

# Housing Assistance Review

A quarterly newsletter for Owners & Tenants of the Section 8 Rental Assistance Program



November 2011

## City of Cedar Rapids Housing Services

1211 6th St. SW  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404  
www.cedar-rapids.org

### GENERAL INFORMATION

286-5872 - Main  
286-5870 - Fax

### PROGRAM STAFF

#### CASE MANAGEMENT

PAM AMMETER 286-5237  
CHRIS BRODT 286-5183  
ANNETTE LORENZ 286-5184

#### HOUSING INSPECTIONS

JIM BORSCHEL 286-5181  
MARIE ANDERSON 286-5189

#### FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY

PAM MOSBAUGH 286-5195  
RANDY KNUDSON 286-5196

#### SUPPORT STAFF

JEANNE VICE 286-5193  
AMANDA RABEY 286-5159

#### ASSISTED HOUSING MANAGER

LASHEILA YATES 286-5192

## Utilities & Housing— A Necessary Combination

**W**hen a utility shut off comes to the attention of our office, it becomes necessary for the family and/or landlord to have the service restored, for those utilities which they are responsible. Failure to have the necessary utilities restored may cause the rent assisted family to be terminated. If the Landlord fails to have the utilities restored, the Housing Assistance Payments contract may be terminated.

**Energy Conservation** - There are a couple of things the tenant can do before it comes to this point. First, look for ways to conserve energy to keep bill lower. There are many ways that you can conserve with or no cost to you. Turn down the thermostat while you are sleeping or away for your home. If you feel chilly, grab a blanket or put on warmer clothes before you turn up the heat. Keep blinds and curtains shut if it is windy outside. On sunny days, open your blinds and curtains on the southern side of your house or apartment. Cover an AC wall unit with plastic from the outside. These are just a few things you can do. Both Alliant and Mid-American Energy have brochures available on many more cost saving ideas. Make sure that you get approval from your landlord before you do anything to the structure of your house or apartment. This includes nailing or tacking up plastic on or around the win-

dows inside or outside. Consider asking your landlord to install a programmable thermostat if there is not already one there.

**Payment Plans** - The most important thing to do is not to fall behind. Both Alliant and Mid-American Energy state that it is very important to contact them immediately if you know that you will not be able to pay your bill. In most cases, they can set up a payment plan. If you are already on a payment plan or behind a couple of months this may not be an option, but it is worth asking. Remember to set up a payment plan that is affordable and one you can stick with.

If you are not already on the budget billing, check into this. With budget billing you pay the same gas or electric bill each month. Your payment is determined by using the average over the previous 12 months. If you are on a fixed monthly income, you may find it easier to pay a flat

amount each month.

**Utility Assistance** - Utility Assistance is available on a first come, first serve basis. The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LiHEAP) helps qualifying families with a onetime credit towards their heat bill. Households who reside in subsidized housing are responsible for paying their primary heating costs **may** be eligible. Households who reside in subsidized housing **and** have heat included in their rent are **not** eligible.

Elderly and Disabled households can apply on October 1, 2011 through April 30, 2012 and all other households can apply November 1, 2011 through April 30, 2012.

**Call HACAP at 319-739-0100 or United Way 2-1-1 for more information.**

### INCOME MAXIMUMS

Household Size	3-Month Gross	Annual Gross
1	\$4,084	\$16,335
2	\$5,516	\$22,065
3	\$6,949	\$27,795
4	\$8,381	\$33,525
5	\$9,814	\$39,255
6	\$11,246	\$44,985

For Households with more than six members, add \$1,433 for a 3-Month period and \$5,730 annually for each additional member.

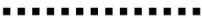
**Medical Waiver:** Households who are over income guidelines may be eligible for energy assistance if they have documented medical bills paid and non-reimbursable.

# Is A Move in your Future?

If you are considering moving, then here are the Section 8 Steps to move.



**We recommend that families give 60 day notice to move.**



## Reporting Changes

All Changes must be reported within 10 Working Days of the event. It must be in writing on the Change of Information Form.

For rent decreases, if our office receives the Change of Information Form on or before the 15th of the month, staff will make every effort to verify and make changes in your rent for the 1st of the following month.



## Deposits

**Housing Services does not have funds available to assist with security deposits. For deposit assistance please check the Linn County Resource Sheets detail on Page 4.**

### Step 1:

- Tenants currently under their first year on Section 8 HCV are not eligible to move and should contact their case manager for additional questions.
- The tenant or landlord must give a minimum of a 30 day written notice (1<sup>st</sup> to end of month). However, it is preferred that a 60 day notice is given. A copy of the notice will need to be submitted to our office.
- The tenant and landlord should check with the landlord's current policy and lease regarding moving eligibility.
- The case manager determines if the move is approvable.

