

# HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER (HCV) PROGRAM

## BRIEFING PACKET



INFORMATION FOR A SUCCESSFUL START IN YOUR NEW HOME

Section 1

***WHEDA***  
***HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM***  
***BRIEFING PACKET***



# WHEDA

## HCV Program Briefing Packet

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## **2024 WHEDA Agent List and County Jurisdictions (updated 01/01/2025)**

Counties with an asterisk (\*) indicate areas with move restrictions or Brown county's homeless preference for the HCV waiting list

Households will work with the agency who issued their voucher unless they move to a county under another agent's jurisdiction, in which case they would get transferred to the new agent.

WHEDA voucher holders residing in counties not listed below will either be administered by WHEDA or ported to the local PHA in the area at WHEDA's discretion.

- **Integrated Community Solutions (ICS)**

**Main Office Address:** 2605 S Oneida St. Green Bay, WI, 54304

**Email:** WHEDAICS@ics-gb.org

**Phone:** 920-496-1944

**Fax:** 920-592-1444

Jurisdiction: Adams, \*Brown, \*Burnett, Calumet, Columbia, Dane, \*Eau Claire, Florence, Forest, Iowa, Iron, Iron Mountain VASH, Jefferson, Kewaunee, Langlade, Manitowoc, \*Oconto, Okato Manor, Oneida, Ozaukee, Price, Racine, Rusk, Sauk, Sheboygan, \*Taylor, Tomah VASH, Vilas, Washburn, and \*Washington County

- **Walworth County Housing Authority**

**Main Office Address:** 20 N Church St. Ste 1, Elkhorn, WI, 53121

**Phone:** 262-723-6194

**Fax:** 262-723-2079

Jurisdiction: Walworth County

- **WEST CAP Inc.**

**Main Office Address:** 525 Second St. PO Box 308, Glenwood City, WI, 54013

**Phone:** 715-598-4750

**Fax:** 715-265-7031

Jurisdiction: Pierce, St. Croix, and Polk County

## WHEDA HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER (HCV) PROGRAM OVERVIEW

WHEDA is a statewide organization, created in 1972, and WHEDA's mission is to expand access to affordable housing choices for everyone.

WHEDA's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program provides qualifying households with federal rental assistance on eligible rental units within the state of Wisconsin. This program is offered through the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) department of the Federal Government.

Housing Choice Voucher program households must be income eligible and pass background checks prior to getting approval for a housing choice voucher. The HCV program requires that households pay a minimum of 30% of their gross income towards rent but no more than 40% of their gross income towards rent on any qualifying rental unit. The remaining rent and/or utilities on the rental unit is then subsidized with federal rental assistance payments made by your public housing authority (PHA). The HCV program rental assistance will remain with the household until they no longer qualify for the program or are terminated from the program for violating the rules and regulations. Please note that households with zero (\$0) income are eligible for this program. However, we do have a minimum rent of \$50 for all households unless an exemption is requested and approved.

Housing Choice Voucher participants are required to complete and submit all requested paperwork by their PHA by the specified due dates. Households are also responsible for notifying their PHA, in writing, of any changes for their household that affect their income, household composition, or contact information within ten (10) business days of the change. Households MUST comply with these requirements or else they may be terminated from the program and lose their federal rental assistance.

WHEDA's Housing Choice Voucher Program includes the administration of Special Purpose Voucher programs that have unique rules and policy exceptions that differ from traditional Housing Choice Vouchers. WHEDA's Special Purpose Vouchers include Veteran Assisted Supportive Housing (VASH) , Family Unification Program (FUP), and Foster Youth Initiative (FYI).

WHEDA's Housing Choice Voucher Program is administered by our agents- local public housing authorities (PHAs) and other agencies- located across the state of Wisconsin. WHEDA agents will be referred to as "Your PHA" in your briefing material and our documents.

WHEDA agents currently work in 52 counties within the state of Wisconsin, and WHEDA vouchers have statewide jurisdiction, meaning your household can take your voucher anywhere in the state of Wisconsin.

The following counties [Burnett, Eau Claire, Oconto, Taylor, and Washington] have special requirements for HCV participants and anyone moving to one of these counties will need to reside in the county for an initial lease term before they can move with their voucher to another county, or a different state. Your PHA will remind you of this requirement if you submit paperwork to rent a unit in one of these counties.

Brown County is the only HCV waiting list with a homeless preference. This means qualifying homeless households will be selected from the Brown County waiting list before waiting list applicants who are not homeless. All other waiting lists are maintained separately, and applicants are selected by the date and time stamped on their completed application.

Each agent has their own jurisdiction, or set of counties, where they operate and administer WHEDA's HCV program.

Your household applied to one (1) or more waiting lists with at least one of our agents. You will work with whichever agent issues you the voucher unless you move to a different county under a different agent's jurisdiction.

If your household moves to a different state, or county in Wisconsin, that is not under the current jurisdiction of our agents, then WHEDA reserves the right to either work with your household in that other county, or port your voucher to the local housing authority in that area. The process of portability will be explained in more detail in your briefing presentation and in the briefing material provided to you in this packet.

## **Steps to Become a Housing Choice Voucher Participant**

### **Step 1: Attend Briefing**

Your household will be selected from one waiting list you applied for based on the time and date of your application, unless Brown County's homeless preference is applicable. Your first step to getting onto the HCV program will be to complete WHEDA's briefing presentation and provide your PHA with any required documentation to ensure that your household is approved to get issued a Housing Choice Voucher for this program.

### **Step 2: Voucher Issuance and Extensions**

After you complete our briefing process, and have submitted all required documentation requested, your household will be issued a Housing Choice Voucher by your PHA.

The Housing Choice Voucher is a 3-page document that contains your household's designated voucher bedroom size, voucher issuance date, voucher expiration date, and provides important rules and regulations of the HCV program.

The Voucher bedroom size is determined by your PHA based on the number of children and adults listed in your household. Ask your PHA if you have any questions on your voucher bedroom size.

The Housing Choice Voucher is a document that your household will need to sign, date, and return to your PHA. Your household should also be keeping a copy of the voucher for your records. Please make sure to note your voucher bedroom size and your voucher expiration date!

Once your voucher has been signed and dated by you and your PHA, your household is officially eligible to search for a rental unit to get approved for the HCV program.

Your voucher will be issued with a sixty (60) day voucher searching timeframe. Households will need to request an extension to your PHA before your voucher expiration date if you cannot find a rental unit. If you do not submit a written request for an extension before your voucher expiration date, then your voucher will expire.

Voucher extension requests need to be made in writing to your PHA, prior to your voucher expiration date, and are granted in 30-day increments. Your voucher will automatically expire if it remains open beyond 120 days not including any voucher suspension days.

Important note: If your voucher expires then your household will have to re-apply to an open waiting list and start this process over again.

### **Step 3: Rental Unit Search**

Your household will be advised to search for a rental unit that matches your assigned voucher bedroom size and stays close to the allotted payment standard for your household.

Households may try to rent a unit that has fewer or more bedrooms than your assigned voucher bedroom size.

Renting a unit with fewer bedrooms than your voucher size will mean less space for your household, and we will use the smaller bedroom size to determine your household's rental assistance calculation.

Renting a unit with more bedrooms will not increase your rental assistance payment, and the larger unit will still need to have a gross rent amount that is reasonable for the program and your household based on your actual voucher bedroom size and payment standard.

Your PHA will provide any known rental resources available in your area, but it will be your responsibility to seek out possible rental units and apply.

The HCV program does NOT provide assistance with paying security deposits or application fees. Households can ask the owner about possibly paying security deposit in installments over the term of the lease or seek out local resources that may help cover security deposits for renters.

### **Step 3. Rental Unit Search Continued**

Your household may be eligible for portability, where you take your Housing Choice Voucher and try to find a rental unit that is outside of your PHA's jurisdiction. Some restrictions may apply and your PHA will discuss with your household if portability is not an option for you.

Portability vouchers have the same sixty (60) day timeframe to find a rental unit, and your household would be working with a new PHA in the new location. Portability voucher extensions have the same requirements of submitting written requests for an extension before your voucher expires or else your household would need to reapply and get back onto a new waiting list to get issued another voucher. (*Review the Portability section under the HCV Terminology and Policies packet for more information*)

No matter where you are looking to rent, your household should consider if the rental unit is in good condition, if there are obvious signs of damage or unlivable conditions, if the unit is going to be large enough for your household to live comfortably, and if the unit is in a safe neighborhood.

HCV rental units also have certain requirements to be approved. Rental units must contain a kitchen area, living room, sleeping room/s, enclosed bathroom/s that have a shower or tub, and the unit must have hot and cold running water, secure locking mechanisms on doors and windows, adequate heating equipment, and ventilation. Also, HCV rental units cannot be shared with other households, which means we can't allow units that have a shared kitchen or bathroom with other people who aren't approved for the HCV program.

WHEDA and HUD encourage HCV participants to consider Opportunity Moves to safer neighborhoods that are in lower poverty areas. With the HCV federal rental assistance, rental units in these areas may be an option for you. Studies have shown that opportunity moves have many benefits for households including less crime, more employment opportunities, better education opportunities, and children have been shown to do better in school.

### **Step 4: Submit the RFTA/New Unit Packet**

Once your household finds a potential rental unit for the program, you will work with your property's landlord or owner to complete the RFTA/New Unit packet. This packet contains the very important Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) 2-page form that provides your PHA with all the details about the rental unit including the contract rent, tenant responsible utilities, lease start date, date unit is ready for an inspection, bedroom size, unit type, and this document MUST be signed and dated by both parties.

Your household MUST submit one completed RFTA form to continue the process to getting leased up with rental assistance on this program! You cannot submit more than one RFTA at a time, and your PHA will not process any additional RFTA forms submitted.

Once you submit the RFTA form that has been completed, your PHA will put a hold on your voucher time frame (referred to as tolling). This means that however many days it takes your PHA to determine if your unit will fit for the program will get added back onto your voucher time frame just in case the unit is determined to NOT be approved for the program and you need those extra days to keep searching for a rental unit.

