Shelter Plus Care and HOME TBA/TBRA Program Guide

Administered by:
Mid-Columbia Housing Authority
500 East Second St
The Dalles, OR 97058
Guide for Shelter Plus Care and Home TBRA/TBA Programs

Table of Contents

Introduction 3
Information about Reasonable Accommodation 4
Notice of Right to Reasonable Accommodation 5
Request for Reasonable Accommodation 6
Section 1: Basic Facts 7
Section 2: Amount of Rental Assistance 8
Section 3: Guide to Finding a Unit 9
Payment Standards 14
Map of Service Area 15
Common HQS Violations 16
Section 4: Case Management Agreement 17
Section 5: Your Responsibilities 18
Section 6: Common Questions 20
MCHA Informal Hearing Procedure 24
Equal Housing Opportunity 29
Dealing with Discrimination 29
Welcome to Shelter Plus Care or Home Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Program! You are eligible for rental assistance from this program. Mid-Columbia Housing Authority helps you rent a good place to live and work with services that will help you become more stable. Under the program you should pay no more than 30% of your adjusted monthly gross income for rent and utilities. The housing authority pays the balance of the rent directly to your landlord. You will also participate in services from other agencies.

You are free to choose any house or apartment you like in the area covered by the program as long as it meets certain requirements for housing quality and does not cost more than the Fair Market Rent. You may choose to stay where you are living now or you may decide to move.

This guide explains how these programs work. It is important that you read this material carefully and keep it in a safe place with your lease and other important papers. A Mid-Columbia Housing Authority representative will discuss this information with you and answer any questions you may have.

If you have any questions after reading this guide or while you are participating in the program, please contact:

**Gayle Hammitt**
Housing Services Specialist
gayleh@mid-columbiahousingauthority.org
541-993-9761  office cell phone
Toll free: 888-356-8919
Fax: 541-296-8570
REQUESTS FOR ACCOMMODATION

If because of a disability you need a change in our policies or procedures, or you need a change in the way we communicate with you in order to use services provided by Mid-Columbia Housing Authority, you can ask for the change which is called a “reasonable accommodation.”

For example, if you would like the owner of your dwelling unit to make modification to your dwelling unit or to some other part of the property to accommodate a disability, let us know. We can make reasonable attempts to negotiate with the property owner to make such modifications.

Mid-Columbia Housing Authority will make all reasonable efforts to be flexible in assisting persons with disabilities to participate in the program successfully. If your request for a change in our policies or procedures or the way we communicate with you is reasonable, and if it is not too difficult to arrange, we will try to make the changes you need. For example, MCHA will make every reasonable effort to obtain necessary aids requested to assist in communicating with persons with disabilities. A FAX is available at the MCHA office and a relay number is also available to facilitate communication with the deaf. Other examples of reasonable accommodation may include:

- Use of an advocate or interpreter or special assistance for interviews;
- Large print or other alternate format for correspondence and other documents;
- Home visits if a disability prevents an individual from coming to the office.

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY
Our Pledge…

The Mid-Columbia Housing Authority does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, physical or mental disability, or familial status.
NOTICE OF RIGHT TO REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

If you have a disability and you need ..... 

- a change in the rules or policies of how we do things that would make it easier for you to use the facilities or take part in our programs,

- a change or repair in your apartment or special type of apartment that would make it easier for you to live there and use the facilities or take part in programs on site,

- a change or repair to some other part of the housing site that would make it easier for you to live there and use the facilities or take part in programs on site, or

- a change in the way we communicate with you or give you information,

you can ask for this kind of change, which is called a REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION.

If you can show that you have a disability and if your request is reasonable, if it is not too expensive, and if it is not too difficult to arrange, we will try to make the changes you request.

We will give you an answer in ten (10) days unless there is a problem getting the information we need or unless you agree to a longer time. We will let you know if we need more information or verification from you or if we would like to talk to you about other ways to meet your needs.

If we turn down your request, we will explain the reasons and you can give us more information if you think that will help.

If you need help filling out a REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION REQUEST FORM or if you want to give us your request in some other way, we will help you.

P-1bmcha  REV5/03
REQUEST FOR A REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

The following member of my household has a disability:

Name: __________________________________________________________

The disability is: ________________________________________________

NOTE: It is not necessary for you to provide medical information about your disability. **DO NOT** tell us the detailed nature or extent of your disability.

