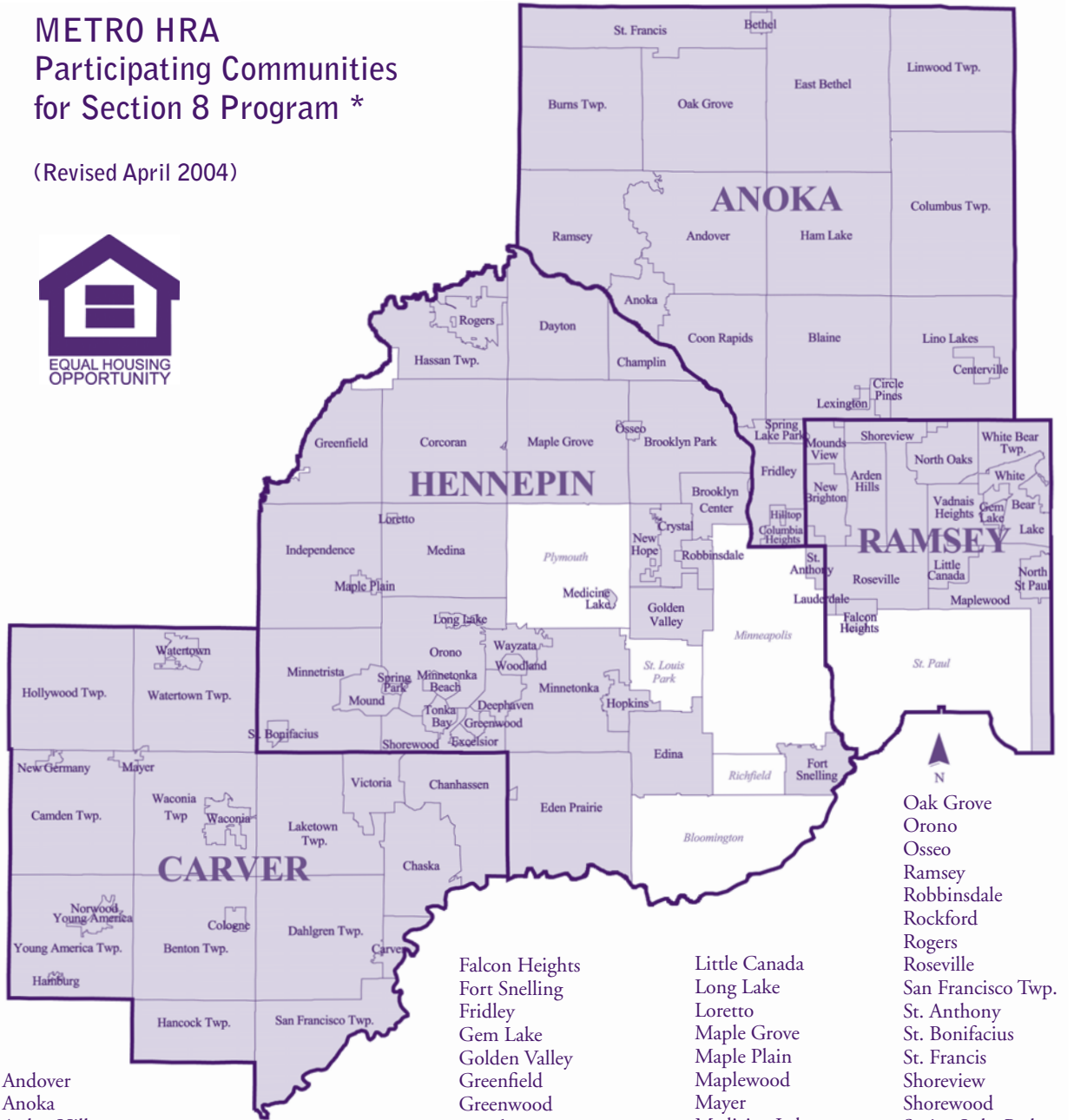
The Metro HRA works toward consistency as much as possible in the administration of our programs. However, in some instances federal, state, and/or local funding sources and rules differ. This necessitates some difference in policy, procedure and forms.

