

## HCV PARTICIPANT FAQ

**COVID-19, Coronavirus, continues to impact people throughout the country. The health and safety of our employees and clients is a priority. Out of an abundance of caution, Decatur Housing Authority (DHA) is closed to the public until further notice.**

We realize you may have many questions and concerns that need to be addressed. We will continue to provide updated information regarding DHA's operations on our website, [www.decaurhousing.org](http://www.decaurhousing.org). Additionally, you may call or email your Housing Specialist or the Front Desk Receptionist, if you have questions. Staff contact information can be found on DHA's website. Most staff are working remotely but your call will be returned. We appreciate your patience.

We would like to address some of your Frequently Asked Questions, FAQs, below.

### **Q. When will DHA conduct in-person Annual and Special inspections?**

**A. In-person Annual and Special HQS inspections will resume July 7, 2020.** Inspectors will wear a mask and gloves during the inspection. To ensure the health and safety of our inspectors and your family, you will be asked if you or a household member have a cold, cough, or flu-like symptoms, or have been around someone with a cold, cough, or flu-like symptoms or you are self-quarantining. If so, the inspection will be rescheduled in thirty (30) days. If you or a household member are unwell when the inspector arrives, the inspection will be canceled and rescheduled later. You and your family are expected to practice social distancing during the inspection and may be asked to stand outside while the inspection is conducted.

### **Q. Will rent continue to be paid to the landlord during the closure?**

**A.** Yes, all rent will be paid to the landlord.

### **Q. Will I receive my utility reimbursement payment (URP) if I am due one?**

**A.** Yes, if you are eligible for a URP it will be deposited onto your U.S. Bank card.

### **Q. Do I have to pay rent during this time?**

**A.** Yes, you must pay your share of rent to the owner. If you are unable to pay your rent, you should make payment arrangements with your landlord. If rent payments are deferred, your rent will be due at some point in time. **You can be evicted for non-payment of rent, even though the hearing may be held at a later date.**

### **Q. What if my landlord gives me an eviction notice?**

**A.** Per Atlanta Legal Aid, landlords are still able to file new eviction cases, either electronically or in person. Eviction warrants are being served and answers may be filed. The moratorium only prevents the eviction cases from being scheduled for hearings. As soon as the Judicial Emergency is lifted, any pending eviction case will be scheduled for a hearing, likely within a few weeks.

### **Q. My income and/or household composition has changed. What needs to be done?**

**A.** All changes must be reported in writing within 10 days of occurrence. The Change of Income and Zero Income forms can be found on our website under the Forms tab. You will need to provide documentation of your income change such as check stubs, a letter from your employer, a separation notice or self-certification letter. Contact your Housing Specialist or Ms. Hayes at the Front Desk if you have a Change of Household Composition. A form can be mailed or emailed to you.

Please provide true and complete information, as failure to do so may result in termination of assistance or you will be required to reimburse DHA for over-paid assistance.

**Q. Do I have to pay rent if I lose my job or my hours are reduced?**

A. You should immediately notify the landlord and your Housing Specialist if you lose your job or you are working fewer hours. Your rent will be recalculated, and you will be notified in writing of the new rental amount. You will need to provide documentation of your income change such as check stubs, a letter from your employer, a separation notice, or a notarized self-certification letter. Please provide true and complete information, as failure to do so may result in termination of assistance or you will be required to reimburse DHA for over-paid assistance.

**Q. Will my annual recertification appointment be rescheduled?**

A. Annual recertifications will be handled by mail. A recertification packet will be mailed to you to be completed and returned by mail, email or deposited into the drop box outside of DHA's office with the requested documents. You will need to make your own copies of original documents. No copies will be made by Housing Authority staff.

**Q. Will my informal hearing be rescheduled?**

A. Beginning June 2020, informal hearings will be conducted utilizing the Zoom Meeting Video Conference or by conference call. Zoom is a video conferencing application that can be accessed through your computer or mobile device. You can download the Zoom application and install it on your smartphone, computer, tablet, or laptop to participate in the informal hearing meeting. Or you can simply dial in on your phone and participate as a conference call only, without the video. The conference call can be made on any phone. The link and instructions for accessing the Zoom meeting informal hearing will be sent when the informal hearing is scheduled. At the participant's request, the video conference or conference call informal hearing will be rescheduled once.

**Q. How are voucher terminations being handled?**

A. Terminations for unreported income or other violations of the federal regulations and DHA policies are being processed. Families are expected to provide true and complete information and comply with program regulations and DHA policies. Informal hearings will be held by a video conference or conference call.

**Q. My voucher is going to expire, what should I do?**

A. Request an extension from your Housing Specialist.

**Q. Can I move to a new unit?**

A. Yes, you can move but we encourage you to remain in your current unit. DHA is operating with a skeleton staff and it will take longer to process your notice to vacate, voucher issuance, RFTA and schedule inspections. Also, it may take you longer to find housing at this time.