Please provide this reasonable accommodation:

This accommodation will help me:

- [ ] live in my housing
- [ ] participate in the program
- [ ] meet the requirements of the program

The reasonable accommodation is needed because:

Signature: __________________________ Date: ___________________
Resident/Applicant

Name: __________________________
Address: _______________________________________________________
Telephone: ______________________________________________________

Review by Housing Coordinator

Does the applicant/resident qualify as an "individual with a disability? Yes [ ] No [ ]
Explain __________________________________________________________

Is the request accommodation related to the disability? Yes [ ] No [ ]
Explain __________________________________________________________

Housing Coordinator's Signature __________________________ Date ______________

Review by Section 504 Coordinator

Is the request accommodation reasonable? Yes [ ] No [ ]
Request Denied [ ] Request Approved [ ]
Section 504 Coordinator/Signature __________________________ Date ______________
Section 1:
BASIC FACTS ABOUT THE SHELTER PLUS CARE AND THE HOME TENANT-BASED RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

SHELTER PLUS CARE TRA

The Shelter Plus Care Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Program (SPC) is designed for homeless people with disabilities. A lease will extend for one year with the option of renewing it annually. This program is available for people residing in Klickitat and Skamania Counties in the state of Washington.

Mid-Columbia Housing Authority works with you and area service agencies to provide rental assistance and supportive services. Supportive services may include employment and skills training, counseling, mental health services, or other assistance that fits your needs. Supportive services are critical to this program and you will be required to work with someone on a regular basis. Mid-Columbia Housing Authority will stay in regular contact with you and a case manager from another agency.

HOME TBA/TBRA

The HOME Program is designed for people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. In Klickitat and Skamania Counties in Washington State, this program is known by “HTBRA”. In Hood River, Sherman, and Wasco Counties in Oregon State, it is called “HTBA”. They are very similar in each state with a few small differences. When you receive a coupon for rental assistance under the HOME Program it is limited to the state that funding is available for. If you are determined to be eligible and a coupon is issued for rental assistance, the coupon will specify what state the assistance is for.

Rental assistance under the HOME Program is temporary and is not guaranteed. Mid-Columbia Housing Authority will work with you and area service agencies to provide rental assistance and case management. While receiving assistance through the HOME Program you are expected to be working towards self-sufficiency. Case management may include employment and skills training, counseling, mental health services, life skills training or other assistance that fits your needs.

While you receive this rental assistance you are required to work with a case manager at Mid-Columbia Housing Authority on a regular basis. A coordinated effort will be made to incorporate existing plans with other social service agencies into the case management plan with Mid-Columbia Housing Authority.
Section 2:
AMOUNT OF RENTAL ASSISTANCE

Under these programs, the amount of rental assistance MCHA will help pay is based on your income and family size. MCHA will calculate so that each participating household pays for rent and utilities the greater of:

- 30% of its adjusted monthly income, or
- 10% of its gross unadjusted income, or
- in Oregon, a minimum of $10 per month.

This is called the **Total Tenant Payment (TTP)**.

The actual amount you pay for rent is called **Tenant Rent**. The Tenant Rent may be less than the TTP if you have to pay any of the utilities yourself except telephone and cable TV. MCHA provides an “allowance” for utilities you pay.

Let’s do an example to illustrate how your rent will be paid. The total amount of rent required by the landlord is called the **Contract Rent**. Under these programs, the Contract Rent will be split between you-- the tenant -- and MCHA. Let’s see what happens if you find an apartment with a total Contract Rent of $400 where you will need to pay about $30 of utilities yourself and your TTP is $100.

**Step 1:** Your portion of the rent (the Tenant Rent) will equal your TTP minus the “allowance for utilities”. For example, if your TTP is $100 and the allowance for utilities is $30, you will pay $70.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Step 1: } & \text{ Tenant Rent (The amount you pay the owner for rent.)} \\
& \text{Contract Rent} - \text{TTP} \\
& 400 - 100 = 300 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& 300 - 30 = 270 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& 270 - 30 = 240 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& 240 - 30 = 210 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& 210 - 30 = 180 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& 180 - 30 = 150 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& 150 - 30 = 120 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& 120 - 30 = 90 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& 90 - 30 = 60 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& 60 - 30 = 30 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& 30 - 30 = 0 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
\end{align*}
\]

