
CHA Bulletin

Published by Caribou Housing Agency for Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Participants and Landlords
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2021, A NEW YEAR BRINGS A NEW PROGRAM AND HUD WAIVERS

Happy New Year CHA Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) participants and landlords! On behalf of the staff, we would like to start 2021 by acknowledging the importance of the partnership between our agency and landlords who are willing to rent decent, safe and affordable housing options to voucher holders in the Caribou, and surrounding communities. You are making a difference!

Mainstream Voucher Program

Our agency is proud to announce that we have been awarded a \$211,200 U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) grant to fund 40 rental subsidies administered through the federal Mainstream Voucher program. Mainstream Vouchers offer a rental subsidy to support the housing needs of non-elderly persons who have disabilities. HUD defines “non-elderly” as under age 62. The program is particularly targeted to disabled persons who are transitioning out of institutional settings, at serious risk of institutionalization, homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

CHA has already started the process for the available Mainstream Vouchers by pulling from our Waiting List, non-elderly disabled applicants. However, we do not have enough applicants, to fill our 40 available vouchers. If you know of anyone who may fall within the requirements of the Mainstream Voucher eligibility, please have them apply today!

(continued page 2)

PAYMENT STANDARDS & UTILITY ALLOWANCES

Caribou Housing Agency’s Payment Standards for Calendar Year 2021 will remain the same as our 2020 Payment Standards, effective 01/01/2021

0 Bedroom	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom	4 Bedroom
\$563	\$633	\$742	\$950	\$1,073

The 2021 Utility Allowances, effective starting 03/01/2021; can be found at: Caribou Housing Agency’s webpage, Forms & Documents, Landlord Forms.

2021, Continued

HUD Waivers

In April 2020, HUD exercised its authority under the CARES Act to establish waivers and administrative flexibility to provide relief to Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. On November 30, 2020, HUD has come out with another set of statutory and regulatory waivers and alternative requirements for the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Below are the waivers that Caribou Housing Agency has adopted and plan on using until further notice or until waiver expiration date.

HQS Inspections, Initial

- Allows PHA to accept owner certification that there are no known life-threatening deficiencies in lieu of a PHA inspection.
- When self-certification is used, PHA must inspect unit no later than 1-year anniversary of date of owner's certification.
- Waiver expires 06/30/2021

HQS Inspections, Biennial

- Allows for a delay in biennial inspections,
- PHAs must require owner certification that there are no known life-threatening deficiencies.
- All delayed biennial inspections must resume by 06/30/2021 and be completed by 12/31/2021

HQS Inspections, Interim

- Waives the requirement for the PHA to conduct interim inspections and requires alternative method
- Waiver expires: 06/30/2021

Administrative Plan

- Establishes an alternative requirement that policies may be adopted without board approval until 03/31/2021.
- Any provisions adopted informally must be adopted formally by 06/30/2021

Housing Choice Voucher, Briefing

- Waives the requirement for an oral briefing.
- Provides for alternative methods to conduct required voucher briefing.
- Waiver expires 06/30/2021

Landlord Incentive Program

In December 2020, CHA kicked off its Landlord Incentive Program. The incentive program was off to a great start at the beginning of 2021 but is now slowing down. Families have been issued vouchers, are out searching for a unit to rent, and we still have funds available. Help us in spreading the word about this program.

- (1) New Section 8 Landlords – Do you know of any property owners/landlords who have a Section 8 Family who is interested in renting one of their units? All new landlords, or who have not partnered with us in the past three years, are eligible to receive \$500 when they sign a Housing Assistance Payment Contract with us.
- (2) Landlord Recommended – Any current non-Section 8 family who is currently renting from you, if they sign up for Section 8, found eligible for the program, and remain in their current unit, you will receive a \$100 bonus after a Housing Assistance Payment Contract is executed.

