

Applicant Frequently Asked Questions:

Do you have emergency housing assistance?

No. ACHA does not have any emergency housing in either its public housing or HCV programs.

What does it mean that your HCVP waiting list is closed?

The ACHA Housing Choice Voucher Program is still operating. However, applications for new vouchers are not being accepted at this time due to the large number of families on the current waiting list for assistance. When it opens, announcements will appear on the Allegheny County Housing Authority website, www.achsng.com.

I'm a victim of domestic violence. Does this give me waiting list priority?

Yes **if you are currently on the waiting list**. ACHA has preferences that will move a family to the top of the waiting list. The Allegheny County Housing Authority, according to our local needs and preferences, will select families based on the following preferences:

Category 1 Preferences: (1) Applicants for whom a law enforcement agency is seeking housing as an accommodation for its witness protection or confidential informant programs; and (2) victims of domestic violence. Preferences in this Category have equal priority.

Category 2 Preference: Residents of the Allegheny County Housing Authority public housing program asked to move due to the modernization of his or her unit or community regardless of whether the waiting list is open or closed.

Category 3 Preference: Successful graduates of the Allegheny County Housing Authority public housing Family Self-Sufficiency Program.

Category 4 Preference: Veterans with discharge other than dishonorable.

Category 5 Preference: Homeless preference to permit no more than 50 vouchers to be given to families experiencing homelessness with or without disabilities. All applicants must be referred through the Allegheny County Department of Human Services.

Category 6 Preference: Preference to permit no more than 50 vouchers to be given to families experiencing homelessness; with a UPMC health plan and meet a criterion of unplanned health crisis.

Category 7 Preference: Preference to permit no more than 25 vouchers to be given to the Allegheny County Department of Human Services for use in providing supportive housing opportunities for individuals with opioid use disorders.

Preferences listed in Category 1 have priority over preferences listed in Category 2 and will therefore be offered housing before those listed in Category 2, and the same is true for the other Categories. The date and time of application will be noted on each application and will be utilized to determine the sequence that each individual with a preference is offered housing within the categories.

If an applicant qualifies for multiple categories, the highest one will control.

A preference does not guarantee admission. The applicant must still meet the Allegheny County Housing Authority's eligibility and screening criteria.

An applicant who lives in a violent neighborhood or is fearful of other violence outside the household does not qualify for the preference of victim of domestic violence.

How do I change my address with the ACHA?

You must tell the ACHA in person or in writing of any change in your address. To submit a change of address please email s8tenants@achsng.com.

Please note: changing your address with the United States Postal Service does not change your address with the Allegheny County Housing Authority. You must update us separately.

How do I cancel my application?

You may cancel your application at any time by writing to the ACHA at the email address listed above. When cancelling your application, please include your name and social security number.

I'm at the top of the waiting list – what now?

You will be sent a letter stating you will need to complete an eligibility application. Before you receive a voucher you will need to provide a copy of social security cards for every person who will reside with you along with a birth certificate for each member of the household. In addition, please provide a copy of all income sources within the household. The ACHA will verify all information as well as conduct a criminal background check. We will also check the Debts Owed module in the HUD Enterprise Income Verification system to ensure you do not owe money to another Housing Authority. If you have been determined eligible, you will be notified when and how you will receive your voucher.

What if someone in my family does not have a social security number/card?

It is required that all members of your household have a social security number/card. If you cannot locate your card, a print out from the social security office documenting your social security number is acceptable.

What if someone in my family does not have a photo ID?

It is required that photo IDs are submitted for everyone in your household over the age of 18. There are no exceptions.

What if someone in my family does not have a birth certificate?

It is required that either birth certificates, a valid driver's license or an identification card issued by a government agency be submitted for each household member.

May I add or remove others from my application/voucher?

You may request to add or remove family members from your application/voucher. However, any request to add a person to your voucher must be approved by the Allegheny County Housing Authority. All adult members of the household will be screened for a criminal background and any debts owed to another Housing Authority. Any member of household wishing to be removed must prove that they will not be living in the subsidized unit.