**Step 2:** Mid-Columbia Housing Authority will pay the balance of the Contract Rent minus the Tenant Rent.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Step 2: } & \text{ Mid-Columbia Housing Authority will pay the balance of the Contract Rent minus the Tenant Rent.} \\
& \text{Contract Rent} - \text{TTP} \\
& 400 - 100 = 300 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& 300 - 70 = 230 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& 230 - 30 = 200 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& 200 - 30 = 170 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& 170 - 30 = 140 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& 140 - 30 = 110 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& 110 - 30 = 80 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& 80 - 30 = 50 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& 50 - 30 = 20 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& 20 - 30 = -10 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -10 - 30 = -40 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -40 - 30 = -70 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -70 - 30 = -100 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -100 - 30 = -130 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -130 - 30 = -160 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -160 - 30 = -190 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -190 - 30 = -220 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -220 - 30 = -250 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -250 - 30 = -280 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -280 - 30 = -310 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -310 - 30 = -340 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -340 - 30 = -370 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -370 - 30 = -400 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -400 - 30 = -430 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -430 - 30 = -460 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -460 - 30 = -490 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -490 - 30 = -520 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -520 - 30 = -550 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -550 - 30 = -580 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -580 - 30 = -610 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -610 - 30 = -640 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -640 - 30 = -670 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -670 - 30 = -700 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -700 - 30 = -730 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -730 - 30 = -760 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -760 - 30 = -790 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -790 - 30 = -820 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -820 - 30 = -850 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -850 - 30 = -880 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -880 - 30 = -910 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -910 - 30 = -940 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -940 - 30 = -970 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
& -970 - 30 = -1000 \text{ Tenant Rent} \\
\end{align*}
\]

**Step 3:** Because the amount you pay the landlord is reduced by the $30 utility allowance, you should have $30 monthly income available to pay your utility bill(s).
Section 3:  
A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO FINDING A UNIT AND USING YOUR RENTAL ASSISTANCE

Step 1: The Briefing

When assistance is available, the Housing Authority will meet with you to discuss the program. You will talk about how the program works and complete paperwork. You will receive a coupon pending verification of eligibility. The coupon lets potential landlords know you will be receiving assistance, how long you have to find a unit, what size unit you qualify for, and has some general information about the program.

Step 2: Selecting a Unit

Your housing assistance coupon will reflect how long you have to find housing. Your home is a very special place. You deserve a home that fills your household’s special needs. These programs allow you to choose a house or apartment that you like. You may decide to stay where you are now living or you may choose to move to a new house or apartment.

a) Deciding whether to stay or move

- If you decide to stay at 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 good condition.

- If you decide to move, you should carefully consider where you want to live. You should consider how easy it will be to get to shopping areas, to work, school, or other places. Do you have transportation? If you have children, will they have to change schools? You may decide to move to another apartment or house in your own neighborhood. You may also choose to move to another neighborhood.

b) Jurisdiction

If you are in the Shelter Plus Care Program or the Washington form of Home Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (HTBRA), you may rent a dwelling in Klickitat or Skamania County in Washington. If you are in the Oregon form of Home Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (HTBA), you may rent a dwelling in Hood River, Sherman, or Wasco County in Oregon.
c) **Unit size**

Your coupon shows the unit size on which your housing assistance will be based. You can rent a smaller unit but the dwelling unit must contain at least one living/sleeping room for each two family members. For example, in a two-bedroom house the maximum number of family members would be six (two for each bedroom plus two for the living room). You may select a larger unit as long as the rent plus the utility allowance is reasonable and does not exceed the Payment Standard (A list of Payment Standards is included in your packet).

**Exceptions to unit size:** The Housing Authority may grant an exception to the unit size determined for your family if your doctor, mental health worker, or social worker can provide documentation to our office stating that a different size unit is required for your family as a reasonable accommodation due to a disability.

d) **Looking for a unit**

There are many ways to find housing. For best results, investigate all of the possibilities. There is a listing of vacancies in our office window. You can also 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 the 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 may charge fees.

e) **Responding to an advertisement.**

When you think you may have found a good housing prospect, call the owner or the owner’s representative and ask if the unit is still available. If you do not have a phone you can use, talk to MCHA about using the phone in our office.

If you have found the unit on your own, do not try to explain the rental assistance program over the telephone. You will get better results by explaining the program in person. When you call, be sure to get the following information:

- What is the correct address of the house or apartment?
- How many bedrooms?
- What is the rent?
- What type of heat does the unit have? Gas? Electric? Wood?
- What type of fuel is needed for the cook stove and hot water tank?
- Which utilities are included in the rent?
- Which utilities do you have to pay yourself?
- Are a stove and a refrigerator provided?
- Is a security deposit required?
If you are interested in the housing and it seems right, set up an appointment to meet the landlord and to see the unit.

**f) The appointment**

First impressions make a big difference! You will want to look and act like someone the landlord would like as a tenant. Here is how you can show you will be responsible and a good tenant with that first impression:

- Be prompt for your appointment. If you cannot meet at the scheduled time, be sure to call back well ahead of time to reschedule.
- It is best to go to your appointment by yourself or with your partner. If possible, leave young children at home or with a baby-sitter. This way you can take a good look at the unit and listen carefully to what the landlord says.
- Dress neatly and speak politely.
- Be patient with the landlord.
- Be prepared to explain the housing assistance program to the landlord. If the landlord would like, she or he may call the program coordinator at Mid-Columbia Housing Authority to discuss the program.