We have developed this handbook in an effort to provide information that applies to all programs.



METRO HRA Participating Communities for Section 8 Program *

(Revised April 2004)



Andover
Anoka
Arden Hills
Benton Twp.
Bethel
Blaine
Brooklyn Center
Brooklyn Park
Burns Twp.
Carver
Centerville
Champlin
Chanhassen
Chaska
Circle Pines
Cologne

Columbia Heights
Columbus Twp.
Coon Rapids
Corcoram
Crystal
Dahlgren Twp.
Dayton
Deephaven
East Bethel
Eden Prairie
Edina
Excelsior

Falcon Heights
Fort Snelling
Fridley
Gem Lake
Golden Valley
Greenfield
Greenwood
Hamburg
Ham Lake
Hanover
Hancock Twp.
Hassan Twp.
Hilltop
Hollywood Twp.
Hopkins
Independence
Laketown Twp.
Lauderdale
Lexington
Lino Lakes
Linwood Twp.

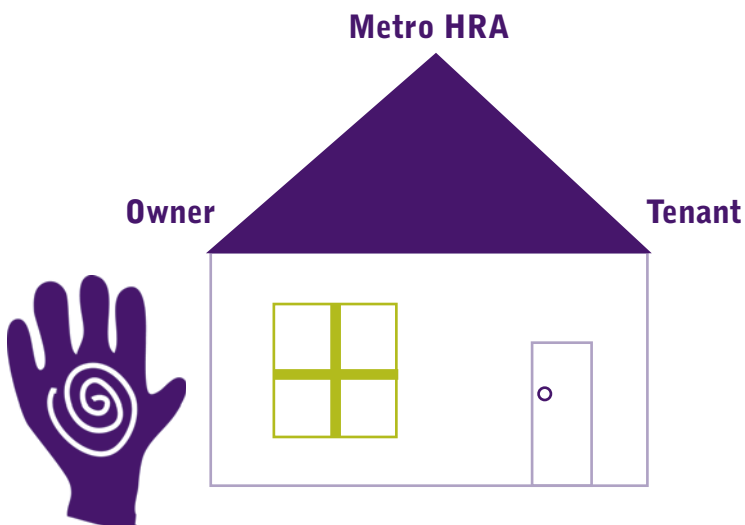
Little Canada
Long Lake
Loretto
Maple Grove
Maple Plain
Maplewood
Mayer
Medicine Lake
Medina
Minnetonka
Minnetonka Beach
Mound
Mounds View
New Brighton
New Germany
New Hope
North Oaks
North St. Paul
Norwood -
Young America

Oak Grove
Orono
Osseo
Ramsey
Robbinsdale
Rockford
Rogers
Roseville
San Francisco Twp.
St. Anthony
St. Bonifacius
St. Francis
Shoreview
Shorewood
Spring Lake Park
Spring Park
Tonka Bay
Vadnais Heights
Victoria
Waconia
Waconia Twp.
Watertown
Watertown Twp.
Wayzata
White Bear Lake
White Bear Twp.
Woodland
Young America Twp.

* For some properties, the Metro HRA service jurisdiction is expanded.

RENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS ADMINISTERED BY THE METRO HRA

- SECTION 8 HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM
- BRIDGES
- SHELTER PLUS CARE
- HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HAP)
- FAMILY SELF- SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM (FSS)
- RENTAL ASSISTANCE IN ANOKA COUNTY (RAAC)



INTRODUCTION

The Owner Handbook is designed to provide rental property owners, managers, and caretakers with information needed to successfully participate in the Rent Assistance Programs administered by the Metropolitan Council Housing and Redevelopment Authority (Metro HRA). Currently, over 6,000 families in Anoka, Carver, and suburban Hennepin and Ramsey Counties are receiving assistance each month with their rent payments. The Housing Choice Voucher Program is the largest program we administer. It is a federal housing program funded through the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

All rental assistance programs are a three-way partnership between property owners, program participants, and the HRA. The success of the programs is due to the willingness and cooperation of more than 2,000 property owners and managers. Without this participation, the programs would not exist. Throughout this handbook, the HRA strives to provide property owners and managers with the information necessary to ensure satisfying participation in the Rental Assistance Programs. The HRA invites feedback from property owners that will help us to continue improving our service.

