



# NEWS ON



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A Newsletter for Section 8 Rental Assistance Landlords and Tenants  
Published Twice Yearly by Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency

## Oklahoma Housing Agencies Fight Fraud

*This story, written by Ginnie Graham, was originally published in the April 10, 2005 issue of the Tulsa World.*

**W**ith a full Section 8 housing program in Tulsa, officials are using criminal charges to make sure no one is lying to get the government subsidy.

A federal grand jury in Tulsa's Northern District issued indictments Thursday against seven people for fraudulently obtaining Section 8 housing assistance from Tulsa Housing Authority, which serves as the local management agency for the U.S. Housing and Urban Development.

THA Security Coordinator Dan Cherry said rooting out fraud has always occurred, but criminal charges have been difficult to obtain. "It's not so much a crackdown because

it's something we've been doing for years," Cherry said. "But we have not had anyone file the cases for us until now. We're very happy with the HUD Office of Inspector General, the U.S. Attorney's Office and the District Attorney's Office for accepting these cases." Cherry said two FBI agents were assigned to investigating fraud with THA officials in the early 1990s. But after the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, the agents were reassigned.

"We went along several years, evicting people and filing payback agreements," Cherry said.

Recently, the Office of Inspector General for the U.S. Housing and Urban Development office in Oklahoma City has dedicated officials for investigating fraud

with THA.

Michael Zerega, spokesman for the HUD Office of Inspector General, said Homeland Security has created interagency investigations including those in public housing. He said his office specializes in public housing investigations and would be involved in all cases of HUD-funded programs.

"The Office of Inspector General makes a concerted effort to partner with state and local law enforcement, as well as other federal law enforcement, to use what time is necessary in an efficient way to make the investigations work," Zerega said. "We have

*(Continued on Page 4)*  
an extensive track

## VISION & MISSION

**OHFA Vision:**  
Recognized as the industry leader, OHFA makes a difference in the lives of Oklahomans by fulfilling their housing needs and dreams.

**OHFA Mission:**  
To provide affordable housing resources.

**Rental Assistance Team Mission:**  
To secure funds to help eligible low income families obtain decent, safe and affordable housing, and do so while providing courteous professional and efficient service.

**"OHFA has a duty to ensure federal tax dollars are spent responsibly and that the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program is free of fraud and abuse."**

**- Deborah Jenkins,  
Rental Assistance Team Leader**

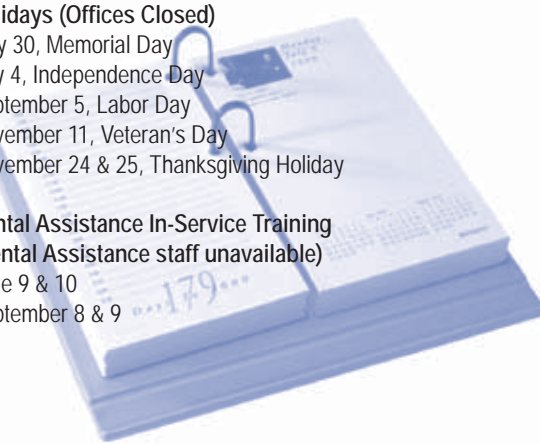
### Important Dates

#### Holidays (Offices Closed)

- May 30, Memorial Day
- July 4, Independence Day
- September 5, Labor Day
- November 11, Veteran's Day
- November 24 & 25, Thanksgiving Holiday

#### Rental Assistance In-Service Training (Rental Assistance staff unavailable)

- June 9 & 10
- September 8 & 9



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## OHFA Policy Change: Legal Identification Required

On October 1, 2004, OHFA began requiring all family members to provide proof of identity at all appointments. All adult members of the household (18 yrs or older) must have a photo ID in the form of a driver's license, passport, or other picture ID.

For all minors of the household, OHFA requires a certified birth certificate, custody papers, adoption papers or a school record that shows the relationship between the head of house and the minor child. Hospital birth records **ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE**. Birth certificates that do not list the parents' names **ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE**.

Custody papers must be a legal court document, not a notarized statement from a biological parent. School records must have the minor's date of birth, the address of residence, guardian of the minor(s) and the relationship of the guardian to the minor(s).

## Eligibility for Assistance

OHFA will accept applications only from families whose head of household is at least 18 years of age **unless the head of household is a minor (under the age of 18) who is not under the care of a parent or guardian able to care for the minor or the head of household is an emancipated minor, as defined by law.**

Verification of the above may include, but is not limited to, a marriage license or DHS referral.



## Out-of-State Moves Restricted Due to Funding Restraints

If you are interested in moving out of the state, you must seek approval prior to moving from the state. Due to recent funding constraints all requests to move from OHFA's jurisdiction must be reviewed to assess the cost to OHFA.

