

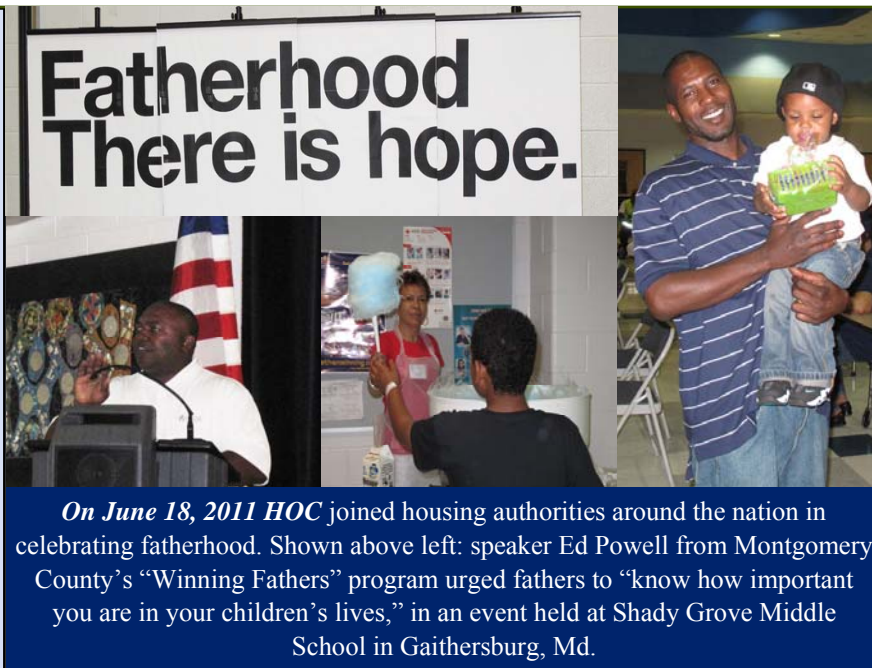


# Connections

A publication of the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County

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On June 18, 2011 HOC joined housing authorities around the nation in celebrating fatherhood. Shown above left: speaker Ed Powell from Montgomery County's "Winning Fathers" program urged fathers to "know how important you are in your children's lives," in an event held at Shady Grove Middle School in Gaithersburg, Md.

## CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENTS OF HOC'S HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM

The Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) is required by law to verify the citizenship status of all applicants and participants in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program.

In order to qualify for the HCV Program at least one person in your household must have eligible immigration status in one of the following categories:

- You are a U.S. citizen (born in the United States);
- You are a naturalized citizen (not born in the United States); or
- You are a non-citizen, lawfully present in the United States.

If you are a non-citizen lawfully present in the U.S., you are required to verify the citizenship status of all applicants and participants in your household, if you participate in the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

*You can find a list of the acceptable verification documents on page 4 of this newsletter.*

If you are unable to provide your housing specialist with one of the verification documents listed on page 4 of this newsletter for each member of your household, or if you are illegally living in the United States, the housing subsidy paid on your behalf will be prorated.

For example, if your household consists of two persons, one illegal immigrant and one U.S. citizen, one of two persons or 50 percent of the household is legally admitted to the U.S. As a result, HOC will only pay 50 percent of the subsidy and you will be required to pay the difference.

*Continued on page 4*

## Be a Good Neighbor!

The summer is a great time to meet new neighbors and to make new friends. Just about every child looks forward to playing outdoors during the summer months.

Good relationships made during the summer can last throughout the year. Parents -- take the time to meet your neighbors and pave the way for lifetime friendships. ■

## Using Housing Choice Vouchers in a New Location:

# All About Portability

You may have heard the word “portability” used when describing the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. It is a feature of the voucher program that enables voucher families to move to new areas when the need arises.

Portability means that an eligible family who has been issued a voucher may use that voucher to lease a unit anywhere in the United States where there is a housing agency operating an HCV Program.

There are certain procedures and rules to keep in mind when “porting” a voucher to a new location.

**New Vouchers:** Families are not permitted to move with their voucher outside of Montgomery County during the first year of their voucher use.

**Must be in Good Standing:**

Families will not be able to port with their voucher if they have violated a family obligation, if they owe HOC or their landlord money, if they have received a utility disconnection or cancellation notice or if the family has moved out of their home in violation of their lease.