METRO HRA

- Determines household's eligibility and assistance level
- Issues voucher to family
- Supplies family with Request for Tenancy Approval form (RTA)
- Approves rent and tenancy
- Performs Housing Quality Standards Inspection
- Prepares contract and sends to owner
- Issues housing assistance payments to owners

OWNER

- Shows available unit
- Screens prospective tenant
- Approves prospective tenant
- Completes RTA form
- Provides proposed lease
- Signs and returns contracts
- Enforces terms of lease

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

- Contacts owner for unit
- Expresses interest in renting unit
- Completes RTA form with owner
- Returns RTA to the Metro HRA by the 15th of the month before assistance is to begin
- Abides by lease terms and program policies

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Q What are the Programs' basic purpose?

A. The basic purpose of the programs is to offer rent assistance opportunities to low income households by utilizing existing housing units. This enables low income households to rent most housing types throughout the Metro HRA service area, thus avoiding a concentration of assisted housing.

Q What do the Programs offer to owners?

A. Owners are guaranteed a portion of the rent paid by the HRA by the first of the month. The intent of the program is to lessen the burden on the household's budget for housing costs, helping them to better afford their rental portion, resulting in more consistent, timely and full payments to owners. Additionally, an annual inspection of the unit helps alert owners to required and/or recommended repairs; ideally, timely maintenance will reduce costs.

Q Who is eligible for the Programs?

A. Households are eligible if their gross annual income does not exceed the federal income guidelines. The programs are designed to assist seniors, families, individuals with a disability, and other single individuals. In some programs there is a specific population to be served. A household is eligible for the program, not a housing unit.

Q How does an owner get involved in the Programs?

A. An owner becomes involved in the program through a renter who has been found eligible for one of the programs.

The household looking for a rental unit will inform the owner that they have a voucher for rent assistance and will ask the owner if he/she is willing to participate in the program.

Q Does the HRA screen prospective renters for the owner?

A. No. The HRA does not screen participants for rental/credit history. Program participant screening and selection is the responsibility of the owner. The HRA recommends that the owner check references of all rental applicants (assisted and non-assisted) for past rental history. The HRA will provide a prospective landlord with a program participant's current and previous landlord's name, address, and telephone number. Ideally complete reference information will aid the landlord in efficient and effective processing.



PROGRAM INFORMATION

...continued

Q Can the owner obtain additional information about the household from the HRA?

A. Yes, if the household provides the HRA with a written release of information form signed by the prospective renter.

Q Is the owner required to participate in the rent assistance program?

A. An owner has the same right of tenant selection with regard to rent assistance program participants as other applicants. State and Federal laws prohibit housing discrimination based on race, color, creed, religion, sex, national origin, reliance on public assistance, marital status, familial status or disability.

Q What is the process if an owner has a rental unit he/she wishes to rent to a rent assistance program participant?

A. Unit availability information will be made available to program participants looking for housing through HousingLink. To list a vacancy contact HousingLink. To list a vacancy, contact HousingLink at www.housinglink.org (612) 520-9233

Q What type of housing unit can be rented by the household?

A. Apartments, single-family homes, duplexes, townhouses, condominiums, and mobile homes are all eligible housing types.

Q Are there limits on rents?

A. Rent limits are generally determined individually for each household based on three factors. The first factor is the payment standard amount, which is set by bedroom size. The second factor is household income. Generally, the higher the household income, the higher the approvable rent. The payment standards are determined to include modestly priced rental units. Not all units are affordable for the program participants. The third factor is that the rent must be determined reasonable by the HRA.

Q Are tenant-paid utility charges taken into consideration?

A. An estimate for tenant-paid utilities (excluding telephone and air conditioning) is calculated by the HRA using average consumption data by bedroom size, structure type, energy source, and current utility rate information. This data is updated annually. The monthly rent plus this estimate equal the gross monthly rent for the unit.

Q When can the rent amount be changed?

