



## Facts about the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program

More than 5,200 landlords in the City of San Diego rent to tenants who receive Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance from the San Diego Housing Commission (SDHC).

Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers help more than 15,000 low-income households—including families, Veterans, seniors and individuals with disabilities—pay their rent in the City of San Diego.

Knowing the facts about the rental assistance program—SDHC's largest program—is essential. Misconceptions about Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers may prevent families from finding participating landlords and may cause landlords to miss out on the benefits the program provides.



*Housing Choice Voucher recipient Terry and her family*

### FACT

**Landlords pre-screen and select Housing Choice Voucher tenants in the same way they screen and select other tenants.**

This may include verifying a participant's credit history and references, and completing a background check. Fair Housing laws apply, ensuring that tenant selection is never based upon race, color, age, religion, sex, familial status, disability, or any other discriminatory factors. In addition, landlords who participate in the rental assistance program receive support from SDHC to ensure tenants fulfill program requirements. SDHC's Program Integrity Unit examines reports of program violations, such as unauthorized family members, and takes appropriate action, as needed.

### FACT

**Landlords decide how many of their units they will rent to Housing Choice Voucher tenants.**

Accepting one tenant who receives rental assistance does NOT mean that a landlord must rent all of their available units to Housing Choice Voucher program participants. If a landlord owns multiple units, they choose whether one or more of their units will be occupied by program participants. If a Housing Choice Voucher participant moves out, the landlord is NOT required to rent the vacant unit to another tenant in the rental assistance program.

### FACT

**Most of the paperwork a landlord is required to complete occurs at the beginning of a new lease, and SDHC staff will help, as needed.**

This paperwork includes the Request for Tenancy Approval form, W-9 form, Lead Warning Statement and Lease Agreement. From time to time, the landlord will receive additional informational documents that do NOT need to be completed, including: letters amending the rent portions, inspection reports, newsletters, and other program materials.

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### FACT

#### **Landlords may take action if lease agreements are violated.**

If a Housing Choice Voucher program tenant violates the lease agreement, a landlord may evict the tenant in accordance with state and local law. SDHC recommends that the landlord inform SDHC staff of initial lease violations. The tenant may lose their Housing Choice Voucher if they are evicted for lease violations.

### FACT

#### **SDHC performs Housing Quality Standards inspections every two years.**

SDHC is required to ensure that all housing units occupied by Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance participants meet certain health and safety standards that are set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. This is NOT a code enforcement inspection. SDHC inspects the rental unit to ensure it is safe, decent and sanitary before a contract is signed with the landlord. SDHC's inspections provide the landlord with the benefit of checking the working order of smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors, water heaters, appliances, exits, window and door locks, fans, outlets, plumbing fixtures, heaters, and light fixtures. Any presence of trip and fall hazards, structural defects, rodents or roaches, peeling paint, excessive dirt or clutter, broken windows and the like are also checked. SDHC also allows landlords to self-certify repairs to some items that fail inspections but are not life threatening.

### FACT

#### **Families identified as able to work have opportunities to become more financially self-reliant through SDHC programs.**

SDHC helps participants with career planning, job training and financial literacy through the SDHC Achievement Academy. This is a learning and resource center with programs available at no charge to families receiving rental assistance from SDHC and those who live in SDHC's public housing units.

### FACT

#### **Landlords are able to implement reasonable rent increases.**

After the initial lease term, landlords may raise the rent for a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance tenant with proper written notice to the tenant and SDHC. The rent increase requested must be reasonable, as determined by SDHC, when compared with the rents on other units on the premises with tenants who do not receive rental assistance, as well as other, comparable unassisted rental units in the market.

### FACT

#### **SDHC does NOT stop rental assistance payments to landlords without reason or notice.**

A landlord who experiences problems receiving a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance payment should contact SDHC to determine if or when payment should be made. If a landlord evicts a tenant for violations of the lease agreement, SDHC will continue to pay SDHC's share of the rent throughout the eviction process until the date the tenant moves out or is locked out.