Due to the time sensitive nature of the lease up process, your PHA will process your RFTA rental unit information within ten (10) business days whenever possible. If the RFTA is incomplete, then your household will have up to thirty (30) calendar days to fix the RFTA document and resubmit. Otherwise, the RFTA is voided, your voucher tolling time stops, and you will need to find a new rental unit and submit a new RFTA document.

### **Step 5: PHA processes RFTA/New Unit Packet for Potential Rental Unit**

After you submit the RFTA/New Unit packet, your PHA will process the submitted paperwork and do the following: 1) Enter the information into our housing software to make sure we don't already have a household assigned to the proposed rental unit. 2) Make sure the rental unit's requested rent is reasonable for the type of unit, size of unit, and the location. 3) Make sure the rental unit's gross rent (rent plus tenant responsible utilities) is affordable based on your household's required 30%-40% income-based payment.

## **Step 6: Physical Unit Inspection**

If your rental unit passes these initial verification steps, then your PHA will proceed to schedule an inspection of the unit to make sure the unit meets our current inspection criteria, and we are satisfied that the rental unit is safe, sanitary, and everything is in good repair.

Your rental unit **MUST** pass an initial inspection before we can approve the unit for the program and advise your household to sign a lease.

If your unit fails an initial inspection, your landlord will be notified of the required repairs, and they will need to make those repairs and then your PHA will reinspect your unit.

Note: The inspection process currently involves Housing Quality Standard criteria to determine if the unit passes or fails. The inspection criteria will be changing to NSPIRE standards in 2025. More information on those changes will be provided to all parties sometime in 2025 before these changes get implemented.

## **Step 7: PHA Lease Signing Approval**

After the unit is approved for the program and passes an inspection, your PHA will notify you that you are approved to sign a lease with that property.

Once your household signs the lease and it is official, you or your housing provider **MUST** send a copy of the signed lease to your PHA for their records. Your PHA cannot proceed without a copy of the signed lease!

Lease start dates **MUST** coincide with the passed inspection date. We cannot pay rental assistance on a unit for any days before it was approved for the program. If your household moves in early or signs a lease before your PHA gives you approval, then your household will be responsible to pay additional rent to your landlord that won't be covered by your federal rental assistance.

***REMINDER- DO NOT SIGN A LEASE BEFORE YOUR PHA TELLS YOU TO DO SO! A LEASE IS A LEGALLY BINDING DOCUMENT AND IF YOU SIGN ONE FOR A UNIT THAT IS NOT APPROVED FOR THE HCV PROGRAM THEN YOU WILL BE STUCK PAYING THE FULL RENTAL AMOUNT WITH NO ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS.***

## **Step 8: Your PHA enters into a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract with your landlord**

Once a copy of the signed lease is on file, your PHA will enter into a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract with your landlord to confirm the lease dates, rent amount, utility types and responsible parties, household information etc. and to explain everyone's responsibilities while participating in the HCV Program.

## **IMPORTANT: YOUR PHA NEEDS TO RECEIVE A COPY OF YOUR EXECUTED LEASE IN ORDER TO PROCEED!**

Your PHA has a maximum of sixty days from the date of the lease start date to complete a HAP contract with your housing provider. The goal is to always complete the HAP contract before your lease start date, but that is not always possible. Please note that if a HAP contract is not completed within sixty (60) days then the lease needs to be amended to a new start date and no federal rental assistance would be available from the initial lease date to the amended lease start date. This is your housing provider's responsibility but it directly impacts your household so please stay in contact with your PHA during this process.

## **Step 9: PHA HAP Notifications and Rental Assistance Payments**

Your PHA will notify all parties of the calculated portions of rent that your household and your PHA are responsible for paying each month to your landlord.

The rental payment breakdown will also include if your PHA is going to be paying any Utility Reimbursement payments on your behalf. Your PHA will need a copy of your utility statement so that we can pay your utility company directly each month through your account.

Your tenant portion of rent **MUST** be paid in full, and on time, to your landlord every month as per your lease requirements. Failure to do so is a breach of household responsibilities on this program and can lead to repayment agreements, eviction proceedings, and even the termination of your household's HCV program federal rental assistance.

Your PHA will also be working to get your household's rental assistance payment ready to issue on your behalf each month once your lease start date begins.

\*PHA payments to your landlord are not your household's responsibility, and your landlord cannot punish you if PHA payments are late or missing. Please contact your PHA if your landlord ever mentions past due rent by your PHA and tries to charge you more money.

## **Step 10: Household officially on HCV program!**

Your household will officially be a participant on WHEDA's Housing Choice Voucher program after your PHA finalizes the HAP contract with your landlord, confirms everyone has provided all the completed documentation needed for the program, and begins issuing federal rental assistance payments on your behalf each month.

Your household will now be responsible for being a model tenant at your federally assisted rental unit. That includes following all the terms of your legally binding lease and paying your portion of rent, and any utility payments, on time each month.

Your household will also be responsible for following all the HCV program household responsibilities that are explained in your briefing presentation, briefing packet, and referenced on your household's voucher document as well as being available online in WHEDA's Housing Choice Voucher Administrative Plan.

Your household will need to remain in contact with your PHA and make sure you report any changes in your household's contact information, household composition, or income within the ten (10) business days of the date of the change as per your PHA's policy.

Your household will also need to complete and return all requested documents that are sent by your PHA throughout the year, as well as allow our inspectors access to your rental unit for scheduled or requested inspections that are scheduled at reasonable times.

Lastly, every year your household will get recertified for the HCV program to ensure you still qualify and are paying the correctly calculated portion of rent each month. This process is known as the Annual Reexamination, and you need to comply with all requests from your PHA to ensure you continue receiving federal rental assistance through the HCV program.

## **WHEDA HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER (HCV) PROGRAM KEY TERMINOLOGY AND POLICIES**

*\*This material is intended to highlight important concepts and policies of WHEDA's HCV program. Households should use this material to make informed decisions and to be successful on the HCV program. Please refer to WHEDA's HCV Program administrative plan for a comprehensive WHEDA policies and procedures for the HCV program.*

### **Public Housing Authority (PHA):**

Public Housing Authorities administer the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

We will be referring to the agency who issues you a Housing Choice Voucher, and who pays federal rental assistance on your behalf, as 'your PHA' throughout this material.

### **Housing Choice Voucher:**

3-page document that authorizes households to search for a rental unit to get approved for the HCV Program and start receiving federal rental assistance payments for the unit.

The Housing Choice Voucher includes a voucher bedroom size, voucher issuance date and voucher expiration date for each household.

Households are responsible for returning a signed and dated copy of the voucher to your PHA to keep on file.

A Housing Choice Voucher is issued for all new participants, and any household who wants to move while on the program.

A copy of the Housing Choice Voucher should be kept on file by the household so they can make note of their voucher expiration date, voucher bedroom size, and review the rules and regulations of the HCV program that are provided on the voucher. Please read through the material before you sign!

### **Voucher Bedroom Size and Subsidy Standard Exceptions:**

Each household is assigned a voucher bedroom size based on the number of adults and the number of children in the household, as well as their relationships to the head of household. The PHA must assign the smallest number of bedrooms needed to house each family without overcrowding.

The general rule of thumb is one bedroom is assigned for every two (2) people in the household, but the following exceptions do apply-

- Live in Aides who are approved by the PHA will be assigned one additional bedroom on the voucher bedroom size determination.
- Single person families will be allocated a one-bedroom voucher.
- Adults of opposite sex, who aren't spouses or partners, will be allocated separate bedrooms on the voucher bedroom size.
- Adult children of the Head of Household, Spouse or Co-Head will be allocated separate bedrooms.
- Children of the opposite sex over the age of five (5), will be allocated a separate bedroom.
- An unborn child will be included in the bedroom size determination. Please be sure to report to your PHA if you are expecting.
- Children with an age difference of seven (7) years will be allocated separate bedrooms

Subsidy Standard Exceptions can be requested by any household member that is justified by the age, sex, health, handicap, or relationship of the family members or other personal circumstances. The typical exception request includes but is not limited to a need for an additional bedroom for medical equipment or a need for an additional bedroom for reasons related to family member's disability, medical, or health conditions.

More information on the process for these requests can be found in the Reasonable Accommodation section. Please contact your PHA if you have any questions regarding the voucher bedroom size that was assigned.

Households may try to rent a unit that has more bedrooms or fewer bedrooms than their assigned voucher bedroom size but will need to consider if the rental unit will still be approvable for the program and if their household can live comfortably in the unit. Your household's rent portion may also be affected by the bedroom size of the rental unit you choose.

The HCV program will always use the LOWER of the assigned voucher bedroom size or the rental unit's bedroom size for calculations. Choosing a rental unit with a different number of bedrooms than your assigned voucher size may impact your federal rental assistance portion and your household's rent portion.

### **Voucher Expiration Date:**

Housing Choice Voucher has a sixty (60) day timeframe with a voucher issuance and voucher expiration date.

Households MUST either find a rental unit or request an extension before their voucher expiration date.

Expired vouchers mean the household will have to reapply for the HCV program and start the process over again.

### **Voucher Extensions:**

Voucher Extension requests must be made in writing, to the PHA, before the voucher expiration date. Households should complete the voucher extension document, or they can provide details in a handwritten letter or email. Extension requests should provide a reason for why an extension is being requested, and the request should include information on units that the household has tried to apply for. Your PHA needs to know your household has been actively trying to find a rental unit during your sixty (60) day search period.

Your PHA may approve or deny any written voucher extension request.

Voucher extensions are offered in thirty (30) day increments. All vouchers will automatically be expired after 120 days of searching.

### **Voucher Term Suspensions (Tolling):**

The Housing Choice Voucher sixty (60) day initial term or any extended term of the voucher will be suspended once a household submits the required Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) paperwork to their PHA for a potential rental unit.

Your PHA will process the paperwork and make sure the rental unit is rent reasonable and the gross rent for your household on the program. The unit will also need to pass an inspection for the HCV program.

If your proposed rental unit does not work for the program for any reason, then your PHA will notify you in writing of the decision.

