

# PHA Owner's Link

Welcome to the Philadelphia Housing Authority's quarterly newsletter for landlords. Find out what's happening with the Housing Choice Voucher Program.



JANUARY 2015

## A Message from the PHA Executive Vice President of Leased Housing

Welcome to the Philadelphia Housing Authority's (PHA) first edition of the Owner's Link Newsletter! We would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to you, our landlords and owners, who partner with us to support the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP). Because of you, over 17,000 low-income families in the city of Philadelphia have safe, decent, sanitary, and affordable housing.

This fiscal year has been a busy one. We have created over 2,500 housing opportunities, allowing PHA to pull applicants from our long waiting list and assist more families who are in need of affordable housing. We were awarded an additional \$835,000 to help end homelessness among veterans in Philadelphia by the year 2016. We are also committed to partnering with our Public Housing Program to commit 500 housing opportunities every year to assist the City in housing our general homeless population.

We also embarked on a new mobility program, which helps families to find housing in areas with better schools, transportation, and economic opportunities. The Housing Opportunity Program is also committed to ensuring these families succeed and prosper in their new neighborhoods.

In an effort to improve customer service and provide better services to owners and clients, PHA consolidated their five HCV satellite offices into one location, located at 2850 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19133. There are five operational units within the reorganized Leased Housing Department:

- **Program Administration** - Monitors HUD regulations, compliance, training, and coordination of hearings.

**Wayman Blackstock**, *Research & Training Coordinator*

Phone: (215) 684-4329

**Lynne Newman**, *Hearings Coordinator* - Phone: (215) 684-3490

- **Eligibility and Special Programs** - Determines eligibility for applicants, issues vouchers, processes transfers, coordinates lease signings, and oversees portability, project-based vouchers, and special programs such as Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) and Homeownership.

**Bret Holden**, *Director* - Phone: (215) 684-4300

Fax: (215) 684-4005 - Email: [clientservices@pha.phila.gov](mailto:clientservices@pha.phila.gov)

- **Inspections** – Conducts Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspections, enforces standards, and takes action for HQS violations.

**Carl McBride**, *Acting Director* - Phone: (215) 684-3860

Fax: (215) 684-1023 - Email: [hcvinspections@pha.phila.gov](mailto:hcvinspections@pha.phila.gov)

- **Owner Services and Financial Management** - Serves as liaison between PHA and landlords, coordinates owner certification classes, the rent determination process, and all owner activities, including the processing of housing assistance payments (HAP), portability receivables billing, and voucher utilization management.

**Darryl Yorkman**, *Director* - Phone: (215) 684-5596

Fax: (215) 684-4005 - Email: [hcvlandlords@pha.phila.gov](mailto:hcvlandlords@pha.phila.gov)

Facebook: PHAHCVLandlords

- **Continued Occupancy** – Manages regular and interim recertifications, monitors for program compliance and supports tenants throughout the life of the program.

**Shane Manila**, *Director* - Phone: (215) 684-4300

Fax: (215) 684-1023 - Email: [clientservices@pha.phila.gov](mailto:clientservices@pha.phila.gov)

We are proud of the accomplishments we have achieved to date, and are committed to seeking out innovative housing opportunities and special programs that will positively impact the lives of our residents. Thank you all for your continued partnership in our effort to open doors to a better way of living.

Regards,

**Celeste Fields**

*Executive Vice President of Leased Housing*

Philadelphia Housing Authority

### HCV Landlord Briefing Session

Every Wednesday evening from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

### HCV Landlord Certification Class

Every Wednesday morning from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

2850 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19133

Phone: **215.684.5596**

Email: [hcvlandlords@pha.phila.gov](mailto:hcvlandlords@pha.phila.gov)

### Landlord Fair

Every Thursday at 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.

**Preinspections** are conducted to expedite the leasing process. The inspection is valid for 60 days. Call to learn more.



Visit our HCV Landlord Page at:

[www.facebook.com/PHAHCVlandlords](http://www.facebook.com/PHAHCVlandlords)

# WHAT ARE THE VOUCHER PAYMENT STANDARDS?

The Voucher Payment Standards (VPS) is the maximum monthly housing assistance payment (HAP) for the family (before deducting the total tenant payment by the family). It is the most the Housing Authority can pay to help a family with rent. If the contract rent (rent plus utility allowance) is more than the VPS, the family must make up the difference out of its own pocket.