**g) Before you decide to lease a unit**

Before you decide to lease a unit, you may want to ask the landlord more questions about the apartment or house:

- What are the rules and regulations of the building?
- Whom should you contact when you need maintenance or repairs?
- What are the security arrangements in the building?
- Are pets allowed?
- If you have small children, ask if the building was ever tested for lead paint. If it was tested, what were the results?
- If the tenant is responsible for paying for some or all of the utilities, ask the landlord to estimate the average monthly cost of each utility.

You may also want to check the neighborhood:

- Is the neighborhood safe? Is the street lighted?
- Are stores and schools nearby?
- Where are the laundry facilities?
- Is there heavy traffic in the area?
- Is public transportation available?
- Are there yards or playgrounds nearby?
One of the great features of these programs is that you have choices on where you want to live. Carefully consider all neighborhoods and options for what is best for you!

**Step 3: Housing condition**

Is the unit in good condition? A rental unit must meet certain basic requirements for us to be able to assist you with the rent.

There is a checklist at the end of this guide. Take it with you when you go to look at a unit or use it to check your own unit. The checklist will help you determine if the place in which you want to live meets basic standards.

If you decide that you want to lease the unit, you need to do two steps:

1) Complete the “Request for Inspection” with the landlord, and
2) Send or bring in the “Request for Inspection” to Mid-Columbia Housing Authority.

The inspector will call the landlord to set the appointment for the inspection and make sure that the unit is safe and secure and meets HUD’s quality standards. If there are repairs that need to be made before the unit passes inspection, the inspector will give a list of these repairs to the landlord and give him or her thirty days to make the repairs. As soon as the repairs are made, the landlord will need to contact the inspector so the unit can be re-inspected.

**Step 4: Financial considerations**

With the SPC and HOME Programs, funding is available for the payment of a refundable security deposit up to but not more than one month rent. If there are other types of deposits such as non-refundable or a pet deposit it is the participant’s responsibility to pay for them. Other things to consider:

- How much will it cost to move?
- How much will your portion of rent be? Ask the MCHA representative for an estimate.
- Will you be able to afford your other monthly expenses?
- Can you pay your total monthly housing costs without much trouble?
- When you move in, will you be able to pay any non-refundable fees or deposits to get utilities hooked up?

This is a good time to look at your finances, maybe with a case manager. Decide whether you can afford to live at the unit or whether you should look for another unit with fewer costs.
Also, keep in mind that funding is temporary and not guaranteed. Have a plan for how you will afford the unit without assistance if necessary.

**Step 5: Request for Inspection**

You have decided that the apartment or house is right for your family. You can afford it and you feel comfortable enough with its location. The landlord agrees to rent to you and to participate in the housing assistance program. Now, you should read the lease. A lease is a written agreement that states the tenant’s and landlord’s responsibilities. The “assisted lease” used for the SPC is for one year and the lease for the HOME Program is dependent on what state your coupon was issued for. In Oregon the HOME Program it is for one year. In Washington the HOME Program is from the date the unit passes inspection through September 30. The lease contains these provisions:

- Names of the tenants
- Name(s) of the owner(s) and manager, if there is one
- Address of the unit to be occupied
- Amount of housing assistance paid by MCHA
- Amount of Tenant Rent
- Eviction procedures
- Utilities and amenities included and who pays
- Prohibition of discrimination by the manager or owner

Read the lease or ask your MCHA representative to explain it to you. Your landlord might provide her or his own lease, which can be used instead of the lease offered by Mid-Columbia Housing Authority. Read this lease carefully. If the landlord’s lease is used it must not contain certain illegal clauses. Do not sign the lease at this time. You should sign the lease only after the Housing Authority has approved the unit.

Next, both you and the landlord can sign the lease. Bring a copy of the lease to MCHA.

**Information provided to owners.**

When you apply for housing assistance, MCHA verifies your sources of income, disability status (if applicable), and criminal background. MCHA does not “screen” tenants for the owners. We will encourage the owner to check your previous rental history, credit history, and criminal background themselves. Under the rules of these rental assistance programs, we are required to give the owner your current address and previous landlord if known.
PAYMENT STANDARDS

The Payment Standard is the amount used to calculate the housing assistance a family will receive in the Voucher Program. Following are the most current Payment Standards for the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority area:

Effective 07/15/2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bedroom Size</th>
<th>Klickitat</th>
<th>Skamania</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>1073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>1161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>936</td>
<td>1346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1350</td>
<td>1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1391</td>
<td>2363</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Payment Standard to be used is the lesser of:

- The Voucher size you have been issued OR
- The gross rent on the actual unit you have selected
The 14 most common Housing Quality Standards violations:

1. Hazardous electrical outlets/switches. Broken or missing cover plates or receptacles, shorts in light switches. Missing outlets in bedrooms (must have 2 outlets or 1 outlet and a permanently installed light fixture for a sleeping area)
2. Broken windows or doors

