

Assistance to Disaster-Affected Families for Public Housing and Voucher Programs

Priority: The Department's first priority is to assist existing public housing and voucher program participants who have been affected by Hurricane Katrina. Once that need is met, PHAs may begin serving other disaster victims who are non-participants.

A PHA may use its own existing available vouchers or public housing units to assist either displaced public housing or voucher participants affected by the disaster, provided it amends its Administrative Plan and/or Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP) to specify a preference for a disaster-affected family.

The amendment must be approved by the Board. The Executive Director should have the amendment written to specify that families of federally declared disasters who are Section 8 voucher holders or public housing residents in another jurisdiction will receive preference over other waiting list placeholders. Once written, and it need only be a few sentences, the PHA may convene a conference call with all the members of the board and ask the Board to approve the amendment. (Please note that it is HUD's recommendation that the PHA's Board not consider the amendment as "significant" to the Administrative Plan or ACOP. Should the Board consider the amendment as "significant" then a formal notice to the public must be prepared and public meeting advertised and held.) Once passed and recorded, the PHA may then immediately admit disaster victims using its own resources. Please remember that these are federal guidelines. PHAs must ensure that they have complied with individual state or local requirements above and beyond the federal requirements such as the Open Meetings Act or similar state law.

If the family arrives without any documentation, the PHA will obtain the name and SSN of the Head of Household that holds the voucher. The PHA will verify the current eligibility by calling the Real Estate Assessment Center at (888) 245-4860 and asking REAC to verify the family's participation. This number can also be used to answer other disaster-related policy questions. This number is for PHAs only and not for tenants to call. Tenants should call the Information Resource Center at (800) 955-2232.

REAC will perform the verifications function using PIC data, and other available documentation such as the HAP register, to verify that the family is a current voucher holder. Where the data cannot be verified with the existing information by REAC, the PHA may accept alternate documentation that demonstrates the tenant's participation in the program. Contact the REAC 800 number for additional instructions.

The REAC will then transmit an acknowledgment form (attached) and the PIC 50058 from PIC verifying the tenant exists in the system. Once the family is accepted into the receiving PHA the family will have an "port move-out" edit in PIC at the initial

“bill” and, be entered into the receiving PHA’s PIC roster. The receiving agency may opt to conduct a reexamination for the family and the normal portability billing process resumes.

New applicants to the public housing and voucher programs must meet the federally declared disaster preference and be income eligible. The PHA must send the amendment to their respective field offices where we will note the change to the plan and transmit back acknowledgement.

Displaced Public Housing Participants:

A PHA may assist a displaced public housing resident through the use of its own public housing and or other resources provided that the unit in which the family is being placed meets decent safe and sanitary standards.

A PHA may also assist a displaced public housing resident using its own voucher program resources, provided that its board has approved the revision to the administrative plan. If you issue vouchers to displaced public housing residents above your existing voucher resources, there is no guarantee at this time that HUD will be able to reimburse the PHA.

Existing Voucher Program Participants:

Portability:

A voucher holder may port into any jurisdiction that has a PHA that administers a Section 8 voucher program.

The family will receive the amount as per the receiving PHA’s payment standard. In some cases the receiving PHA may have a higher amount than the disaster PHA and will bill for that amount. For example, a family coming in from New Orleans may have a voucher worth \$600 there but has ported into Atlanta and the same voucher in Atlanta is \$800. Atlanta will bill for the \$800. HANO is currently setting up accounting operations to be able to pay portability billings on a timely manner. Other PHAs affected by Katrina are currently re-establishing their own operations. Further instructions will be issued shortly on where to bill.

Do not let portability billings get in the way of providing vouchers to displaced voucher holders from any of the PHAs affected by Katrina. The Department will make sure that PHAs are paid for legitimate ports from affected PHAs.

In the event the annual recertification date cannot be determined, the 12-month period will begin on the date the unit is leased. Once the receiving PHA accepts the family all normal PHA procedures will be followed including HQS inspections, etc.

Field Offices who have been performing the certification functions to date must refer PHAs to the REAC and must mail the completed certification forms to the REAC to the attention of Elizabeth Hanson.