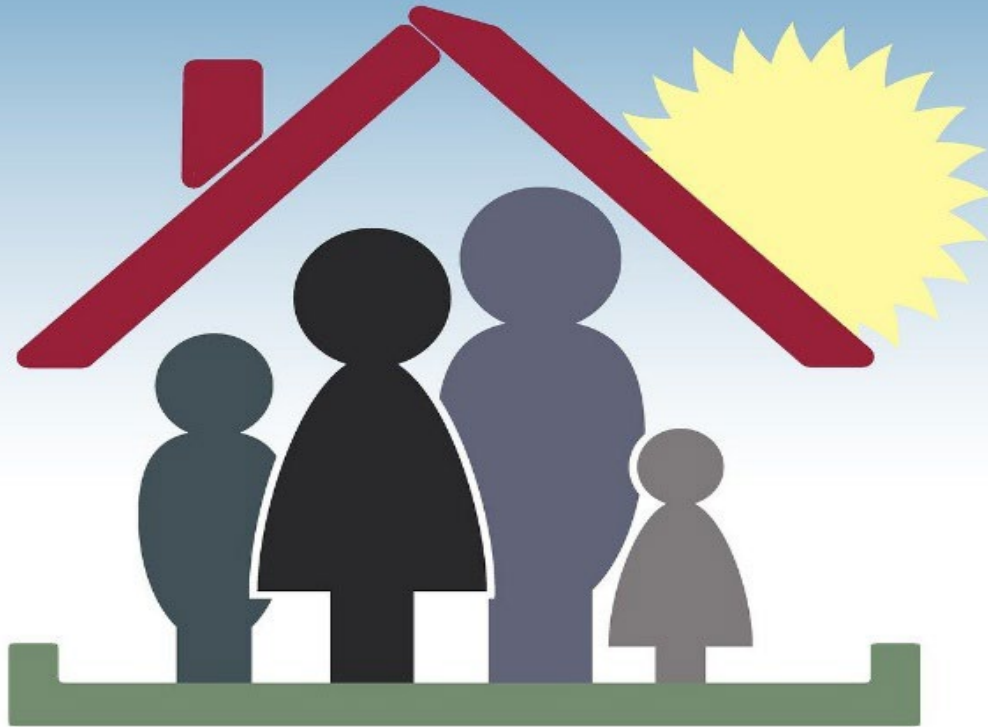


# Tenant Handbook

*A Guide for the  
Project-Based Program*



**Housing Authority  
of the County of San Mateo  
264 Harbor Boulevard, Bldg. A  
Belmont, CA 94002**

## Project-Based Units

A Project-Based unit is a specific unit at a specific complex for which a person or family has applied. As such, residents moving into the designated unit will receive a Statement of Family Responsibility (SFR).

### Determination of Housing Assistance Payment

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is the subsidy the Housing Authority of the County of San Mateo (HACSM) will pay to the project owner on your behalf. The subsidy is based on the following factors:

- Annual Adjusted Income
- Eligible Unit Size

#### ***Annual Adjusted Income***

Annual adjusted income is the family's annual income after all allowable deductions (health and medical care expenses, disability assistance expenses, childcare expenses, elderly/disabled household allowance, and dependent allowance).

#### ***Eligible Unit Size (Subsidy Standards)***

In determining the eligible unit size, HACSM uses the following guidelines:

- Head of household and their spouse, co-head, or partner will be issued one bedroom.
- All remaining family members will be issued one bedroom per two family members regardless of gender, age, or relationship of these family members. *HACSM does not determine who shares a bedroom.*
- An unborn child may be included in determining the family's subsidy standard.

\* Exceptions to the above standards will only be considered with an approved reasonable accommodation.

#### ***Mixed Family***

Eligibility for federal housing assistance is limited to individuals who are United States citizens or have eligible immigration status. Mixed families are families that consist of members who are U.S. citizens or have eligible immigration status and members who are not U.S. citizens or do not have eligible immigration status.

A mixed family is eligible for prorated assistance. Prorated assistance is a calculation of subsidy based on the number of members who are U.S. citizens or have eligible immigration status. As a result, mixed families will pay a higher amount towards rent. The estimate prorated tenant rent amount is listed on the SFR.