ODDBALL HOLIDAYS TO CELEBRATE

January 28th – National Kazoo Day

January 31st – Backwards Day

February 4th – Thank Your Mailman Day

February 6th – Eat Ice Cream for Breakfast Day

February 11th – Make a Friend



March 5th – Learn What Your Name Means Day

March 14th – National Pi Day

March 22nd – National Goof Off Day

March 26th – Make Up Your Own Holiday Day

DON'T LET THE BED BUGS BITE



Just the thought of bed bugs gives many people the creepy crawlies. The thought of a little tiny bug living in the crevices of our bed, inside outlets, curtains, in places we wouldn't even think of. They just don't bite causing a swelling and itchy red welt, but they also shed their skin (just like a snake does), and if heavily infested bugs have been known to have an odor.

One may think, "it won't happen to me"; but it can. They are very easy to pick up, luggage, kids school bags, even clothes. Caribou Housing Agency and the Caribou Code Enforcement Office have had several reports throughout the past few months, regarding bed bugs in the Caribou area. As a tenant, you and others in your building have steps to help combat the pest.

Before Moving In:

It is illegal for a landlord to rent a unit that he knows (or suspects) to have bedbugs. He must also tell the family whether other nearby apartments in the building have bedbug problems. The Landlord must disclose the last date that the unit or adjacent units were inspected and found to be free of a bedbug infestation.

What happens if a unit is infested with bedbugs?

First, the family must tell your landlord immediately. It is recommended that the tenant notify your landlord in writing. (A sample letter from Pine Tree Legal, is included in this newsletter). After that, both the family and the landlord must make efforts to evict the pests.

1. After the tenant notifies the landlord, he has five (5) days to inspect the unit.
2. Upon inspection and finding bedbugs, the landlord must contact a state certified pest control expert within 10 days.
3. The landlord must take all reasonable steps to treat the problem as determined by a pest control agent.
4. After receiving reasonable notice (24-hour notice) from the landlord, the family needs to grant access to the unit for the landlord and/or pest control agent access for an inspection. The initial inspection may include only a visual and manual inspection of all bedding, upholstered furniture, and other belongings.
5. The family, needs to cooperate in the measures that are needed to be taken to get rid of the bedbugs.

What happens if the tenant cannot afford to "cooperate?"

To help get rid of the bedbug, the family may be asked to move furniture, launder clothing, linens, or take other steps to assist in the process. If the family cannot afford to do these things or are not able to do them, a landlord shall offer to make reasonable assistance available to a tenant who is not able to comply due to financial or physical limitation(s). Prior to the landlord taking the necessary steps (i.e. moving furniture, laundering linens), he must tell the tenant how much the cost will be and offer a 6-month repayment period (or longer).

What if the landlord doesn't do anything to get rid of the bedbugs?

A landlord who fails to comply with the provisions of the treatment of bedbug infestation is liable for a penalty of \$250 or actual damages, whichever is greater, plus attorney fees. This is after, the tenant can show (1) he didn't cause the problem; (2) timely notice was given to the landlord; (3) the landlord didn't take steps to get rid of the bedbugs; and (4) the tenant didn't owe the landlord any back rent when the notice was given.

What happens if the tenant doesn't comply with the pest control measures?

A landlord may take action and obtain relief against a tenant who fails to provide reasonable access or comply with reasonable request for inspection or treatment or otherwise fails to comply with bedbug control measures. If the court may find that the tenant failed to comply, the court may issue a temporary order or interim relief to carry out the provisions including, but not limited to: (1) granting the landlord access to the unit; (2) granting the landlord the right to engage in bedbug control measures; and (3) requiring the tenant to comply with specified bedbug control measures or assessing the tenant with cost and damages related to the tenant's noncompliance.