The total number of days from the date your PHA received your household's RFTA paperwork to the date of the written notice from your PHA will be added back onto your voucher term so that you are given additional time to keep searching for a new rental unit that may fit for the program.

Voucher term suspensions take place any time a household submits RFTA paperwork for a rental unit with a voucher.

### **Portability:**

Portability is a process where a household moves outside the jurisdiction of their local PHA and into a new PHA jurisdiction. This could mean moving to a different county within a state or moving to a different state.

WHEDA Housing Choice Voucher participants may be eligible to move with their voucher to another county in Wisconsin, or any other state in the country. Certain counties and residency restrictions apply. Please ask your PHA if portability is an option for you.

WHEDA currently has statewide jurisdiction in the state of Wisconsin, and we reserve the right to either work with your household in any of the 72 counties of Wisconsin, or port your voucher to the local PHA in that area.

New households getting onto the program from a waiting list will need to provide proof of residence in the state of Wisconsin if they want to try and move out of the state of Wisconsin with their initial voucher.

Households who cannot provide proof of Wisconsin residency with their initial voucher MUST reside somewhere in the state of Wisconsin for an initial lease term before they are eligible to port their voucher out of state.

Households will declare which state and county they intend to move to, get approval from their current PHA to move, and get issued a new, moving voucher for the portability process.

Your PHA will gather all your household's program information and send all necessary documentation to the new PHA in the new location.

Households will have the same sixty (60) day timeframe to successfully find a rental unit in the new area, and they will be working with their new PHA to get a rental unit approved.

## **Portability Continued:**

Households will work with the new PHA to learn their new assigned Payment Standard and maximum gross rent amount. The new jurisdiction may have different payment standard charts, utility allowance charts, and subsidy standards that could affect rental unit searches.

Portability voucher extensions should be written requests made prior to the voucher expiration date to their new PHA. The PHA may approve or deny the requests and the extensions will be made in thirty (30) day increments.

Portability vouchers will expire if no extension is requested or if the voucher expires before a rental unit is approved for the program. Households will have to reapply to an open waiting list and start this process over again if that occurs.

## **Acceptable Rental Units:**

The HCV program accepts rental units located within common rental property types such as duplexes, row-houses, townhouses, garden apartments, high rise apartments, single family homes, and mobile homes (rented or owned).

WHEDA's Housing Choice Vouchers only allows for one (1) accepted special housing type: Family-owned manufactured homes can have lot rent count towards federal rental assistance payments. No other Special Housing Types including single room occupancy, congregate housing, group homes, shared housing, cooperative housing, and homeownership are permitted for any WHEDA Housing Choice Voucher. Homeownership is not allowed for any WHEDA voucher holder.

Rental units also are not eligible for the HCV program if the unit is currently being assisted by Public housing, Indian housing, Project Based assistance under section 8 of the 1937 Act; nursing homes, board and care homes, or facilities providing continual psychiatric, medical, or nursing services; college or other school dormitories; units on the grounds of penal, reformatory, medical, mental, and similar public or private institutions; and units occupied by its owner or by other person with ownership interests.

*\* If you are a VASH Special Purpose Voucher then exceptions to the special housing types allowed, as well as other voucher policy exceptions may apply. Please review page 28 for more information on policy exceptions and work closely with your case manager and PHA to select a qualifying rental unit for the HCV program.*

## **Housing Resources and Accessible Units List:**

Finding a rental unit for the HCV program within sixty (60) days may prove to be difficult.

Your PHA will provide you with any known resources depending on which county you are trying to rent in.

Household members with disabilities may request a list of available accessible units known to the PHA.

Your PHA will provide any known accessible units (this could result in a response of no known accessible units). Also, your PHA cannot make any guarantees that the units are still available or whether the property will accept any given household.

WHEDA advises households to use all rental resource tools available both online and locally.

Online Resources: [Apartments.com, rent.com, trulia.com, realtor.com, and others]

Local Resources: [Newspapers, Shopper Stoppers, Community bulletin boards, and others]

WIHousingSearch- Statewide rental resource that has a website and toll-free number. This resource also provides a list of properties that offer accessible units and properties which have eligibility restrictions, such as being an elderly or disabled only property.

Website: [www.wihousingsearch.org](http://www.wihousingsearch.org) Toll Free Phone: 1-877-428-8844

## **Opportunity Moves:**

The Housing Choice Voucher Program federal rental assistance may allow households to seek out rental units in lower poverty areas. This type of move to a lower poverty area is referred to as an 'Opportunity Move' and is something that WHEDA and HUD encourage households to consider.

Studies have shown that moves to lower poverty areas have been shown to improve access to employment opportunities, improve access to educational resources, improve children's performance in school, and experience less crime.

**Contract Rent:**

Amount of rent that is owed per month on the lease for a rental unit. This amount does not include any utilities that the household is responsible for paying.

**Utility Allowance:**

Rental units will specify which utilities the household is responsible for paying. For all utilities that the household is responsible for paying, the HCV program will consider the average monthly utility amounts, based on our utility allowance charts, and include them in your rental unit's gross rent calculation.

WHEDA calculates statewide utility allowance charts annually that provide the average monthly utility charges for all utility types based on the 4 primary unit types (Duplex/Rowhouse/Townhouse, Garden/Highrise, Single Family House, and Manufactured Home). The Utility Allowance Charts are determined for 11 different regions within the state of Wisconsin.

Currently, households are asked to provide copies of a monthly statement to show charges for water, sewer, and/or trash pickup before your PHA will add these utilities to your Utility Allowance for the assisted rental unit.

Annual Utility Charts are listed on WHEDA's website page for the Voucher Administration: <https://www.wheda.com/developers-and-property-managers/property-managers/voucher-administration/applicants-and-participants>

**Gross Rent:**

Contract Rent + Utility Allowance = Gross Rent.

The HCV program considers the Gross Rent in calculations for determining if a rental unit will fit for your household on the HCV program and for determining your rental assistance amount.

**Fair Market Rent (FMR):**

Housing and Urban Development (HUD) annually determines the estimated Fair Market Rent amounts for 2,736 areas across the nation.

The HUD FMR amounts reflect the cost to rent a moderately priced dwelling unit in the local housing markets.

**Payment Standard:**

HCV Program Payment Standards are determined by local PHAs, and better reflect the accurate costs to rent a moderately priced dwelling unit in local housing markets.

Payment Standards are set at 90%-110% of the FMR amounts.

WHEDA always sets our Payment Standards for Wisconsin counties at the highest possible percent allowed for the program.

Payment Standards reflect the anticipated Gross Rent of a rental unit based on the county and bedroom size.

Payment Standards are revised annually after the HUD FMR amounts are released.

Your PHA will always use the LOWER of the Payment Standard or Gross Rent for calculations.

The Payment Standard used for calculations will always be based on either your voucher bedroom size or rental unit bedroom size, depending on which is smaller.

(For example: If you rent a 3-bedroom unit with a 2-bedroom voucher size, then we will use the 2-bedroom Payment Standard. Whereas if your household has a 2-bedroom voucher size and choose to rent a 3-bedroom rental unit, then we still have to use your assigned 2-bedroom Payment Standard because it is the lowest eligible bedroom size for the HCV program.)

WHEDA's Annual Payment Standard Charts are available online on our Voucher Administration webpage:

<https://www.wheda.com/developers-and-property-managers/property-managers/voucher-administration/applicants-and-participants>

## **Gross Income:**

Households MUST provide their PHA with up-to-date information for all household member's sources of income.

Income sources include: wages and salaries, regular contributions of income, wages from government programs (some may be exceptions that are not counted), business income, social security and SSI, Death Benefits, Pensions/Retirement funds, Annuities and Non-revocable trusts, unemployment or disability payments, Military Pay, Workman's Compensation, Public Assistance/TANF, Alimony and Child Support, Income from the rent or sale of property, foster care payments, Lottery winnings and periodic payments, Insurance policy payouts, severance pay, and others.

Gross Income is the combined annual income, before taxes, for all qualifying household members in a unit.

Gross income includes all income sources for household members 18 and older, as well as assets valued over \$5000.

**IMPORTANT- Households claiming ZERO income have a maximum gross rent of their assigned Payment Standard amount. The Gross rent of the rental unit could not exceed their payment standard amount.**

## **Assets:**

Households MUST provide their PHA with up to date information for all household member's sources of assets.

Assets include, but are not limited to, checking and savings accounts, money market and CDs, retirement accounts and trusts, Stocks and Bonds, equity in real estate, life insurance policies, cash and valuables stored, and assets disposed of for less than fair market value in the past two years.

Net assets valued over \$5000 will be counted as income for the household based on the greater of either the actual income earned from the assets, or the imputed income rate for assets based on the current WHEDA asset passbook rate. WHEDA uses the current HUD published rate.

## **Deductions:**

The HCV program allows for certain deductions from a household's gross income based on the household members. These deductions get subtracted from your household's gross income calculation and will affect your rental assistance portion.

Dependent Deductions of \$480 are provided for every household member who is under the age of 18 and who is not a head of household, co-head of household, spouse, or foster child.

Elderly/Disabled Deductions of \$400 are provided for every household member who is sixty-two (62) years or older and household members with disabilities.

***\*In 2025, the deduction amounts will be changing due to HOTMA (Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act). Our briefing material will update our listed deduction amounts once HOTMA changes take effect for WHEDA. More information on HOTMA related changes will be sent out to all parties at a later date.***

## **Expenses:**

Households with qualifying dependent, elderly, or disabled household members can provide documentation of their out of pocket, non-reimbursed expenses that may result in an additional deduction from the household's gross income calculation.

Qualified out of pocket expenses will be added up by your PHA and if the combined expenses total is greater than 3% of your household's gross income, then the larger amount will be included as a medical expense, or childcare expense deduction.

Households can provide documentation of non-reimbursed, out of pocket medical expenses and/or out of pocket attendant care and auxiliary apparatus expenses for elderly and disabled members.

Households can also provide out of pocket childcare expenses for dependent household members.

Out of pocket expenses only qualify if your household has paid an non-reimbursed amount. Your PHA does not count unpaid medical bills towards this expense.