The Housing Authority establishes VPS based on the Fair Market Rents (FMR), which are established at least annually by HUD.

The family's voucher will show the number of bedrooms authorized by the Housing Authority, based on the number of persons in the family. The Housing Authority must use the **smaller** of the number of bedrooms in the rental unit or the number of bedrooms on the voucher to determine the VPS. For example, if a family locates a two-bedroom unit with a three-bedroom voucher, the two-bedroom VPS must be used to calculate your tenant portion of the rent.

## PHA'S VOUCHER PAYMENT STANDARDS (EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 1, 2014)

Bedroom Size Payment Standard 2015	0-Bedroom	1-Bedroom	2-Bedroom	3-Bedroom	4-Bedroom	5-Bedroom	6-Bedroom	7-Bedroom
	\$814	\$959	\$1,156	\$1,440	\$1,546	\$1,777	\$2,009	\$2,241

The landlord's asking rent for the unit must be supported by comparable rents within the area.

**Family share reminder:** At the starting date of the initial HAP contract for a unit (lease-in-place or otherwise), if the contract

rent is higher than the appropriate VPS, the family share cannot be greater than 40% of the family's adjusted monthly income. This is a statutory and regulatory requirement. There are absolutely no exceptions and HUD headquarters cannot grant a waiver on this matter.

## PHA AWARDS 13 UNIT-BASED VOUCHER CONTRACTS

In 2014, the PHA Board of Commissioners approved 13 unit-based voucher contracts with external housing providers, creating over 300 new housing opportunities.

With unit-based (or project-based) vouchers, the subsidy is tied to a specific unit and does not follow the tenant. Unit-based vouchers are a critical tool to ensure that quality housing developments can be affordable for low-income individuals and families.

The new contracts will serve veterans, seniors, and the homeless population.

DEVELOPMENT NAME	VOUCHERS REQUESTED
2415 N. Broad Street	88
4050 Apartments	20
Belmont Specialty Housing I	25
Belmont Specialty Housing II	15
Cantrell Place	15
Centennial Village	23
Francis House	10
Grace Townhomes	36
Haddington III	19
HELP Philadelphia V	15
Impact Veterans and Family Service Center	8
NewCourtland Apts. at Allegheny	20
Witherspoon Senior Apartments	15



The Leased Housing Department congratulates Bret Holden, Director of Eligibility and Special Programs, for winning PHA's Employee of the Year Award.



Congratulations to Celeste Fields, EVP of Leased Housing, for capturing two prestigious awards – the President's Leadership Award and the Verified Cost Savings Award.

# How Often Do You Inspect Your Property?

Do you have a regular inspection schedule for your rental properties or do you rely on PHA's annual inspection for information? If you are relying on us to be your "eyes and ears" at your property, you may not be doing enough to protect your investment. Our HQS Inspection is HUD-required, but it is only to ensure that the property meets HUD's minimum standards for "decent, safe, and sanitary." It is not to help landlords with repairs and it does not ensure that your property is being well taken care of by your tenant. We recommend that owners inspect their properties at least quarterly. We cannot require a regular inspection by landlords, but our experience has shown that landlords who do not do regular inspections have more issues related to property damage and rent collection.

Be a proactive landlord and keep in mind that your property is a valuable investment. The more you do to take care of it and to keep it up-to-date, the more it is worth in the market. Landlords who change air filters and smoke detector batteries on a regular schedule, rather than making that the tenant's responsibility, have additional opportunities to see the property on a regular basis and to take action to correct a maintenance issue or repair damage before it becomes a larger, more expensive issue.

If the tenant damages the property, you may bill him/her for the cost of repairs completed by an experienced professional. Never rely on a tenant to make repairs. Legally, it isn't the tenant's responsibility. Also, you will have no idea if the person doing the work is qualified.

Make doing regular inspections a part of your property management routine. Include the requirement as one of the clauses in your lease and follow through. Remember, it is always the landlord's responsibility to make repairs regardless of whether it is a matter of routine maintenance, such as replacing an old, leaky faucet, or is tenant-caused damage. It could pay off in lower maintenance or turn-over costs in the long run.

Do you have an inspections question? Please call our Inspections Department at (215) 684-3860.



