

Now That You Are Housed



Congratulations on getting your place! YARR is excited to continue working with you while you get settled in your new place.

This packet has general information and resources related to housing

YARR - 2 years of housing support

MaineHousing - Voucher that helps pay for rent

Landlord - Who you rent from

YARR - Once You Are Housed

Congratulations on becoming housed and moving into your new apartment! YARR is thrilled to continue supporting you on this housing journey

While it is important to celebrate this accomplishment it is also important to recognize that this is only the beginning of your housing journey. There are now many steps you will need to take to establish and maintain your housing

As a part of this YARR program, your Housing Coordinator & the Peer Support can continue to support you through **monthly meetings for up to 24 (twenty-four) months**. Your Housing Coordinator will provide you with assistance navigating the responsibilities you now have with your unit, maintaining your unit and developing the skills necessary to continue housing on your own. Your Peer Support can assist you with finding and utilizing community resources and supportive services. Including RENSMART training

*****Please note that your Housing Coordinator and Peer Support will assist you but CANNOT do the work for you*

As a reminder, your Housing Choice Voucher is maintained through this program and non-compliance with YARR program requirements or Maine State Housing Rules could result in termination from this program as well as your housing voucher

If your voucher is terminated by the YARR program or MaineHousing, you will immediately be responsible for all costs associated with your unit. This includes the full amount of rent and any utilities. You would also need to coordinate with your landlord to make changes to your lease as MaineHousing would no longer provide support with rent and utilities

Resource Packet

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Housing Choice Voucher Tenant Responsibilities



Participants in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program have rights and responsibilities as program participants. Some responsibilities may vary, so check with your public housing agency (PHA). Learn more about your responsibilities by reading your lease.

Q When am I required to notify the PHA?

- ☒ When you are away from your unit for an extended period of time.
- ☒ Before ending the lease or moving out of the unit.
- ☒ If there are changes to your family, such as a new birth or a death in your household, or if someone moves out.
- ☒ When there are changes to your family's income.

Q What information am I required to supply during a recertification?

- ☒ Income information. You may be required to provide asset information based on the policy of your PHA.
- ☒ Information on each household member's immigration status.
- ☒ Each member's social security number.

Q What are my responsibilities regarding inspections?

- ☒ You must allow the PHA to inspect your unit for periodic inspections, complaints, or emergencies.

Q What are my obligations to the unit?

- ☒ You must follow the terms of your lease. This includes paying your rent portion and utility bills you are responsible for.
- ☒ You must maintain the unit. That includes not damaging the unit.
- ☒ You cannot participate in any drug-related or violent criminal activity and cannot commit any other crime that would threaten or bother your neighbors. You also cannot use illegal drugs or abuse alcohol in a way that bothers your neighbors.



For more Housing Choice Voucher tenant resources, visit <https://www.hud.gov/hcv/tenants>



Contact your local PHA for more information.

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Young Adult Rapid Rehousing (YARR)

Questions to Address

- What do you need to be successful in maintaining housing?
- How can your Housing Coordinator help you be successful maintaining housing?
- What goals do you have?

- **How comfortable are you finding, contacting, and accessing services & providers you may need?**
 - What level or type of support would you like from your Housing Coordinator

- **What providers or services do you need?**
 - Employment (search for employment or employment support services)
 - Education (Type of school and financial assistance needed)
 - Internet
 - Cell phone
 - Transportation
 - Food (local food pantry or soup kitchen)
 - Clothing
 - Case Management
 - Primary Care doctor
 - Mental or behavioral health provider
 - Dentist
 - Health and/or dental insurance
 - SNAP
 - TANF
 - Furniture
 - Bank or Credit Union

YARR Team can help with

Your Housing Coordinator can assist with:

- **Changing your mailing address**
- **Establishing a system for maintaining contact information for providers**
 - Landlord, Dr, mental health, Housing Navigator, Case management, employer, benefits
 - One method: Download a note app on your phone then enter each person or provider and their contact information (phone number, email, address, company name and/or type of provider). This provides quick and easy access to the information anytime you need it
 - ***Example:** PCP, Dr name, name of the Dr office, phone #, email, physical address*
- **Establishing a system or record for your login information**
 - One method: Download a note app on your phone. Enter each company/provider with the username and password you use for each account
- **Setting up payment for your portion of rent** (cash, check, card, or automatic withdrawal)
 - This can include creating an online profile if this is offered by the landlord. Often landlords have an online tenant portal which allows you to pay rent, contact the landlord and make requests for maintenance needed in the unit
- **Setting up an account and payment method with utility companies such as CMP, internet, or heat**
 - This can include creating an online profile with the company to view the amount due each month, make online payments or set up automatic withdrawal, view payment history and any updates from the provider
- **Establishing a system that will remind you when a bill is due to be paid**
 - This is to make sure bills like rent, CMP, internet, or heat are paid on time
- **Setting up an account with a credible bank or credit unit**
 - This can include creating an online profile which gives you access to your account information, balance, and payment history
- **Setting up direct deposit**
 - This could include payment you receive from an employer or funds such as housing utility support from MaineHousing
- **Research and access to supports, services, and providers you may need**
 - Your Housing Coordinator will assist you in developing the skills to research and access appropriate and legitimate supports/services/providers on your own
- **Referrals to providers**

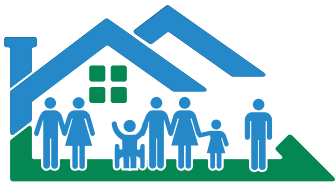
- **Connecting to and establishing a relationship with supports, services, and provider you may need**

Young Adult Rapid Rehousing (YARR)

- Your Housing Coordinator will assist you in developing the skills to independently connect and establish relationships with appropriate and legitimate supports, services, and providers
- This can include creating an online profile through provider portal(s). This allows you to schedule appointments, contact with questions, see upcoming or past appointment and access to records)
- **Creating a list of household chores**
- **Creating a budget**
- **Outreach to your landlord with any questions or issues that arise**
- **Outreach and updates to MaineHousing**
- **Completing and submitting annual documentation to MaineHousing**
- **Renewal of your lease with your landlord**

The Peer Support can assist with:

- Finding and connecting to community and supportive services
- Finding and connecting to resources you may need. Including employment, education, needs for children, clothing, food pantries, and internet
- Assist with side-by-side support during interviews or new services you may receive.
- Assist with developing new skills
- Assist with social interaction. Including what to expect during a job interview and educational opportunities



Housing Choice Voucher Tenant Rights



Participants in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program have rights and responsibilities as program participants. Some rights may vary, so check with your public housing agency (PHA). Learn more about your rights by reading your lease.

Q When can I request an informal hearing?

☒ If you think your public housing agency (PHA) applied a policy incorrectly, you can contest your PHA's decision related to:

- Your annual income calculation.
- Your rent portion.
- The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) amount sent to the property owner.
- The appropriate utility allowance for your unit.
- The subsidy standard applied to your household. In other words, the number of bedrooms your family qualifies for under the PHA's policy.
- A determination to end your assistance because of your action or failure to act.
- A determination to end your assistance because your family was absent from the unit.

Q When can I request repairs to my unit?

☒ Any time a repair is needed to make your home safe and habitable. If the property owner refuses to make needed repairs to your unit, you may request an inspection from the PHA. The inspection should encourage the owner to make the repair. If the owner refuses to make the repair, the PHA will eventually stop HAP payments and terminate the contract. The PHA will give you a voucher to move.

Q What is a reasonable accommodation? When can I receive a reasonable accommodation?

☒ A reasonable accommodation is a change to your PHA's policy or process that allows a person with a disability an equal opportunity to participate in the program. Your PHA can tell you how to request a reasonable accommodation.




☒ Examples of a reasonable accommodation include:

- A larger voucher size to allow a person with a disability to have a live-in-aide.
- A sign language interpreter during a public PHA meeting so a person with hearing loss can participate.
- Large-print documents for a person with limited eyesight.
- Additional search time to allow a family more time to find an accessible unit.
- An exception payment standard, meaning a higher rent subsidy, to make a unit that meets a family's disability-related needs affordable for that family.