Child Care expenses should include specifics on which household member is receiving the care, and the exact amounts your household has paid and for when.

## **Gross Adjusted Income:**

The HCV program will always use your household's Gross Adjusted Income for HCV rental assistance calculations.

Gross Adjusted Income= Household's Gross Income – All Deductions and qualified expenses.

This amount will be calculated for an annual amount and a monthly amount. We determine the gross adjusted annual income and divide by 12 to get the gross adjusted monthly income.

Example:

Household A Gross Annual Income= \$15,000

Household A Deductions: 1 Dependent member (\$480) and 1 Elderly household member (\$400) with no qualified out of pocket expenses.

Household A Gross Adjusted Annual Income=  $\$15,000 - \$480 - \$400 = \$14,120$

Household A Gross Adjusted Monthly Income=  $\$14,120 / 12 = \$1,177$  rounded up.

\*Households claiming zero income have a Gross Adjusted income of \$0 per month. You will need to use your assigned payment standard amount and find a rental unit that has a gross rent that is equal to or lesser than your payment standard amount to find a qualified rental unit for the HCV program.

## **Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Calculation:**

The HCV program requires households to pay a minimum of 30% of their gross adjusted income towards rent but no more than 40% of their gross adjusted income towards rent each month.

The HAP calculation will use your household's 30% and 40% amounts to determine your household's HAP.

Household A example from Gross Adjusted Income section-

Household A gross adjusted monthly income= \$1777

Household A 30% minimum rent portion=  $\$1777 * 30\% = \$533.1$  = \$533 rounded.

Household A 40% maximum rent portion=  $\$1777 * 40\% = \$710.8$  = \$711 rounded.

HCV Program Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Calculation-

[Lower of Payment Standard or Gross Rent of rental unit] – [30% Household Portion]= Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) amount.

***Remember that we always use the payment standard for either your voucher bedroom size OR rental unit bedroom size based on which is smaller. We then compare that payment standard amount to the gross rent of your unit and select the smaller figure for this calculation.***

Example: Household A issued a 3-bedroom voucher size. They submit the RFTA paperwork to try and rent a 3-bedroom unit in Adams County. Therefore, the PHA will use the 3-bedroom payment standard for the county where their rental unit is located in.

Adams County 3-bedroom 2025 payment standard= \$1398

3-bedroom rental unit contract rent (CR) = \$1350

3-bedroom rental unit utility allowance (UA) = \$100

3-bedroom rental unit gross rent (GR)= \$ 1450

The PHA will use the \$1398 Payment Standard amount for this rental assistance calculation because it is lower than the gross rent (\$1450) of the rental unit.

HAP Calculation for this household's unit-

$[\$1398 (\text{Adams County 3-bdrm Payment Standard}) - \$533 (30\% \text{ income amount for Household A})] = \$865$  HAP amount paid monthly.

### **Tenant Rent Portion and Total Tenant Portion (TTP):**

The Total Tenant Portion is the total amount of contract rent to landlord plus any utility bills that your household will be responsible for paying each month for your federally assisted unit.

Whenever the federal rental assistance portion is less than the contract rent amount, then the full rental assistance amount is applied to the contract rent that is owed to the landlord each month.

The household is responsible for paying the remaining contract rent portion each month and will also be responsible for paying any utility bills.

Household A example continued-

TTP= [ Tenant Rent Portion + utility allowance]

Unit contract rent= \$1350. Federal Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)= \$865. Utility Allowance= \$100

Tenant's Rent Portion is the amount of money the household must pay the landlord each month. It is the remaining amount of money owed after the HCV program rental assistance payment is made.

[Unit Contract Rent (\$1350 ) – HAP ( \$865) = \$485 Tenant Rent Portion.

Household A's TTP amount is [\$485 + \$100] = \$585.

The household will pay their landlord \$485 each month in rent and is responsible for paying the utility bills on their unit.

### **Maximum Gross Rent on HCV Program:**

To figure out if a rental unit's rent will be too high for the program, we would take the calculated federal rental assistance amount and add the household's maximum 40% of income towards rent amount. If the gross rent is higher than that total, then the unit is too expensive for the household while on this program.

Household A example continued-

\$865 (rental assistance payment) + \$711 (40% of income amount) = \$1576 (Max Gross Rent)

If Household A's gross rent of their rental unit was more than \$1576, it would not be approved for the HCV program.

Your PHA can sometimes negotiate contract rents or household responsible utilities for a rental unit to try and get the gross rent to be lowered so that it can fit for the HCV program. But landlords are not required to agree.

### **40% Maximum Total Tenant Portion/ Unit Won't Fit Example:**

Using the Household A example, consider what happens if the Gross Rent of this 3-bedroom rental unit in Adams County was listed at \$1577.

The new TTP calculation would be:

[\$1577 (GR) - \$865 (HAP amount for the household with 3-bedroom payment standard) = \$712 remaining as the TTP.

But the 40% maximum rent portion for this household based on their reported income is \$711.

This means that the household would be required to pay MORE than their 40% maximum TTP amount and the unit would therefore NOT qualify for the HCV program.

In these cases, your PHA will contact the housing provider to ask if they would be willing to reduce the asking rent price of the unit so that the unit could qualify. This would also be where your PHA offers the benefits of participating in the HCV program such as guaranteed federal rental assistance payments each month.

If your housing provider agrees to reduce the rent price, then your PHA could proceed with an amended RFTA document, or statement in writing about the newly agreed upon rent price, along with a matching lease contract rent amount once the unit gets approved.

## **Utility Reimbursement:**

If a household's HAP amount exceeds your rental unit's contract rent, then your household would be eligible for a Utility Reimbursement payment provided that your unit required any household responsible utilities.

Your PHA would pay your full contract rent amount to the landlord each month, and the PHA will make any utility reimbursement amount payable to the participant and the utility provider on a monthly basis or choose to make the utility reimbursement payments directly to the utility provider.

Households will need to provide a copy of their utility bill to the PHA before we can proceed with making any eligible Utility Reimbursement payments to the utility company on your behalf.

Please note: Not all households will be eligible for a utility reimbursement. Your PHA will notify you if this applies for your household.

## **Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA):**

Your PHA will be providing your household with an RFTA Packet after your briefing.

The RFTA is an important 2-page document that MUST be submitted by household once a potential rental unit has been found.

This document contains all the required information your PHA needs to know to verify if the rental unit can be approved for the program and for your household.

The document will ask for the unit's contract rent, bedroom size, lease start date, the date the unit can be inspected, what utilities the household is responsible for paying, what type of property it is, and both the landlord and your household will need to sign and date the document.

Households must review the RFTA document to make sure the information is correct. Make sure the unit number is correct and that the contract rent and utilities matches what was listed when applying for the unit.

**IMPORTANT:** The RFTA must be completed, signed and dated by both parties, and submitted to your PHA before they can proceed.

## **Physical Inspections:**

The Housing Choice Voucher program currently adheres to HUD guidelines for inspection criteria on rental units.

Your PHA must inspect any proposed rental units for the HCV program to make sure everything is safe, sanitary, and in good condition. Inspection criteria includes making sure the unit has cold and hot running water, working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in proper locations, working and functional appliances and electrical outlets, hand railings, functional hot water heater, functional security features such as locks on doors and windows, and that everything is in good repair.

All HCV program rental units are required to pass an inspection before households can be advised to sign a lease and before any rental assistance payments can be issued.

\*Inspection criteria will be changing in 2025 to NSPIRE standards. More information on these changes will be provided to all parties once an official implementation date has been determined.\*

### **Lease:**

All HCV participants with an approved rental unit will need to enter into a legally binding lease agreement with their rental unit landlord/owner/property manager. Your PHA will notify you if there are any lease restrictions in your area once you submit rental unit paperwork.

Households who are already in a lease for the rental unit when they get issued a voucher will need to sign a new lease agreement for the HCV program. Mid-month leases are acceptable for this program.

Lease agreements are typically for 12-month periods, but some properties offer modified lease durations of 9 months, 6 months, 3 months, or month to month.

Your PHA will only allow an initial lease term of less than 12-months if the shorter lease term would improve housing opportunities, is to the benefit of the family, or is the standard in the market.

After the initial lease term is over, if your household remains in the same rental unit then the lease is assumed to have gone month to month. If a new lease is signed, then you must provide your PHA with a copy.

HCV participants should wait until their PHA notifies them that the rental unit is approved for the program before they sign the lease.

A lease is a legally binding document and your PHA can never advise you to break that agreement for the program.

Households who sign a lease for a unit that is NOT approved for the HCV program will be stuck in a legally binding agreement to pay rent, and not qualify for any federal rental assistance on the unit.

Your PHA will work with you and your landlord to make sure the lease start date is confirmed and starts no earlier than the date the unit passed the HQS inspection.

***IMPORTANT- Households and/or housing providers MUST send their PHA a copy of the signed, executed lease agreement once completed! Your PHA cannot proceed without it.***

### **Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract:**

Your PHA will enter into a HAP contract with your landlord once the rental unit is approved for the program, it passes inspection, and your household provided the copy of the signed lease agreement.

The HAP contract will include all the agreed upon rental information for your unit including the contract rent, the lease duration, the household responsible utilities etc. and it will be the contract which gets your landlord to participate in the HCV program for your rental unit.

The contract specifies the responsibilities of your PHA, your household, and the owner while on the program. The contract also specifies certain restrictions such as the owner is NOT allowed to charge the household late fees if the PHA's portion of rent is ever late.

### **Elective Moves:**

No elective moves are allowed during a household's initial lease term for the HCV program.

After the initial lease term is complete, households are allowed one elective move in a 12-month period while on WHEDA's HCV program.

Households will notify their PHA of their intent to move and will be issued a new moving voucher that has the same sixty (60) day searching term with the option for additional extensions if requested in writing prior to the voucher expiration date.

Households will be responsible for communicating with both the PHA and the owner about their intent to move.

The new rental unit the household intends to move to will need to go through the same verification steps by your PHA to ensure the unit is approved for your household while on the HCV program.

