

NEWS ON



Winter 2004

Volume 4, Number 1

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

OHFA Helps Family Find Home



Joyce Williams enjoys the view from her new front porch.

*“There’s nothing
like having your
own home.”*

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.

Important Dates

Holidays (Offices Closed)

December 24, Christmas Eve
December 31, New Year’s Eve
January 17, 2005 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
February 21, 2005 President’s Day
May 30, 2005 Memorial Day

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

December 16 & 17
March 3 & 4, 2005

*Please refer to www.ohfa.org for updates
regarding 2005 meeting dates.*

NEWS ON 8, Rental Assistance Newsletter
Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency
P.O. Box 26720
Oklahoma City, OK 73126
www.ohfa.org

Presort Standard
U.S. Postage
Paid
Permit No. 926
Okla. City, OK

OHFA Policy Change: Identification Required

On October 1, 2004, OHFA began requiring verification of legal identity for each member of a household receiving Section 8 rental assistance. Below is a list of acceptable documents.

Acceptable forms of verification for legal adults include driver's license, passport or another photo ID (such as an employee badge.) Acceptable forms of verification for minors are birth certificate, adoption papers, custody agreement or school records.

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.

Portability & Out-of-State Moves

Voucher assistance can be transferred to other states or cities (outside OHFA's jurisdiction) at the written request of the participant or applicant. Approval of the transfer is dependent upon income eligibility, length of time remaining on the voucher, location of a unit in the new area and the availability of funding. If the transfer is approved, OHFA will contact the housing authority in the area the family wishes to relocate to ensure the family's move will not be hindered.

If the family is a current program participant, OHFA will continue to provide assistance until the family relocates to the new area, as long as the family remains in the assisted unit and the assisted unit remains in compliance.

Moves with Continued Assistance

Participants that have fulfilled their current lease and wish to move to another unit within OHFA's jurisdiction may do so by submitting a written request to OHFA. Upon approval, a voucher will be issued. The voucher allows the participant to search for a new unit while continuing to receive assistance in their current unit. Vouchers are effective for 60 days.

Participants give written notice to move to their current landlord only after a new unit is located. If the participant decides not to move or fails to locate a new unit during the 60 day term of the voucher, assistance will automatically continue in the currently assisted unit.



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.

Executive Director
Dennis Shockley

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 26720
Oklahoma City, OK
73126-0720

Rental Assistance
Director
Deborah Jenkins

Street Address:
100 N.W. 63rd Street
Ste. 200
Oklahoma City, OK
73116

NEWS on 8
Editor
Natalie Gels

www.ohfa.org
AA/EEO

(405) 842-2471
(800) 256-1489
TDD: (405) 848-7471



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

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



Important Numbers Rental Assistance Team

Recertification Team 1 <i>Alphabet A,D,G,H,K,M,O, and X</i>	(405) 419-8166 Fax: (405) 419-9166
Recertification Team 2 <i>Alphabet B,C,I,J,N,P,T,U, and Y</i>	(405) 419-8167 Fax: (405) 419-9167
Recertification Team 3 <i>Alphabet E,F,L,Q,R,S,V,W, and Z</i>	(405) 419-8168 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 Hoock <i>Rental Assistance Supervisor</i>	(405) 419-8266
Jack Bruce <i>Rental Assistance Field Supervisor</i>	(405) 419-8218
Carol Dodge <i>Rental Assistance Manager</i>	(405) 419-8268
John Pettis <i>Rental Assistance Manager</i>	(405) 419-8230
FSS/Home Ownership	(405) 419-8171

Briefly Speaking

Completion of the Scheduling Request is the Tenant's Responsibility

Completion of paperwork is the tenant's responsibility. Landlords can assist with this process, but it is up to the tenant to make sure the paperwork is completed and turned in to OHFA. Do not leave your paper work with your landlord.

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 paper work 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.

Resident Advisory Board Reviews Program Policies

by Dorris Moore, News On 8 Representative

The role of the Resident Advisory Board is to review and make recommendations on policies for OHFA's Section 8 Rental Assistance Program.

These policies are included in OHFA's Five Year Plan and Annual Plan, which must be submitted to HUD for final approval. Current members of the Resident Advisory Board were elected in a meeting held at OHFA on July 30, 2004.

For more information about the Resident Advisory Board, please contact Kathy Crittenden at (405) 419-8236 or (800) 256-1489 ext. 236.

