

FOR RENTERS & APPLICANTS

Housing Choice Voucher — plain-language *basics*.

The short version of the Housing Choice Voucher Program (sometimes called Section 8) — written for renters, not lawyers.

What a voucher is

A Housing Choice Voucher is a federal rental subsidy administered locally by a housing authority (in DC, that's the DC Housing Authority, or DCHA). It pays a portion of your rent directly to the landlord every month. You pay the remaining portion.

How the payment split works

- DCHA pays the landlord a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) every month, directly.
- You pay the landlord a smaller tenant portion, usually about 30% of your adjusted household income.
- The split varies by household income and the apartment's rent vs. the local payment standard.

How you get one

DCHA controls the waiting list. Applications open periodically when slots are available. Check [dchousing.org](https://www.dchousing.org) or call DCHA for current status. Birdie's House does not issue vouchers — we work with families who already have one.

What happens once you have a voucher

- 01 Find a landlord who accepts your voucher — that's where Birdie's House comes in.
- 02 Submit a Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) packet to DCHA via the landlord.
- 03 DCHA inspects the unit (HQS inspection) — the landlord runs corrective work directly with DCHA.
- 04 DCHA executes the HAP contract; you sign your lease with the landlord.
- 05 You move in.

Portability — voucher from another jurisdiction

If your voucher comes from outside DC (PG County, Maryland, Virginia), you can still rent in DC. It's called "portability." It adds a few weeks while housing authorities coordinate, but it's routine. We handle it.

Common myths

- "Voucher tenants are bad tenants" — false. Same screening standard as market-rate at Birdie's House.
- "Voucher units are second-rate" — false. Every voucher unit must pass HQS inspection — a HUD federal standard — before move-in.



- **“Landlords lose money on vouchers”** — generally false. Most DC payment standards are competitive with market rents, especially for 4–5BR units.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

If you have a voucher and are looking for a unit, email leasing@birdieshousecd.org or call **(202) 656-9668**. If you don't have a voucher and want to apply, contact DCHA at dchousing.org.