3. Daylight showing around doors & windows (install weather-stripping or adjust so no gaps are present)

4. Insufficient locks on doors & windows.

5. Loose door knobs & striker plates, split door-jambs around striker plates

6. Leaky plumbing

7. Missing handrails on steps and porches (required on steps with 4 or more risers inside or out, or 30” in height)

8. Missing temperature/pressure relief valve and discharge pipe on water heater (discharge pipe must be same diameter as valve opening, constructed of copper, galvanized, or CPVC pipe, and must extend down to within 6” of the floor or outside the living area)

9. Non-working smoke alarms (1 per floor including basements required)

10. Interior & exterior peeling paint (abatement of all peeling paint required if there are children under 6 present in household)

11. Bathrooms without proper ventilation systems (1 of the following are required, an operable window to the outside, an electric vent fan vented to the outside or attic/crawl space, gravity vent to attic or outside)

12. Excessive interior/exterior debris

13. Improperly installed wood stoves

14. Loose or defective floor coverings causing a tripping hazard
Section 4: CASE MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

The Shelter Plus Care and HOME Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Programs require that you are involved with case management and social service agencies for supportive services while receiving rental assistance. See below for details by program.

SHELTER PLUS CARE TRA
Most of the time, you will already be receiving services from other agencies before you begin this rental assistance program. For example, you may be working with the mental health agency, vocational rehabilitation, employment training, counseling, or another service. If you are not linked with a supportive service, however, MCHA will work with you to assess what agencies in the area would be appropriate to meet your needs and get you linked with that service.

HOME TBA (OREGON)
If you receive Home TBA assistance, you will be required to meet on a regular basis with a case manager at a Social Services Agency. The case manager will be in regular contract with Mid-Columbia Housing Authority and exchange progress reports. Your case manager will help you with life skills, personal counseling, and referrals to other agencies and will be a valuable resource for you while your household stabilizes.

HOME TBRA (WASHINGTON)
If you receive Home TBRA assistance, you are required to meet with the program coordinator and a case manager at one of the social service agencies in your area on a regular basis. These may include: Department of Social and Health Services, Employment Security, Programs for Peaceful Living, Central Washington Comprehensive Mental Health, the Guided Path, or another agency that helps people stabilize their lives in addition to the Program Coordinator at MCHA.
Section 5:
YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

In order to receive housing assistance with these programs, you have certain rights and responsibilities. This is a step toward greater stability for you. Your landlord, MCHA, and you and your family must all work together to make this a positive experience.

1. **You must comply with your lease.**
   It is your responsibility to live up to the lease that you signed. This responsibility includes paying your share of the rent when it is due and paying for utilities that you are responsible for in a timely manner. You must obey the rules and regulations of your building as well as all of the rules written in your lease. This may include, for example, rules on whether pets are allowed and how many, or whether you may smoke cigarettes inside the unit. If you violate the lease, you can be evicted and you may risk losing your assistance.

2. **You must try to keep the unit in good condition.**
   You should be careful not to damage the unit. If you need repairs, notify the landlord right away in writing and send your case manager at MCHA a copy. You are responsible for damages or repairs caused by you, your family or guests. **If we paid a refundable security deposit and you take good care of the unit, the security deposit will be refunded to you after you move!** If you damage the unit, you will not receive the deposit and you may even be evicted or risk losing your assistance.

3. **You must pay any nonrefundable fees, pet deposits and utility payments.**
   When you move into your unit, you must pay any reasonable fees required by the landlord, such as a pet deposit. If you are responsible for paying for any utilities, make sure you pay your bills each month when due. Disconnected utilities are a violation of Housing Quality Standards. If you are the one responsible for the disconnection, you can be held liable for all rents due while the utility is off and any damages that result from the disconnected utility and it can be cause for termination from the rental assistance program.

4. **Report changes in income and family size.**
   Changes in income or family size may affect the amount of subsidy you receive. It may mean you pay less toward rent, or it may increase your portion. You are obligated to report any changes in income such as changing jobs, working more
hours, working fewer hours, no longer receiving other public assistance, etc. If
there is a birth of a new child, a marriage, any new people who want to live in the
home, or anyone moving out, report these changes as they occur.

On each of these programs, the goal is to help you become as independent as
possible. We need to know about all changes. A determination will be made if it
is a necessary to adjust your rent.

5. **Allow inspections and comply with recertifications.**

At least once a year a Housing Authority must inspect your unit. Sometimes
there are special re-inspections. These will NEVER be surprise inspections.
They will always be pre-arranged. Make sure that someone is there to let the
inspector into the unit.