The one elective move per 12-month period policy can be amended for households claiming an exception in order to protect the health or safety of the household members, to accommodate household circumstance changes such as a new job location or school location, or to address an emergency situation beyond the control of the household.

### **Reasonable Accommodations:**

HCV applicants and participants with disabilities can request a Reasonable Accommodation from your PHA.

Reasonable Accommodation requests will ask the PHA to make a change, exception, or adjustment to an HCV program rule, policy, practice, or service to enable the household to have full access to the PHA's programs and services.

WHEDA encourages households to submit their Reasonable Accommodation request be made in writing, using our Reasonable Accommodation forms, but verbal requests will also be considered.

A Reasonable Accommodation request will need to provide an identifiable connection, or nexus, between the reasonable accommodation request and the individual's disability.

Your PHA will review all informal and formal requests for a Reasonable Accommodation and will respond with a decision made in writing within ten (10) business days from the date the request was made.

Reasonable Accommodation requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and will involve considerations of the PHA program's budget, staffing capacity, and the availability of alternative accommodations that would also effectively meet the household's disability related needs.

Denied Reasonable Accommodation requests are subject to our informal hearing review process.

Approved Reasonable Accommodations will be reviewed annually for the household to determine if each accommodation is still necessary.

### **Verifying Disabilities:**

Your PHA will comply with the following requirements when attempting to verify a household member's disability status:

- Third-party verification of a person's disability status must be obtained from an individual who is deemed competent to make the determination by the household. This includes a doctor or other medical professional, a peer support group, a non-medical service agency, or a reliable third party in a position to know about the person's disability.
- Medical records will not be accepted or retained in the household's file.
- Your PHA will make a note in the household's file to indicate a disability status has been verified, along with the date and contact info of the person who provided the information, however no confidential information about a household member's specific diagnosis, treatment, or the nature or severity of the disability will be kept on file. Any confidential information received while trying to verify a household member's disability status will be securely disposed of.

The PHA must verify the existence of a disability to allow certain income disallowances and deductions from income. The PHA is not permitted to inquire about the nature or extent of a person's disability [24 CFR 100.202(c)]. The PHA may not inquire about a person's diagnosis or details of treatment for a disability or medical condition. If the PHA receives a verification document that provides such information, the PHA will not place this information in the tenant file. Under no circumstances will the PHA request a participant's medical record(s). For more information on health care privacy laws, see the Department of Health and Human Services' website at [www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/).

The above cited regulation does not prohibit the following inquiries, provided these inquiries are made of all applicants, whether or not they are persons with disabilities [VG, p. 24]:

- Inquiry into an applicant's ability to meet the requirements of ownership or tenancy
- Inquiry to determine whether an applicant is qualified for a dwelling available only to persons with disabilities or to persons with a particular type of disability
- Inquiry to determine whether an applicant for a dwelling is qualified for a priority available to persons with disabilities or to persons with a particular type of disability
- Inquiring whether an applicant for a dwelling is a current illegal abuser or addict of a controlled substance
- Inquiring whether an applicant has been convicted of the illegal manufacture or distribution of a controlled substance

## **Interim Reexamination:**

Your PHA will conduct an Interim Reexamination any time there is a change in your household that needs to be reported for the HCV program.

These changes include removing income, adding income, removing a household member, adding a household member, or changing a name or important personal identity information on file.

Reporting income increases of less than \$500 per month will be noted in the household's file but no interim will be conducted. The change would get included on the household's next annual reexamination instead.

### WHEDA Interim policy

- Any reported change that lowers the household's portion of rent will get implemented immediately on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month following the date of the change after the change has been verified. There is no minimum amount required to process an interim that reduces the household's rent portion.

Example 1: Household A reports a job has ended on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The PHA verifies the employment ended and will conduct a November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024 Interim certification to remove the wages from the household's income.

Removing the income source will reduce the household's gross adjusted income, which will reduce their rental portion after we redo the federal rental assistance calculation.

This certification will take effect November 1<sup>st</sup> even if the PHA cannot verify this change until December 2024. We would make the change retroactive to the proper effective date.

- Any reported change that increases the household's rent portion will be put into effect the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month following a 30-day period after the date of the change.

This policy aims to help households prepare for a higher rent portion amount by giving them a 30-day buffer before the change goes into effect.

Example 2: Household A reports a new job started October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The PHA verifies the job started on that date and that the new job will create a change of at least \$500 more per month for the household. The PHA will process a December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024 Interim to add on the income source.

(October 28<sup>th</sup> + 30 days = November 27<sup>th</sup>. And the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month following that period is December 1<sup>st</sup>.)

## **Annual Reexamination:**

The HCV Program requires all households to recertify with their PHA within 12 months of their last full certification.

The Annual Reexamination process ensures that the PHA has the most up to date information for every household's contact information, household composition (household members in the assisted rental unit), and the household's current income, assets, and expenses.

This process involves the PHA mailing and/or emailing households an Annual Reexamination Packet to households at least 120 days in advance of their Annual Reexamination due date.

Households will be given specific due dates for returning the completed Annual paperwork, and households will also be responsible for providing any requested verification documents to support the claims on the Annual paperwork.

*Examples of verification documents your household should provide include monthly statements for any assets like checking or savings accounts, two (2) consecutive paystubs for a current job, social security award letters, and any other verification documents that may apply.*

Please note: Make sure you are monitoring your mail and email for communication from your PHA and respond in a timely manner to provide any requested documentation to guarantee that your federal rental assistance payments continue without interruption.

Your PHA will send multiple requests for your Annual Paperwork if you do not comply initially. However, your Annual Reexamination certification must be completed prior to your annual reexamination due date, otherwise your next federal rental assistance payment will be withheld.

Failure to comply with the Annual Reexamination process is grounds for termination from the HCV program.

## **Household Responsibilities once on Program:**

Households have several responsibilities once you are officially on the HCV program and start receiving federal rental assistance payments. Failure to comply with these responsibilities is grounds for termination from the HCV program and may result in your household owing money and/or getting evicted from your unit.

- Households MUST provide true and accurate information to your PHA. This includes keeping your contact information up to date. If you change phone numbers or email addresses, you MUST notify your PHA immediately so that we know how to contact you!

*Fraud, or knowingly providing false or incomplete information can be grounds for termination from the HCV program and is punishable by state and federal law.*

- Households MUST pay their portion of rent directly to their landlord and on time as per their lease.
- Households MUST comply with the terms of their lease. A lease is a legally binding document between the household and the landlord. Failure to do so may result in the landlord pursuing an eviction. If your household is evicted from a federally assisted unit, then your household will also be terminated from the HCV program.
- Households MUST report to their PHA, in writing, within 10 business days (2 weeks) of any changes in their household composition or income.

*This includes if you want to move someone in or out of your household, if someone is in the hospital or rehab, if you lost a job, started a new job, if your hours increased or decreased, or if you got a raise etc.*

- Households MUST provide all requested documentation and verifications to your PHA upon request. Your PHA will communicate with you by email and/or mail. Do not ignore your PHA!

***Every household will be required to complete our Annual Reexamination paperwork each year you remain on the HCV program. Your PHA will mail and/or email you the paperwork months before your Annual Reexamination is due and ask you to complete and return the packet along with any additional verification documents by a specified due date. If your household does not comply, then it will lead to withholding your federal rental assistance payments and/or the termination of your HCV federal rental assistance.***

- Households MUST use their federally assisted unit as their primary residence. Your household cannot receive duplicate federal rental assistance on a unit, and your household cannot be living in two places at the same time.
- Households cannot be absent from the assisted unit for more than 120 consecutive days, unless the PHA grants an extension, and no household can be absent from the assisted unit for more than 180 days even with extensions. Incarceration is not an approvable reason for an extension for the 120 consecutive days absent from unit policy.
- Households should contact your PHA if there is any situation regarding VAWA (domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking) on the premise of your unit, or any situation where someone may know your rental unit location. There are protections in place for you.
- Households should contact your landlord first with any concerns about unit issues that may need repairs. If the landlord is not cooperative, then households should contact your PHA and we can schedule a tenant requested inspection to inspect your items of concern. If those items fail the PHA inspection, then your landlord would be notified of the items and given a specific timeframe to make those repairs.
- Households must allow the PHA entry for an annual, or bi-annual, physical inspection; an adult 18 or older must be present.
- Households MUST NOT commit any violent or drug related criminal activity while on the program, and households MUST make sure that they are not interfering with the health, safety, or right to the peaceful enjoyment of the rental property premise for other tenants. Household also MUST NOT be abusive or threatening to PHA staff.

*Please refer to Chapter 12 'Termination of Assistance and Tenancy' for the full listing of mandatory and permissible reasons for terminating a household from the program. Pages 12-1 through 12-9 are provided in this Briefing Packet.*

*WHEDA's complete HCV program Administration plan can be found on our website: <https://www.wheda.com/developers-and-property-managers/property-managers/voucher-administration>*

## **Housing Provider HCV Program Responsibilities**

- Owners will do their own tenant screening of households. Owners have the right to deny voucher holders.
- Owners will comply with PHA requests for completed documentation in a timely manner.
- Owners will comply with all Fair Housing Laws and not discriminate against anyone.
- Owners must properly maintain the federally assisted rental unit and the rental unit property.
- Owners must repair all owner responsible inspection fail items within the specified due dates to ensure they remain eligible to receive federal rental assistance payments each month. Non-life-threatening fail items have a thirty (30) day repair window. Life threatening fail items have a 24-48 hour repair window. Failure to repair items by specified due dates can result in the abatement of rental assistance payments, and in some cases the termination of the HAP contract and lease for the household.
- Owners will enforce the terms of their lease and collect rent from households and the PHA each month.
- Owners who sign the HAP contract with the PHA are agreeing to the PHA's payment schedule for the federal rental assistance payments. The PHA's payment schedule may not comply with your lease requirements for tenants. You are NOT allowed to charge the tenant a late fee if the PHA's payment arrives after your lease's required payment due date.
- Owners CANNOT charge households late fees for any PHA rent payments that are received after your property's lease required payment due date. The owner can only charge late fees if the household's portion of rent is not made on time as per the lease requirements.
- Owners will adhere to state and local guidelines for providing timely notices to households regarding their rental unit.
- Owners MUST provide written requests to the PHA, at least sixty (60) days prior to the effective date, for ANY proposed rent increase to an assisted unit! Rent increases are not allowed during the initial lease term on the HCV program. The PHA must review any proposed rent increase, verify the rent increase is still rent reasonable, and make sure the requested rent increase is allowed to go into effect for the program.
- Owners will pursue evictions against any household who violates their lease agreement. Households who are legally evicted from a federally assisted unit will also be terminated from the Housing Choice Voucher program.
- Owners MUST report to the PHA if there is ever a management change at the property, or if payment information changes. (Failure to provide proper notice to the PHA may result in payments getting sent to the wrong place, and the owner will be responsible for retrieving the payment since they did not provide the PHA with proper notice. )