Families transferring to new units and families porting to DHA's jurisdiction **must not** move into the new unit before the unit passes initial inspection. **Move-in inspections will be conducted as long as the tenant has not moved into the unit.**

**Q. Can I move to a new unit if I am under a current lease?**

A. If you are under a current lease, you must obtain written permission from your current landlord to break the lease. DHA will not process you to move without written permission from your landlord if you are under a current lease. If your landlord gives you written permission to break the current lease, you must submit a 60-day notice to vacate signed by you and your landlord and a copy of the written permission to break the lease to your Housing Specialist. The Notice to Vacate is on the website under the Forms tab.

**Q. Can I move to a new unit if I am not under a current lease or my lease is expiring?**

A. Yes. You must submit a 60-day notice to vacate signed by you and your landlord to your Housing Specialist. The Notice to Vacate is on the website under Forms.

**Q. Can I port to another housing authority jurisdiction?**

A. Yes, but you should contact the housing authority to see if they are accepting portability families at this time. Many housing authorities are not accepting ports. You must submit a notice to vacate and a written request to port out. You must tell your Housing Specialist what Housing Authority you want to port to. Please see the questions above regarding moving. VASH participants must obtain approval from the VA to port to another location.

**Q. My voucher amount is too low. Can the housing authority give me a higher voucher amount?**

A. Rents in metropolitan Atlanta are high. The Housing Choice Voucher program is an income-based program. Families with higher incomes can afford higher rents. Zero income families have difficulty finding suitable housing. When searching for housing go to [www.georgiahousingsearch.org](http://www.georgiahousingsearch.org), [www.gosection8.com](http://www.gosection8.com), or [www.socialserve.com](http://www.socialserve.com) for property listings.

**Q. My relatives give me money each month. Can I include the contributions as income?**

A. DHA does not include contributions as income at lease-up if there is no evidence that the contributions were being received prior to lease-up. Otherwise, regular contributions are counted as income.

**Q. I am a new applicant or recently referred to DHA. What happens next?**

A. Your Housing Specialist will mail an intake packet to you. Please provide a current mailing address, phone number and email address. The intake packet must be completed, signed, and returned by mail, fax or email to your Housing Specialist with the requested documents, including **birth certificates, social security cards, income verification, bank statements, current photo identification. Use the verification checklist in your intake packet to ensure that you send all applicable documents for each household member.** If you return your packet by email, please send your documents as attachments. Do not include the documents in the body of your email. All adult members of the household must sign the forms in the intake packet. Upon receipt, the completed intake packet will be reviewed by your Housing Specialist and you and all adult members of the household will be instructed to watch the briefing video. You and each adult member of the household must sign and date the form acknowledging that every adult member watched the briefing video. Upon receipt of the Acknowledgement form, your voucher, Tenant Rent Estimator and Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) will be sent to you. Questions should be addressed to your Housing Specialist. Contact information for your Housing Specialist can be found on DHA's website.

**Q. Can I live anywhere in DeKalb County?**

A. You can live anywhere in DeKalb County except within the City of Atlanta or the City of Lithonia city limits. The City of Atlanta and the City of Lithonia have their own housing authorities.

**Q. How do I find housing?**

A. Several websites offer property listings including [www.socialserve.com](http://www.socialserve.com) , [www.georgiahousingsearch.org](http://www.georgiahousingsearch.org) and [www.gosection8.com](http://www.gosection8.com) . We encourage you to search for housing in areas with employment opportunities, proximity to educational opportunities and access to public transportation.

**Q. What happens when I find a unit?**

A. DHA is operating with a skeleton staff and it will take longer to process your RFTA and schedule inspections. Also, it may take you longer to find housing at this time. Your Housing Specialist will review the RFTA and determine if the requested rent is affordable for your family based on the household income and if the rent is reasonable. If the rent is not affordable, the owner will need to decrease the requested rent, or you will need to find another unit. If the rent is not reasonable, the owner will need to decrease the rent to the acceptable amount, or you will need to find another unit.

Once the unit and rent are approved, the initial inspection will be performed. The owner has 15 days to make repairs.

Families **must not** move into the new unit before the unit passes initial inspection. **Move-in inspections will be conducted as long as the family has not moved into the unit.**

**After the unit passes inspection, new applicants and newly referred families can move into the unit the day after the unit passes inspection. Contact the landlord to find out when the unit passed inspection.**

**Current participants transferring to a new unit cannot move into the new unit until after the move-out date on the Notice to Vacate or on the Move-out Extension.**

**Pay the estimated amount of rent noted on the Notice of Passed Inspection given to your landlord until you receive the Rent Change Notification letter.**

DHA is committed to updating you on any changes we are making. Please check our website, [www.deaturha.org](http://www.deaturha.org) regularly.