

Landlord Survey Provides Insight For Improvement

In December 2014, the Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara (HACSC) issued a survey to current and former Section 8 property owners.

The goal of the survey was to get an understanding of how property owners view their experience with HACSC—and what we can do, as an agency, to be better partners.

The response to the survey was excellent—we received about 2,000 completed surveys. As we looked through the surveys HACSC found a mixture of positive feedback and recommendations for improvement.

The feedback conveyed through the survey from past and present property owners is now being transformed into ideas, projects



and plans, specific to how HACSC can enhance its partnership capacity.

For example, HACSC is exploring creating a team dedicated to

property owner communications, streamlining internal processes and hosting more property owner workshops. In addition, we are looking into processes (rent adjustments and new contract execution) that can be streamlined to make owners' experiences with HACSC as efficient as possible.

HACSC is dedicated to providing a high level of customer service to property owners—which will in turn ensure that we are providing efficient services to the clients we serve. A landlord ombudsman has been designated to handle all landlord inquiries.

Thank you for your continued participation in the Section 8 program, and dedication to serving low-income families/individuals of Santa Clara County.▲

Steps to Request a Rent Increase

1. Request a rent adjustment by written notice to the tenant (with a copy sent to HACSC) at least 60 days before the effective date of the desired rent increase. The notice must be signed by the owner/agent and include the effective date and the requested dollar amount.
2. If the tenant is in a lease, adjustments will be effective when the lease term expires.
3. HACSC will determine whether the requested rent is reasonable compared to comparable rents in the neighborhood.
4. If HACSC determines that the requested adjustment is reasonable, the owner and tenant will be notified of the rent change and the effective date of the rent increase.
5. If HACSC determines that the proposed rent adjustment is not reasonable, HACSC will propose a reasonable rent and make it effective on the approved effective date.

Section 8 Program

Policy Changes Affect Landlords

HACSC maintains an administrative plan outlining agency policies on the website at www.hacsc.org. This plan is updated regularly as policies change internally and as mandated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The latest plan updates affecting landlords are as follows. For more details, refer to the corresponding chapters on the website.

Chapter 1: In response to recent fair housing regulations, a policy was added that discriminating based on gender or gender identity is illegal.

Chapter 8: Section 3 explains that working carbon monoxide monitors must be present in all rental units with gas appliances. If it is missing,

it must be installed within 30 days of the inspection. Lack of an operable heater in the unit between November and March would now be considered a life-threatening deficiency (24-hour repair required).

Chapter 9: Rent increases are limited to one per year for each unit under a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract. Increases are discretionary and dependent on rent comparables.

Chapter 14: As stated in the HAP contract, in cases where the Housing Authority has overpaid an owner, HACSC may deduct the amount of the overpayment from any amounts due the owner (including amounts due under any other Section 8 assistance contract).▲

Section 8 Program

Tenant Affordability Determined on a Case-by-Case Basis

Federal law requires that Section 8 tenants pay no more than 40% of their monthly income towards the rent at the time of initial lease. HACSC subsidizes Section 8 rents based on payment standards (the maximum HACSC can pay for a particular dwelling).

When the rent is above the payment standard, the tenant pays the difference. Most HACSC Section 8 families pay a minimum 32% of their gross monthly income (GMI) as their rent portion.

When the difference between the payment standard and the rent increases the tenant payment

to more than 40% of their GMI, HACSC cannot approve the unit for this family. Note the example:

“40% Rule” Example:

Current payment standard for a one bedroom unit	\$1,348
Asking Rent for Unit X	\$1,450
<i>Sample Family Cost Calculated on \$1,000 Gross Monthly Income</i>	
32% GMI - Tenant Would Pay	\$ 320
HACSC pays payment standard minus 32% GMI (\$1,348-\$320)...	\$1,028
Family rent portion to Owner (\$1,450-\$1,028)	\$ 422

This would exceed the allowable rent limit for this tenant by \$22.

For HACSC to approve the unit, this family could only pay 40% of their GMI which is \$400 (40% of \$1,000). HACSC would disapprove the unit for this family because it requires the family to pay more than 40% of their GMI towards the rent. ▲

List Your Units on GoSection8

Landlords who would like to take part in the Section 8 rental program can easily do so by listing their property on the GoSection8.com website. GoSection8 in turn provides property rental listing services directly to Public Housing Authorities. Their listings are passed out to thousands of "walk-in" tenants seeking Section 8 rental housing daily.

1. Go to www.GoSection8.com
2. Click on "For Owners & Managers" link.
3. Click on "Post My Vacancy for Free."
4. After registering with your phone number and email address, you will receive a phone message verifying your phone number registration.
5. List your unit as prompted with address, amenities and rent desired. You will be prompted for the fee or free services provided.
6. Respond to your email verifying your account. ▲