A. This option is dependent upon available program funding and the rent reasonableness of a rental unit.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

...continued

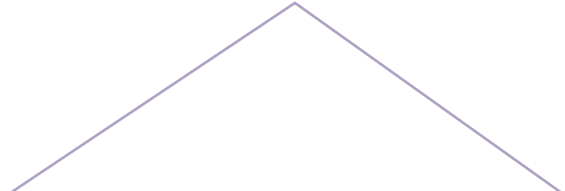
Q How and when does the owner notify the HRA of a rent change?

A. Following the initial term of the lease, the owner may adjust the rent by providing the HRA with 60-day written notice of the change. In some instances the HRA's ability to approve rent increases is limited as a result of budget restraints or funding availability.

Q How much of the rent does the household pay?

A. For most programs, the household will initially pay between 30-40% of their monthly income toward their housing cost. A maximum HRA subsidy is calculated and the household is responsible for the remainder of the rent.

As a guideline to assist in determining the percent of the household's income used for housing, if the household chooses a unit that rents for less than the Payment Standard they will pay 30% of their income for housing. If they choose a unit that rents for more than the Payment Standard they will pay more than 30% of their income for housing. The household's rent portion is affected by both their income and the rent charged.



Q Will the HRA help a household decide if they can afford the rent?

A. At the time of any move or admission to the program, the HRA will determine the maximum rent allowed for the household based on their income. This is communicated to the household using an "Eligibility Worksheet". An owner can request this form from the prospective renter to ensure the rent charged will be approved by the HRA. Hopefully, this process will eliminate most cases where an owner has selected the tenant, but the HRA must deny the unit because it is not affordable for the household.

The HRA will ensure that a household's initial rent amount will be no more than 40% of their income (after any program deductions).



PROGRAM INFORMATION

...continued

Q What will cause the household or HRA's rent portion to change?

A. Rent portions may change at the household's annual re-examination or mid-year due to a change in the household's income, expenses, or composition, and/or change in the contract rent. The owner and the household will be notified, in writing, of any change in rent portions.

Q What should an owner do if a program participant seriously and/or repeatedly violates provisions of the lease?

A. The HRA recommends problems with assisted tenants be handled in the same manner as those of unassisted tenants, and in accordance with state law. The HRA is not a party to the lease and does not have the authority or responsibility to intervene in or to resolve problems.

The HRA further recommends that the owner notify the household in writing of the violations, request the necessary change(s), and state a deadline for the change(s). The owner should forward a copy of the correspondence to the HRA.