In addition, if your rental assistance is renewed for another year, we must review
your subsidy level and eligibility for the program. A MCHA representative will
contact you to obtain the necessary information. You must disclose social
security numbers and submit consent forms. You must also supply any
necessary certification release, information or documentation requested by the
MCHA representative, including evidence of citizenship or eligible immigration
status.

6. **You must use the dwelling only for residence by the family
members listed on the lease.**

It is a violation to allow extra people, not on the lease, to live in the unit. A family
is not allowed to have more than one residence under subsidy at a time. In
addition, we cannot subsidize your home if it is also a business or if you own it.

7. **Notify the Housing Authority if the landlord does not live up
to his or her obligations.**

8. **Notify your landlord and the MCHA if you decide to move or
terminate from the program.**

Please do not request to move if you have not been in the unit for the
length of your lease unless you have a legitimate reason for moving.
Discuss this with your program coordinator. If you, the landlord and the program
coordinator determine you have a legitimate reason for moving during the term of
your lease, you and your landlord will have to agree to break the agreement and
fill out a form called a Mutual Agreement to Rescind the Lease. If the landlord
agrees and fills out the form, you must give the landlord and MCHA 30 days
notice before you intend to move. If you are being evicted, you must give a copy of your notice to MCHA.

Section 6: COMMON QUESTIONS

1. What if I cannot find a suitable unit within the limit on my coupon?
   You may request an extension from the program coordinator before the time limit on your coupon is up. In order to receive an extension you have to ask for one in writing and provide documentation that you have been actively searching, you may be given an additional 30 days to search. The number of extensions given will be determined by funding and may depend on whether you qualify as disabled and if you can provide evidence that you have been searching for a unit. There is a worksheet in this packet to list numbers and addresses that you have contacted and is to be turned in with your written request for the extension. A written request for an extension will not be considered if it is submitted without a list of at least 10 contacts on it.

2. What if I cannot afford to pay the non-refundable portion of the security deposit or the portion of the refundable deposit that is above MCHA’s limit?
   In some cases, landlords will permit tenants to pay security deposits over several months. Check with your landlord to see if she or he is willing to work out a payment schedule. Remember, MCHA can pay refundable security deposits for each of these programs up to the equivalent of one month’s rent.

3. Must I get a unit with the same number of bedrooms as written on my housing coupon?
   No, you may rent a larger or smaller unit. As long as the rent is reasonable and within the Payment Standard for the unit size you qualify for you may rent a larger unit. As long as the unit meets the program’s housing quality standards (not more than 2 persons per living/sleeping room), you may rent a smaller unit if it is under the Payment Standard for the smaller unit size.

4. What if I disagree with the Housing Authority about my eligibility or my subsidy level?
   If you disagree with a decision of the Housing Authority, go back to the program coordinator and have her or him explain the decision. Perhaps there was a mistake or perhaps you misunderstood. If you are dissatisfied with the coordinator’s response, you may request a informal review at the Housing
Authority. This is a more formal review of the decision if you disagree with it. If you are still dissatisfied you may request an informal hearing.

There are some circumstances where a hearing will not be granted.

5. What happens if the landlord wants to raise the rent?
Once a year the landlord will be asked to review the terms of the lease if you will continue on the program. At that time, the landlord may choose to raise the rent. The landlord CANNOT raise the rent at any time after the lease is signed until the anniversary of the contract. The owner must give at least 60 days prior notice if she or he would like to raise the rent on the anniversary date of the contract. If your landlord asks you to pay more than the Tenant Rent on your lease, please contact the program coordinator at (541) 296-5462, extension 21.

6. What happens if my family size changes?
You should report any changes in family size to the Housing Authority. A change in your family size may change the amount of subsidy you receive. The Housing Authority will also want to be sure that your unit is large enough for your family.

7. What if there are maintenance problems with the unit after I move in and the landlord will not fix them?
Call the Housing Authority after submitting a written repair request to the landlord and a copy to MCHA if you do not get a response within a reasonable amount of time and ask for a new inspection. The Housing Authority will notify the landlord if she or he is not maintaining the unit properly.

8. Can I move?
Participants may move within the area included for each program after the initial term of their lease or if all parties agrees to break the lease. Be sure to contact the program coordinator before you take any action to move, as moving without proper notice is grounds for termination of assistance.

9. I signed up for Section 8 rental assistance. Should I ignore the letter notifying me that there is now assistance available for me on that program?
No! While receiving assistance through SPC or HOME Program you will be required to apply for the Section 8 waiting list, if you are eligible, and you will be required to maintain an active waiting list status.