Families must provide the name of the housing authority (HA) in the area in which they want to move. If the HA is absorbing or the per-unit-cost is equal to or less than OHFA's cost, the request will be approved. If the HA is not absorbing and the per-unit-cost is higher than OHFA's cost, the request will be denied.

## Ideas? Suggestions?

Do you have comments or suggestions for OHFA? Please submit them in writing to the attention of the Rental Assistance secretary or visit our website: [www.ohfa.org](http://www.ohfa.org).

Executive Director  
*Dennis Shockley*

Rental Assistance  
Director  
*Deborah Jenkins*

NEWS on 8  
Editor  
*Natalie Geis*

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OHFA is a 2000 Oklahoma Quality  
Award Winner for Commitment

OHFA's Administrative Plan for the Section 8  
Housing Voucher Program may be viewed at our  
central office by appointment or at [www.ohfa.org](http://www.ohfa.org)

## Housing Assistance Payment Message Line Available

**405-848-1144, Ext. 2898** is available to report problems with rental assistance payments. When prompted, please leave your message and a phone number where you can be reached. Please provide as much information as possible concerning the payment problem.

## Field Agents

Field agents from the Rental Assistance Team play a vital role in making sure our customers have safe and affordable places to live by conducting housing quality standards inspections.

- **Luanne Alexander**  
*North Central OK*
- **Christina Christenson**  
*SW Oklahoma*
- **Keith Cravens**  
*Central OK*
- **Fleashia Ford**  
*SW Oklahoma*
- **Roger Hayes**  
*Central OK*
- **Christina Hines**  
*Floater Agent*
- **Jack Howell**  
*East Oklahoma*
- **Corey King**  
*Floater Agent*
- **Rhonda Murrell**  
*Floater Agent*
- **Philippe Jamet**  
*Floater Agent*
- **Steve Jett**  
*East Oklahoma*
- **Larry Keith**  
*SE Oklahoma*
- **Kimberly Kephart**  
*SW Oklahoma*
- **Sandy Lindsley**  
*East & NE OK*
- **Debbie Mauldin**  
*Floater Agent*
- **Dodie Pool**  
*Floater Agent*
- **Mary Revard**  
*North Oklahoma*
- **Judy Wright**  
*Floater Agent*

## Important Numbers Rental Assistance Team

Recertification Team 1 (405) 419-8166  
*Alphabet A,D,G,H,K,M,O, and X* Fax: (405)  
419-9166

Recertification Team 2 (405) 419-8167  
*Alphabet B,C,I,J,N,P,T,U, and Y* Fax: (405) 419-9167

Recertification Team 3 (405) 419-8168  
*Alphabet E,F,L,Q,R,S,V,W, and Z* Fax: (405) 419-9168

Initial Certification Team (405) 419-8169  
Fax: (405) 419-9169

Preapp Status line 1-800-898-  
6432  
or (405) 879-6365

Local Leasing line (405) 842-2471  
Toll-free Leasing line 1-800-256-1489  
Fax Number (405) 879-8822

Mary Hook (405) 419-8266  
*Rental Assistance Supervisor*

Jack Bruce (405) 419-8218  
*Rental Assistance Field Supervisor*

Carol Dodge (405) 419-8268  
*Rental Assistance Manager*

John Pettis (405) 419-8230  
*Rental Assistance Manager*

## Briefly Speaking

### Inspection Requests

**Completion of the scheduling request is the family's responsibility.** Landlords can assist with this process, but it is up to the family to make sure the paperwork is completed and returned to OHFA. **Do not leave your paperwork with the landlord.** Once you have requested an inspection, it takes approximately two weeks to process the request.

### Address and Telephone Number Changes

So we can better serve you, please notify your team in writing if your mailing address or telephone number changes.

### Check Mailing

Checks are mailed the first business day of the month. If the first day of the month falls on a Saturday or Sunday, your check will be mailed the following Monday. Payments are made once a month.

## Offenders in Your Community & What You Can Do

**M**egan Nicole Kanka disappeared on July 29, 1994. After lured into a neighbor's home, she was brutally raped and murdered. Megan was seven years old. Megan fell victim to a two-time convicted sex offender who was convicted of an attack on a 5-year-old and an attempted attack on a 7-year-old.

With the growing number of kidnappings by sexual offenders, parents are asking what they can do to protect their children.

Local law enforcement have made it easier to track registered sex offenders in your community. As result of Megan's Law and other federal laws, each state is required to provide a database for convicted sex offenders to register. Oklahoma's website, hosted by the Department of Corrections, posts names, physical descriptions and last-known addresses of sex offenders deemed habitual or aggravated.

