

Chapter 5

Applicant and Participant Briefing

Once an applicant has been determined eligible for the Housing Choice Voucher Program or when a participating family chooses to move with continued voucher assistance, the family must attend a briefing session to receive their voucher (24 CFR 982.301). The purpose of the briefing is to:

- Acquaint the family with the program, the responsibilities of the family and the landlord while receiving rental assistance;
- Explain where the family may lease a unit, including renting a dwelling unit inside or outside AHFC's jurisdiction (portability), and
- Provide the family with the necessary forms and information to find and lease a unit that meets program requirements.

5.1 REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

Reasonable Accommodation requests may include documentation in an accessible format, accessible or alternate locations, or requests for persons outside the family to attend to assist the disabled family member. Families may also request a reasonable accommodation in order to attend a briefing session. Requests for a reasonable accommodation should be directed to the local AHFC office.

5.2 CHANGES AFTER EXAMINATION

Families may have changes to income or family composition either before or during the shopping process.

5.2.A Changes Before Voucher Issuance

If family reports changes that will affect their gross annual income, those changes must be processed before the family may attend a briefing class.

- If the change will cause the applicant family to exceed the income limit for the program, the family is no longer eligible to receive a voucher.
- If the change will cause the participant family's portion to exceed the payment standard, the family is no longer eligible to receive a voucher.

5.2.B Changes After Voucher Issuance

When a family reports changes in income or composition after voucher issuance, but before the effective date of the HAP Contract, AHFC will process those reported changes. See Exhibit 3-1 for the policy on processing a family's reported imminent change.

1. Applicant Family

Staff will verify that the family's gross annual income does not exceed the income limit for the program. If the family's gross annual income exceeds the income limit, the family may retain their eligibility if they meet all three of the following conditions (24 CFR 982.201(b)):

- a. At least one adult family member is employed.
- b. The newly verified gross annual income does not exceed 80 percent of area median income for the family size.
- c. The HAP amount will exceed \$0 (zero dollars).

2. Participant Family

If the change will cause the family's portion to exceed the payment standard, the family is not eligible to lease. See Exhibit 4-2 for processing a family's reported change after the examination process.

5.3 BRIEFING CLASS SCHEDULING

Staff may choose to brief a family at the intake or examination appointment and not schedule a separate appointment. In this case, a *Briefing Class Appointment* (form V704) is not generated. Otherwise, a family will be notified in writing of their scheduled briefing session.

Staff will use the *Briefing Class Appointment* (form V704) to notify the family of their briefing date, time, and location. Staff may hand deliver or mail the *Briefing Class Appointment* (form V704). The letter instructs the family about late attendance and how to reschedule the appointment, if necessary.

5.3.A Attendance

Only one adult family member is required to attend a briefing class. Typically, AHFC will address the Briefing Class appointment letter to the head of household.

5.3.B Additional Adults in Class

Other adult family members are welcome to attend. Families may also bring other adults that will be assisting them with the leasing process (a social worker, a live-in aide, a friend, etc.). To ensure that there is sufficient space for all attendees, those families wishing to send more than one adult to the class must contact AHFC in advance of the class. Staff will advise the family if there is sufficient space or if they must attend another session in order to accommodate the additional adult(s).

5.3.C Family Reschedule of Briefing

To reschedule a briefing class appointment, a family must contact AHFC within ten (10) calendar days of the date of the *Briefing Class Appointment* letter. The family may need to recertify or re-verify any information that expires due to the family's attendance delay.

5.3.D First Missed Appointment

If an applicant/participant does not attend his/her first scheduled briefing session, staff will schedule a final briefing appointment. Staff will notify the family using the *Briefing Class Appointment Final Notice* (form V705). This notice tells the family their scheduled date, time, and location. It also warns the family that this is their last opportunity to receive their voucher. The letter instructs the family about late attendance and how to reschedule the appointment, if necessary.