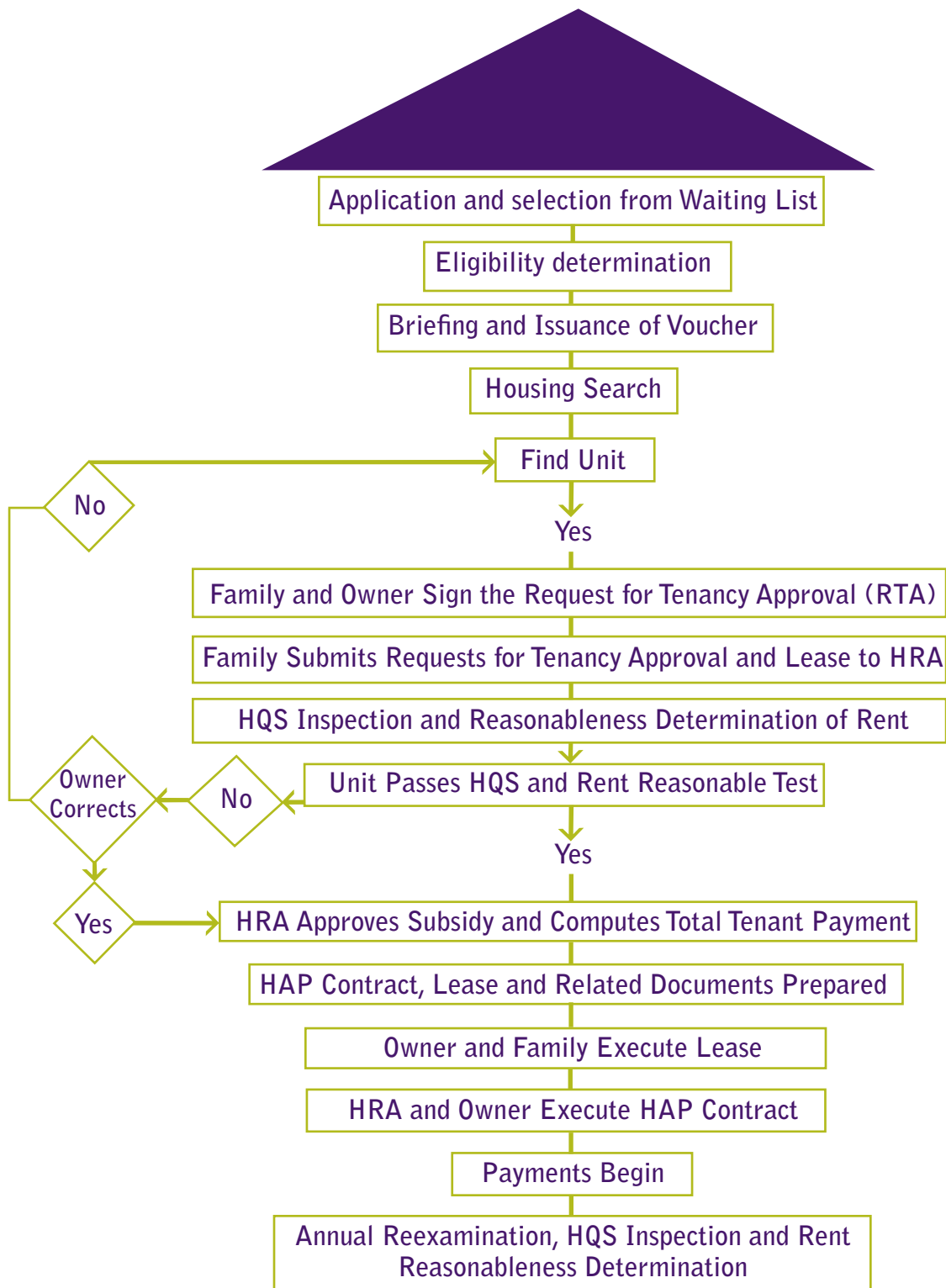
When the HRA receives a copy of the lease violation notice, the HRA Coordinator will notify the program participant that the HRA is aware of the violation and inform the program participant that lease violations that result in a court ordered eviction will result in termination of their rent assistance program benefits. The HRA Coordinator will encourage the program participant to remedy the situation.

After written correspondence, if the family does not correct the problem, the owner can consider issuing a vacate notice. If the family complies with a written vacate notice, the HRA considers this a mutual termination of the lease, not an eviction.

Or, if the family does not correct the problem, the owner can initiate a legal court eviction by contacting the County Clerk of Court and filing an Unlawful Detainer.

The owner must notify the HRA, in writing, of commencement of lease termination procedures. This can be done by furnishing the HRA with a copy of the tenant's vacate notice and/or Unlawful Detainer. If a family is evicted through a court for serious or repeated lease violations, the families housing assistance will be terminated.





SECURITY DEPOSITS

Q How is the security deposit handled?

A. The owner may collect the same security deposit amount from an assisted household as is collected from an unassisted household. The owner must collect a deposit amount not more than that of private market practice and abide by state laws.

The owner charges market-rate security deposits and then deals directly with the program participant in the event of damages, unpaid rent or vacancy loss. This allows the owner to more uniformly deal with tenants whether assisted or not assisted.

INSPECTIONS

Q Is the unit inspected by the HRA? What is the purpose of the inspection?

A. Yes. A unit must be inspected by the HRA or its Contract Inspector initially to ensure the unit meets Federal Housing Quality Standards (HQS). The Housing Quality Standards were developed to ensure that housing assisted through the Program is “decent, safe and sanitary.” The unit must be re-inspected annually.

Q What if a unit “fails” the inspection?

A. Under Federal regulations, a unit either “passes” or “fails”. Any item that does not meet the standards will cause the unit to fail. The owner will be notified, in writing, if the unit “fails”. The owner determines whether he/

she is willing to make the repairs and informs the program participant of this decision. If the owner elects not to make the repairs, the household must choose another unit to receive assistance.

