

Section 6.0 AFFIRMATIVELY FURTHERING FAIR HOUSING

In the provision of housing services and programs, the New York State Homes & Community Renewal (HCR) promotes Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity and carries out its responsibilities pursuant to: Presidential Executive Order #11063 requiring equal opportunity in housing; New York State's Human Rights Law; The Fair Housing Act of 1968 - Title VIII; and The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

It is the policy of HCR's Statewide Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program to ensure that participating landlords and each of its local program offices fully comply with all Federal, State, and local nondiscrimination laws and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) regulations governing Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. No person shall, on the grounds of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, marital status, age, disability, military status, sexual orientation, lawful source of income or any other protected characteristic be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination in any of its housing programs.

HCR's Fair and Equitable Housing Office (FEHO) was organized to respond to the Agency's expanding role in monitoring the progress of access to Fair Housing initiatives. In this effort, HCR's website makes available the following publications:

- Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity form;
- Anti-Discrimination form;
- Affordable Housing Directories;
- Statewide Listing of HCR Section 8 Providers;
- FAQs;
- Section 8 Information Sheets;
- Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) information and forms;
- Agency contact phone numbers; and
- A complaint line.

HCR actively participates with local landlords in an effort to educate them regarding Fair Housing laws and conducts outreach programs to recruit additional landlords for the purpose of expanding housing choice to program participants by encouraging landlords to list their properties in areas of low minority and poverty concentration.

6.01 Assistance to Families Claiming Discrimination

LAs will provide Federal/State/local information to applicants for and participants in the Section 8 HCV Program regarding discrimination and any recourse available to them if they believe they may be victims of discrimination. Such information will be made available with the application. The HUD Fair Housing Information and Discrimination Complaint Forms (Form 903) will be made available at the HCR Statewide Section 8 Voucher Program Office, the offices of each HCR Local Administrator, and on the HCR website. In addition, all appropriate written information and advertisements will contain the appropriate Equal Housing Opportunity language and logo.

The LA will assist any participant who believes he/she has suffered illegal discrimination by providing him/her with copies of the housing discrimination form. The LA will also assist the participant in completing the form, if requested, and will provide him/her with the address of the nearest HUD Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. The LA should also notify HCR, and specifically HCR's Fair and Equitable Housing Office at feho@nyshcr.org or (518) 473-3089, when they are notified of any housing discrimination/fair housing complaints filed through the HUD office, New York Division of Human Rights, or any other forum, including courts.

The LA will advise families regarding how to file a complaint if they believe they have been discriminated against by an owner. The LA will advise the participant to make a Fair Housing complaint. The LA may also report the owner to HUD (Fair Housing/Equal Opportunity) or the local Fair Housing organization.

6.02 Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Programs

In addition to the Housing Choice Voucher Program, HCR administers the following programs in selected communities throughout the State of New York based on availability of HUD funding:

- Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program;
- Family Unification Program (FUP);
- Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) Program, in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Centers

The purpose of FSS is to create an opportunity for families receiving Section 8 rental assistance to improve and develop their ability to increase employment opportunities and enhance life skills needed to become self-reliant. All families who are currently receiving assistance from HCR's Section 8 HCV program are eligible to apply for voluntary participation in FSS.

The purpose of FUP is to create an opportunity for families for whom lack of adequate housing is the primary reason for a child or children being placed in out-of-home care. It is HCR's policy to service all FUP-eligible referrals up to allowable awards or budget authority as authorized by HUD.

The HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Voucher (HUD-VASH) Program combines HUD Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance for eligible homeless veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs in its medical centers in the communities. Referrals are made to HCR Local Administrators (LAs) by their partnering VA Medical Centers (VAMCs), and the LAs administer the program following regular HCV program requirements, as modified by HUD for the VASH program. As indicated in Sections 3.02 and 10.08 of this plan, VASH voucher holders may also seek housing designated as single room occupancy (SRO).

6.03 Fair Housing Policies

The agency provides both in-house and HUD-approved housing counseling services conducted by Neighborhood and Rural Preservation Companies and Neighbor Works organizations. As FSS and FUP families complete their requirements and graduate from the Housing Choice Voucher program, additional openings are made available for other low income families to qualify. The agency implements numerous initiatives to further the purposes of the Fair Housing Act. Strategies to promote fair housing rights and choice include mobility counseling; tenant, staff and owner education; and special initiatives to encourage housing search in areas where there are low concentrations of poverty and minority households.

All Housing Choice Voucher programs, including the Homeownership option, are marketed to all eligible families including persons with disabilities and those with limited English proficiency. HCR administers the Assets for Independence Program that allows families to accumulate funds for down payments & closing costs when preparing to become homeowners.

The agency does not restrict access to other housing programs to eligible disabled applicants who decline to participate in the Mainstream or NED programs.

HCR complies with all fair housing requirements of 24 CFR Section 903.7(o). HCR ensures people with disabilities have access to other housing assistance programs that are not limited to disabled families. The program is promoted by conducting outreach to independent living centers, veterans' services offices, and other agencies that service disabled families.

HCR advises owners and participants exceptions to higher payment standards may be approved for reasonable accommodations so long as the accommodation is related to the person's disability. HCR makes accommodations for disabled and non-English speaking individuals, such as providing home visits and having translators present. Accessibility for the hearing impaired is provided upon request.

Where requested, the agency will:

- Assist program applicants and participants in gaining access to local supportive services;
- Provide housing search assistance in accordance with Rent Reasonableness requirements; and
- Accept mailed applications from individuals who are unable to come to the management office because of a disability

HCR's policies on Housing Choice Vouchers terms, as outlined in Section 2.01 of the Administrative Plan, allows each applicant adequate time for successful housing searches, and provides for extensions in response to requests for reasonable accommodation. Geographic choice is fostered through the Housing Choice Voucher portability provisions.

HCR's central Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher System (SHCVS) tracks participant information such as race, ethnicity, familial status, and disability status in order to insure

compliance with Fair Housing regulations. HCR employs HUD-certified Housing Counseling Agencies that provide counseling services to participants in financial education, debt and credit repair, pre and post purchase counseling, default counseling and predatory lending. HCR sponsors numerous regional workshops that include information on fair housing and predatory lending.

HCR's applicant briefing package includes information on the fair housing rights of HCV participants and where a discrimination complaint may be filed, including the office address, telephone number, and TTY number of the local fair housing agency, or HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. The briefing material also includes the toll-free number for the HUD Housing Discrimination Hotline, (800) 669-9777. This information can also be accessed for the hearing impaired via TTY at (800) 927-9275 and/or by calling the Federal Relay Service (FedRelay) at (800) 877-8339.

HCR conducts outreach to organizations which assist people with disabilities, the elderly, students, immigrants, homeless people, victims of domestic violence and VAWA covered crimes, without regard to sex, gender identity or sexual orientation. HUD programs must also be operated consistently with [HUD's Equal Access Rule](#).

Equal Housing Opportunity advertisements and applicable Fair Housing Information and Discrimination Complaint Forms are available at each local office.