5.3.E Second Missed Appointment

1. Applicants

If an applicant does not attend the second scheduled briefing class and does not call to reschedule, staff will withdraw the applicant's application. Staff will send the Ineligibility Notice (AP110) and follow Informal Review procedures in Chapter 9.

2. Participants

Participants may choose to shop prior to giving notice to a landlord, particularly in limited rental market areas. If a participant does not give notice and then does not attend a scheduled briefing class, the HAP Contract will continue to its anniversary date. The family is responsible for any further action.

If a participant has given notice and then does not attend or reschedule the second scheduled briefing class, staff will take the appropriate action to end the current contract and terminate assistance (see Chapters 8 and 9). The family must take appropriate action to reinstate the HAP Contract (see Chapter 6).

5.4 CONDUCTING A BRIEFING

AHFC will orally brief families when issuing a voucher. AHFC may choose to brief families individually or in group sessions. Group sessions are called "Briefing Classes." Guidelines for preparing required briefing packets are in the Administrative Desk Manual.

5.4.A Behavior at the Briefing

In the event that an applicant displays behavior that reflects on his/her ability to meet applicant screening criteria, his/her eligibility for housing will be reassessed. For instance, if an applicant is disruptive, destructive, intoxicated, or verbally abusive of staff or other applicants, he/she will be asked to leave and he/she may be found ineligible for the program.

5.4.B Briefing Content

Briefings will be conducted uniformly by staff using the appropriate AHFC Briefing Class PowerPoint (located at <http://athome/phd/manuals/manuals.htm>) as the guideline. The PowerPoint covers:

- The contents of the family briefing packet
- An overview of how the Housing Choice Voucher Program works and where vouchers can be used (both within and outside of AHFC's jurisdiction)
- Family, landlord, and AHFC obligations under the program
- The shopping period, how to request an extension, and shopping examples
- The family's choice of a rental unit location, type, features, and size
- How to meet with landlords and create a favorable impression
- What resources to use to look for a unit and what types of units are eligible for assistance
- Fair Housing and how to report possible discrimination
- Availability of a reasonable accommodation for extended shopping time, additional subsidy for a unit with features, a live-in aide, or durable medical equipment
- How to select a unit to meet HQS and rent reasonableness and awareness of lead-based paint hazards
- A discussion of how subsidy is calculated, application of payment standards, family maximum rent, and utility allowances
- Required and prohibited lease agreement provisions and attachment of the Tenancy Addendum
- How to start the leasing and inspection process
- AHFC grievance procedures available to applicants and participants
- Common termination reasons
- A short overview of the Family Self Sufficiency program
- Information AHFC may provide at a prospective landlord's request

Families will be provided an opportunity to ask questions about any aspect of the program.

1. Shopping Time

Under HUD regulations (24 CFR 982.303), the initial term of a voucher is 60 days. AHFC then has the discretion to grant extensions to the initial term or suspend a voucher term once a family has submitted a request for tenancy

approval. See Exhibit 5-1 for shopping guidelines including extensions and time suspensions.

Staff will explain the process for requesting an extension of the voucher. Staff will remind families that a person with a disability may request the maximum shopping time available as a reasonable accommodation.

2. Shopping Examples

Using the *Shopping Example* (form V770) for the appropriate area, staff will give examples of how to apply the family's maximum subsidy and utility allowances at the assigned unit size, a larger unit size, and a smaller unit size.

3. Completion of the Briefing

Once material is presented, staff and the family will sign the *Voucher* and *Briefing Statement and Family Obligations* forms. Staff will provide a copy of the documents to the family and retain the originals in the file. The family is now free to shop.

5.4.C Family Information

AHFC will include in the briefing packet a statement of AHFC's policy on providing information to landlords. AHFC will provide the same types of information to all families and to all landlords. If known, AHFC will furnish the landlord the following:

- The family's current and prior address (as shown in AHFC's records), and
- The name and address of the landlord at the family's current and prior address.
- Dates of tenancy (original move-in and move-out);
- If AHFC ever evicted the family through judicial process and the basis for the eviction.

5.5 SHOPPING

See Exhibit 5-1 for shopping guidelines including extensions and time suspensions.

