

Section 8 and MRVP Subsidies*

The Section 8 and Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) Vouchers are mobile housing subsidies that can be used in private apartments. MRVP vouchers can be used anywhere in the state, and Section 8 vouchers can be used anywhere in the country. The majority of our state's vouchers are managed through the Local Housing Authorities (LHAs). There are 130 LHAs that manage a Section 8 or MRVP program. The Department of Housing and Community Development also has a pool of Section 8 vouchers that are administered through the state's Regional Non-Profit agencies.

Here's How it Works:

- The federal department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) sets an average rental price for a given area, the Fair Market Rent (FMR). 30% of a person's income is subtracted from the FMR for a given area – the resulting amount is the voucher's worth.
- A voucher holder can pay no more than 40% of their income for rent.
- A landlord cannot legally deny someone an apartment because they are a Section 8 or MRVP voucher holder. Discrimination is illegal.

Who is Eligible?

The Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development sets an Area Median Income (AMI). The AMI changes every year. People earning between 0 – 50% of the AMI are eligible for a Section 8 or MRVP voucher.

For example, a family is eligible if they:

- Are a family of 4 and make between \$0 and \$26,050 in Springfield.
- Are a family of 3 and make between \$0 and \$37,000 in Boston.
- Are a family of 4 and make between \$0 and \$31,750 in Fall River.

IMMIGRATION STATUS

At least one person in a household must be “legal.” This means that they have to be a citizen, have a green card, be a refugee, etc. If there are people in a household who are not considered “legal” immigrants, the household is still allowed a federal Section 8 voucher, but the subsidy will be pro-rated to cover only the legal resident.

PREFERENCES

Every Local Housing Authority (LHA) can decide if they want to give groups of people a “preference” for vouchers. This means that someone who has a preference will move to the top of the waiting list. Some LHAs give preference to:

- Homeless people
- Working people
- Local residents

* Information taken from: Down & Out: A Manual on Basic Rights and Benefits for Homeless People in Massachusetts, Mass Coalition for the Homeless, 2003.

- People with Disabilities
- Victims of Domestic Violence

Preferences vary by LHA.

How to Apply:

THROUGH REGIONAL NON-PROFITS

- There are eight regional non-profits in the state. Each manages the Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) pool of Section 8 vouchers.
- DHCD has a single, unified application system and waiting list. Anyone interested in applying for these Section 8 vouchers need only apply to one regional non-profit.
- This waiting list is always open.
- Currently, DHCD's preference for their Section 8 voucher program is for people under 30% AMI.

THROUGH LOCAL HOUSING AUTHORITIES

- Each LHA that runs a voucher program has its own voucher waiting list.
- Most LHA's voucher waiting lists are closed and open only periodically and for short periods of time. The Massachusetts Chapter of the National Housing and Redevelopment Officials (MassNAHRO) has compiled a unified waiting list for 43 Local Housing Authorities that distribute Section 8 vouchers. The waitlist will remain open at all times and people will need to apply once to be considered by all participating housing authorities. More information and an application can be found at www.massnahro.org.
- Remember that Section 8 vouchers are mobile, so once received, one can use them anywhere in the state (for MRVP), or anywhere in the country (Section 8).
- Waiting lists are long. When a person's name comes to the top of the list, the housing authority will notify them. If someone moves while awaiting a voucher, it is essential to notify the Housing Authority of new address.

➔ To find your local housing authority visit
www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts/states/ma.cfm