Section 8 rental assistance may be an important safeguard for you. It is a more stable and long term type of rental assistance. If you are eligible for rental assistance when your name comes to the top of the waiting list for Section 8, we will work with you and the landlord to transfer you onto that program. The MCHA program coordinator can provide more information.
10. I found a place to live and am waiting for an inspection. Can I move in now?
This depends on what you, the landlord, and the program coordinator decide is best. We cannot pay any portion of the rent until the unit has passed inspection. If you move in before it passes inspection, you run the risk of owing money to the landlord that we cannot pay. Please discuss this with the program coordinator.

11. I don’t want to participate in case management and supportive services. Do I have to?
Yes, you are required to participate in these services while you are receiving assistance from Shelter Plus Care TRA, Home TBA, or Home TBRA. If you do not participate, we will not provide rental assistance.

12. My landlord and I are having a disagreement. What do I do?
If you and your landlord are having a dispute, let the MCHA program coordinator know about the situation. Try to work it out on your own with your landlord. If you cannot, ask the Housing Authority if they will assist. We can help resolve problems if you are unable to and we would prefer to know about little problems before they become BIG problems!

13. I still have a question that was not answered here. What can I do?
Feel free to contact the MCHA program coordinator when you have questions or concerns. She or he will help you understand your questions and address concerns you may have.
PLEASE REMEMBER we want this to be a positive experience for you and want to help you be successful. Stay in contact with your MCHA program coordinator and your case managers and together we can avoid problems. You have responsibilities to make this program work!!

YOU MUST NOT:

♦ Own or have any interest in the dwelling
♦ Commit any fraud, bribery or other corrupt or criminal act in connection with the housing program
♦ Receive duplicate assistance while receiving assistance under any other federal subsidy program (for example, two federal subsidies for housing)
♦ Sublease or assign the lease or transfer the unit
♦ Commit any serious or repeated lease violations
♦ Participate in violent criminal action
♦ Use any illegal drugs
♦ Allow any guest to use drugs while in the unit
♦ Damage the unit or premises or permit any guest to damage the unit
♦ Engage in or threaten abusive or violent behavior toward MCHA personnel

YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM MAY BE TERMINATED IF YOU DO NOT COMPLY WITH YOUR OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE PROGRAM!
AGENCY DECISIONS

MID-COLUMBIA HOUSING AUTHORITY decides:

✓ If you are eligible to participate based on program requirements
✓ If the lease between you and the manager is acceptable
✓ How much your share of the rent payment will be
✓ Whether or not you are able to continue to participate in the program

INFORMAL REVIEW AND HEARINGS

Informal Review Process for Participants

A. When a Hearing is required

1. The Mid-Columbia Housing Authority will give a participant family an opportunity for an informal hearing to consider whether the following Mid-Columbia Housing Authority decisions relating to the individual circumstances of a participant family are in accordance with the law, HUD regulations, and Mid-Columbia Housing Authority’s policies:

a. A determination of the family’s annual or adjusted income, and the use of such income to compute the housing assistance payment.

b. A determination of the appropriate utility allowance (if any) for tenant-paid utilities from the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority’s utility allowance schedule.

c. A determination of the family size under the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority’s subsidy standards.

d. A determination that a Program family is residing in a unit with a larger number of bedrooms than appropriate for the family unit size under the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority’s subsidy standards, or the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority determination to deny the family’s request for an exception from the standards.

e. A determination to terminate assistance for a participant family because of the family’s action or failure to act.

f. A determination to terminate assistance because the participant family has been absent from the assisted unit for longer than the maximum period permitted under the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority’s policy and HUD rules.

2. In cases described in paragraphs (A)(1)(d), (e), and (f), of this Section, the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority will give the opportunity for an informal hearing before Mid-Columbia Housing Authority terminates
housing assistance payments for the family under an outstanding HAP contract.

B. When a Hearing is not required

The Mid-Columbia Housing Authority will not provide a participant family an opportunity for an informal hearing for any of the following reasons:

1. Discretionary administrative determination made by the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority.

2. General policy issues or class grievances.

3. Establishment of the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority’s schedule of utility allowances for families in the program.

4. A Mid-Columbia Housing Authority’s determination not to approve an extension or suspension of a coupon term.

5. A Mid-Columbia Housing Authority determination not to approve a unit or lease.

6. A determination made by Mid-Columbia Housing Authority that an assisted unit is not in compliance with HQS. (However, the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority will provide the opportunity for an informal hearing for a decision to terminate assistance for a breach of the HQS caused by the family.)

7. A determination made by the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority that the unit is not in accordance with HQS because of the family size.

8. A determination by the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority to exercise or not exercise any right or remedy against the owner under a HAP contract.

C. Notice to the Family

1. In the cases described in paragraphs (A)(1)(a), (b), and (c), of this Section, the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority will notify the family that they may ask for an explanation for the basis of the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority’s determination and that if the family does not agree with the determination, the family may request an informal hearing on the decision.