5.6 LOCATING A UNIT

A voucher holder may request further information or assistance if they are experiencing difficulties finding an appropriate dwelling unit. If requested, AHFC will provide a list of any appropriate-size units made known to AHFC and will show a map of the localities in order to relate housing units to preferred search areas.

5.6.A Freedom of Choice

AHFC may not directly or indirectly reduce the family's opportunity to select among available units, except for ineligible housing, housing not meeting HQS, or housing for which the contract rent exceeds a reasonable rent.

5.6.B Suspected Discrimination Complaints

AHFC will provide assistance to any family, upon request, if they suspect they were prevented from leasing a suitable unit because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, familial status, or a disability. Assistance may include directing the family to HUD's Fair Housing web site to make a complaint, providing the toll-free hotline, or assisting the family with completing a complaint form.

5.6.C Renting a Smaller Unit

A voucher holder may select a smaller unit than that for which they qualify. The family will be counseled that AHFC will pay the lesser of the subsidy standard or unit size. Upon request, families interested in renting a unit outside of their assigned subsidy standard may have AHFC recalculate their eligible subsidy.

5.6.D Eligible Housing

See Chapter 11 for special housing types. Assistance may be provided for a family wishing to reside in the following:

- a cooperative;
- a manufactured home leasing a manufactured home space;
- shared or group housing - a landlord unrelated to the assisted family may reside in the unit, but assistance may not be paid on behalf of the resident landlord; or
- Single Room Occupancy units.

5.6.E Ineligible Housing

The following types of housing may not be assisted in the voucher program (24 CFR 982.352).

1. A Public or Indian housing unit.
2. A unit receiving project-based assistance under Section 8 of the 1937 Housing Act.
3. Nursing homes, board and care homes, or facilities providing continual psychiatric, medical, or nursing services.
4. College or other school dormitories.
5. Units on the grounds of penal, reformatory, medical, mental, and similar public or private institutions.
6. A unit occupied by its landlord or by a person with any interest in the dwelling unit.

7. A family may not receive the benefit of the voucher program assistance while receiving the benefit of the following forms of other housing subsidy, for the same unit or for a different unit:
 - a. Public or Indian housing assistance;
 - b. Other Section 8 assistance (including other tenant-based assistance);
 - c. Assistance under former Section 23 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (before amendment by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974);
 - d. Section 101 rent supplements;
 - e. Section 236 rental assistance payments;
 - f. Tenant-based assistance under the HOME program;
 - g. Any local or state rent subsidy; or
 - h. Any other duplicative federal, state, or local housing subsidy, as determined by HUD. Housing subsidy does not include the housing component of a welfare payment, a social security payment received by the family, or a rent reduction because of a tax credit.

5.7 VOUCHER EXPIRATIONS

AHFC may withdraw a family's voucher before it expires under the following circumstances:

1. If the family is no longer eligible;
2. If the family made false representations during the certification process;
3. If the family gave the voucher to another person with the intention of transferring the subsidy;
4. If the family has otherwise conducted itself in such a manner as to merit disqualification from participation in the program; or
5. If AHFC no longer has funds to support leasing a new unit.

5.7.A Applicant Failure to Utilize the Voucher

An applicant family whose voucher has expired will be notified in writing using the *Voucher Expiration Notice* (form V706). The letter explains that the family is no longer eligible for rental assistance and must reapply for housing assistance. A family that fails to utilize their voucher within the allotted time is not eligible for the grievance procedure.

5.7.B Participant Failure to Utilize the Voucher

These families must receive a *Termination of Assistance* (form V709). See Chapter 8 to complete this notice.

Forms

AP110 Ineligibility Notice

HUD-52646 or V765 Voucher

V704 Briefing Class Appointment

V705 Briefing Class Appointment Second Notice

V706 Voucher Expiration Notice

V709 Termination of Assistance

V741 Briefing Statement and Family Obligations

V770 Shopping Examples

Administrative Desk Manual

Briefing Packet