May I rent from a relative?

The owner/landlord may not be the parent, child, grandparent, grandchild, sister, brother or spouse of any member of the assisted family. Renting from a family member may be approved as a reasonable accommodation for a family member who is a person with disabilities. If approved, both the voucher holder and owner/landlord will be notified in writing.

Can the ACHA deny assistance?

Yes. If you do not qualify based on income, or you have a negative criminal background, or you have an unpaid debt to ACHA or another housing authority you will be issued a determination of ineligibility. You may request a hearing if you do not agree with the information that determined you ineligible.

Can I ask for a voucher extension?

All vouchers are issued for at least 60 days. A voucher extension **may** be issued based upon an approved reasonable accommodation. Any person awarded additional time on the voucher will be notified in writing.

My voucher expired – now what?

If your voucher has expired, you are eligible to reapply to the waiting list **if** the waiting list is open. If the waiting list is closed, you will not be able to reapply until such time that the list re-opens.

If I'm issued a Housing Choice Voucher, may I use it outside Allegheny County?

If you provided an Allegheny County address (on your original application –not including the city of Pittsburgh or McKeesport), once you've been issued the voucher, you may take it to another housing authority anywhere in the country who has a HCV program. This is "porting out".

If you did not provide an address within ACHA jurisdiction on your original application, you must live within the ACHA jurisdiction at least a year before you are permitted to use elsewhere.

If you lived in the city of Pittsburgh or the city of McKeesport when you applied to the ACHA, you will be permitted to port to those 2 jurisdictions **only**.

Your Housing Counselor will be able to advise you if you are permitted to port out at the time of voucher issuance if you are unsure.

Do you have a listing of Section 8 landlords you can send me?

The ACHA uses PAHousingSearch.com website or GoSection8.com to list landlords who accept vouchers. You may access available units by going to the above websites.

I found a unit! What happens now?

You will give your voucher and Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) to your prospective landlord. He/she will complete and return to the Housing Authority. The rent will be reviewed to ensure it is reasonable and affordable. If the landlord has returned proof of paid local taxes with the RFTA, it will be scheduled for an inspection; usually within 14 business days. Your landlord will notify you if the unit passes or fails the inspection. It is very important that you keep close contact with your prospective landlord during the process.

When should I pay my security deposit?

Many landlords will ask for the security deposit when you wish to rent their unit. This is not unusual. However, it is recommended that you receive the return policy in writing should you or the landlord decide not to rent the unit.

My unit passed – when can I get my keys?

You may begin your lease with your landlord the day the unit passes inspection. The Allegheny County Housing Authority begins contracts on the 1st and the 15th of each month. If your unit passes inspection on the 2nd of the month, the contract (and your lease) will begin on the 15th of that month.

My unit hasn't passed inspection, but my landlord said I can move in.

Please be aware ACHA will not pay subsidy on your behalf to the landlord until your unit passes inspection and it is under contract. If you move in before this time period, the ACHA **will not** pay any portion of your rent and your landlord may be able to charge you the full amount of rent.

What is a reasonable accommodation? Can I get one?

Sometimes people with disabilities may need a reasonable accommodation in order to take full advantage of the Allegheny County Housing Authority housing programs and related services.

A reasonable accommodation is a change, adaption, or modification to the ACHA's rules, policies, practices or services which are necessary to provide a qualified individual with a handicap or disability an equal opportunity to participate fully in services, programs or activities provided by the ACHA.

Your request should be made to your Housing Counselor. Requests can also be made at any time to the Allegheny County Housing Authority's Program Accessibility Administrator, Kate Vitek. A request may be made either orally or in writing. A request can also be made on behalf of the individual by a family member or other agent.

What if I have an individual need?

Please tell us if you need assistance of any kind to access our services. If you need an interpreter or a translator, tell us, and we will provide one for you.

I have a specific question that isn't answered here. Where do I get the answer?

If your question isn't answered in this list, please email your question(s) to: s8tenants@achsng.com. You will receive an answer via email.