



Housing Choice Voucher Program Waitlists

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Who can apply to the Housing Choice Voucher Program?

The MHA HCVP helps low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities afford safe, decent housing in the private market throughout Mobile City and Mobile County. To be eligible for the program, a family must be either extremely low income (30% of area median income); OR very low-income (50% of area median income). Additionally, per HUD regulations, MHA must ensure that 75 percent of its admissions in each fiscal year are families whose incomes are at or below the extremely low-income (ELI) limit.

Please see the current *U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Income Limits for the Mobile County Metropolitan Service Area*: https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il/il2022/select_Geography.odn.

How does the Housing Choice Voucher Program work?

The Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) takes families from the waiting list and determines eligibility, and the amount of assistance families will receive. Eligible families are issued a Voucher and a Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA). The family then searches for a unit that suits their needs. The property owner must agree to rent under the Housing Choice Voucher Program and the selected unit must pass an HUD HCV Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspection.

How long does it take to get to the top of the list?

The amount of time that an applicant waits for assistance cannot be predicted and is based on the number of applications ranked higher than your application based on local preferences and applications received in time and date stamp order. Local preferences are outlined in the HCVP Administrative Plan, however, are also briefly summarized below **with the documentation required to be approved for the preference selected**.

Targeted Funding [24 CFR 982.204(e)]

HUD may award the MHA funding for a specified category of families on the waiting list. The MHA must use this funding only to assist families within the specified category. The MHA administers the following types of targeted funding:

- **HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program.** *These vouchers are not subject to selection from the waiting list; they are committed based on referrals to the MHA by the Veterans Affairs Medical Center.*



- **Family Unification Program.** Families eligible for participation are selected from the HCV program waiting list or referred by the Alabama Department of Human Resources and must be approved by MHA.
- **Mainstream vouchers for non-elderly persons with disabilities.** The MHA will make vouchers available to any family that includes a person with disabilities who is at least 18 years old and not yet 62 years old at the effective date of the initial Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract; these families are selected from the waiting list.
 - **Required documentation:** personal identity verification showing the head, cohead or spouse is not yet 62 years old at the time of admission to the program and documentation such as Social Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) benefit award letter, or the MHA Disability Verification form completed by a knowledgeable medical or allied health professional.
 - **Note:** MHA will provide a preference for non-elderly persons with disabilities who are also currently experiencing homelessness; or previously experienced homelessness and are *currently* a client in a permanent supportive housing (PSH) or rapid rehousing (RRH) project; or are at risk of experiencing homelessness.
Required documentation: a letter providing confirmation of residency in a PSH or RRH project; or emergency shelter or transitional housing site.
- **Non-elderly disabled vouchers.** The MHA will make these vouchers available to non-elderly disabled families (families that do not meet the definition of an elderly family, whose head, spouse or sole member is a person with disabilities). The MHA will select non-elderly disabled families from the HCV program waiting list.
 - **Required documentation:** personal identity verification showing the head, cohead or spouse is between the ages of 18-61 at the time of admission to the program and documentation such as SSI or SSDI benefit award letter, or the MHA Disability Verification form completed by a knowledgeable medical or allied health professional.
- **Emergency Housing Vouchers.** Eligibility for EHV is limited to individuals and families who are: (1) homeless; (2) at risk of homelessness; (3) fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or human trafficking; or (4) recently homeless and for whom providing rental assistance will prevent the family's homelessness or having risk of housing instability. *These vouchers are not subject to selection from the waitlist. These vouchers are committed only upon receipt of a referral from the local Continuum of Care, Coordinated Entry System Lead Agency (Housing First of Alabama).*



In the event of a funding shortfall, these special purpose vouchers will be issued first when the MHA begins issuing vouchers again after the shortfall. There must be funds available to issue vouchers to eligible families.