Q English is not my first language. Can I get information in my language?

☒ Yes. You can receive oral information from your PHA in your preferred language. The PHA will have a staff member that speaks your language or provide a free interpreter.



When and where can I move with my voucher?

-  You can move with continued assistance at any time as long as your lease has ended. You may be limited to one move per year.
-  There is an exception for persons covered under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Someone who has experienced domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and/or stalking, and has a voucher, must be allowed to move with continued assistance. Learn more at <https://www.hud.gov/vawa>
-  You can move anywhere else in the country where there is a Housing Choice Voucher program. This process is called “porting.”



How can I participate in my PHA board?

-  All PHA clients are entitled to participate in the public PHA board meetings. Your PHA will publicly post their board meeting schedule.

A property owner told me they don’t take vouchers. Is that legal?

-  It depends on where you live. Some areas have what is called “source of income” law. Source of income laws make it illegal for property owners to refuse HCV renters the chance to apply for their units because they have an HCV. So, ads that say something like, “No Section 8” or “Not voucher approved,” are illegal.
-  To find out if your community has a source of income law search here: https://www.hud.gov/Program_Offices/Public_Indian_Housing/Source_Income_Protections

How can I report discrimination?

-  If you feel that you have been discriminated against and you want help, find your federally supported local fair housing organization here: https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/contact_fhip
-  You can also file a complaint directly with HUD: <https://www.hud.gov/fairhousing/fileacomplaint>



For more Housing Choice Voucher tenant resources, visit <https://www.hud.gov/hcv/tenants>



Contact your local PHA for more information.

Quick Reference

Things that can get me EVICTED:

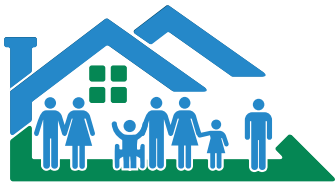
- Rent is more than 5 days late
- Someone moves in with me without MaineHousing & landlord approval
- Someone stays for more than 2 weeks
- If I get an animal without permission from landlord
- Criminal or dangerous activity
- Alcohol and drug use
- Not keeping the unit clean

Things I need Written Permission from Landlord:

- Getting a roommate
- Getting an animal
- Moving out

Things I Must do Each Year:

- MaineHousing: Annual recertification packet
- MaineHousing: Inspection of unit
- Landlord: Lease Renewal



Maintaining Your Voucher



The traditional Housing Choice Voucher (or “voucher”) is not time-limited. As long as you: (1) follow the program rules, (2) continue to qualify for housing assistance payments based on your income, and (3) based on your PHA's policy, continue to apply based on your assets, you can keep your voucher until you no longer need it. These are some of the basic requirements around maintaining your voucher:

Notify the Public Housing Agency About:



Updates to income



Family changes



Moving out



Extended absences



Do's



Live in the home



Allow inspections



Participate in reexaminations



Don't's



Damage unit



Violate lease



Commit crimes

LOCAL HUD FIELD OFFICE

If you feel that your local public housing agency (PHA) is applying these policies incorrectly, contact your local HUD field office.



Look up the field office near you here: <https://www.hud.gov/local>



Flip to the other side to see additional Family Obligations.



Maintaining Your Voucher: Frequently Asked Questions



What information am I required to regularly report to the public housing agency?

- **Updates to income:** You need to submit any information your PHA requires about changes to your family's income for your regular reexamination or interim reexamination.
- **Family changes:** Tell the PHA of changes to your family such as a new birth or death in the family. Request in writing to add any other family member to the household. Tell the PHA if anyone in your household moves out.
- **Moving out:** Tell the PHA and your property owner if you plan to move out or end your lease.
- **Extended absences:** Notify the PHA if you are away from your home for a long time.



What obligations do I have regarding the unit?

- **Live in the home:** You need to live in the home as your only residence.
- **Allow inspections:** You need to allow the PHA to inspect the unit for periodic inspections or inspections related to a complaint or emergency.
- **Keep in good standing with lease:** You cannot commit a serious or repeated lease violation.
- **No damages:** You cannot damage the unit beyond normal wear and tear.
- **No committing crimes or using illegal drugs:** You cannot participate in any drug-related or violent criminal activity and cannot commit any other crime that would threaten or bother your neighbors. You also cannot use illegal drugs or abuse alcohol in a way that bothers your neighbors.



