



Frequently Asked Questions (for Persons Seeking Housing Assistance)

1. Who can apply for housing assistance?

When DCHA is accepting applications, anyone can apply for housing assistance, but before any assistance can be offered, applicants must be determined eligible.

2. What types of housing assistance does DCHA offer?

DCHA administers the public housing, Housing Choice Voucher, and Moderate Rehabilitation programs. DCHA also administers the Local Rent Supplement Program.

3. How can I apply for housing assistance?

When DCHA is accepting applications for placement on the waiting list, there are several ways to apply: by e-mail, on-line, by mail, in person, or by fax. If you need assistance completing an application, you can visit the Client Placement Division at 1133 North Capitol Street, NW Suite 178 from 8:30am-4:30pm Monday-Friday.

4. How will my application for housing assistance be affected by the suspension of the waiting list?

If your name is already on the waiting list, your application will remain active on the waiting list.

However, it is important that you notify DCHA of any changes to your contact information, household composition, income and/or preference. If you do not keep this information current with DCHA, it may impact your position on the waiting list. If DCHA does not have correct contact information, your application may be classified as inactive if DCHA tries to contact you and you do not respond.

Applications can be updated by e-mail, on-line, by mail, in person, or by fax. Updates may be completed in person at the DCHA Client Placement Division (CPD).

5. What happens after I submit an application for housing assistance?

- i. Completed applications are placed on the waiting list based on the date/time of application and preference.
- ii. When the application reaches the top of the waiting list, you will be contacted by mail to come into the office for an eligibility interview



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- iii. During the interview, you will be asked to provide information about you and the members of your household including, for example, social security numbers, school enrollment, birth certificates and income. DCHA will also conduct a criminal background check for all household members who are 18 years old or older.

While you are on a waiting list, it is your responsibility to report any changes to your contact information, household composition, income and/or preference. If you do not keep this information current, it may impact your position on the waiting list. If DCHA does not have correct contact information, your application will be considered inactive if DCHA tries to contact you and you do not respond.

6. How long must I wait to find out if I am eligible for housing assistance once my application has reached the top of a waiting list?

Once an applicant reaches the top of a waiting list, it takes approximately 30-45 days to finish the eligibility review process.

7. How do I add my name to the lease of someone already living in public housing or the Housing Choice Voucher Program?

Public Housing

- i. Head of household on the lease must make a written request to add a family member to their existing lease. The addition must not cause overcrowding of the unit.
- ii. An eligibility interview is scheduled to begin the screening and verification process.
- iii. If the additional person is determined eligible, the family must sign a new lease.

Housing Choice Voucher Program

The following are the only instances when DCHA will consider adding an adult to the existing voucher household:

- Marriage,
- If the adult is to be added as a live-in aide, or
- As a reasonable accommodation

If one of the above applies, the following steps will be considered:

- i. Head of household on the lease must make a written request to add a family member to their existing lease.
- ii. An eligibility interview is scheduled to begin the screening and verification process.



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- iii. If the additional person is determined eligible, the family must notify the landlord and add the person to the lease OR search for new housing with an updated voucher.

8. What is the time frame for approval of an addition to the lease?

The timeframe is the same as for a new applicant. It takes approximately 30-45 days to process a complete application. Please note that this is based on the fact that there is no delay in obtaining all necessary documents and verifications.

9. Can a returning citizen apply for housing assistance before release?

Yes.

New applicants - When DCHA is accepting applications for placement on the waiting list, a returning citizen may apply for public or assisted housing before release. Applications can be completed and submitted on-line at www.dchousing.org, by mail to DC Housing Authority 1133 North Capitol Street, NE Washington DC 20002, or by facsimile at (202) 535-2043. However, the eligibility determination interview must take place in person.

Adding to existing household – The current head of household can submit the request as outlined above in question #7. However, the eligibility determination interview must take place in person.

10. Can an applicant be denied assistance for criminal conviction or criminal activity?

Yes. While DCHA may initially deny admission to persons who have been engaged in criminal activity or convicted of certain crimes, in some cases applicants are given an opportunity to provide information that supports why they should receive housing assistance. Also called “mitigation”, this information may include evidence of rehabilitation (See question #13 for examples).

In accordance with applicable federal laws and regulations; however, admission will be denied without a chance for mediation when:

- any applicant any family member who is subject to Class A sex offender registration; or
- any who has been convicted of drug-related criminal activity for the manufacture and production of methamphetamine or production of methamphetamine on the premises of federally assisted housing

11. How long is a criminal record relevant when applying for housing assistance?

DCHA takes into account a series of factors when determining eligibility for housing assistance when an applicant has a criminal history, including the time that has passed since the criminal activity has taken place, the nature of the crime and any mitigating



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circumstances (see question #13 for examples of acceptable proof of rehabilitation). DCHA shall deny admission to any applicant who has been evicted from housing assisted under the United States Housing Act, for **drug-related criminal activity** for a three year period beginning from the date of the eviction.