## Initial Unit Inspection

HACSM is required to conduct a unit inspection prior to beginning a lease. HACSM staff will inspect both the interior and exterior of the unit to ensure that the unit is in decent, safe, and sanitary condition. **All utility services must be operable at the time of inspection.**

Do not move into the unit until HACSM approves the unit and all parties agree to the move-in date. **You will be responsible for 100% of the contract rent if you move in prior to HACSM's approval and the effective date of the lease.**

## Keeping Your Assistance

Receiving housing assistance requires that you comply with certain family obligations. These obligations are listed on the SFR. It is important that you become familiar with the obligations, as failure to comply may result in termination of your housing assistance.

In addition to complying with the family obligations listed on the SFR, you and your family members must comply with the following:

- Not engage in threatening, abusive, or violent behavior toward any Housing Authority or property management personnel. Abusive or violent behavior includes verbal as well as physical abuse or violence.
- Not engage in any illegal use of a drug or have a pattern of illegal drug use that interferes with the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises by other residents.
- Respond to any written or oral communication from HACSM promptly.
- Not breach an agreement with any Housing Authority to pay amounts owed.
- Not owe any money to any Housing Authority.
- Not enter into a "side agreement" with the owner to pay any amount above and beyond what is stated on your lease agreement and subsequent notice of changes.
- Not commit any drug-related criminal activity or violent criminal activity.

**Note:** Assistance may be terminated if a preponderance of evidence indicates that a family member has engaged in drug-related or violent criminal activity, whether or not an arrest or a conviction is made.

## Recertification and Inspection

### ***Recertification***

HACSM will conduct ongoing recertifications with you to determine your continued eligibility. Depending on HACSM policy and your household type, recertification schedules may differ. For example, elderly and disabled households may have a triennial schedule, whereas other households will be on an annual recertification schedule.

Family composition changes must be reported in writing to HACSM. You will be notified if an appointment or rent adjustment to your portion of rent is necessary. With the exceptions of birth, adoption, or court-awarded guardianship, you may not add anyone to your household without HACSM approval.

## ***Inspection***

HACSM will conduct ongoing unit inspections to ensure continued compliance. Generally, these ongoing unit inspections will occur biennially (every other year).

Always report any needed repairs to your property manager in a timely manner.

## **How to Request an Informal Hearing**

HACSM is required to provide participant families with an informal hearing under the following circumstances:

- A determination of the family's annual or adjusted income, and the use of such income to compute the housing assistance payment.
- A determination of the subsidy standards or a denial of the family's request for an exemption from the standards.
- A determination of the citizenship status of family members to pro-rate assistance.
- A determination to terminate assistance for a participant family because of the family's action or failure to act.
- A determination to terminate assistance because the participant family has been absent from the assisted unit for longer than the maximum period permitted under HACSM policy and HUD rules.

HACSM must give the family an opportunity for an informal hearing *before* HACSM terminates the assistance. HACSM will simultaneously provide notice of the termination to the owner so that it coincides with the termination of assistance.

The family must request an informal hearing in writing before the deadline stated in the termination notice if the family wishes to contest the decision to terminate assistance. The notice will state to whom the hearing request should be addressed.

## **Equal Housing Opportunity Laws**

There are Federal, State and Local laws that apply to the prohibition of discrimination under certain circumstances when renting a unit. It is illegal for a property owner to deny housing to any individual based on race, religion, national origin, immigration status, marital status/familial status, sexual orientation, or disability.

We have included information on fair housing and agency contacts in the briefing packet.

## **Rights of Individuals with Disabilities**

Individuals with disabilities are entitled to full and equal access to housing. Upon request, owners must make reasonable accommodations in their rules, policies, and practices for individuals with disabilities. It may be the responsibility of the family to pay for any necessary modifications to the unit.

## **Violence Against Women Act**

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is a federal law that provides certain rights and protections to applicants and participants on housing programs who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking. VAWA requires housing authorities to (1) place safeguards on admissions and terminations, and (2) provide procedures for certification, confidentiality, and notification for victims of domestic violence. Request for assistance under VAWA can be directed to your housing programs specialist.

We have included information on VAWA in the briefing packet.

## **Request for Reasonable Accommodation**

Individuals with disabilities may request a reasonable accommodation from HACSM to fully utilize this housing program and any related services. HACSM will make all reasonable efforts to be flexible in assisting individuals with disabilities to participate in the program successfully. Requests for reasonable accommodations can be submitted to your housing programs specialist. The information received will be verified to ensure that the accommodation is reasonable.