What other violations could lead me to losing my voucher?

- **Failing to complete a recertification:** You need to recertify your information with the PHA when requested. This includes verifying your income and who lives in your household.
- **Allowing non-household members to stay with you:** Only family members on your voucher can live with you. You have to request to add new people to your voucher.
- **Committing crimes related to the voucher:** You cannot commit fraud, bribery or any other corruption or criminal act in connection with the program.
- **Receiving double subsidies:** You cannot receive voucher assistance while also receiving housing rental (or mortgage) assistance from another government program.



These are just examples of big program requirements. Other requirements exist.

To learn about additional HCV tenant resources, see: <https://www.hud.gov/hcu/tenants>.

Also contact your PHA for more information.

Reporting Changes

If there is any change to your income, members of your household or incidents, you **MUST** notify MaineHousing **and** provide documentation showing this change.

- If your income increases or decreases
- If you need to add or remove an adult or child
- Any significant change (ex. housing conditions, lease violations, eviction, criminal activity)

MaineHousing Email - section8hcv@mainehousing.org

In certain situations, the landlord will need to be made aware and/or approve a change.

Changes to Income

1. Notify MaineHousing

- In an email let them know who you are, your address and that you are contacting them to update your income.
- Attach documents to the email showing proof of change .

2. Provide documentation showing this change

- **Increase in income:**
 - Employment
 - New hire letter/notice of employment
 - Four weeks of paystubs
 - Benefits or other assistance
 - Letter/notice showing approval or change to amount of assistance
 - Statement showing how much was most recently received
- **Decrease in income:**
 - Employment
 - Updated paystubs showing decrease in recent pay
 - Resignation or Termination of employment Letter
 - Benefits or other assistance
 - Letter/notice saying assistance has lowered or ended
 - Statement showing how much was most recently received

Example: Screenshot of Mymaineconnections account showing SNAP Active status and amount received

MaineHousing will process the documents and calculate your portion of rent. You will get a letter in the mail showing how much you will owe the landlord for rent each month.

Please Note: You will be responsible for paying 30% of income to your landlord for rent AND any utilities

Changes to Household Members

Adding a Child: (birth, adoption, court awarded custody)

- Inform MaineHousing – Email: section8hcv@mainehousing.org
 - Complete and send the “**Adding a Child**” Packet
 - Attached a clear phot of the child's birth certificate and Social Security Card
- **If you are housed** - You must notify your landlord in advance and have the child added to your lease

Adding any other household member (adult):

- You MUST receive approval from MaineHousing FIRST
 - Complete and send the “**Adding an Adult**” Packet to MaineHousing
 - Attach the person's ID, birth certificate, Social Security Card and income documentation
- **If you are housed** - Your landlord must also approve the additional household member BEFORE they move in

REMOVING an adult household member:

1. Complete and sign the MaineHousing “**Agreement to Remove Former Member from Household form**”
2. Provide 1 of the documents listed below proving the individual is no longer in the household
 - Utility bill for their new address
 - A copy of a lease at a new address
 - Rental payment receipts for a new address
 - A written statement explaining & confirming request for removal signed by VOA Housing Coordinator as a provider
 - A written statement from the landlord acknowledging additional adult move out
3. Both forms will need to be mailed or submitted to section8hcv@mainehousing.org

Young Adult Rapid Rehousing (YARR)

Moving with your Voucher

Your first lease with your voucher will be for one year. Your lease is the contract you sign with your landlord for your unit/apartment. You may renew your lease for your current unit, move after one year, or in certain circumstances you may **“break”** your lease before the one year to move to another apartment

- Once you have been housed with your voucher for one year you may renew your lease for another year (or change your lease to roll over month to month)
- Once you have been housed with your voucher for one year you may move to a new unit/apartment
- You and your landlord may agree to **“break”** your lease if there is a reasonable explanation as to why you need to move out of the apartment
 - **Reasons include:** Safety, adding or removing a household member, work

