

HABC RESPONDS: HCVP

COVID-19 ANSWERS TO YOUR FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Learn more about COVID-19 at www.coronavirus.baltimorecity.gov

October 2020

The Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) continues to closely monitor developments related to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The safety of our residents and employees remains of utmost importance to us. Below are answers to some of our most frequently asked questions about the **Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP)**.

1. What type of housing subsidy does your organization provide?

The Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) through the agency's Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) provides rental assistance to increase affordable housing choices for very low-income households by allowing families to choose privately owned rental housing. Typically, a participant household will pay 30% of their adjusted monthly income for rent and utilities. HABC pays the balance of the contract rent directly to the private landlord every month.

2. What are the main eligibility criteria?

The eligibility criteria consist of the following factors:

- A family's income must be 80% or below the area median income (AMI) based on income limits published by HUD annually.
- All family members age fourteen (14) years and older are screened based for criminal convictions based on HABC's criminal background criteria and HUD's mandatory exclusions, including a sex offender subject to a lifetime registration requirement.

3. How can residents apply for assistance?

Currently, HCVP's tenant-based waiting list is closed and HCVP is not accepting any applications. However, HCVP is issuing vouchers to applicants who are already on the waiting list and accepting referrals for special set-aside voucher programs. HCVP maintains a project-based waiting list for seniors, and that waiting list is open., HCVP is accepting preliminary applications online at www.habc.org for the Project-Based Senior Waiting List. Applicants must be 62 years of age or older. The Project-Based Senior Waiting List will remain open through June 30, 2021.

4. Does your organization accept referrals from other agencies?

Yes, HCVP partners with different agencies to provide f vouchers that are set-aside for several populations as described below.

- **Homeless Vouchers** - HABC partners with the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (MOHS).
- **Families with Children with Elevated Blood-Lead Levels** - HABC partners with the Baltimore City's Department of Health and Green and Healthy Homes, Inc (GHII).

- **Re-Entry Program** – HABC partners with MOHS.
- **FUP – Family Unification Program** – HABC partners with Baltimore City’s Department of Social Services (BCDSS) Ready by 21 Program.
- **NEDS Category II** – HABC partners with The Coordinating Center to accept referrals for vouchers set aside to assist non-elderly persons with disabilities to transition from nursing homes and other healthcare institutions into the community.
- **HUD-VASH (Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing) Vouchers** – HABC partners with the Veterans Administration to help homeless veterans and their families find permanent housing.
- **Bridge Subsidy Program** – HABC partners with the Maryland Department of Disabilities through Money Follows the Person.
- **Project-Based Transitional/Permanent Supportive Housing** – HABC partners with several sites accepting referrals for different populations.

5. Describe the actions your agency has taken throughout the pandemic to prevent eviction and to provide additional housing resources?

HABC, through HCVP, continues to take the following actions:

- Processing interims recertifications for families who have lost income regardless of whether the loss was related to the pandemic, resulting in a reduction in the amount of rent;
- Scheduling and processing recertifications, online recertifications instead of holding in-person interviews;
- Extending voucher terms;
- Suspending voucher terminations;
- Permitting self-certification to verify income;
- Holding remote/virtual interviews, briefings , and inspections;
- Increasing communication with participants electronically via email, MyHousing Portal and mass mailings; and with owners via the Landlord Portal, including asking owners to relay information to the HCVP tenants;
- Increasing mailing of letters to applicants, participants and owners communicating the procedures and contact information for tenants to request interim recertifications due to loss of income; and posting this information on the HABC website;
- Increasing landlord recruitment.

HABC RESPONDS: LIPH

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1. What housing/utility-related assistance can your organization provide?

For LIPH, The Housing Authority is required to modify rent based upon the resident's income. Multiple notifications have been sent to our families encouraging to report any change in income so rent can be adjusted if necessary.

2. What are the main eligibility criteria?

Eligibility is based on adjusted household income. Resident are only responsible to pay 30% of their adjusted income as rent. Loss of hours or employment will result in immediate reduction in rent even to the point of a zero rent amount.

3. How can residents apply for assistance?

Residents need to contact the Management Office of their development either by phone, email, or personal visit by appointment.

4. What outreach/education efforts have you made recently to connect with City residents and how have those outreach efforts navigated the digital divide?

HABC has sent out flyers, multiple letters, posted signs all over the property, set up drop boxes for information submission as well as included statements with rent notices on how to request a rent adjustment or request a repayment agreement plan. Additional outreach has been made to reach out to residents that are delinquent with rent to try to offer guidance on repayment. We also have an Office of Resident Services which we can refer residents to for additional social services assistance. HABC has partnered with the City for multiple non-perishable as well as produce boxed food giveaways. HABC has provided PPE to residents for their safety.

5. What are the main obstacles to residents obtaining assistance and how could those obstacles be addressed?

Resident have been apprehensive about reaching out due to the COVID pandemic. HABC has taken multiple measures to ensure contactless encounters, frequently sanitized work stations, hand sanitizer and PPE is worn at all times. In addition, residents seem to be confused with the State's moratorium on evictions. Many residents believe that because they cannot be evicted, they do not have to pay rent. We are encouraging residents to remain current with their rent because once the moratorium ends, the residents will need to bring their rental accounts current.