Local Preferences [24 CFR 982.207]

MHA selections families in order of preference as follows:

- Families that meet the criteria under targeted funding (above);
- Special/emergency circumstances, such as:
 - o Families that are victims of a federally declared disaster affecting the City and/or County of Mobile;
 - o Families that are an active participant in a Witness Protection Program or State Victim Assistance Program;
 - o Families living in a MHA administered housing unit which must be rehabilitated to meet ADA/504 requirements and for whom alternate MHA administered housing units are not available;
 - o Public Housing residents covered under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and for whom the MHA has determined that it does not have a suitable unit in its portfolio to which the household can be relocated. MHA will work with the following partnering service agencies:
 - Lifelines Counseling Rape Crisis Center
 - Sybil H. Smith Family Village
 - Family Promise of Coastal AL
 - Penelope House Domestic Shelters
 - Mobile County District Attorney
- Families or individuals that meet HUD's definition of homelessness under the HEARTH Act and are referred to by the City of Mobile's Continuum of Care through the Coordinated Entry System. **Required documentation:** a letter from the CoC CES department confirming the family is literally homeless; a letter confirming residency in an emergency shelter; a referral letter from a domestic violence counseling agency or emergency shelter.
- Working Families. Families where head, spouse or co-head is employed.
 - An applicant shall be given the benefit of the working preference when the head and co-head/ spouse are age 62 or older and/or a person with disabilities. **Required documentation:** See above for guidance on personal identity and disability verification documents.
- Veterans, Active or Inactive Military Personnel and Immediate Family Members of both. **Required documentation:** Current Veteran Identification Card (VIC), Department of



Defense (DoD) Identification Card, Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC), Veterans Designation on state-issued driver's license, and Form DD214.

What happens when I get to the top of the list?

When your name reaches the top of the waiting list, MHA will send you a notice by mail and e-mail instructing you to complete an online intake application within 10 business days of the date of the letter.

How long is the Voucher good for?

The initial voucher term is 90 days (about 3 months). 30-day extensions may be requested. An additional 30-day extension may be requested as Reasonable Accommodation for persons with disabilities.

How can I update or check the status of my application?

Applicants currently on the waiting list may update, change their contact information and family composition (i.e., the number of adults and children in their household) and view the status of their housing application using a computer, smart phone, or tablet without having to call or come into the HCVP office.

Click [here](#) to access the Applicant Portal.

The Applicant Portal allows those added to a waitlist to: (1) check waiting list status; (2) reply to future 'Save My Spot' inquiries; and (3) when pulled from the waitlist complete the formal application ('Certification for Intake') process online.

Can I use my voucher outside of Mobile?

A family that has been issued a Housing Choice Voucher by MHA may use that voucher to lease a unit anywhere in the United States where there is a Public Housing Authority (PHA) that administers the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Applicants are not eligible for portability if the family lived outside of Mobile County when they initially applied for HCV assistance; when a resident outside of Mobile County receives a voucher administered by MHA, they must use that voucher within County limits for the first year – only at the end of this 12-month period may a request to port-out be made.

How much do tenants pay for rent?

HCVP and the landlord will negotiate the monthly rent for the housing unit. HCVP then pays the housing assistance payment directly to the landlord on behalf of the participating family. If



applicable, the family is responsible for paying the difference between the rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by the HCVP. Tenants residing in voucher units pay 30% of their income for rent and utilities.

What is the Project-Based Voucher Program?

HCVP programs contract with private property owners to rent some or all the units in their housing developments to low-income families. MHA previously issued a Request for Proposals for its current project-based voucher developments. Private developers and housing owners applied for the designation and were awarded vouchers based on the scoring criteria. In addition, the MHA expects to procure new development with project-based units. Both new and existing project-based unit wait lists will be processed through the online Application Portal.

Commitment to Nondiscrimination

The MHA will not discriminate based on race, color, sex, religion, creed, nationality or ethnic origin, age, family or marital status, sexual orientation, handicap, or disability, nor deny any family or individual the opportunity to apply for assistance under the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Request for Reasonable Accommodation

All requests for reasonable accommodation for a person with disabilities must be made in writing to MHA before the waiting list opens on January 20, 2023.