Step 1. Contact Your Current Landlord

- If you are near the end of your lease you need to tell your landlord at least 30 days before the end of your lease
- If you are not near the end of your lease (1 year) your landlord may agree to allow you to move (or **“break”** your lease)
 - Ask your landlord if you can break the lease and explain why
 - Reasons to break your lease – Safety, new household members, work

Step 2. Find a New Unit/Apartment

- If you are near the end of our lease or the landlord agrees to **“break”** your lease you will need to find a new apartment
- The apartment must accept vouchers
- The apartment must match your voucher
 - Number of bedrooms
 - How many people and who is currently added on your voucher
- The apartment must meet MaineHousing Voucher Payment Standards
 - The Voucher Payment Standard is the maximum housing will pay for rent
 - Use the Payment Standards Chart
 - To find the most up to date rent chart go to [Housing Choice Vouchers](#) and scroll down to **“Program Resources”** then choose the **“Voucher Payment Standards”** with the most recent month and year.
 - Payment standards are updated twice a year

Young Adult Rapid Rehousing (YARR)**Step 3. Landlord Packet**

- Once you locate a new apartment you and the new landlord will need to complete MaineHousing's Landlord Packet
- The completed landlord packet must be sent to MaineHousing
 - MaineHousing email - Section8HCV@mainehousing.org
- **Please Note:** MaineHousing may take up to 3 weeks to approve or deny the landlord packet

Step 4. Inspection of the Unit

- If the landlord packet is approved MaineHousing will schedule an inspection with the new landlord

Please Note: *MaineHousing may take up to 3 weeks to schedule the inspection*

Step 5. Sign a New Lease and Move

- If the unit/apartment passes inspection you can sign a new lease and move into the unit

*****DO NOT SIGN A LEASE OR MOVE UNTIL ALL STEPS ARE COMPLETE**

MaineHousing may terminate your voucher

MaineHousing will not pay your rent or provide assistance

How Portability Works

What is Portability?

"Portability" in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program refers to the process through which your family can transfer or "port" your rental subsidy when you move to a location outside the jurisdiction of the public housing agency (PHA) that first gave you the voucher when you were selected for the program (**the initial PHA**).

The agency that will administer your assistance in the area to which you are moving is called the receiving PHA.

New families have to live in the jurisdiction of the initial PHA for a year before they can port. But, the initial PHA may allow new families to port during this one-year period.



What Happens Next?

1. You must notify the initial PHA that you would like to port and to which area you are moving.
2. The initial PHA will determine if you are eligible to move. For example, the PHA will determine whether you have moved out of your unit in accordance with your lease.
3. If eligible to move, the initial PHA will issue you a voucher (if it has not done so already) and send all relevant paperwork to the receiving PHA.
4. If you are currently assisted, you must give your landlord notice of your intent to vacate in accordance with your lease.

Contacting the Receiving PHA

1. Your case manager will let you know how and when to contact the receiving PHA. Your case manager must give you enough information so that you know how to contact the receiving PHA.
2. If there is more than one PHA that administers the HCV program where you wish to move, you may choose the receiving PHA. The initial PHA will give you the contact information for the PHAs that serve the area. If you prefer, you may request that the initial PHA selects the receiving PHA for you.

Generally, the initial PHA is not required to give you any other information about the receiving PHAs, but you may wish to find out more details when contacting them (such as whether the receiving PHA operates a Family Self-Sufficiency or Homeownership program).

How Portability Works



Before Porting, Things You Should Know

Subsidy Standards: The receiving PHA may have different subsidy standards. In other words, the initial PHA may have issued you a three-bedroom voucher, but the receiving PHA may, if appropriate for your family, issue you a two-bedroom voucher. Note, however, that the PHA's subsidy standards must comply with fair housing and civil rights laws. This includes processing reasonable accommodation requests that are necessary for qualified individuals with disabilities.

Payment Standards: The payment standards of the receiving PHA may be different for each PHA. Payment standards are what determine the amount of the rent that the PHA will pay on your behalf. If a receiving PHA's payment standards are lower than the initial PHA, then the portion of the rent you pay may be more than what you were paying at the initial PHA.

