LANDLORD UPDATE

How Landlords Can Bridge the Affordable Housing Gap

The United States is facing an affordable housing shortage. Researchers claim that nationwide just 31 affordable rental units are available for every 100 extremely low-income households, with 20 states having even fewer available spaces. Florida is one of those 20 states with scarce housing options for low-income families. In fact, when SPHA opened its Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) / Section 8 wait list in April 2015, more than 16,000 families applied for housing.

As incomes fail to keep pace with housing costs, these low-income families face complicated choices: desperately trying to put food on the table, pay for quality health care, educate their children, and keep a roof over their head. Those that cannot manage that balancing act become homeless or live on the periphery of homelessness. Residents are required to contribute 30 percent of their income for their monthly rent, while the Section 8 HCV voucher pays for the balance based on the SPHA payment standards. Landlords also receive the benefits of advertising your properties, annual unit inspections (both at no cost to the property owners) and the privilege to use your own lease as approved by the SPHA.

With the assistance of the St. Petersburg rental community, together we can reach our goal of providing safe, decent and affordable housing to local families residing in the City of St. Petersburg. We thank our current landlords for their commitment to this goal and invite all rental property owners/landlords in the jurisdiction to join us in the path to serving our citizens.

SPHA to Host Landlord Workshop on March 15, 2018

On Thursday, March 15, 2018, at 2:00 p.m., SPHA will host a workshop for all local landlords and property owners who are interested in learning more about SPHA's HCV program, commonly known as Section 8. The workshop will take place at SPHA's central office, 2001 Gandy Boulevard North in St. Petersburg.

Gil Machin, SPHA's Housing Choice Voucher Officer, says, "Through this workshop, we hope to educate all landlords about the benefits of renting to a Section 8 tenant and to give landlords already in the program a better understanding of its requirements. At SPHA, we are committed to working hand-in-hand with local landlords to increase affordable rental options for families in need of housing."

The workshop agenda includes an overview of the HCV program, tenant and landlord obligations and responsibilities, the landlord registration process, property listing resources for optimum exposure, and preparing for a successful Housing Quality Standards Inspection.

To register for the free workshop, landlords and owners should call 727-323-3171, ext. 236, or E-mail dlucier@stpeteha.org. Space is limited, so reservations are recommended.

ST. PETERSBURG HOUSING AUTHORITY

The Landlord's Role in Ending Veteran Homelessness

Thirteen percent of U.S. adults who are homeless have served in the military—a staggering number, given that veterans represent just 7 percent of the overall population. SPHA is working with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to end veteran homelessness and you can help.

If you have a rental property, consider participating in a program, known as HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH), that has helped tens of thousands of veterans and their families nationwide overcome the challenges of homelessness and lead independent lives.

With a HUD-VASH voucher issued by SPHA, homeless veterans are able to rent private sector apartments in St. Petersburg. Since 2009, HUD has awarded a total of 275 HUD-VASH vouchers to SPHA, in addition to the regular vouchers allotted to the housing authority's

Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) / Section 8 program.

For landlords, there are a number of benefits to participation in the HUD-VASH program:

- Guaranteed income through reliable monthly rental payments from SPHA
- A say in security deposits, based on local standards
- Annual property inspections help to maintain quality
- Ongoing case management provides a safety net for tenants and lowers default risks
- A chance to honor those who honorably served our nation

Landlords who have worked with the program also comment that their HUD-VASH tenants have been extremely "appreciative of the opportunity."

To become a HUD-VASH landlord, simply contact SPHA to fill out the required paperwork and to secure a spot on a list of approved HUD-VASH properties.

Also, if a veteran you know is homeless, at imminent risk of becoming homeless, or in crisis, please refer him or her to the VA. You can call 877-4AID-VET (877-424-3838) or chat online at va.gov/homeless.

Protecting Women and Families from Violence

The Violence Against Women Act of 2013 (VAWA) is a federal law that provides special protections for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking who are applying for or receiving assistance under the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program.

If a family or a member of a family is or has been the victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, the SPHA will allow them to move to protect their health or safety of the family or family member. This condition applies even when the family has moved out of its unit in violation of the

lease, with or without prior notification to SPHA, if the family or family member who is the victim reasonably believed that he or she was imminently threatened by harm from further violence if they remained in the unit.

SPHA's goal is to fully comply with the VAWA law. It is our objective to work with applicants or residents who certify under VAWA to ensure that they are protected from any further harm. You can find more information regarding VAWA at https://www.justice.gov/ovw.

Have questions? Please contact SPHA's Section 8 Department:
727-323-3171 (phone) or section8@stpeteha.org (e-mail)