

HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF DECATUR, GA

Housing Choice Voucher Program Initial Lease-Up Steps

Families have a limited amount of time to find and lease a unit after receiving a voucher. Families who do not lease-up within the allotted time risk losing their housing assistance. Therefore, it is critical for the lease-up steps to be followed.

Step 1 Listing the Property

- Prospective landlords may list available properties on the website www.georgiahousingsearch.org. Georgia Housing Search is a non-profit organization that lists properties free of charge for landlords and tenants.

Step 2 Completing the RFTA

- The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program family attends a tenant briefing and is issued a voucher and Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) form.
- When the family finds a unit they wish to rent and the owner is willing to rent to the family, the owner is given the RFTA to complete. The RFTA must be completed correctly and in its entirety. It must be signed and dated by the prospective landlord and tenant.
- The completed RFTA must be submitted to Decatur Housing Authority (DHA) immediately.
- If the owner is not registered with DHA at the time the RFTA is submitted, the completed RFTA will be not accepted and will be returned to the owner. Once the owner completes the new owner packet and is registered, the RFTA will be accepted and processed.

Step 3 Screening Prospective Tenants

- It is the sole responsibility of the landlord to conduct a background, criminal, or credit check on any prospective tenant. DHA does not screen participants for suitability and the Housing Authority is not liable for damages caused by any HCV program family.

Step 4 Initial Inspection

- Owners must be registered with DHA before the RFTA will be accepted, processed and sent to the inspection department. New owners must complete the New Owner Packet and submit the required documents in order to become an approved landlord.

- Once the RFTA has been submitted to DHA, it will be reviewed within 5 business days to determine if the family is income eligible for the unit.
 - If the family is income eligible for the unit, the RFTA will be forwarded to the inspection department.
 - If the family is not income eligible, the original form will be returned to the family to negotiate the rent with the landlord or bring the RFTA back to the office to receive a new RFTA form to find another unit.
 - If the family needs assistance with negotiating the rent, DHA will contact the owner on the family's behalf and explain the amount of rent the family is eligible for.
 - A new RFTA will be given to the family if the owner is unwilling to accept the amount of rent the family can afford. The family will have to begin their housing search again.

- The landlord will be contacted within 7-10 business days by the inspector to schedule the initial inspection. All inspections are processed in the order in which they are received regardless of circumstances.

- Utilities must be on at the time of the initial inspection and the unit must be vacant. The landlord will have 15 days to complete repairs and notify the inspector that the unit is ready for follow-up inspection.

Step 5 HAP Contract Preparations

- The landlord will receive a Notice of Passed HQS Inspection and Move-In Confirmation form when the unit has passed the HQS inspection. If the family moves in prior to the effective date of the contract, the family is responsible for the full payment of rent.

- The Notice of Passed Inspection provides an **estimate** of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and tenant's portion of rent. Owners should make the family aware of their estimated portion. The family should pay the estimated rent until DHA completes the final rent calculation and HAP contract. A letter will be sent to the landlord and tenant notifying them of the final HAP and tenant rent amounts.

- Once the unit passes the initial inspection, **the owner must complete and submit to DHA the Move-In Confirmation form and lease signed by the owner and tenant within 24 hours of the family moving into the unit.** The HAP contract will be prepared upon receipt of these documents. The owner will be notified when the contract is ready to be signed. Note that the tenant's portion of rent appearing on the Move-In Confirmation form is an estimate.

- **The effective date of the HAP contract cannot be earlier than the day after the family's move-out date indicated on the Notice to Vacate or move-out extension from their previous unit.**

- DHA is not responsible for any payments on a unit until the following has been completed/submitted:
 - Unit passed HQS inspection.
 - DHA has determined that the requested rent is reasonable.
 - The landlord and tenant have executed a lease and the landlord has signed the HAP contract with DHA.

Step 6 Housing Assistance Payments

- Housing assistance payments are deposited directly into the designated account during the first week of each month. The family pays its portion of the rent to the owner.