Re-screening: The receiving PHA may re-screen you using their own policies, which may be different than the initial PHA's policies and could result in them denying your request to move. When contacting the receiving PHA, you may want to ask whether they re-screen families moving into their area under portability and what are their policies for termination or denial of HCV assistance. This will assist you in determining if the receiving PHA's policies might prevent you from moving to their jurisdiction.

Time Management: You should manage the move so that you have enough time to arrive at the receiving PHA before the initial PHA voucher expires; otherwise, you may lose your assistance.

See front for more details

Once at the Receiving PHA

1. The receiving PHA will issue you a voucher to search for a unit in its jurisdiction. Your voucher must be extended by 30 days from the expiration date on the voucher issued by the initial PHA.
2. When you submit a request for tenancy approval, the time on your voucher will stop until you are notified in writing whether the unit is approved or denied. The request for tenancy approval is the form you will submit to the receiving PHA once you find a unit, so that the receiving PHA can determine whether you may rent that unit under the program.
3. If you decide that you do not want to lease a unit in the area, the receiving PHA will return your voucher to the initial PHA. The initial PHA is not required to, but may, extend the term of your voucher so that you may search for a unit in the initial PHA's jurisdiction or port to another jurisdiction.

Any additional instructions will be provided by the receiving PHA. PHAs must comply with all nondiscrimination and equal opportunity requirements in the portability process, including, but not limited to, the Fair Housing Act, Section 504 of the of the Rehabilitation Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

See front for more details

Evictions

What is an eviction:

Eviction is a legal process a landlord can use to remove a tenant from a rental property. This usually happens when a tenant violates the terms of their lease agreement

Common Reasons for Eviction:

- ***Non-payment of rent: Failing to pay rent on time or in full is the most common reason for eviction***
- **Lease violations:** This can include having unauthorized occupants, pets (if prohibited), excessive noise, or property damage
- **Criminal activity:** Engaging in illegal activities on the property, such as drug-related offenses, can lead to eviction
- **Property damage:** Intentionally or negligently causing significant damage to the rental unit
- **Disturbing the peace:** Creating excessive noise or disturbances that disrupt other tenants' quiet enjoyment of the property

Eviction Can Affect Your Housing Voucher

If you have a housing voucher the eviction can have serious consequences for your housing assistance

- **Termination of your voucher:** In many cases, a landlord evicting you for lease violations, especially non-payment of rent or criminal activity, can lead to your housing voucher being terminated
- **Difficulty finding future housing:** An eviction record can make it very difficult to find future rental housing, even with a voucher. Many landlords are hesitant to rent to tenants with a history of eviction

Protecting Your Housing Voucher

- **Pay rent on time:** Ensure you pay your rent in full and on time every month
- **Comply with your lease:** Carefully review and adhere to all the terms of your lease agreement
- **Maintain the property:** Keep your rental unit clean and in good condition, and promptly report any necessary repairs to your landlord
- **Be a good neighbor:** Avoid creating excessive noise or disturbances that could disrupt your neighbors
- **Communicate with your landlord:** If you're having trouble paying rent or need to address a lease issue, communicate with your landlord as soon as possible to try to find a solution
- **Understand your rights:** Familiarize yourself with your rights as a tenant and voucher holder

What to Do If You Receive an Eviction Notice

***Don't ignore it:** An eviction notice is a legal document that requires a response*

- **Seek legal assistance:** Contact a tenant's rights organization, legal aid society, or attorney as soon as possible. You may be able to fight the eviction if the landlord hasn't followed proper legal procedures or if you have a valid defense
- **Contact Maine housing authority:** Inform Maine housing authority about the eviction notice. They can advise you on how the eviction may affect your voucher and what steps you can take
- **Gather documentation:** Collect any relevant documents, such as your lease agreement, rent receipts, and any correspondence with your landlord
- **Attend all court hearings:** If the eviction goes to court, attend all scheduled hearings. Failure to appear can result in a default judgment against you

If you receive an eviction notice, it's crucial to take action immediately