



Your Guide To Rental Vouchers

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FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION IN HOUSING

Discrimination is against the law. Discrimination means that you are treated differently because of your race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin. In housing, discrimination generally means:

- A denial of your right to choose the housing that you want.
- Being forced to accept housing conditions, which other people would not have to accept if they were to rent the same unit (for example, paying higher rents or paying a higher security deposit).
- If you feel that you have been discriminated against in your search for housing under this program, please contact ACOH at (434) 296-5839 or through Virginia Relay 711. You may also want to complete and submit a “Housing Discrimination Complaint Form” to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development at (800) 669-9777.



The Information Contained In This Brochure Pertains Only To The County Of Albemarle Office Of Housing And Should Not Be Interpreted As A Definitive Policy Statement For Other Housing Authorities. For More Information on Program Guidelines for Each Program, Please Contact the Appropriate Agency for More Information.

The County of Albemarle Office of Housing Shall Not Deny Any Family Or Individual The Equal Opportunity To Apply For Or Receive Assistance Under The Section 8 Programs On The Basis Of Race, Color, Sex, Religion, Creed, National Or Ethnic Origin, Age, Familial Status, Handicap Or Disability.

The County of Albemarle Office Of Housing Is Accessible To Persons With Disabilities. Accessibility for the Hearing-Impaired Is Provided By Calling the Virginia Relay Center by Dialing 711.

3. After you submit the documents an ACOH representative will inspect the unit at a time convenient for you and the landlord. The representative will fill out an inspection form, documenting the housing conditions. If the lease and unit are approved, you and your landlord will sign a lease, and the agency will sign a contract with your landlord. Then you may move in and begin receiving assistance. If the lease and/or unit are not approved, ACOH will give the landlord a list of problems that must be corrected within a set period of time. If the landlord will not correct the problems then you must find another place to live.

PARTICIPANT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Pay tenant rent portion in a timely fashion.
2. Report any increase in income, family size, birth or death within 30 business days of change. Income must be reported in 30 business days from start of employment. All changes are subject to approval from the landlord and ACOH.
3. Keep your home clean and in good repair.
4. Comply with all approved lease requirements.
5. Maintain rented unit as primary residence.

For more information on program requirements, please contact your Housing Counselor.

A FAMILY'S GUIDE TO RENTAL VOUCHERS

Welcome to the **Rental Voucher Program!** You are eligible for rental assistance through the federally funded Rental Voucher Program. As a participant in the program, Albemarle County Office of Housing (ACOH) pays a portion of your rent directly to your landlord and you pay the remainder. You may choose to stay where you are living now or you may decide to move. This Guide explains how the Rental Voucher Program works. If you have any questions after reading this Guide, contact ACOH for assistance.

BASIC FACTS ABOUT THE RENTAL VOUCHER PROGRAM

Your Estimated Costs: Assistance is based on your income. A family will pay more or less than 30% of your adjusted income depending on the cost of the unit you choose. If your unit (rent and utilities) is more than the Payment Standard, you will pay more than 30% of adjusted income. If the unit (rent and utilities) is less than the Payment Standard, you will pay less than 30% of adjusted income. ACOH will calculate your exact expenses once a unit is selected. Please ask to be shown the calculation documents if you are interested in how assistance is determined based on your income and unit selected.

The Rent Charged For the Unit: You can choose to rent a unit that is the right price for your budget provided the unit meets Housing Quality Standards. ACOH will determine the reasonableness of the rent for the area. You can select a unit that is above or below the Payment Standard of _____.

When Can the Landlord Increase the Rent: Rent increases will be outlined in the lease agreement between the tenant and the landlord. Tenant's should review and understand the rent amount terms and duration. All increases after the initial term must be reviewed for Rent Reasonableness and approved by ACOH. The tenant must pay for any rent that is above the approved amount.

Portability: You must reside with Albemarle County's jurisdiction (Charlottesville/Albemarle County) for 12-months before you will be permitted to exercise your portability rights. Portability allows you to use your voucher anywhere within the United States, subject to approval of the receiving Housing Authority and ACOH. *For more information, please refer to the ACOH Administrative Plan.*

A STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO RENTAL VOUCHERS

Step 1: The Briefing

When a Rental Voucher is available for you, the local agency will ask you to attend a briefing session. They will ask you some questions about your current residential situation. At the briefing session, you will learn how the Rental Voucher Program works and what you must do to qualify for assistance. Then, you will receive your Rental Voucher and you may begin looking for a suitable unit.

Step 2: Selecting A Unit

A. Deciding Whether to Stay or Move

Once you receive your Rental Voucher you will be advised how much time you will have to locate housing. You may decide to stay where you are now living, or you may choose to move to a new house, manufactured home or apartment. If you decide to stay in your current place, you must arrange with your landlord to participate in the program. Your unit must pass an inspection certifying that it is in acceptable condition.

If you decide to move you should carefully consider where you want to live. You should consider how easy it would be to shop, travel to work, school, or church. Is there public transportation? If you have children, will they have to change schools? You may decide to move to another apartment, house or manufactured home in your own neighborhood. You may also choose to move to another location.

B. Looking for a Unit

There are many ways to find housing. You can check the local newspaper advertisements. You can walk or drive through the neighborhood where you want to live and see if there are any “for rent” signs on apartment buildings or houses. You can also check notices posted in churches, local businesses, or community bulletin boards. Often friends, relatives, or local business people can provide leads on housing. Be careful if you go to local Realtors or housing referral agencies. Some of these agencies do not charge fees; however, others may charge expensive fees. You may be able to find better housing through your own efforts.

C. Responding to an Advertisement

When you think that you have found a good housing prospect, call the landlord or the landlord’s representatives and ask if the unit is still available. If you found the unit on your own, do not try to explain the Rental Voucher program over the telephone or have the landlord contact the housing office. You will get better results by explaining the program in person.

Step 3: Housing Condition

If you decide that you want to lease the unit, ACOH will inspect the unit to make sure that it is safe and secure.

Step 4: Financial Considerations

You must decide whether you are willing and able to pay your share of the rent and utilities in the apartment that you select. To figure out your monthly costs you need to know:

- The rent per month the landlord charges
- The utilities that you must pay each month
- The amounts of assistance that you will receive from ACOH

ACOH will recalculate your monthly costs and the exact amount of the agency’s subsidy. The rent amount must be reviewed through the Rent Reasonableness Determination. The amount of security deposit should be noted in the lease agreement and is subject to the laws of the Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act (VRTLA). Please contact ACOH for a copy of the act.

Step 5: Request for Tenancy

1. You have decided that the apartment or house is right for your family. You can afford it. The landlord agrees to rent to you and to participate in the Rental Voucher Program. Now, you should read the lease. A lease is a written agreement that states the tenant’s responsibilities and also the landlord’s responsibilities. Read the lease or ask the landlord to explain it to you. Make sure you understand the terms of the agreement. Do not sign the lease at this time. You should sign the lease only after ACOH has approved the unit.
2. Next, both you and the landlord must complete and sign a Request for Tenancy. Bring this form along with a copy of the lease to ACOH.