

Section 8 Department
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Date: March 26, 2018

RE: Changes in payment standards for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program: Notice of potential impact

Dear Landlord / Owner / or Agent:

Thank you for participating in the HCV program. Your ongoing participation helps to ensure that low-income families have a safe and stable place to call home.

Beginning on APRIL 1, 2018, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) began to require an important change in the way Westmoreland County Housing Authority (WCHA) operates the HCV program for new tenants and tenants moving. Under the new approach, the payment standard used to determine the maximum subsidy amount WCHA provides will be based on Fair Market Rents set at the ZIP code level, rather than the metropolitan-area level. The new ZIP-code level rent estimates are known as Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMRs).

The shift to SAFMRs means that payment standards will now be based on the localized rent for each ZIP code, as opposed to typical rent levels across the entire metropolitan area. The purpose of this change is to promote a more effective system that allows HCV-assisted families to access higher-cost housing in low-poverty areas. As a result, **the payment standard for units you rent through the HCV program may change.** Depending on the ZIP code in which your rental units are located, your tenant's voucher and payment standard may increase, stay the same, or decrease. Please see the attached table, SAFMR Payment Standard by ZIP Code, which lists payment standard amounts for all ZIP codes effective APRIL 1, 2018.

As annual reexaminations of income and eligibility for existing HCV households are conducted, the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) provided by WCHA will be **"held harmless" – no reduction in subsidy.** WCHA continues to use the previous payment standard when calculating the family's subsidy, as long as the HAP contract for the unit remains in effect.

These changes will open up new opportunities for new and moving HCV-assisted renters to access better schools and safer neighborhoods, but only if owners accept them as tenants. **We encourage you to consider renting to families with HCVs.** As an owner who participates in the program, you may continue to screen and accept our own tenants and enforce your own lease agreement. Advantages of participation in the HCV program include;

- Guaranteed steady monthly rent payments, including protections in case of decreases in tenant income
- WCHA support with advertising and marketing of units to voucher families (www.pahousingsearch.com).
- WCHA support throughout the renter's tenancy

If you have any questions about this change or would like additional information, please visit our website at www.wchaonline.com or contact the families WCHA representative.

Regards

David Kushner, Section 8 Coordinator

Form: SAFMR OWNER LETTER 2 3/2018