### HOW TO “PORT OUT” OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

- Contact the housing authority in the area where you wish to move. (A list of, and contact information for, housing authorities can be found by searching for housing authorities on the HUD website: [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov))



*Keep in mind that if you move to another jurisdiction, the size and value of your voucher may change according to the new housing authority's guidelines.*

- Find out what procedures to follow from the housing authority in the area where you want to move.
- Complete the portability sheet in HOC's relocation packet and supply the required notice to vacate to your landlord & HOC.
- Your paperwork will be sent from HOC to the other housing authority.

HOC will also accept families with valid vouchers from other jurisdictions. The family must submit a Request for Tenancy Approval form for an eligible home during the term of the voucher. ■



### E-MAIL US AT [HOCMC.ORG](mailto:hocmc.org)

Sometimes the best way to reach your housing specialist at HOC is through e-mail.

Every HOC employee's e-mail address consists of their first name followed by a period and their last name @ hocmc.org. (for example: [mary.brown@hocmc.org](mailto:mary.brown@hocmc.org))

You can also e-mail the department that oversees the voucher program at: [hcvprogram@hocmc.org](mailto:hcvprogram@hocmc.org)

We promise you'll get a response quickly! ■

### HUD ISSUES NEW INCOME GUIDELINES

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is required by law to set income limits that determine eligibility of applicants for HUD's assisted housing programs. FY 2011 income limits are:

Family Size	Income Limit
1	\$37,150
2	\$42,450
3	\$47,750
4	\$53,050
5	\$57,300
6	\$61,550
7	\$65,800



Want to know the latest news from HOC? Join our Facebook page by searching for the Housing Opportunities Commission on Facebook. Choose to “Like” us and you'll never miss important news about HOC.



## Moving to a New Home? Don't Forget the RFTA\* and Other Forms!

(\*Request for Tenancy Approval)

**Y**ou've found the apartment! It fits all your needs, the rent seems reasonable and the landlord knows you are going to be using a voucher. **Now What?**

There are a number of forms and steps that HOC requires before the agency can process your request to move to a new address.

### FORMS TO BE COMPLETED

▶ Your landlord must complete the **Request for Tenancy Approval Form (RFTA)** and an **IRS W-9** form. Make sure your landlord completes *all* sections of the RFTA, including the type of **utilities** and who is responsible for paying for them.


*Please make sure the property owner includes a working phone number and, if possible, an e-mail address.*

▶ Your landlord must include his or her rental license number on the RFTA. It is *critical* for your landlord to indicate **when** the property will be available for **inspection**. Your landlord must complete and sign the lower left hand corner of page 2 of the RFTA.

▶ You must complete and sign the lower right hand corner of page 2 of the RFTA.

### HOC'S DECISION

▶ When HOC receives the completed forms, your specialist will determine if you qualify for the new unit and the following will take place:



**The following forms MUST be returned to HOC:**

- **The completed RFTA**
- **The completed W-9 form**
- **The Notice to Vacate (completed by your current landlord.)**

**Without these items, your request to move will not be processed and your move will be delayed.**

1. Your qualifications will be determined based on the minimum/maximum amount of income on your 30/40 sheet.
2. If you qualify for the unit based on income, HOC will schedule an inspection of the unit. All homes must meet Housing Quality Standards (HQS). HOC checks to ensure the unit is a safe place to live.
3. If the property passes the HQS inspection, HOC will conduct a Rent Reasonableness test to determine whether the rent is reasonable for the unit and area where you want to live.
4. If the rent is determined reasonable HOC will notify you and you will be approved

- to move into the unit.
5. If the rent is NOT reasonable, HOC will try to negotiate a reasonable rent with the landlord. If the owner is not willing to lower the rent, HOC will contact you and you must select another unit.

▶ It is recommended that you not move into the unit if you have not received the approval from HOC. If you move in prior to HOC's approval, you will be responsible for the full rent.

▶ Once the unit has passed inspection and HOC has approved your move-in, you must sign an initial lease with your landlord for a minimum of one year.

### TIMING

HOC's goal is to complete the entire process within 10 to 15 days of receipt of the RFTA, if all the paperwork is completed accurately and the unit is ready for inspection. ■

### FOR YOUR LANDLORD...

▶ HOC has just published a guide for landlords to help them learn and understand more about HOC and their role as a landlord.