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## Returning Your Leasing Packet: A STEP-BY-STEP OVERVIEW

1 Complete Packet

**STEP 1:** The Leasing Packet is issued to the participant, along with the voucher, at the voucher briefing. Both the participant and the landlord complete the packet and turn it in to the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

2 Packet Review

**STEP 2:** HCVP receives the Leasing Packet and reviews it for completeness. The owner will be advised if any additional information is needed.

3 Inspection

**STEP 3:** Once the packet is complete, the Inspections Department contacts the landlord/owner to schedule the initial inspection. If the first inspection fails or the unit is not ready, the owner has 15 business days to contact the Inspections Department and reschedule the inspection. If the unit fails the initial inspection two consecutive times, the participant will be issued a new voucher in order to continue the process.

4 Negotiation

**STEP 4:** Once the unit passes inspection, a Rent Reasonableness Determination will be completed to determine if the proposed rent is comparable with other units in that area. If the rent is not acceptable because it is more than the market will bear or more than the tenant can afford, PHA will contact the landlord/owner to negotiate a lower rent. If the reduced rent amount is not accepted, the Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) will be cancelled and the participant will be issued a voucher.

5 Approval

**STEP 5:** Once the rent is approved and all other requirements have been met, HCVP will contact the landlord/owner to schedule the HAP and lease signing appointment. Please note that HCVP provides a model/standard lease. Any modifications to the lease must be approved by PHA.

# PHA CELEBRATES SUCCESSFUL HOUSING PROGRAM FOR VETERANS



PHA honored veterans by hosting a pre-Veterans Day breakfast for participants in the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) Program on November 6.

The VASH Program provides veterans with housing assistance. Since 2008, the program has housed over 400 veterans and their families in Philadelphia. Three of the participants have gone on to become homeowners, including Edward Mack, who shared his story with his fellow veterans at the breakfast and encouraged them to look into PHA's Homeownership Programs.

"PHA wanted to take this opportunity to thank our veterans for their service to this country and the sacrifices they have made to keep this country safe," said PHA President and CEO Kelvin A. Jeremiah.

The special breakfast gave VASH veterans an opportunity to hear about PHA's resident services programs and enjoy each other's company.

PHA is working with partners like the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, the City of Philadelphia, and numerous nonprofit organizations to end veteran homelessness in Philadelphia by 2016. The VASH Program plays a crucial role in that effort. Corey Mims, who served in the U.S. Navy from 2000 to 2004, is one of the veterans who have benefited from VASH. He struggled after his mother passed away; moving from family to family and staying in a shelter before going into transitional housing, where a group helped him get back on his feet, readjust to society, and sign up for the VASH Program.

"To go from sleeping in basements and on living room floors and in a room with all my belongings with 25 other men... just to come from all of that and now walk around in my own place. There's nothing like having your own," Mims said.

Fellow veteran Chantell Hunter was in the Marine Corps for seven years, where she worked as an aviation supply clerk. After leaving the military and going through a difficult divorce, she moved back to Philadelphia and stayed with her sister and her two sons in a one-bedroom apartment.

"It was a horrible situation, having no place to live for four years. VASH was me starting over. It felt good to get a stable living condition for my kids," she said. "Being able to tell them we were going to have a home—they were happier than I was." Chantell now lives in a beautiful home with plenty of space for her three children to play. She recently started a job at the VA and is thrilled to work for her dream company and to be back with her fellow veterans.

This year, PHA was awarded 123 additional VASH vouchers from HUD, totaling over \$800,000 to help homeless veterans and their families find affordable housing.



Leased Housing employees celebrated the holidays by donating to the Salvation Army's Toys for Tots campaign.

## Are You Signed Up for the Landlord Data Center?

PHA landlords can view all the information they need to manage their HCV properties through the Landlord Data Center. **You can access:**

- Detailed HAP records by resident
- Status and schedule of inspections and re-inspections
- The schedule of upcoming client recertifications

Information is updated at the end of each workday and is available for viewing 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!

Create your account and access your data by visiting: <https://partnerportal.pha.phila.gov/PartnerPortal>. If you have any questions, please call (215) 684-5596 or email us at [hcvlandlords@pha.phila.gov](mailto:hcvlandlords@pha.phila.gov).