(Per Maine Statute §6021-A. Treatment of Bedbug Infestation; Pine Tree Legal, Rights of Maine Renters: Unsafe or Unfit Housing)

10 REASONS WHY SHOULD JOIN THE FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY (FSS) PROGRAM NOW

It's time to begin mapping out your New Year's resolutions. The first item on your list should be joining the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program! The benefit of this program is to help you and your family become independent and self-reliant. If you are ready to put your life on track, and eventually transition off assisted housing, this is the program for you! Below, are ten reasons why you should join the FSS program:

- 10). You are tired of reporting all household changes to the housing authority
- 9). You need to obtain your GED/ high school diploma
- 8). You need assistance in repairing your credit rating
- 7). You need a driver's license
- 6). You need to obtain your associates/bachelor's degree
- 5). You need career training
- 4.) You need a resume
- 3). You want an escrow/savings account
- 2). You want to become a homeowner



And the #1 reason why you should join the FSS program is:

You need a job/you need a better job/you need a job that pays more money!

If you can identify with any of these items, please contact our office and speak to Sue Ouellette, FSS Coordinator, 207-493-5977; to complete an interest form and obtain additional information.

REPAYMENT AGREEMENTS

A Repayment Agreement is when you have to pay back to the Housing Agency when your rent should have increased as a result of a change in income or family size. Avoid repayments by reporting your income and family size changes within 10 days of occurrence! A missed repayment could also cause you to lose your Section 8. Please report all changes on time!

LANDLORDS' CORNER

How do I request a rent increase?

Rent increase requests must be submitted on CHA's Rent Increase Request Form. Incomplete forms will not be processed. The form may be accessed on the Caribou Housing Agency's webpage, Forms & Documents, Landlord Forms.

A rent increase request must be submitted to CHA for approval 60 days prior to the requested effective date. CHA will review the request to ensure the requested increase is reasonable as compared to similar unassisted units. CHA will notify the owner and family in writing if the request is approved or denied. No rent increase will be approved during the initial term of the lease.

What if I have problems with an assisted tenant????

The only added responsibility you have as a Section 8 landlord is keeping us, your business partner, informed. Send us copies of lease violation notices, eviction paperwork, notices to vacate or any other paperwork that may be relevant to our partnership.

We cannot take action regarding lease violations unless you take action because we are not a party to the lease, but once we are notified of a lease violation, it becomes a program violation.

HOW TO BECOME A HOMEOWNER IN THE SECTION 8 PROGRAM



Many individuals dream of owning their very own home. Caribou Housing Agency provides a way to achieve dreams of homeownership through the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership Program.

To participate in the program, individuals must first qualify for assistance through CHA's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Rental Assistance Program and be a current participant for a minimum of one-year. Individuals must also meet certain income requirements to qualify for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership Program. An individual must have worked full time (at least 32 hours per week) for at least one year. Two part-time jobs may meet this requirement. Secondly, an individual's earned annual income must total at least \$14,500.

There are a few exceptions to the income requirements. If the head of household or spouse is more than 62 years old or receives disability income, the requirement for working does not apply. However, the disability income must be at least \$9,000 per year. If the head of household or spouse is elderly but not disabled, the work requirement again does not apply but the income must be at least \$14,500.

The next step is to address credit issues. It is important for individuals to know what is on their credit report. A Homeownership Coordinator can help individuals look at their credit and know what needs to be done to help them prepare to obtain a mortgage loan. Once an individual has met the income requirements and cleared any credit issues, a homebuyer education class will be offered. The Homeownership Coordinator will assist the family in locating a local homebuyer education class. Classes are normally conducted in one or two days. Individuals who have completed the homebuyer education class will receive a homeownership voucher and more information about the homebuying process. Individuals ready to learn more about owning a home call Sue Ouellette, Homeownership Coordinator, 207-493-5977.

STRUGGLING WITH THE STRESS OF COVID-19?

StrengthenME offers stress management tools, emotional support resources, and program and community connections that promote wellness, resilience, empowerment, and recovery. StrengthenME is free, confidential, anonymous, and available to anyone in Maine.

Community health workers are available from 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. by contacting [207-762-4851](tel:207-762-4851).

2021 Direct Deposit Payment Schedule

It is the policy of the Caribou Housing Agency that monthly Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) and Utility Reimbursements (UR) will be deposited on the first business Friday of the month.

Please note: New HAP Contracts executed after the first of the month will have a mid-month pro-rated payment.

