

Getting Involved

What is a Public Housing Authority Plan?

A Public Housing Authority Plan is a guide to the Housing Authority's policies and programs. It is where the Housing Authority lists its policies and goals for the next year and the next five years. It is also a way for you to tell your concerns to the Housing Authority about their policies.

How can I be involved?

You can try to join the Resident Advisory Board. The Board is involved in the planning process. The Housing Authority can tell you about other residents who are involved and may provide a place for you and other residents to meet.

Why should I be involved?

Residents on the Board can talk to the Housing Authority about its policies about rent, eligibility, admissions, pets, and other matters.

THIS BROCHURE IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY.

IT DOES NOT APPLY TO ALL TYPES OF RENTAL HOUSING OR ALL RENTAL SITUATIONS.

If you have problems with your housing, a housing authority, your lease, or your landlord, you may want to contact a lawyer. If you have a very low income, your local legal services office may be able to help you. To get in touch with them, call the Legal Assistance Telephone Intake Service for a referral at 1-888-346-5592 statewide or (803) 744-9430 in Columbia.

The South Carolina Bar Lawyer Referral Service can give you the name of a lawyer who is willing to meet with you and advise you at a lower rate. For the name of a lawyer in your area, call the Lawyer Referral Service at 1-800-868-2284 statewide or (803) 799-7100 in Columbia.

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South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center is dedicated to advocacy for 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.

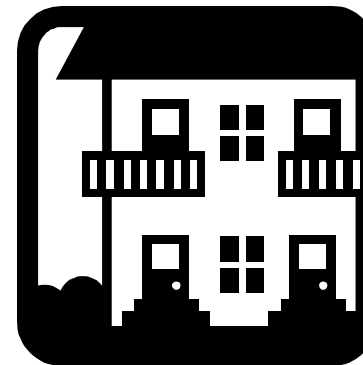
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Housing Choice Voucher

Public Housing

Your Rights and Responsibilities

Subsidized Housing



This brochure gives information for people who live in public or subsidized housing. It is also for people who get housing through voucher programs, such as the Housing Choice Voucher Program (formerly the Section 8 Voucher Program).

You may have to work with both your Housing Authority and your landlord. The Housing Authority will tell you when you should go to them and when you must go to the landlord. Make sure you understand this. This brochure will help you understand some of your rights and responsibilities. It does not take the place of your lease or any other agreement you make with a landlord or Housing Authority. If you have questions about your rights, you should talk to a lawyer.

Income	<p>What income should I report to the Housing Authority?</p> <p>You must report all household income to the Housing Authority. Income includes your paycheck, and also child support, Social Security or other benefits you get for any household member (including children), and other money household members get for working.</p>
	<p>When should I report income to the Housing Authority?</p> <p>Report income when you first apply and at least once each year as directed by the Housing Authority. Ask your Housing Authority when you should report income changes that happen in between your annual reviews. It is usually in your interest to report any decrease in income right away.</p>
	<p>Will an increase in income change my rent or my housing assistance?</p> <p>It may. Some types of income will not increase your rent, but if you fail to report them, you may be breaking the law. Also, if your income decreases, your rent may decrease, too. The Housing Authority will determine that. You must keep paying the full rent amount unless the Housing Authority tells you to pay a different amount. If you disagree with this amount, you have the right to request a hearing.</p>

Guests	<p>Am I allowed to have guests at my house?</p> <p>Yes. You may have guests. However, you should follow Housing Authority rules about telling the Housing Authority or your landlord about guests, including relatives and overnight guests.</p>
	<p>Am I responsible for my guests?</p> <p>Yes. You are responsible for the criminal activity of your guests, even if you did not know about the activity. What your guests do while visiting you could cause you to be evicted or cause you to lose your housing assistance. The exception to this rule is if you are a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking and your guest tries to or does abuse you. In that case, the landlord or Housing Authority cannot use an act of actual or threatened abuse against you as a reason to end your lease or to evict you. Report trespassers to the police.</p>
	<p>When does a guest become a household member?</p> <p>Sometimes a guest may stay long enough to become a household member. Most types of public or subsidized housing require you to report changes in the make up of your household. If you do not report these changes, it may lead to your landlord or the Housing Authority taking negative action against you. So, you should be sure to ask about rules regarding guests and make sure that all members of your household are listed on the lease.</p>

Maintenance	<p>Who do I call if something in my house or apartment breaks?</p> <p>If your landlord is not the Housing Authority, contact the landlord for repairs. If your landlord is the Housing Authority, call the Housing Authority. Remember that South Carolina law does not allow you to withhold your rent just because the landlord does not make repairs.</p>
	<p>Do I have to keep the utilities turned on?</p> <p>Yes. To keep your housing or assistance, you must keep your utilities, including electricity and/or gas, turned on. Ask the Housing Authority about programs that help you pay for utilities, like utility subsidies or the Low Income Heating Assistance Program (LIHEAP).</p>
	<p>Do I need a smoke alarm?</p> <p>Yes. Keep batteries in your smoke alarms. (The Housing Authority might replace batteries for free.) Also, do not disconnect the smoke alarm because the Housing Authority or landlord might charge a penalty if you do.</p>
	<p>Who is responsible for damage to the house or apartment?</p> <p>You are responsible for damage caused by you, your household members, and your guests. This includes damage to the house or apartment and to the grounds. Before you move in, inspect the house or apartment carefully and make a list of anything that is wrong. Keep a copy of this list for yourself and give one to the Housing Authority and the landlord. Have them sign something saying that they received a copy of the list. This will help make sure you get your security deposit back (if you paid one) and keep you from being charged money for damages you did not cause.</p>

Working with Agencies & Landlords	<p>Appointments</p> <p>Usually once a year, the Housing Authority will need to complete a recertification. A recertification is when the Housing Authority determines how much your rent will be. You will usually receive a letter from them with an appointment time. You can lose your assistance if you do not show up, so call to reschedule if you cannot attend a particular appointment.</p>
	<p>Leases and Other Documents</p> <p>Make sure to read over and understand your lease and any other documents from the landlord or Housing Authority. Keep the lease and other important documents in a safe place where you can find them if necessary. Have someone explain the lease or any other documents that you do not understand.</p>
	<p>Paying Rent and Security Deposits</p> <p>You should pay rent to your landlord just as your lease says. The landlord cannot make you pay more than what the lease says. Make sure to get a receipt from the landlord for your security deposit and for rent payments.</p>
	<p>Questions</p> <p>If you have questions about your housing, ask the Housing Authority. They will work with you. If you are having a problem with the Housing Authority or your landlord and need legal assistance, contact your local legal services office. The number to get in contact with a legal services office is on the back of this brochure.</p>