Q What happens if the unit fails the inspection due to tenant-caused violations of the standards?

A. The program participant is responsible for HQS violations caused by the following:

- Program participant failure to pay for tenant-supplied utilities;
- Program participant failure to provide and maintain tenant-supplied appliances

The Metro HRA may terminate assistance to a program participant for tenant-caused HQS violations.

Until assistance to the program participant is terminated, the Metro HRA does not stop HAP payments to the owner or terminate the HAP contract because of tenant-caused violations.

OVERVIEW OF HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS

The federal regulations for the program stipulate that each unit shall meet basic “Performance Requirements” with respect to the following:

- Sanitary facilities
- Food preparation and storage space
- Space and security
- Thermal environment
- Illumination and electricity
- Structure and materials
- Interior air quality
- Water supply
- Lead-based paint
- Access
- Site and neighborhood
- Sanitary condition

SPECIFICS

Each DWELLING UNIT must have a minimum of a living room, kitchen area, bathroom and one living/sleeping room for every two family members.

The BATHROOM must have a flush toilet, fixed basin and a tub or shower with hot and cold water, an operable window or fan vented to the outside, and a ceiling or wall type light fixture and one outlet.

The KITCHEN must have a stove or range, a refrigerator, a sink with hot and cold water, space for storage, preparation, and serving of food, facilities for sanitary disposal of food wastes, a ceiling or wall type light fixture and one outlet.

The LIVING/SLEEPING ROOM(S) must have two outlets or one light and one outlet and an operable window large enough to be used as an emergency exit.

CEILING, WALLS, FLOORS, WINDOWS must be in good condition. There can not be any large cracks or peeling and/or chipped paint or plaster. Windows must open and close, cannot have cracked, broken or missing panes, and if accessible from the outside, must be lockable.

PORCHES, BALCONIES, DECKS that are more than 30 inches above ground must have a rail 36 inches high. All stairs (interior or exterior) with four or more steps including the landing must have a handrail.

SMOKE DETECTOR(S) must be present and functioning outside each sleeping area and on each level of the dwelling unit regardless of whether there are bedrooms on the level.

CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS must be present and functioning within 10 feet of each sleeping area. These must be installed per manufacturers guidelines.

The SITE AND NEIGHBORHOOD must be free from conditions that could endanger the health, life, and/or safety of residents. The unit must be free of insect or rodent infestation.

All surfaces must be free of cracking, scaling, peeling, chipping, and loose paint; or be properly treated or covered to prevent the exposure of residents to lead based paint hazards.



OVERVIEW OF HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS

...continued

MOST COMMON FAIL CONDITIONS

Missing or Nonfunctioning smoke detectors
Missing or Nonfunctioning carbon monoxide detectors
Missing or cracked electrical switch plate and outlet covers
Peeling and/or chipping exterior and interior paint
Burners on kitchen stove/range not operating as designed
Cracked and/or broken window panes
Leaking faucets/plumbing
Inoperable bath fan
Carpet and vinyl conditions – safety issues
Railings on four or more steps not present



IMPORTANT: If the unit was built before 1978 and the program participant has children under the age six (6), no defective or peeling paint surfaces are allowed on either the interior or exterior of the building. If the rental unit has chipped or peeling paint, it must be removed using safe work practices, and some repairs will require a clearance test. Another option is to have paint samples tested to determine if its lead content is at an acceptable level. A certified testing lab must collect random samples of paint chips from the unit for this test. Landlords cannot collect and submit their own samples. Contact the HRA for additional information regarding this option.

FORMS AND PROCEDURES

In an effort to make this handbook more readable, samples of documents and forms used in the administration of the Programs have not been included. If you would like to review the actual documents (contracts, lease addendum, etc.) please call (651) 602-1428.

Q Whose lease document is used?

A. Owners use their own lease document. If you do not have a model lease you may use the Minnesota Multi-Housing Association (MHA) model lease, or a standard lease form available at many office supply stores.