2. In the cases described in paragraphs (A)(1)(d), (e), and (f), of this Section, the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority will give the family
prompt written notice that the family may request a hearing within fifteen (15) business days of the notification. The notice will:

a. Contain a brief statement of the reasons for the decision; and

b. State this if the family does not agree with the decision, the family may request an informal hearing on the decision within fifteen (15) business days of the notification.

D. Hearing Procedures

The Mid-Columbia Housing Authority and participants will adhere to the following procedures:

1. Discovery
   a. The family will be given the opportunity to examine, before the hearing, any of Mid-Columbia Housing Authority’s documents that are directly relevant to the hearing. The family will be allowed to copy any such document at the family’s expense. If the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority does not make the document(s) available for examination on request of the family, the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority may not rely on the document at the hearing.
   b. The Mid-Columbia Housing Authority will be given the opportunity to examine, at Mid-Columbia Housing Authority’s offices before the hearing, any family documents that are directly relevant to the hearing. The Mid-Columbia Housing Authority will be allowed to copy any such document at the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority’s expense. If the family does not make the document(s) available for examination on request of the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority, the family may not rely on the document(s) at the hearing.

Note: The term document includes records and regulations.

2. Representation of the Family
   At its own expense, a lawyer or other representative may represent the family.

3. Hearing Officer
   a. The hearing will be conducted by any person or persons designated by the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority, other than a person who made or approved the decision under review or a subordinate of this person.
b. The person who conducts the hearing will regulate the conduct of the hearing in accordance with the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority’s hearing procedures.

4. Evidence
The Mid-Columbia Housing Authority and the family must have the opportunity to present evidence and may question any witnesses. Evidence may be considered without regard to admissibility under the rules of evidence applicable to judicial proceeding.

5. Issuance of Decision
The person who conducts the hearing must issue a written decision within fourteen (14) calendar days from the date of the hearing, stating briefly the reasons for the decision. Factual determinations relating to the individual circumstances of the family shall be based on a preponderance of the evidence presented at the hearing.

6. Effects of the Decision
The Mid-Columbia Housing Authority is not bound by a hearing decision:
   a. Concerning a matter for which the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority is not required to provide an opportunity for an informal hearing under this Section, or that otherwise exceeds the Agency of the person conducting the hearing under the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority’s hearing procedures.
   b. Contrary to HUD regulations or requirements, or otherwise contrary to Federal, State, or local law.
   c. If the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority determines that it is not bound by a hearing decision, the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority will notify the family within fourteen (14) calendar days of the determination, and of the reasons for the determination.

E. Considering Circumstances
In deciding whether to terminate assistance because of action or inaction by members of the family, the Housing Authority may consider all of the circumstances in each case, including the seriousness of the case, extent of participation or culpability of individual family members who were not involved in the action or failure.

The Housing Authority may impose, as a condition of continued assistance for other family members, a requirement that family members who participated in or were culpable for the action or failure will not reside in the unit. The Housing Authority may permit the other members of a participant family to continue receiving assistance.
If the Housing Authority seeks to terminate assistance because of illegal use, or possession for personal use, of a controlled substance, or pattern of abuse of alcohol, such use or possession or pattern of abuse must have occurred within one year before the date that the Housing Authority provides notice to the family of the Housing Authority determination to deny or terminate assistance. In determining whether to terminate assistance for these reasons the Mid-Columbia Housing Authority will consider evidence of whether the household member:

1. Has successfully completed a supervised drug or alcohol rehabilitation program (as applicable) and is no longer engaging in the illegal use of a controlled substance or abuse of alcohol;
2. Has otherwise been rehabilitated successfully and is no longer engaging in the illegal use of a controlled substance or abuse of alcohol; or
3. Is participating in a supervised drug or alcohol rehabilitation program and is no longer engaging in the illegal use of a controlled substance or abuse of alcohol.
Equal Housing Opportunity

Our Pledge…

The Mid-Columbia Housing Authority is committed to ensuring an Equal Housing Opportunity for all applications and participants. In the administration of its programs Mid-Columbia Housing Authority shall not take any action that discriminates against persons on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, physical or mental disability, familial status or any other protected class.

Dealing with Discrimination

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

• 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 security deposits.)

If you feel that you have been discriminated against in your search for housing under this program, please contact the local public housing authority for assistance. If there is a “Fair Housing Commission” in your area, you should also contact the commission. You have a right to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, or you can call the following toll free number: 1-800-669-9777.

CIVIL RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity
Arcade Plaza Building
1321 2nd Ave
Seattle, WA 98101

Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries
Civil Rights Division
240 Cottage St. NE
Salem, OR 97310
(503) 378-3296