	First of Month	Mid-Month
January	1/8/2021	1/15/2021
February	2/5/2021	2/19/2021
March	3/5/2021	3/19/2021
April	4/2/2021	4/16/2021
May	5/7/2021	5/21/2021
June	6/4/2021	6/18/2021
July	7/2/2021	7/16/2021
August	8/6/2021	8/20/2021
September	9/3/2021	9/17/2021
October	10/1/2021	10/15/2021
November	11/5/2021	11/19/2021
December	12/3/2021	12/17/2021

If you do not receive your deposit into your account on the scheduled day, please contact Lisa Plourde at (207) 493-5971 or lplourde@cariboumaine.org

“NO PETS” POLICIES

Must be Waived for Persons with Disabilities

The Fair Housing Act requires all public and private housing providers to make reasonable accommodations in their rules, policies, practices, and services when needed to provide persons with disabilities an equal opportunity to use or enjoy a dwelling. This includes waiving “no pets” policies for persons with disabilities.

A HUD notice states “An assistance animal is not a pet. It is an animal that works, provides assistance, or performs a task for the benefit of a person with a disability, or provides emotional support that alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a persons’ disability.

Assistance animals are not limited to dogs alone and may sometimes be referred to as service animals or support animals.

The Fair Housing Act makes it illegal for landlords to do the following:

- refuse to rent to tenants with assistance animals
- ignore requests for reasonable accommodations
- evict tenant solely for having assistance animals



Individuals denied a reasonable accommodation may file a complaint by contacting HUD’s Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at (800) 669-9777 (voice) or (800) 927-9275 (TTY).. Housing discrimination complaints may also be filed going to www.hud.gov/fairhousing.

HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT(HUD) NEWS

HCV LANDLORD RESOURCES

Last year, 2020, HUD released the [HCV Landlord Resources](#), a webpage to help landlords get started in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. Information that can be found on this page ranges from:

- Steps to become an HCV Landlord,
- Myth-busting and Benefits for HCV Landlords,
- Flowchart of HCV Lease Up Process for Landlords,
- Inspection Requirements,
- The Tenant's Obligation,
- COVID-19 Tools for HCV Landlords, and much more

The screenshot shows the HUD.gov website. The top navigation bar includes the HUD logo, the text "HUD.GOV", and links for "SECRETARY OF HUD", "WHAT WE DO", "HUMANS OF HUD", "FIND SHELTER", and "CORONAVIRUS RESOURCES". Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links for "PIH HOME", "ABOUT PIH", "PIH ONE-STOP TOOL", "PUBLIC HOUSING", "OPERATING FUND", "CAPFUND", "INDIAN HOUSING", and "MORE". The main content area features a breadcrumb trail: "Home / Program Offices / Public and Indian Housing / PIH / Office of Housing Choice Vouchers / HCV Landlord Resources". The title "HCV LANDLORD RESOURCES" is prominently displayed, followed by a paragraph explaining the HCV program: "The housing choice voucher (HCV) program is the federal government's primary program for assisting very low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market. Since housing assistance is provided on behalf of the HCV tenant, participants are able to find their own housing, including single-family homes, townhouses and apartments. Housing choice vouchers are administered locally by public housing agencies (PHAs) that receive federal funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to administer the HCV program. This means that the tenant, landlord and PHA all have obligations and responsibilities under the HCV program."

FIND SHELTER TOOL

Last week, Secretary Ben Carson introduced the [Find Shelter Tool](#), a new resource developed by the Department to help individuals and families in need to locate nearby resources. Specifically, users of the tool can search for facilities that provide shelter, clothing, health clinics, and food pantries for those in need. Find Shelter provides mapping and contact information for these service providers, and the site is optimized for mobile use.

The screenshot shows the "find shelter" tool interface. The top navigation bar is identical to the HUD.gov page. Below the navigation bar, the "find shelter" logo is displayed with the tagline "Helping people facing homelessness find resources in their communities." The main section is titled "I am searching for:" and features four large buttons with icons: "Shelter" (house icon), "Food Pantries" (fork and knife icon), "Health Clinics" (cross icon), and "Clothing" (shirt icon). At the bottom, there are two input fields: "Enter location" and "Enter keywords (optional)", followed by a green "Search" button.