An owner participating in the Section 8 Program may set the initial lease term at his/her discretion and may terminate tenancy without cause at the end of the initial lease term or at the end of a successive renewal term. For example, if the lease provides for automatic renewal on a month-to-month basis, the owner may terminate tenancy with proper 60 day written notice to the tenant and the Housing Authority without cause. During the course of the initial term or during the course of each successive month extension, the owner may terminate the tenancy if the owner has cause under the grounds for termination of tenancy stated in the HUD required tenancy addendum.

Q What is the required tenancy addendum?

A. The tenancy addendum ensures that the owner's lease does not conflict with program regulations. The addendum adds information regarding termination of tenancy and prohibited lease provisions. In addition to being a supplement to the lease, it is also incorporated into the HAP Contract.

Q What is a "Request for Tenancy Approval"?

A. The Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA) is a form that the family initially provides to the owner. The owner completes it with information about the unit regarding size, rent, availability, address, and utility responsibilities. The family returns it to the HRA. The form provides the HRA with the information necessary for scheduling the inspection, the preparation of lease addendum and contract documents. The RTA also provides a prospective landlord with the program participants' current and past landlord information. This is designed to assist the landlord in their screening process.

The RTA is not a lease, however, we suggest that a landlord not complete the RTA unless it has been determined that the landlord will be entering into a lease with the family.



FORMS AND PROCEDURES

...continued

Q What happens after the Request for Tenancy Approval is returned to the HRA?

A. The HRA Coordinator will review the form and inform the inspectors of the need for an inspection. The owner and program participant will be notified if there are questions or problems with the proposed leasing arrangements and/or rent amount.

When the HRA has all the necessary information, contract documents will be prepared and mailed to the owner. It is the owner's responsibility to ensure the documents including a copy of the lease are signed and returned to the HRA in a timely manner to enable the HRA to make a timely payment to the owner. The contract must be executed no more than 60 days after the effective date of the lease.

The lease is a legal document between the owner and tenant. The HRA is not a party to the lease, however, the owner must provide the HRA with a copy of the signed lease.

12003
Metropolitan Council
Housing required commitments to a jurisdiction
230 E. 1st Street
St. Paul, MN 55101
Phone 651-602-1428 • Fax 651-602-1313 • TTY 651-291-0804

HRA Rep Name _____
Initial _____ Move _____
Child Under 6 Y _____ N _____
MGR _____

IMPORTANT DEADLINE:
This form is due by the 15th of the month for assistance to start on the 1st of the next month. **Please Note:** If this form is returned after the 15th but on or before the last day of the month, assistance can begin no sooner than the 1st of the next month.

Request for Tenancy Approval
Housing Choice Voucher Program
US Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Public and Indian Housing

Address of Unit: (street address, apartment number, city, state & zip code) _____
OMB Approval No. 2577-0102 (Rev. 03/31/2004)

Lease Begins: _____	Number of bedrooms: _____
*Year Constructed: _____	Security Deposit: \$ _____
Contract Rent: \$ _____	

Lease Term: _____ month to month _____ 6 month _____ 12 month _____ other _____

Type of House/Apartment:
 Single Family Duplex (2 connected units) Apartment Building Mobile Home Townhouse (2 connected units) Other _____

If the unit is subsidized, indicate the type of subsidy:
 Section 236 (Rental or interest) Section 515 (Rural Development) Section 202 Section 221 (9) (3) (State) Home Tax Credit Other (describe other subsidy, including any State or Local subsidy) _____

UTILITIES PAID BY TENANT: Please X those paid by tenant and circle the type of energy source:
_____ Heat (circle source) Gas _____ Electric _____
_____ Bottle Gas _____ Lights, Refrigeration and Miscellaneous Electricity
_____ Fuel Oil _____ Water Heating (circle source) Gas _____ Water
_____ Electric _____
_____ Bottle Gas _____ Trash
_____ Fuel Oil _____ Sewer
_____ Cooking Fuel (circle source) Gas _____ Electric _____
_____ Bottle Gas _____ Fuel Oil _____

•Does the Tenant provide the Stove? Yes ___ No ___ •Does the Tenant provide the Refrigerator? Yes ___ No ___

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:
Is a garage included in the rent? Yes ___ No ___ If yes, is the garage optional? Yes ___ No ___
If the garage is optional, how much is attributed to the garage rent? \$ _____

METRO HRA DETERMINATIONS:
a. The Metro HRA has not screened the family's behavior or suitability for tenancy. Such screening is the owner's responsibility.
b. The owner's lease must include word for word, all provisions of the HUD tenancy addendum.
c. The Metro HRA will arrange for inspection of the unit and will notify the owner and family as to whether or not the unit will be approved.

