

What is a minimum rent?

A HA may charge a minimum rent of no more than \$50 no matter what your income is.

If I am charged a minimum rent but can't pay it and the HA tries to evict me, what do I do?

You may qualify for a hardship exemption. This means that the HA will not evict you for 90 days. You may need to agree to repay the unpaid rent later. A hardship exemption does not keep the HA from evicting you if you break a different rule that allows the HA to evict you. Contact the HA to ask for a hardship exemption.

What if I pay a minimum rent and my income decreases because of a family change?

You may qualify for a hardship exemption. See above.



This brochure is for information only. It does not take the place of legal advice.

If you have questions about changes in your lease, changes in your rent, or other questions about your housing, you may want to contact your local legal services program. To contact The South Carolina Centers for Equal Justice, call the Legal Aid Telephone Intake Service for a referral at 803-744-9430 in Columbia or 888-346-5592 from other places in South Carolina.

This brochure was produced by the South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center with funds provided by the South Carolina Bar Foundation's Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts.

Special thanks to the National Housing Law Project and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center is dedicated to advocacy on behalf of low-income people in South Carolina to effect systemic change by acting in and through the courts, legislature, administrative agencies, community and the media, and helping others do the same through education, training, and co-counseling.

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SOUTH CAROLINA
appleseed
LEGAL JUSTICE CENTER



RENT CALCULATION IN PUBLIC HOUSING

This brochure is for people who live in public or subsidized housing or who get a Section 8 voucher. It shows how the housing authority decides your rent.

This brochure does not tell exactly what your rent will be. To get into these housing programs, contact your local housing authority.

How will I know how much rent to pay?

The Housing Authority (HA) will tell you how much your rent is. You must pay your rent every month.

How is my rent decided?

It is based on your income and who lives in your household.

What is income?

Income is money your family plans to get for the year. This is all money going to anyone in your household who is over age 18.



Examples of income:

- Paycheck;
- Money you get for keeping foster children;
- Child support
- Money from the government, such as a Social Security check.

How do I show what my income is?

You may need to show pay stubs or tax returns. If you work or have a bank account, you may need to give the HA the address and phone number of your employer or bank.

Must I tell about all of my family's income?

Yes. It may not all count when the HA decides your rent, but you must tell them about all of it.

Is all of my income counted?

Maybe not. And, you may get special deductions. For example, the HA will give you "credit" for children or disabled family members by subtracting this credit from your income. This should make your rent a smaller amount.

What if my income changes?

You must tell your HA that your income or household has changed. Write this in a letter to them and keep a copy of the letter.

Examples of changes:

- You lose your job;
- A household member loses her job;
- A household member moves out;
- You get a new job or a pay raise.

If my income changes, will my rent change?

It depends. If your income decreases, the HA should lower your rent. The HA will not know that your income decreased until you tell them.

If your income increases, the housing authority may change your rent then or they may wait until the end of the year lease.

For public housing and disabled voucher recipients only: If you or a family member are unemployed and then get a job, your rent will not increase right away. When the HA determines your income, the new paycheck will not be counted for one year. For the next six months, only half of your new income will count. This is called Earned Income Disregard (EID).

The EID has a time limit. The time starts when you get your new job, but you must tell the HA. For example, if you get a new job in Jan. 2004 but do not tell the HA until Mar. 2004, you can still get EID. From Apr.-Dec. 2004, none of your new paycheck would count as income; from Jan.-Jun. 2005 only half would count.

Can I pay less rent if I disagree with the amount of my rent?

No. If you do not pay your rent, you might be evicted.

What if I think I should pay less rent?

Ask to meet with your HA. If they will not meet with you, you can ask for an informal hearing or a grievance hearing.



Can the HA change my rent if my income does not change?

Yes, but the HA must tell you in writing *before* the rent changes.

Your rent will not change each month. It only changes if the lease ends and you get a new lease or the lease changes.

Must I pay fees other than rent?

Sometimes. For example, you may need to pay for lawn care. You should be told about these fees before you sign a lease. Also, you may pay for utilities (the light and heat bill), but if you do, you should get a rent deduction. If you have questions about fees, ask the HA. They cannot charge you hidden fees or disguise part of your rent as fees.