12. Is there a formal process to appeal denials?

There is a formal process to appeal denials. A notice of denial is sent to the applicant that advises them of their right to appeal the denial. The applicant is allowed to respond to the denial and address the reasons for denial by providing mitigating and/or supporting information.

13. What are some examples of acceptable proof of rehabilitation?

Examples include, but are not limited to, letters from a probation officer, social worker, pastor, community organization or other agency or person who has had the chance to observe and can detail the following:

- i. Evidence of favorable changes in the applicant's pattern of behavior, including the length of time since an offense or behavior was committed; or
- ii. Evidence of successful rehabilitation, e.g., evidence that the responsible member of the applicant family is not likely to repeat the prior criminal behavior, evidence that neither the applicant nor any member of the applicant family is likely to cause harm to the other public housing or Housing Choice Voucher Program residents, DCHA staff, or other members of the community; or
- iii. Evidence of the applicant's participation in or willingness to participate in relevant social service activities or other appropriate counseling services; or
- iv. Evidence of the applicant's modification of previous disqualifying behavior, with indications of continuing support intended to assist the applicant in modifying the disqualifying behaviors

14. How long can a person stay with a resident of public housing before their name must be added to the lease?

Public Housing—As outlined in the DCHA Lease Agreement, a person can stay as a guest for up to ten consecutive days and up to thirty nonconsecutive days within a year without permission from DCHA. For stays longer than ten consecutive days, the head of household must make a written request to the property manager. DCHA will respond to all written requests in writing within ten days. If the request is denied, a written reason for the denial will be provided.



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Housing Choice Voucher Program— A guest may remain in the assisted unit no longer than thirty (30) consecutive days or a total of ninety (90) cumulative calendar days during any twelve (12) month period.

Children who are subject to a joint custody arrangement or for whom a Family has visitation privileges and who are not included as a Family member because they live outside of the assisted household more than fifty percent (50%) of the time, are not subject to the time limitations of guests as described above.

Exception: A Family may request an exception to this policy for valid reasons (such as, care for a relative recovering from a medical procedure is expected to last forty (40) consecutive days). An exception shall not be made unless the family can identify and provide documentation of the residence to which the guest will return.

15. Can a person stay in public housing or the Housing Choice Voucher Program if the request to add them to a lease is pending?

The person may stay given compliance with the criteria outlined in question 13.

16. Can a registered sex offender live in public housing?

Federal law requires DCHA to deny admission to all Class A registered sex offenders who apply for housing.

17. Does DCHA have housing alternatives for registered sex offenders who are asked to leave public housing or the Housing Choice Voucher Program?

DCHA does not have any alternative housing programs for registered sex offenders who are asked to leave public housing or the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

18. If a person has been arrested on a public housing property, does that make them ineligible for being added to the lease?

An arrest on or off public housing property does not necessarily make a person ineligible for being added to an existing lease. However, the person must be determined eligible by DCHA before being added to a lease.

19. If a person was previously barred from public housing, does it make them ineligible to be added to the lease in the future?

Having been previously barred does not necessarily make a person ineligible for being added to an existing lease. However, at the time eligibility is being determined, the



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person cannot have a current barring notice at the property or unit for which they wish to be added. Additionally, the person must pass all DCHA eligibility criteria.

Re-housing Former Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher Program Residents

20. What is the policy for returning to public housing or the Housing Choice Voucher Program if the returning citizen lived there before incarceration?

DCHA households undergo recertification to verify continued eligibility for housing assistance annually for the public housing program and every two years for the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Only the household members who are determined to still be eligible can remain on the lease. If one household member is incarcerated during recertification, he or she may be removed from the lease. Once released, the leaseholder must make a request to add the returning citizen to their lease. The addition of the returning citizen to the family composition must not cause overcrowding in the unit and the returning citizen must meet the screening criteria.

21. What if I left public housing or Housing Choice Voucher Program owing a debt? Will it affect the eligibility review?

Yes. Any debt owed to DCHA, any other housing authority, or any landlord participating in any federally assisted housing program must be paid or otherwise satisfied before an applicant can be admitted or readmitted.

Evictions/Terminations of Assistance

22. Does DCHA use police reports from juvenile cases to evict families or terminate benefits?

DCHA does not use police reports or crime records for persons charged as juveniles to determine initial eligibility or eligibility for continued occupancy.

23. What factors does DCHA consider when deciding to evict residents from public housing or terminate voucher assistance?

Public Housing—resident violations of the Dwelling Lease agreement are the basis for decisions to proceed with evictions.

Housing Choice Voucher Program—resident violations of the Family Obligations outlined in the voucher, including violations of the resident's lease with the landlord, and landlord violations of the Housing Assistance Program (HAP) contract are the basis for decisions to proceed with the termination of voucher assistance.