VERBA FORM 01/2004

FORMS AND PROCEDURES

...continued

Q What is the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract?

A. This is a contract between the Owner and the HRA. Essentially it guarantees that the HRA will pay its portion of the rent provided the owner performs his/her responsibilities under the lease and contract and the participant remains in the rental unit.

The HRA strongly recommends that the owner read the contract in its entirety, and be familiar with all provisions.

Q When does the HRA mail rent payments?

A. It is the policy of the HRA to mail rent payments on the last working day of the month with the intention that the owner receives payment on the first working day of the month. The owner may receive payment late the first month of assisted occupancy due to delayed processing affected by the completion of the inspection and return of leasing and contract documents.

Q What should an owner do if he/she has a question about the amount of or receipt of a payment?

A. Contact the HRA Coordinator or Community Representative assigned to the household. His or her name will appear on the paperwork received from the HRA.

Q What should an Owner do if he/she suspects a fraudulent situation regarding the income or household composition of an assisted tenant?

A. Contact an HRA Coordinator or Community Representative. The HRA is seriously concerned about any fraud or abuse in the program. We ask for the owner and/or managers help in reporting any fraudulent situation.



FORMS AND PROCEDURES

...continued

Q What is the process if a household wants to move to another unit within the same building/complex or another building/complex?

A. The program participant is required to give the HRA at least a proper 60-day notice of his/her intention to move and must have permission from the landlord. The HRA must re-verify income, re-establish rent portions, execute new documents, and inspect the new unit.

Q How often does the HRA meet with program participants to review their situations and re-determine their rent responsibilities?

A. At least once annually the HRA re-certifies participant's income and redetermines rent. This process is called the annual re-examination. The HRA begins the process approximately 90 – 120 days prior to the lease renewal date. This process also involves contacting the owner about lease renewal, new rent amounts, and the annual inspection of the unit.

Q What happens if a program participant "skips" or vacates a unit in violation of their notice requirements?

A. Assistance for participants who leave their unit in violation of their lease term will be terminated from the rent assistance program. Please notify the family's HRA Coordinator or Community Representative of this event.



OTHER RESOURCES

Owner/Program Participant Conflict Resolution

Dispute Resolution Center
974 W. 7th Street
St. Paul, MN 55102
(651) 292-7791

Community Mediation Services, Inc.
9220 Bass Lake Road
New Hope, MN 55428
(763) 561-0033

Mediation Services for Anoka County
2520 Coon Rapids Blvd., Suite 100
Coon Rapids, MN 55433
(763) 422-8878

To List Rental Vacancies
HousingLink
(612) 520-9233
www.housinglink.org

Landlord/Program Participant Rights Information

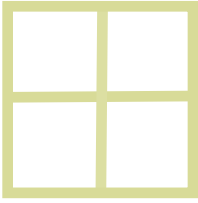
Minnesota Attorney General's Office
NCL Tower
445 Minnesota Street, Suite 1400
St. Paul, MN 55101
(651) 296-3353
1-800-657-3787
TTY (651) 297-7206

Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity
Department of Housing and Urban Development
Room 5204
451 7th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20410
1-800-669-9777

Property Management Information and Assistance
Minnesota Multi-Housing Association
1600 W. 82nd Street, Suite 110
Bloomington, MN 55431
(952) 854-8500

Landlord/Program Participant
Information Hotline
(952) 858-8222






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Website: www.metrocouncil.org

Art from Family Housing Fund 20th Anniversary
Home Sweet Home Art Exhibit
Artist: Jodi Reeb-Myers

 **Metropolitan Council**
390 Robert Street North
St. Paul, MN 55101-2229

