Tips for HCV Unit Search

Explore where you want to live.

With your voucher in hand, it's time to search for housing. In determining which neighborhoods you might like to live in, consider the things that are most important for your family in your new community.

Consider personal priorities and needs such as:

- ☑ Schools
- ☑ Transportation
- ☑ Access to community resources
- ☑ Grocery stores including any specialty grocery stores
- ☑ Social and family supports
- ☑ Places of worship
- ☑ When the unit is available

Start your search.

Check with the local housing authority. Participants should ask public housing agencies (PHAs) for a list of landlords that have expressed an interest in participating in the voucher program. The housing authority should also know of any local property listing services.

In addition to talking with the local housing authority, check out some of these well-known property services:

- ☑ AffordableHousing.com
- ☑ Realtor.com
- ☑ Apartments.com

Set aside time to visit units.

Be sure to visit units in person to make sure they meet your needs. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

It may be helpful to visit units during the day and also the evening as well as different days of the week.

Come prepared.

Some landlords are not familiar with the voucher program. There are resources on the landlord page at www.hud.gov/hcv to explain the benefits of the program to landlords.

Typical documents that are requested by landlords include forms of identification (such as driver's license, social security card, etc.) and a completed rental application.

It is important to have ready names and contact information for prior landlords and personal references, the Request for Tenancy Approval packet, and explanations of anything that may show up on a credit or criminal history screening.

Know your rights.

The Fair Housing Act protects people from housing-related discrimination. People may not be discriminated against on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including gender identity or sexual orientation), familial status, or disability. If you believe your rights may have been violated, please visit our website to report housing discrimination.

In addition, some communities have adopted laws that prohibit landlords from discriminating against voucher holders. Some properties are required to accept vouchers as a source of rent payments. Learn more at the HUD Source of Income website (available at www.hud.gov/hcv).

Know what to avoid.

Here is a list of things to avoid when looking for a unit:

- ☒ Units renting much higher than the payment standard
- ☒ Units that you or someone in your family owns
- ☒ Units that won't pass an inspection (serious health or safety defects, significant repairs)

Beware of scammers that will waste your time and money. Do not provide identifiable information about yourself until you have seen a unit and are in the process of filling out an application. **You should never have to pay money to see a unit.**

Budget for housing search.

Some landlords will require application and other fees. Have funds available to apply for units and pay for security deposits, if necessary.

Don't get discouraged.

It can take a while to find a rental unit that meets your family's needs. Most families can successfully lease with their voucher, but it might take some time. Keep searching!

Ask the PHA about its policy on voucher extensions if you need more time for your housing search.

To learn about additional HCV tenant resources, see: https://www.hud.gov/hcv/tenants.
Also contact your PHA for more information.

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