



HAP Express

Charleston Housing's Landlord Newsletter



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CH Launches New Web Site

Charleston Housing has launched a new web site that will provide landlords with more information about the Section 8 program and offers a bulletin board for posting available property.

The new site is in an easy to use format and provides interested property owners on the steps to becoming a Section 8 landlord, what rent to

request, the benefits of being a Section 8 landlord and all the Housing Quality Standards requirements.

The staff directory also provides an easy way of reaching all CH staff by e-mail.

Your comments and suggestions for improvement are appreciated and may be sent to Jeff Knight.

Landlord Survey Results

Charleston Housing mailed 178 customer satisfaction surveys to randomly selected landlords during the latter part of August. Forty-two percent (42%) responded to the survey and the results were generally positive.

Eighty-five percent of respondents have less than three units on the program. Over ninety percent are satisfied with the timeliness of monthly checks and believe HQS inspections are thorough. Likewise, ninety-four percent believe CH staff are polite.

Eighty-seven percent know who they need to contact when they have a question or concern. Seventy-five

percent say it is easy to reach staff when they need assistance.

Landlords were given the opportunity to offer their opinions and suggestions. Most were positive, but the negative comments centered around the need for greater consistency among caseworkers and inspectors.

The survey was issued to provide management with information about the agency's strengths and areas in need of improvement. The results and the comments of landlords will be used by staff to improve services and processes. Thank you to all who responded. Your participation was appreciated.



visit us at
www.charlestonhousing.com

September Program Briefing Held in St. Albans

The first in a series of meetings designed to inform existing landlords on program requirements and to attract new landlords to the Section 8 program was held in St. Albans on September 16th. A groups of city officials along with a number of landlords attended.

The briefing focused on the benefits of becoming a Section 8 landlord and how best to market rental units. There were also lengthy discussions on the impact of Section 8 rentals on neighborhoods and the responsibility of landlords to address problems.

Plan to attend the next Section 8 Program Briefing for landlords on Thursday, December 11, 2003 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. at the Family Enrichment Center on Charleston's West Side

Training on Tenant Screening Held in October

Charleston Housing sponsored training on the tenant screening process that was held Monday, October 20, 2003 at the Family Enrichment Center. Trainers discussed the federal fair housing laws and the need for good applications for proper screening.

The next training will be in early 2004 and will focus on lease development and enforcement. It will also be at the Family Enrichment Center. Be watching for a notice in your HAP payments!

Charleston Housing Sets New Voucher Rates for 2004

Effective October 1, 2003 HUD's new Fair Market Rents for the Kanawha-Putnam market will be used in determining the amount of assistance CH will provide to participants (see the chart below).

Again this year, CH will set the payment standards for the smaller voucher sizes at 105% of the FMR.

The continued increase should benefit all parties involved as more units become available to families resulting from voucher rates becoming

more appealing to landlords. Remember, a new renter must pay at least 30% of their income toward rent and utilities, but cannot pay more than 40%. If a landlord requires a tenant to pay all utilities, many times the requested rent has to be lowered to make the unit affordable. The increased standard should make more units affordable to Section 8 participants.

In order to determine an affordable rent, a landlord can subtract the average utility cost from the payment standard amount for the appropriate bedroom size.

For example, the rent for a two bedroom apartment in Kanawha County could be set at a minimum of \$415 for a family with very limited income. This amount is determined by subtracting \$143 in utility costs from the new standard of \$558. Typically, the family will be paying 30% of their income for rent and utilities. If the family has a higher income, the allowable rent might be greater as long as it didn't push the family's rent burden above 40% of their income.

The new rates will be used for all initial contracts processed after 10/1/03 and all annual recertifications beginning 12/1/03.

2004 Payment Standards

<u>Efficiency</u>	<u>1 Bedroom</u>	<u>2 Bedroom</u>	<u>3 Bedroom</u>	<u>4 Bedroom</u>
\$ 323	\$ 440	\$ 558	\$ 729	\$ 797

Below is the approximate cost in utilities (gas, electric, water, sewer, and trash) for each bedroom size. If you deduct this amount from the Payment Standard you will arrive at a rent that most families will be able to afford.

2004 Utility Rate Schedule (calculated 9/03)

Type of unit	<u>Eff.</u>	<u>1Br.</u>	<u>2Br.</u>	<u>3Br.</u>	<u>4Br.</u>
	Kan/Put	Kan/Put	Kan/Put	Kan/Put	Kan/Put
House	87/96	108/117	153/166	193/209	234/251
Apartment	82/91	101/110	143/156	180/196	219/236
Mobile Home	88/97	106/115	142/153	174/190	208/225

*The above utility amounts are approximate based on the tenant paying all utilities and the landlord owning the appliances.



Cold Weather is Coming!

Have those heating systems checked and serviced prior to the onset of bad weather and save a lot of time and frustration for you and your tenants!

Remember to change the furnace filter too!

Charleston Housing Offices will be closed on the following dates:

- *November 11.....Veterans' Day
- *November 27 & 28...Thanksgiving
- *December 24th (at noon) & the 25th.
- *December 31st (at noon) & Jan. 1st.
- *January 19.....M.L. King Day