The current Board members are:

Bertha Lacy, Chairperson

Paulette Hoffman, Vice-chairperson

Melonie Harris, Secretary

Linda Washington, Assistant Secretary

Dorris Moore, News on 8 Representative

Complaint Inspection Procedures for Section 8 Tenants and Owners

by Debbie Mauldin, Field Agent

The property owner and family share responsibility for maintaining the property in accordance with HUD's housing quality standards (HQS). HQS must be maintained throughout the term of the contract. When there are HQS deficiencies, OHFA may conduct a complaint inspection at the request of a family or owner (or someone else with an interest in the property being maintained).

Failure by the owner to maintain the property in compliance with HQS is a violation of the Housing Assistance Payment contract (HAP). The HAP contract is between the owner and OHFA. A family may request that OHFA conduct a complaint inspection if an owner fails to correct deficiencies within a timely manner, as long as the family has properly notified the owner in writing of the deficiency.

Failure by the family to maintain the property in compliance with HQS is a violation of the lease and tenancy addendum and a violation of family obligations. OHFA cannot enforce the lease. The lease is between the owner and the family.

However, OHFA can enforce family obligations. If a family has caused major damage to the unit, disconnected utilities, or removed batteries from smoke detectors, an owner may

request that OHFA conduct a complaint inspection.

Requests for complaint inspections must be submitted to your assigned Recertification Team.

When requesting an inspection, the family or owner must provide OHFA with a detailed list of the deficient items and a copy of the correspondence sent to the respective party informing of the deficiency. Only those items in violation of HQS will be required to be corrected. Certain deficiencies, such as gas and plumbing leaks, severe structural damage, terminated utilities, non-functioning smoke detectors, etc, must be corrected within 24 hours. Other items must be corrected within 30 days.

If a family or owner fails to correct the deficiency within the time proscribed by OHFA, OHFA will terminate assistance.



Fraud Investigations by OHFA Staff

by Marcia Brejda, HAP Accountant/Investigator

One of the least known functions of the Section 8 staff is the investigation of fraud and criminal activity, yet it's a function conducted regularly and aggressively. OHFA has established partnerships with many organizations in an effort to reduce the occurrence of fraud and criminal activity within the Section 8 program.

Partnerships include the United States Postal Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the HUD Office of Inspector General (OIG), the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, the Department of Human Services, the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, local law enforcement agencies and public housing authorities throughout the country.

A major concern of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is the under-reporting of household income by Section 8 participants. Under-reporting of income results in the over-payment of assistance. Several of OHFA's investigations involve income fraud and have resulted in the referral of participants to the OIG for prosecution. OHFA currently receives

reimbursement from these former participants for the overpayment of assistance.

OHFA receives tips from a variety of sources. Sources can include co-workers of assisted participants, neighbors of assisted participants, concerned citizens, television reports and newspaper articles. Every tip from every source is investigated. Many of our criminal investigations are conducted via the internet. Some public websites provide detailed criminal background information, including information about arrests, convictions, incarcerations and parole status.

These websites are an invaluable tool, as involvement in criminal activity is strictly prohibited under OHFA's program guidelines.

Do you suspect someone of committing fraud on the Section 8 program?
To report a problem, call
(405) 419-8274

Board Members Reopen Section 8 Waiting List

Trustees of Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency authorized a resolution to reopen the waiting list statewide to applicants for the Section 8 Rental Assistance Program, effective July 14.

OHFA has budget authority to assist 9,300 families through the program. The agency closed the list in May of 2003 when it grew to 23,000 families.

"To continue to take applications at that time would have given false hope to those seeking assistance," said Deborah Jenkins, Rental Assistance Team Leader "We have purged our waiting list and are currently taking applications again."

Rental Assistance helps elderly, disabled individuals, working families on fixed incomes and single parents live in safer neighborhoods by paying a portion of their rent. Some local housing authorities also administer Section 8 vouchers. OHFA is the only agency to do so statewide. Applicants who are homeless or disabled receive preference and are moved to the top of the list.

To apply for rental assistance, applicants should visit www.ohfa.org. Applications may also be picked up at OHFA, 100 N.W. 63rd Street in Oklahoma City or by telephone (405) 842-2471.

Notice from the Metropolitan Fair Housing Council

Are you a Section 8 participant with a disability who has been notified by the Department of Human Services' Developmental Disability Services Division that in order to receive services you must move into housing with other persons with disabilities?

Progressive Independence, a disability advocate and assistance organization, and Metropolitan Fair Housing Council would like to advise you of your rights and options, before you make a decision that could jeopardize your Section 8 assistance.

For more information, please contact Progressive Independence at (405) 321-3203 or Metropolitan Fair Housing Council at (405) 232-3247.