### **PHA Responsibilities for the HCV Program:**

- Your PHA will be responsible for making timely rental assistance payments to your landlord, and utility reimbursement payments to your utility companies if applicable, on your behalf each month.  
*Timely payments can only be made if all parties provide all requested documentation by specified due dates, and all household information can be properly verified. If your PHA has difficulty verifying information that would impact the federal rental assistance portion, then a monthly payment may be delayed until verification is complete.*
- Your PHA will perform Interim and Annual certifications for all assisted households in a timely manner and adhere to WHEDA administrative policies and procedures to ensure that HCV program regulations are followed.  
This includes making sure any Interim certification is put into effect based on our household portion increase vs. decrease policy and making sure any proposed rent increase is rent reasonable for the HCV program.
- Your PHA will provide written notice to all parties at least thirty (30) days prior to any certification taking effect whenever possible.  
*Advanced written notice of certifications cannot be guaranteed if the household or landlord does not provide proper notice of changes to the PHA, or if either party fails to provide required documentation in a timely manner.*
- Your PHA will provide required documentation to all parties in a timely manner and with specified due dates listed.
- Your PHA will be monitoring the household's and owner's responsibilities while on the program and your PHA may issue warning letters or other written notices if either party can be proven to have violated HCV program responsibilities.
- Your PHA will pursue terminations from the Housing Choice Voucher for any household who violates our mandatory program requirements or violates any of our permissible termination criteria.
- Your PHA will follow all requirements when working with another PHA regarding portability of a WHEDA voucher holder.
- Your PHA will review all reasonable accommodation requests from households and modify normal procedures to accommodate the needs of any household member with disabilities.

### **PHA Policy on Sharing Household Information with Prospective Owners:**

The PHA must provide the owner with the family's current and prior address (as shown in the PHA records); and the name and address (if known to the PHA) of the landlord at the family's current and prior address. [24 CFR 982.307 (b)(1)].

The PHA is permitted, but not required, to offer the owner other information in the PHA's possession about the tenancy history or trafficking of family members [24 CFR 982.307(b)(2)].

The PHA may not disclose to the owner any confidential information provided by the family in response to a PHA request for documentation of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking except at the written request or with the written consent of the individual providing the documentation [24 CFR 5.2007(b)(4)].

#### **PHA Policy:**

The PHA will inform owners of their responsibility to screen prospective tenants, and will provide owners with the required known name and address information, at the time of the initial HQS inspection or before. The PHA will not provide any additional information to the owner, such as tenancy history or criminal history.

#### **PHA Policy:**

The PHA will not screen applicants for family behavior or suitability for tenancy. The PHA will not provide additional screening information to the owner.

*WHEDA's HCV Program Administrative Plan has more details in Chapter 3 and Chapter 9 on specifics of these policies.*

## **WHEDA's Mandatory and Permissible Denials:**

Household members subject to a lifetime registration requirement under a state sex offender registration program are not allowed onto the HCV program.

Household members who have been evicted from federally assisted housing in the past 3 years for drug related criminal activity will not be allowed on the HCV program.

Household members who have been convicted of drug related criminal activity for the production or manufacture of methamphetamine in any location, not just on the premises of federally assisted housing, will be denied HCV program assistance.

Household members who are currently engaged in the use of illegal drugs during the previous three months will either be denied admission onto the HCV program or removed from an assisted household's composition.

Household members with a current use or pattern of use of illegal drugs, or of alcohol abuse, which may threaten other resident's right to the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises are also subject to termination or denial from the HCV program.

***WHEDA's policy is to determine reasonable cause by considering all credible evidence including but not limited to any record of convictions, arrests, or evictions of household members related to the use of illegal drugs or alcohol abuse. A record of arrest will not be used as the sole basis for determining reasonable cause. The PHA will also consider evidence from treatment providers or community-based organizations providing services to household members.***

WHEDA will also deny or terminate assistance for families if-

- The household does not provide information that the PHA or HUD determines is necessary to properly administer the HCV program.
- The household does not provide true and complete information to the PHA.
- Any household member has been evicted from federally assisted housing in the past three (3) years.
- Any household member has had federal rental assistance terminated in the past two (2) years.
- Any household member has committed fraud, bribery, or other corrupt or criminal acts in connect with any federal housing program.
- Any household members engage in, or threaten, violence or abuse toward PHA personnel or PHA contractors.

***Abusive or violent behavior includes verbal, written, or physical threats of, or committing acts of abuse or violence, the use of racial epithets or any other language used that is customarily meant to intimidate would also be considered abusive or violent behavior. Threatening personnel and contractors refer to making written or spoken statements or gestures, which imply violent or abusive acts and may be intended to intimidate others.***

- Any household member owes rent or other amounts to any PHA in connect with Section 8 or any other public housing assistance under the 1937 Act, unless the family repays the full amount of the debt owed prior to being selected from the HCV program waiting list.
- The household has not reimbursed any PHA for amounts the PHA paid to an owner under a HAP contract for rent, damages, to the unit, or other amounts that are owed by the household under the lease, unless the household repays the full amount of the debt owed prior to being selected for an HCV waiting list.
- The household has breached the terms of a repayment agreement that is in effect with a PHA, unless the household repays the full agreement amount prior to being selected from an HCV waiting list.

***Households denied for a debt owed will be provided with a copy of HUD's EIV system Debts Owed report. Any disputes over the information listed in HUD systems will need to contact the PHA who entered the information into EIV. Households will need to provide the PHA with any supporting documentation and evidence to support their claim disputing the debts owed finding.***

## **WHEDA Forms of Denial Policy:**

HCV households may experience the following forms of denial when trying to get approved for HCV federal rental assistance.

Your PHA may not place a household on a waiting list, deny or withdraw a Housing Choice Voucher offer, not approve a rental unit, or refuse to finalize a HAP contract for a rental unit, or refuse to process a request to provide assistance under portability.

WHEDA will also never finalize a HAP contract for a rental unit that has a calculation of zero dollars in rental assistance to be paid at New Admission, Move, or Portability Move-In.

Your PHA will provide written notification of any decision regarding denial onto the HCV program and households will be offered the option of an informal hearing to dispute the decision.

## **Informal Hearing/Appeal Process:**

WHEDA PHAs will offer an informal hearing for households to appeal any of the following situations as required by HCV regulations:

- Reviewing a determination of the household's annual or adjusted income calculation for determining rental assistance portions.
- Reviewing a determination of a rental unit's household utility allowance based on the PHA utility allowance charts.
- Reviewing a determination of a household's voucher bedroom size under the PHA's subsidy standards
- Appealing a determination to terminate assistance due to a household's actions or failure to act.
- Appealing a determination to terminate assistance due to a household's absence from an assisted unit for longer than permitted by PHA policy and HUD regulations.
- Appealing a determination to terminate a household's Family Self Sufficiency contract, withhold supportive services, or propose forfeiture of the family's escrow account [ 24 CFR 984.303 (i)]

WHEDA PHAs are NOT required to offer an informal hearing for the following situations, nor will an informal hearing be offered for any situation not covered by the HCV program informal hearing regulations:

- Any discretionary administrative determinations by the PHA
- General policy issues or class grievances
- Establishment of the PHA schedule of utility allowances for the HCV program.
- A PHA determination not to approve a requested voucher extension.
- A PHA determination not to approve a unit or tenancy for the HCV program.
- A PHA determination that a rental unit is not in compliance with HQS inspection standards.
- A PHA determination to exercise or not to exercise any right or remedy against an owner under a HAP contract.

PHA decisions about a household's federal rental assistance portion or their eligibility for the HCV program will always be sent out in a written letter that includes the option for an informal hearing request that must be made in writing by the household within ten (10) business days and will involve a specified due date.

Households MUST respond in writing to request an informal hearing by the specified due date or else the household will forfeit their right to an informal hearing and have no recourse to overturn the decision to deny or terminate the HCV federal rental assistance. This is primarily for termination decisions. If the household has questions on how the PHA calculated their portion or utility allowance, then that review can take place at any time and the PHA has discretion to go back and make retroactive adjustments to historical certifications if any mistakes are found.

The PHA has the sole discretion on whether to offer an informal hearing in person or virtually. Informal hearings will be offered with all possible considerations to be available for persons with disabilities and in compliance with Section 504 accessibility requirements. Households also have the right to request a virtual informal hearing as a reasonable accommodation request.

The PHA will provide households with informal hearing information including the location, directions to join, and all the material and documentation that the PHA plans to present at the informal hearing at least five (5) days before the scheduled informal hearing date.

Households will also be provided with all available resources to have accessible means to present their own material and documentation at the hearing. Household evidence must be submitted to the PHA at least twenty-four (24) hours before the scheduled informal hearing for remote, virtual informal hearings. All evidence is scanned and emailed to the hearing officer for the informal hearing.

### **Informal Hearing/Appeal Process Continued:**

Households may request to reschedule an informal hearing due to good cause such as needing a reasonable accommodation, or unavoidable conflict which seriously affects the health, safety, or welfare of the family.

Households must contact the PHA within twenty-four (24) hours if they were not able to attend the informal hearing within 20 minutes of the start time and could not request to reschedule in advance.