For more information on sex offenders, visit [http://www.doc.state.ok.us/DOCS/offender\\_info.htm](http://www.doc.state.ok.us/DOCS/offender_info.htm) or [www.parentsformeganslaw.com](http://www.parentsformeganslaw.com).

### Landlord Spotlight:

## Tulsa Area Landlord Encourages Homeownership

**H**arrid Ramezane lives by the famous quote, "If you give a man a fish, you feed him for one day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime." The owner of 10 homes, Ramezane encourages his tenants to become more than just renters.

"My ultimate goal is for everyone to become homeowners," Ramezane said. "I think it is important for everyone to have the opportunity to have something that belongs to them."

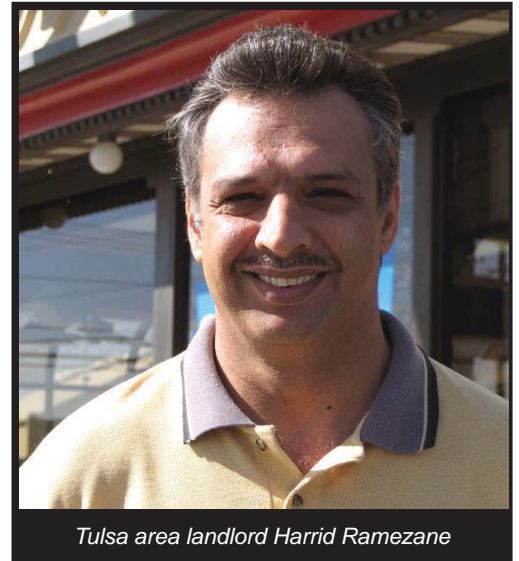
This landlord believes that with every generation that grows in homeownership, the next generation will grow also. To Ramezane, being a landlord means providing a better life for the future.

A native of North Carolina, Ramezane moved to the Tulsa area in hopes of pursuing his dream to build homes. Ramezane has built three of the homes he rents.

"I want to provide a high quality, safe environment that is affordable to everyone."

Continuing with his goal to help others, Ramezane manages a local restaurant. As a manager, he helps individuals build or maintain a solid career.

Ramezane depends on Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency to provide a reliable background



*Tulsa area landlord Harrid Ramezane*

check on prospective tenants.

"OHFA makes my job easier. They do the hard part so I am able to do the part I like most, helping others."

## House Hunting Made Easy

by Christina Christenson, Field Agent

**N**o matter what your family is looking for, whether an apartment, house in the city, or mobile home in the country, house hunting is now easier than ever. There are more and more resources available to the renting public than ever before. Why not try some of the following tips to jumpstart your search for a new home?

Word of mouth is always a good start to your house hunting. Talk to your friends, neighbors, or family members. Do they have the type of landlord that you have always wanted to rent from? Why not give their landlord a call to see if he has available units?

Property management companies take the work out of house hunting. Why not try calling your local property management company? Ask if they have Section 8 properties available. Most management companies do not charge you to look at their available listings.

Many of us know the neighborhood we would like to live in and the school we would like our children to attend. Why not narrow down your search and save yourself time by looking only in that neighborhood? Take a leisurely drive through those ideal neighborhoods and keep an eye out for those red and black "For Rent" signs.

Not every renter is ready for the upkeep of a yard and the extra utility bills that go along with

you're more suited for apartment living.

Most cities offer an "Apartment Guide" to help you find just the right complex for your family. Apartment guides are available at most local grocery stores or near the entrance of many discount stores. The guide is free and usually includes photos of apartment complexes in your area.

OHFA maintains a list of landlords with properties available for rent through the Section 8 program. You may quickly and easily view the list, along with a description of homes available in your area, at [www.GoSection8.com](http://www.GoSection8.com). This website was designed specifically for Section 8 tenants looking for a new home. With a few quick clicks of your mouse, you can access many available units in your area.

No online access? No problem! If you don't have online access, you can call (866) 466-SEC8, and sign up for QuikMatch rental locator service, another free service of Gosection8. With QuikMatch, you will be contacted by phone, email, or text message whenever a new listing becomes available in your area.

## ...Fraud (continued)

record and tremendous investigative experience in public housing programs."

Section 8 is a federal program to help low-income families, elderly and disabled people afford housing. THA stopped taking applications in August 2004 because the waiting list exceeds 9,000 families, waiting between two and five years for a voucher.

Eligible participants use vouchers to rent from any owner willing to participate in the program. Tenants pay about 30 percent of their income, and the government pays the remaining amount. Cherry said a fraud case is launched after a tip from a friend, relative, neighbor or co-worker. "Residents should be aware of this because they sign the lease agreements, all the paperwork and know full well they are supposed to report all income and the income of everyone living in the unit," Cherry said.