The guide can be downloaded from HOC's website: [www.hocmc.org](http://www.hocmc.org). (Type "Landlord Guide" in the Search Box on the home page.)

## New Subsidy Standards:

### How Many Bedrooms for Your Family Size?

In January 2011, HOC changed the rules regarding the number of bedrooms that voucher families can qualify for, depending upon the size of the family. The new rules are the same as those that apply to families living in HOC Public Housing.

#### The new standards are:

- The head of household and spouse/partner are assigned one bedroom;
- Two persons below the age of 12, regardless of sex and relationship, are assigned one bedroom;
- Persons of opposite sex, ages 12 and older, are not required to share a bedroom;
- Persons of the same sex will share a bedroom, regardless of age;
- An approved live-in aide will have a separate bedroom.



*Commission members (above) at HOC passed new Housing Choice Voucher subsidy standards in January 2011.*

The previous standard (adopted in 2005) required each additional two persons in a household to share a bedroom, regardless of sex, age or relationship.

Both old and new standards assign one bedroom to the head of household and spouse/partner and both old and new standards allow an approved live-in aide to have a separate bedroom. ■

◆ **The subsidy standard change was effective 1/20/11 for all new clients to the HCV program, all current clients who moved within Montgomery County and all annual recertifications effective 4/1/11 or later.**

# FRAUD

## & HOC's Voucher Program

Fraud is the intentional, false representation of information in order to gain some benefit or advantage.

When an individual in the Housing Choice Voucher Program commits fraud, he or she is not only committing a crime but is also reducing the amount of funding that could be used to serve other families.

If you are aware or suspect fraud is being committed by a HCV participant, contact the **HOC fraud line: 240-773-8808.** ■

### Citizenship, from Page 1

Moreover, if HOC is required to prorate your housing subsidy, it is likely that you will not qualify for the HCV program or be allowed to move to a new unit.

This is because you are prohibited from paying more than 40 percent of your income when you move to a new home.

If no one in the home has eligible immigration status or if you live alone and do not have eligible immigration status, you will not qualify for the HCV Program.

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website provides citizenship information at: [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) or you can call their toll free number at: **800-375-5283.** ■

### Verifying Legal Non-Citizen Status

If you are a non-citizen who is lawfully present in the United States, you must verify your citizenship with your HOC housing specialist.

Following is a list of documents that will verify your legal status.

- Resident Alien card
- Form I-551 Alien Registration Receipt Card
- Form I-94 Arrival-Departure Record annotated with one of the following:

- *Admitted as a refugee pursuant to Sec. 207*
- *Sec. 208 or asylum*
- *Sec. 243(b) or deportation stayed by Attorney General*
- *Paroled as per Sec. 21(d)(5) of the UCSCIS\**

- Form I-94 Arrival Departure Record with no annotation accompanied by:

- *A final court decision granting asylum*
- *A letter from USCIS\* granting asylum*
- *A court decision granting withholding of deportation*
- *Form I-688 Temporary Resident card annotated "Sec. 245A" or "Sec. 210"*

- Form I-688B Employment Authorization card annotated "Provision of Law 274a.12(11) or Provision of Law 274a.12"
- A receipt by USCIS indicating that it has received an application for issuance of a replacement document in one of the above listed categories. ■

\*U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

## THE FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM:

### OPENING NEW DOORS TO THE FUTURE

El Programa Para la auto-suficiencia de la familia  
(llame Ud. A Margaret Chapman 301-869-9291)

The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program is available to Housing Choice Voucher clients and Public Housing residents who want to increase their earnings, develop career skills and build savings.

You could overcome barriers to success if you enroll in FSS and work regularly with your FSS case manager on short- and long-term goals such as: career development, job training/education, budgeting and problem-solving skills.

#### The FSS Advantage:

- Graduates have raised their earnings by an average of \$19,000 during their participation in the program.
- 18 % of our graduates became home owners.
- As you raise your earnings, your FSS savings account grows and that money is yours when you graduate!

*FSS es un programa con el propósito de ayudar a las familias a mejorar sus ingresos. Le ayudará una consejera a encontrar recursos. Para más información en español, llame Ud. A Margaret Chapman, 301-869-9291. ■*

**For further information contact FSS at:  
240-773-9393.**



*Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD) met with a group of HOC Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) participants and staff earlier this year during a visit to Capitol Hill. .*

### Your feedback needed... Neighborhood Network

HOC voucher clients are offered tuition-free classes at Neighborhood Network at the Tony Davis Resource Center at HOC's Seneca Ridge in Germantown.