Informal hearings involve the household and PHA meeting with an impartial hearing officer who is approved by the PHA. Additional attendees may include any witnesses for the PHA or for the household, a household's legal counsel or other representative, and any person approved by the PHA due to reasonable accommodation requests.

The informal hearing officer will be responsible to manage the order of business at the informal hearing to ensure the hearing is conducted in a professional and businesslike manner. Attendees who act unprofessionally, displaying disruptive, abusive, or inappropriate behavior may be excused from the hearing at the discretion of the hearing officer.

The hearing officer will consider all evidence that is presented by both parties, as well as the administrative plan and policies for the HCV program when making their decision. The hearing officer may ask for more information or to reconvene at a later date when necessary.

The hearing officer will provide a written decision letter via first class mail or by email to all parties. The informal hearing officer's will be based on the preponderance of evidence presented at the hearing.

The PHA and household will comply with the decision of the informal hearing officer for all decisions that required an informal hearing to be conducted.

For a full review of WHEDA's Informal Hearing Procedures, please review our current Administrative Plan found on WHEDA's website at <https://www.wheda.com/developers-and-property-managers/property-managers/voucher-administration>

### **WHEDA Nondiscrimination policies and Household Protections**

The PHA will abide by Wisconsin laws covering protected classes of race, color, family status, disability, sex, national origin, religion, marital status, ancestry, source of income, sexual orientation, gender identity and age and will abide by all local nondiscrimination laws and ordinances.

WHEDA also promotes fair housing and the equal opportunity for very low-income families of all ethnic backgrounds to experience freedom of housing choices.

VAWA, or the Violence Against Women Act of 2013, offer victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking with protections against being terminated from the HCV program or from remaining in a unit that puts them at risk.

VAWA documentation has been provided to the household in the Briefing material and is available upon request from your PHA. Please contact your PHA if you have or are experiencing any VAWA related situations.

Safer at Home is a program that prevents the victims' home address from being shared on physical mail for anyone who has experienced domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. The program enables a secure mailing address where the victim's mail can be sent to prevent perpetrators from stalking victims. Households will have to apply for the program and provide your PHA with the verification card to ensure the PHA uses the secure mailing address for your household's paperwork.

### **Fair Housing Discrimination:**

If an HCV applicant or participant believes that any family member has been discriminated against by the PHA or by an owner or landlord, then the family should notify the PHA in writing or verbally.

The PHA will investigate housing discrimination complaints and provide written notice to all parties within ten (10) business days of completing the investigation. The written notice will address the conclusions of the investigation including any proposed corrective actions to be taken.

The PHA will make retain copies of all housing discrimination complaints, investigations, notices, and corrective actions that may be suggested.

Households will also be advised to complete the housing discrimination complaint form for HUD's office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity.

## HUD's Fair Housing and Equal Housing Discrimination Complaint

Website: <https://www.hud.gov/fairhousing/fileacomplaint>

### Reporting Housing Discrimination

If you believe your rights may have been violated, we encourage you to report housing discrimination. Because there are time limits on when an allegation can be filed with HUD after an alleged violation, you should report housing discrimination as soon as possible. When reporting housing discrimination, please provide as much information as possible, including:



Your name and address



The name and address of the person(s) or organization your allegation is against



The address or other identification of the housing or program involved



A short description of the event(s) that cause you to believe your rights were violated



The date(s) of the alleged violation

### How to Report Housing Discrimination



#### Online

You can Report Housing Discrimination with FHEO online in [English](#) (also available in [Español](#), [中文](#), [Tiếng Việt](#), [한국인](#), [العربية](#), [Русский](#), [ဗြိ](#), and [Soomaali](#))

[Report Now >](#)

or



#### Phone

We speak your language! Talk with an FHEO intake specialist by calling:

1-800-669-9777

You can also call your regional FHEO office at the phone numbers on [this list](#).



#### Mail

You can print out [this form](#) (also available in [Español](#), [中文](#), [Tiếng Việt](#), [한국인](#), [العربية](#), [Русский](#), [ဗြိ](#), and [Soomaali](#)) and mail it to your regional FHEO office at the address on [this list](#).



#### Assistance for Persons with Disabilities

HUD welcomes and is prepared to receive calls from individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as individuals with speech or communication disabilities. To learn more about how to make an accessible telephone call, please visit [Telecommunications Relay Service - TRS](#).



#### Assistance for Persons with Limited English Proficiency

You can report housing discrimination in any language. For persons with limited English proficiency, HUD provides interpreters. HUD also provides a [Spanish language version](#) of the online report housing discrimination form. You can find descriptions of your fair housing rights in several languages other than English [here](#).

### Retaliation Is Illegal

It is illegal to retaliate against any person for making an allegation, testifying, assisting, or participating in any manner in a proceeding under HUD's allegation process at any time, even after the investigation has been completed. The Fair Housing Act also makes it illegal to retaliate against any person because that person reported a discriminatory practice to a housing provider or other authority. The Violence Against Women Act also makes it illegal for a public housing agency, owner, or manager of housing assisted under a VAWA covered housing program to retaliate against someone for seeking or exercising VAWA protections for themselves or another. This includes protection for people who testify, assist, or participate in any VAWA matter on their own, or another's, behalf. If you believe you have experienced retaliation, you can report housing discrimination.

## Opportunity Move and Emergency Housing Resources:

### Wisconsin Poverty Rate by County Map

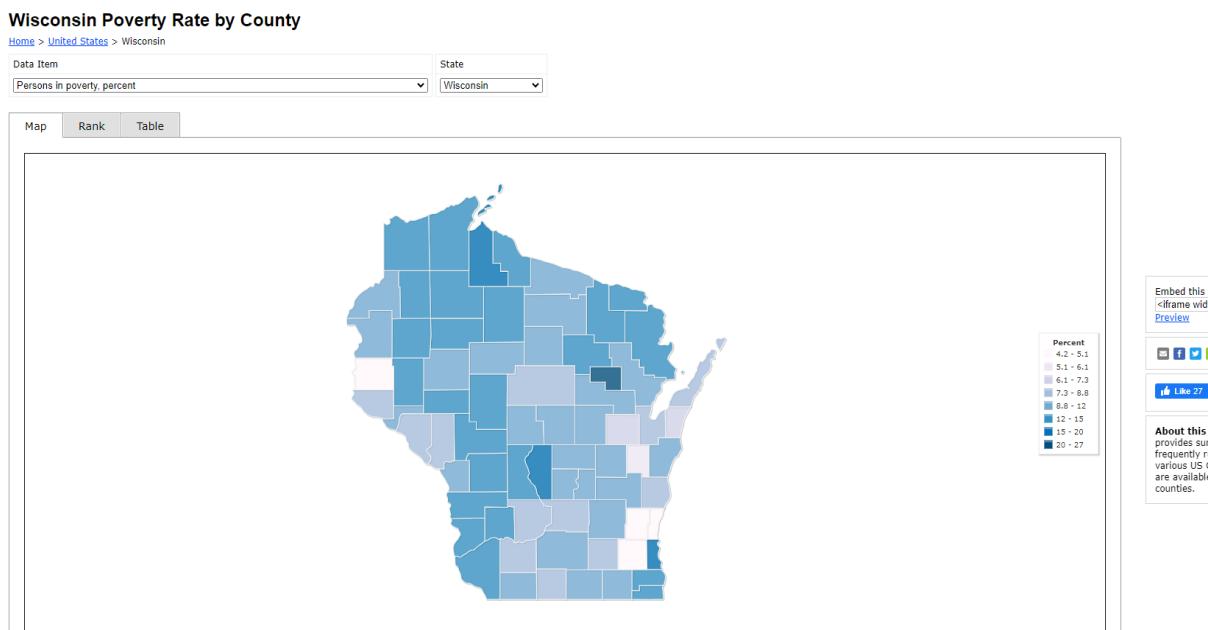
The map below references US Census Bureau statistics for Wisconsin's poverty rate by county.

The darker shades reflect higher poverty rates.

Here is a link to IndexMundi's webpage for the map where you can view more detailed information including the exact poverty rate for each county.

<https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/united-states/quick-facts/wisconsin/percent-of-people-of-all-ages-in-poverty#map>

Households can refer to this map when considering HCV program Opportunity Moves to locations with lower poverty levels. The counties with darker shading indicate a higher poverty level.



## 2-1-1 Wisconsin

Wisconsin's 2-1-1 resource center can be used by households to learn more about the services offered for any county within the state of Wisconsin.

<https://211wisconsin.communityos.org/guided-search>





## WHEDA Housing Choice Voucher Program HQS/NSPIRE Inspection Standards Update

Dear Housing Providers and Program Participants,

This is notice of upcoming changes to inspection standards and the implementation of NSPIRE (National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate), for all **WHEDA** Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) and Project Based Voucher (PBV) households.

Effective **October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025**, WHEDA's HCV Program inspection process will begin assessing units based on the new National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE). NSPIRE, which will be replacing HQS, establishes a new approach to assessing housing quality inspections and strengthens physical condition standards and will be replacing the current HQS standards. Implementation of NSPIRE will ensure that the overall condition of the dwelling unit and property, including components located both inside (i.e. common areas and building systems) and outside of the building (i.e. site exteriors and grounds), and within the units are functionally adequate, operable, and free of health and safety hazards.

It is important to comply with these new requirements to avoid delays in the leasing process, life threatening fail items, or the abatement of federal rental assistance payments.

### **The biggest changes are as follows:**

1. All the smoke alarm changes, placement and 10-year sealed/hard wired
2. Inspections will include the unit/inside/outside for all units, this includes the path of travel to unit on apartment buildings
3. GFCI's within 6 feet of water source
4. Interior wall holes cannot be greater than 2 inches in diameter or an accumulation of holes that are cumulatively greater than 6 inches by 6 inches.
5. Heaters must be functional year round

Units subject to inspections prior to the implementation effective date will be held to the HQS administrative and enforcement policies in place at the time the inspection was conducted, but this will also include NSPIRE standards already required for carbon monoxide detectors and smoke alarms. To further assist our participating landlords and families, enclosed with this notification is guidance material on properly preparing for a NSPIRE inspection.