FIND SHELTER FAQ'S

What is the Find Shelter Tool?

The Find Shelter Tool is an online resource that helps vulnerable populations and their fellow community members locate resources like food, shelter, health care and clothing in their neighborhoods. Particularly during the coronavirus pandemic we've seen a surge in Neighbors Helping Neighbors which has been an important force in serving vulnerable Americans. The Find Shelter tool will only bolster this effort get people the help they need.

How Do I Use Find Shelter?

Access the Find Shelter Tool by visiting hud.gov/findshelter or by scanning the QR code on the print materials with the camera on your mobile device. Enter a zip code or location in which you would like to find services and filter by key word or type of service provider. The search results will offer a menu of providers from which you can choose.

What Kind of Information Can I Access on Find Shelter?

Find Shelter includes mapping and contact information for entities within communities that provide resources to individuals and families in need. Specifically, Find Shelter includes search features for food pantries, clothing resources, shelter, and health care facilities.

How Can Find Shelter Be Used in My Community?

The Find Shelter site contains links to downloadable posters and palm cards that can be easily printed. Hang a poster in your local fire station, Public Housing Authority, library, or place of worship. Palm cards are a smaller format option that can be handed out easily.

Can I Access Find Shelter on My Cell Phone?

Yes, the Find Shelter site is optimized for use on a cell phone web browser. Scan the QR code on your device to locate the website or visit hud.gov/findshelter.



Scan the QR code to access
HUD's Find Shelter tool



EVICITION MORATORIUM EXTENDED

On January 20, 2021, his first day in office, President Biden extended Center for Disease Control's (CDC) nationwide eviction moratorium for nonpayment of rent from January 31st until March 31st.

During the eviction moratorium, Landlords,

- Can still send late notices to tenants, but cannot include fees/charges for nonpayment of rent.
- Cannot evict for owing rent if the tenant has had a loss of income and meet CDC criteria.
- Can evict for other lease or program violations (i.e. criminal activity, damages to the unit, violating a lease term).

HCV Tenants,

- Must continue to pay their share of the rent.
- Report any/all changes in income, daycare expenses, medical expenses to the Housing Agency.
- A family could lose their rental assistance due to not paying their share of the rent, breach in Family Obligations.

There are not special COVID rules that say a tenant doesn't have to pay their rent.

MAINE NOTICE OF A SUSPECTED BEDBUG INFESTATION

TO: _____

The unit which I rent from you is located at:

Pursuant to Maine State Law, 14 M.R.S.A. § 6021-A, a landlord has five (5) days from when he or she receives notice that there may be a bed bug infestation to conduct an inspection to determine if the apartment has bed bugs. If the inspection shows that there are bedbugs, the landlord has ten (10) days to contact a pest control agent who is certified pursuant Maine State Law 22 M.R.S.A. § 1471-D. I hereby request that you conduct an inspection and take reasonable efforts to treat the infestation as directed by a certified pest control agent.

Please be advised that if you do not comply with this Maine State Law, you may be liable for my actual damages as a result of the infestation or \$250 (whichever is higher) and attorney's fees pursuant to 14 M.R.S.A. § 6021-A(4).

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

Deliver this notice in hand to your landlord, or send by certified mail, Return Receipt Requested.
Keep a copy for your records.

DID YOU REMEMBER TO REPORT YOUR CHANGES?

To be able to assist participants in an efficient and timely manner, the Housing Agency requires that participants report **ALL** changes to their household:

The following updates must be reported in writing:

- Request to add a new household member
- Household member moved out
- New household income
- Increase/decrease in household income

Any/all changes must be reported to the Caribou Housing Agency **within 10 days** of the change/addition. Failure to report the change within a timely manner could result in a breach in your Family Obligations, and possible termination of your Section 8 Voucher assistance.

For more information, contact the Caribou Housing Agency.

Caribou Housing Agency
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