

Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program

The California Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program is a federal initiative administered by local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs).¹ Section 8 vouchers provide subsidies for low income families to access safe, affordable, and sanitary housing. To be eligible, applicants must fall below the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) income limits and must be a U.S. citizen or have qualifying immigrant status. Applicants are separated into three categories based on household earnings compared to area median income: low income (80%), very low income (50%), and extremely low income (30%).

Demand for Section 8 frequently exceeds housing capacity or funding levels, and applicants are often placed on long waitlists, so it is important to apply as soon as possible to shorten the time between approval, waitlist placement, and eventually being awarded housing vouchers.² Once a family is approved for Section 8 vouchers (which can take years), they locate an appropriate home where the owner agrees to participate in the assistance program. Every month, the Section 8 subsidy gets paid to the landlord. The family must pay 30% of their monthly adjusted gross income, and may need to pay more than that (but no more than 40% of monthly adjusted gross income) if the voucher does not cover the entire rent.³

In some instances, families may be able to gain priority on a waitlist—if they are [homeless](#) or living in substandard housing, are being involuntarily displaced, or are paying more than half of the household income for rent. These priorities are often determined at a local level by housing authorities.⁴

Due at least in part to a slashing of the HUD budget on the federal level, subsidized housing provided by HUD is inadequate to demand, especially in metropolitan areas. Some areas, such as Los Angeles and San Francisco, have created or subsidized affordable and below-market-rate housing in addition to administering their local Section 8 programs.⁵

More Information

HUD – Housing Choice Vouchers Fact Sheet

https://www.hud.gov/topics/housing_choice_voucher_program_section_8

¹ The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) website contains a list of local PHAs: https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts/ca.

² A broad overview of the eligibility requirements and application process can be found at U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Housing Choice Vouchers Fact Sheet*, https://www.hud.gov/topics/housing_choice_voucher_program_section_8.

³ *Id.*

⁴ For example, in 2017 the Sacramento's Board of Supervisors and City Council voted to add individuals experiencing homelessness to the top of their voucher list. Steve Large, *Sacramento Leaders Vote To Give Homeless Priority On Affordable Housing Wait Lists*, CBS Sacramento, Feb. 1, 2017, <http://sacramento.cbslocal.com/2017/02/01/sacramento-leaders-vote-to-give-homeless-priority-on->

[affordable-housing-wait-lists/](#). The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles prioritizes applicants who are disabled, elderly, in school, or working. See Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, *Applying for Public Housing*, <http://www.hacla.org/apply-public-housing/applyforph>.

⁵ See, e.g., San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development, *Affordable Housing Resources*, <http://sfmohcd.org/affordable-housing-resources-0#affordableRentalHousing>.