For further information, please visit <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/nspire/>.

Please reach out to [hcvprogram@wheda.com](mailto:hcvprogram@wheda.com) with questions.

Sincerely,  
Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Team

# What To Expect During An NSPIRE Inspection

*For Residents*

**1**

**Inspectors may enter all rooms and areas to complete the inspection.**

**3**

**Inspectors will lock/unlock doors, open cabinets, test plumbing, etc.**

**2**

**Loud noise may occur, such as when alarms are tested.**

- 1 Provide inspectors access to all areas and let them know if they will encounter other people or pets.
- 2 Expect loud sounds, such as beeping from smoke or carbon monoxide alarms or the opening and closing of doors.
- 3 Allow inspectors to examine all inspectable items, including doors, cabinets, kitchen appliances, plumbing fixtures, heating systems, electrical service panels, lighting, windows, etc.



# What To Expect During An NSPIRE Inspection

You may be asked to temporarily move some personal items, like clothes and plants.

Inspectors might trip electrical breakers, disrupt circuits, or turn on/off lights.

You may be asked to move personal belongings that could be safety risks.

## During the Inspection

Inspectors may request certain tasks to be completed, such as turning on/off a cooking appliance, adjusting the thermostat, or pulling a stopper from a bathtub.

Light bulbs or batteries may be changed, installed, or replaced as needed.

Inspectors will not inspect resident-owned items, such as fire extinguishers, air conditioners, or freezers for functionality.

## After the Inspection

- ▶ The public housing authority (PHA) or property representative may explain discovered deficiencies and required repair time.
- ▶ The inspector will provide the inspection results to the landlord, property manager, or PHA.
- ▶ Your PHA will follow up with a notice of reinspection dates, if applicable.

See the **Requesting an Inspection Report** job aid if a report is not provided.

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**Location Focus**

Defined basic quality housing standards based on 13 key aspects (General Regulations and HUD 52580-A)

**Inspection Locations**

Living Room  
Kitchen  
Bathroom  
Other Room  
Used for Living  
All Secondary  
Heating and Plumbing

**Deficiency Types**

Health and Safety  
Non-Health and Safety

**FOCUS****INSPECTION****DEFICIENCIES****Resident Focus**

Designed to focus on resident health and safety while addressing the increase in multifamily properties and tenant and project-based vouchers

**3 Inspection Types/  
3 Inspection Areas**

**Inspection Types:**  
Annual Self-Inspection  
Critical-to-Quality  
Critical-to-Quality Plus

**Inspectable Areas:**  
Outside  
Inside  
Unit

**3 Deficiency Categories**

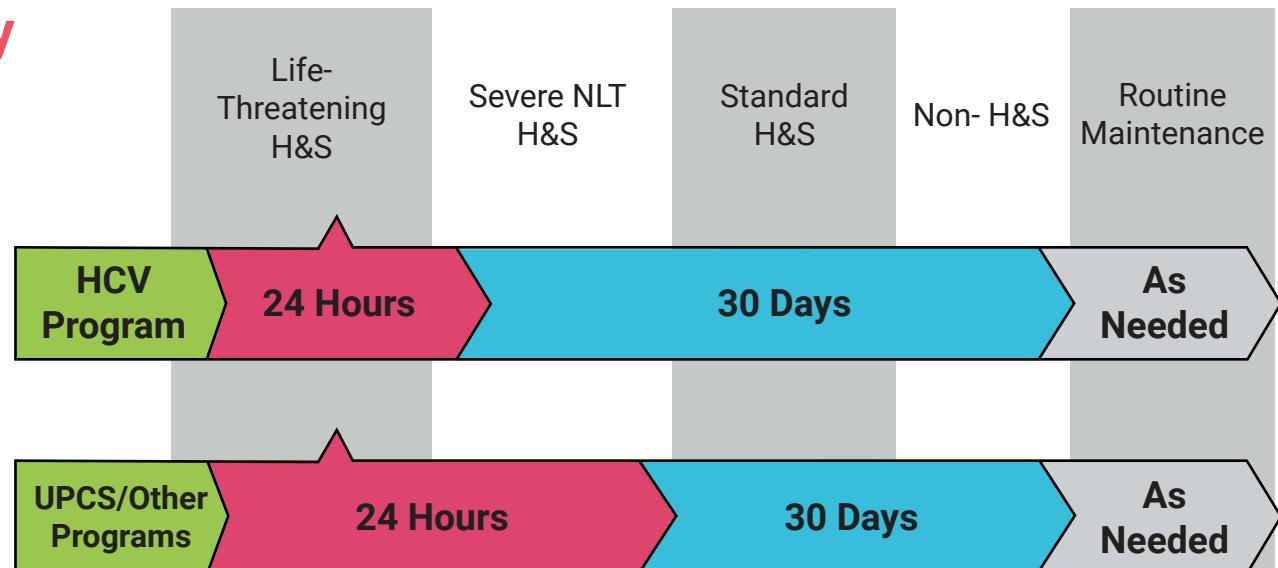
Condition and Appearance  
Function and Operability  
Health and Safety

**Rationales:**  
Deficiencies based on rationales, or clear and concise explanations of the potential risk a defect presents

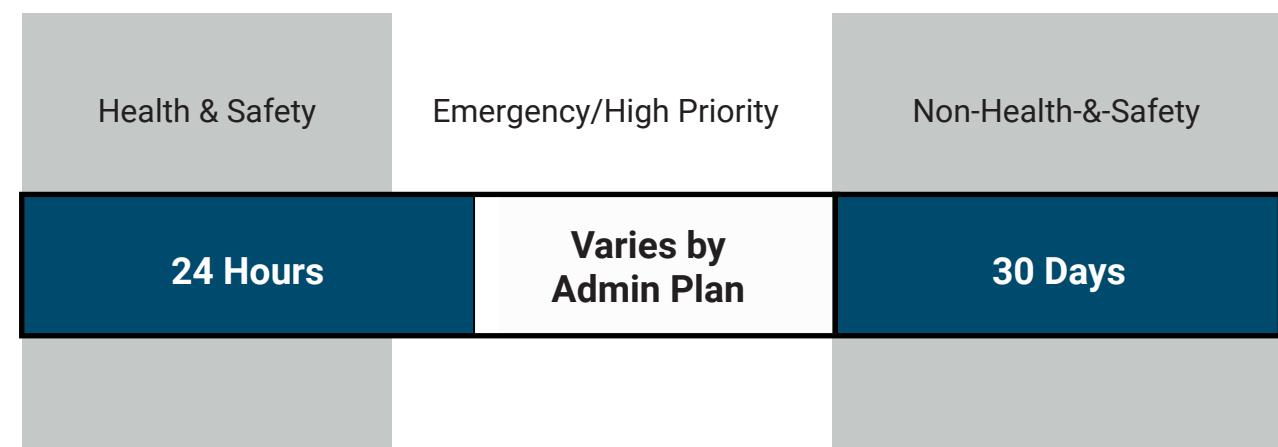


## NSPIRE vs HQS

### NSPIRE Deficiency Time of Repair



### HQS Deficiency Time of Repair



## **Special Purpose Voucher Programs**

### **WHEDA Policy Exceptions**

*(These policy exceptions ONLY apply to households who were issued the specific type of Special Purpose Voucher)*

#### **Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing Special Purpose Voucher Policy Exceptions:**

- Vouchers are issued for 120 days and there is no limit to the extensions requested by case managers.
- Vouchers are only issued from referrals from case managers, there is no open application for the program.
- The only denial reasons for VASH referrals are over-income, lifetime sex offender registration, manufacturing meth in federally assisted property.
- VASH vouchers may be used in any special housing type including shared housing, congregate housing, single room occupancy, manufactured homes, and cooperative housing.
- All other HCV program policies and procedures provided in this briefing material apply to all special purpose voucher households.

#### **Family Unification Program (FUP) Special Purpose Voucher Policy Exceptions:**

FUP youth vouchers are limited by statute to a period between 36 and 60 months of housing assistance. Supportive services must also be provided to FUP-eligible youth by the Public Child Welfare Agency (PCWA) or by another agency or organization under contract with the PCWA for the period of time defined in the notice or Notice of Funding Availability/Opportunity (NOFA/O) for which funding was made available.

WHEDA PHA POLICY: The PHA has not designated any specific number or percentage of FUP vouchers for youths or families. The PHA will serve all referrals that meet program eligibility requirements, up to the PHA's FUP voucher allocation. The PHA has 20 FUP vouchers available in Washington County

The PHA has entered into an MOU with the following partnering organization: Washington County Human Services Department (WCHSD)

PHA Policy The PCWA (WCHSD) will provide supportive services for all FUP youth for a period of 36 months.

Maximum Assistance Period: Although there is no time limit on FUP family vouchers, FUP youth vouchers are limited by statute. Unless the FUP youth meets an exception outlined below, after 36 months of assistance, the FUP youth voucher must be terminated. However, any period of time for which no subsidy (HAP) is being paid on behalf of the youth does not count toward the 36-month limitation. If the FUP youth does meet the requirements outlined below, the statutory limit on FUP assistance is a total of 60 months of FUP voucher assistance [FR Notice 1/24/22].

Statutory Exceptions A FUP youth will be entitled to receive an extension of assistance for up to 24 months beyond the 36-month time limit without participating in the PHA's FSS program if they certify that they meet certain exceptions. The full administrative policy for FUP vouchers can be found on Chapter 21 of WHEDA's administrative plan located on the Voucher Administration webpage: <https://www.wheda.com/developers-and-property-managers/property-managers/voucher-administration>

#### **Foster Youth Initiative (FYI) Special Purpose Voucher Exceptions:**

The PHA has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Wood County Human Services Department (WCHSD) and Northcentral Transition Resource Agency Independent Living to administer a Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) program.

#### **Project Based Vouchers (PBV) Special Purpose Voucher Policy Exception:**

Households with a PBV may elect to remain in their current unit, or they can request the next available regular Housing Choice Voucher from their PHA, but only after they complete an initial lease term.

Please Note: It is projected that there will not be any new available Housing Choice Vouchers for the 2025 calendar year.