U.S. Attorney General David O'Meilia released a news release outlining the federal grand jury indictments.

**James A. Morgan, 37, and Bethany Morgan, 40,** of Tulsa, were charged with making false statements in 2001 and 2002 to THA on forms used to determine eligibility for HOUSING assistance. They allegedly failed to disclose their correct household income and wrongly received rent subsidies from May 2001 to October 2002.

**Earnestine Harris, 45,** of Schriever, La., is charged with three counts of making false statements to THA from 2000 to 2002 on THA eligibility forms. She allegedly failed to disclose the number of people living with her and their sources and amounts of income. She is also charged with one count of embezzlement for allegedly wrongly receiving rent subsidies between December 1999 to August 2003.

**Ladonna D. Allen, 47,** of Tulsa, faces four counts of making false statements to THA from 2002 to 2004 on eligibility forms. She allegedly failed to disclose her employment and correct income.

**Dennis L. Graham, 47,** and Linda J. Graham, 57, of Tulsa, are charged with four counts of making false statements to THA in 2001 and 2002 on eligibility forms. Linda Graham faces an additional count of embezzlement for allegedly wrongly receiving rent subsidies from June 2000 to November 2002.

**Marlo Hamilton, 35,** of Tulsa, faces four counts of making false statements to THA from 2001 to 2003 to THA on eligibility forms. She has an additional charge of embezzlement for allegedly falsely receiving rent subsidies from January 2001 to January 2004.

*Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency shares Tulsa Housing Authority's commitment to reducing fraud in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. OHFA has staff whose full-time job is to research and investigate reports of fraud. Thirty-eight cases have been referred to the HUD Office of Inspector General. To date, 6 cases have resulted in criminal convictions.*

*"OHFA has a duty to ensure federal tax dollars are spent responsibly and that the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program is free of fraud and abuse," said Deborah Jenkins, Rental Assistance Team Leader. If you suspect or know someone who is committing fraud, call (405) 419-8274.*

This story, written by Ginnie Graham, was originally published in the April 10, 2005 issue of the Tulsa World.

## Top 10 New Uses for Household Items

**1. Remove tough food stains from plastic and light-colored wooden cutting boards with lemons.** Slice a lemon in half, squeeze the juice onto the soiled surface, rub, and let sit for 20 minutes. Rinse with water.

**2. Deodorize food containers with your old newspapers.** Stuff a balled-up piece of newspaper into a lunch box or thermos, seal it, and let sit overnight.

**3. Newspaper keeps the refrigerator vegetable drawer dry and free of smells.** Line the bottom with newspaper.

**4. Baking soda erases crayon, pencil, ink, and furniture scuffs from painted surfaces.** Sprinkle soda on a damp sponge, rub clean, and rinse.

**5. Deodorize a garbage disposal with white vinegar.** Make vinegar ice cubes and feed them down the disposal. After grinding, run cold water through the drain.

**6. Clean a dishwasher like a pro with white vinegar.** Once a month, with the machine empty, run a cup of vinegar through an entire cycle to reduce soap buildup on the inner mechanisms and glassware.

**7. Protect hands from Popsicle drippings with coffee filters.** Slide the wooden stick of an ice pop through a coffee filter so your hands stay mess-free.

**8. Coffee filters prevent soil from draining out of flowerpots.** When repotting, place a filter at the bottom, over the drainage hole, then add the soil.

**9. Remove chewing gum or candle wax from a tablecloth, a couch, or carpeting with Ziploc bags.** Gently rub gum or wax with a Ziploc bag filled with ice cubes until the substance hardens. Shatter gum with a blunt object, then vacuum up the chips. Carefully peel off frozen wax with a plastic spatula.

**10. Olive oil helps your pet.** Add 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon to your cat's food to help prevent hair



## Rent Reasonableness Strictly Enforced

Owners receiving Section 8 rental subsidy payments are prohibited from charging higher rent for assisted units than rent charged for unassisted units. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development requires housing agencies to reevaluate Section 8 assisted units periodically to ensure the rent charged remains reasonable.

Housing agencies determine rent reasonableness by comparing the rent charged for assisted units with the rent charged for similar unassisted units in the same general vicinity. The condition of the assisted unit and neighborhood

conditions are major factors when reevaluating for rent reasonableness. HUD requires housing agencies to reduce the rent for Section 8 assisted units that no longer satisfy the rent reasonableness test.

OHFA is in the process of conducting rent reasonableness reevaluations. Initially, only those units where OHFA pays \$400 or more in monthly rental subsidy payments will be reevaluated. If you have questions concerning rent reasonableness evaluations, please contact Carol Dodge at (405) 419-8268 or carol.dodge@ohfa.org.