If you have participated in any of the classes, please fill out a survey to help HOC determine how to improve and build upon the programs there.

The survey is online at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SRNN> ■

#### Computer Classroom at HOC's Seneca Ridge Neighborhood Network



## UPDATE:

# Voucher Waiting List Preferences

When HOC opened its Housing Choice Voucher (formerly called Section 8) waiting list in 2008, nearly 20,000 families applied to the program.

Unfortunately, HOC cannot provide housing assistance to each of these applicants. HOC's housing programs have applicant preferences, which provide the agency with a way to determine which families to serve first.

#### Three Preferences

Each application is reviewed to determine if a family qualifies for one or more preferences. The more preferences a family has, the better chance they have of being selected for a

voucher. Because HOC is set up to serve Montgomery County residents, the main preference is for families who live or work in the county. If applicants do not meet this preference at the time they apply, they will not get called up from the waiting list. There are just too many applicants on the list who live or work in Montgomery County.

Another preference on the voucher waiting list is given for applicants that live in HOC Public Housing and have been notified that they must move because they are living in a home that is too large for their household. They will receive a preference if HOC is unable to transfer them to a smaller Public Housing unit.

The final preference is one that does

not come up very often. HOC will award a voucher to a family that has been displaced by a state or county development project. Montgomery County government -- not HOC -- must certify that this has happened and that the family is qualified for the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

#### Meeting Montgomery County's Needs Fairly

The preference system is in place to allow HOC to select families from its waiting list in a fair manner. The preferences reflect the policies that HOC has adopted as the agency works to provide housing for as many families as possible. These preferences allow HOC to serve the greatest number of families as fairly as possible. ■

# The Resident Advisory Board (RAB) Works For You!!!

**WELCOME TO THE RAB CORNER.** Each issue of *Connections* includes an update from the RAB on its activities.

The RAB has been actively working to bring your concerns, ideas and recommendations for change and improvement to HOC for action. We are your voice. The RAB membership includes representatives from every segment of HOC's housing portfolio including Housing Choice Voucher holders, Public Housing and Tax Credit participants, residents representing specific programs such as the elderly, Supportive Housing and Shelter Plus Care Program participants, to name a few.

Among our recent accomplishments:

- Conducted a joint session to communicate resident issues to the Commissioners. Made suggestions and recommendations for resolution and improvement.
- Provided input on HUD-required documents including the Five-Year Plan and Annual Plan. This includes input on proposed changes to policies related to occupancy, grievance procedures and income disregards for students.
- Served as impetus for expansion of HOC's rent collection procedures allowing elderly residents and some family communities to be able to pay rent on-site at the respective developments. Hours were also expanded for rent collection pick-ups at the two Customer Service Centers until 5 p.m. to avoid charges for late payments.
- Advocated on behalf of Sandy Spring residents in their battle against exorbitantly high utility bills and on behalf of Washington Square residents for changes to parking policies.
- RAB members serve on the HOC Hearing Board to provide objectivity and sensitivity to resident cases.

With your input and opinions we can do even more to ensure that your concerns are heard and that issues are resolved. Call **(240) 773-9332** for further information or check the HOC website ([www.hocmc.org](http://www.hocmc.org)) for a direct link to the RAB. We look forward to hearing from you.

## Important HOC Contacts

### Offices:

#### **Main Office**

10400 Detrick Avenue  
Kensington, MD 20895  
(240) 773-9000

#### **East Deer Park**

231 East Deer Park Drive  
Gaithersburg, MD 20877  
(240) 773-9350

#### **Gaithersburg Customer Service Center**

101 Lakeforest Blvd., #200  
Gaithersburg, MD 20877  
(240) 773-8805

#### **Silver Spring Customer Service Center**

8241 Georgia Avenue, 3rd Floor  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
(240) 773-8806

#### **Fair Housing**

240-777-8450

#### **Family Self-Sufficiency Program**

(240) 773-9393

#### **Resident Advisory Board**

240-773-9332

#### **Resident Accounting**

(240) 773-9346

#### **Seneca Ridge Neighborhood Network**

240-773-9349



Housing Opportunities Commission  
10400 Detrick Avenue  
Kensington, MD 20895-2484