### Step 2:

- Within 10 working days upon receipt of the move notification, the case manager will let the tenant and landlord know in writing whether or not the move is approved or denied.
- If approved, the tenant will be sent documents to fill out and submit to our office to start the update process.
- Case manager will send out any additional verifications that are required.

### Step 3:

- The tenant is sent the voucher to return to our office within 7 working days.
- Once original voucher is returned, the tenant will receive the Move Packet envelope with all the instructions for the move process.
- The voucher will be issued for 60 days to look for a unit. The tenant can request in writing prior to the voucher expiration date, an extension of their voucher not to exceed a total of 180 days.

### Step 4:

- The tenant selects a unit from the open market within their total voucher limits.
- If the landlord is interested in renting the unit to the tenant, the landlord should screen the tenant as they would screen any non Section 8 HCV tenant for suitability of the unit.

### Step 5:

- The landlord and tenant will complete and sign the Request for Tenancy Approval and Lead Paint Disclosure Form.

- The tenant is responsible for returning the forms to the office.
- The Request for Tenancy Approval must be submitted to our office before the voucher expires.

### Step 6:

- The Housing Services office determines if the tenant is income-eligible for the unit and that the rent is reasonable.
- A tenant may not pay more than 40 percent of their adjusted monthly income towards the initial rent and utility allowance for the unit.
- Housing Services inspects the unit to ensure it is in compliance with HUD's Housing Quality Standards.

### Step 7:

- The Lease Addendum and HAP Contract will be executed and HAP payments will occur providing:
  - The unit passes HQS inspection.
  - The tenant has all required utilities turned on in their name.
  - The tenant moves in.
  - The landlord and tenant have signed the lease addendum and the landlord has signed the HAP Contract.
- The first payment cannot be processed until all documents are signed by all parties and returned to our office. Processing the HAP payment can take 2-4 weeks.

**\*Note: At this time our office is not prorating rent subsidies.**

## **Other Considerations When Moving**

- Do you have the money for a new deposit? You will pay deposit at your new place long before you get your old one back. Your current landlord has 30 days after your lease ends to give your deposit back or an itemized list of repairs explaining why you did not get your deposit back. Be sure to give your old landlord your forwarding address.
- Do you have the funds for utility deposits? The utility company may charge a deposit to set up an account at your new place.
- Do you have the funds to move? Renting a truck, hiring someone to help, or buying pizza for your moving volunteers can be costly.

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## Section 8 Waitlist is Now Closed

**E**ffective October 28, 2011, Cedar Rapids Housing Services is no longer taking applications for their Section 8 Waitlist. There are currently over 3,500 families on the waiting list and there are more families on the list than can be assisted in the near future. There is no scheduled date to reopen the waiting list at this time. When the City of Cedar Rapids Housing Services Division is prepared to re-open the waiting list, an announcement will be posted on the City of Cedar Rapids website and in the local newspaper.

If an applicant's name is already on the waiting list, they do not need to take any action. The City of Cedar Rapids Housing Services Division will maintain their name and the date and time they applied. They are still required to update their personal information by submitting changes in writing.

Please note that staff will continue to provide individuals with information about other affordable housing options in the community. If you have any questions about the waiting list closure, please contact our office at (319) 286-5872. You can also contact the Assisted Housing Program Manager LaSheila Yates at (319) 286-5192.

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## Changes in Payment Standards

The Voucher Payment Standards have been lowered in both Linn & Benton Counties. This will take effect on January 1, 2012.

### For Linn County the Standards are:

<u>Bed Room Size</u>	<u>Old</u>	<u>New</u>
0 Bedroom	\$436.00	\$418.00
1 Bedroom	\$507.00	\$487.00
2 Bedroom	\$668.00	\$641.00
3 Bedroom	\$947.00	\$908.00
4 Bedroom	\$1075.00	\$1032.00
5 Bedroom	\$1236.00	\$1186.00
Mobile Home Lot Rent \$256		

### For Benton County the Standards are:

<u>Bed Room Size</u>	<u>Old</u>	<u>New</u>
0 Bedroom	\$350.00	\$360.00
1 Bedroom	\$413.00	\$425.00
2 Bedroom	\$539.00	\$555.00
3 Bedroom	\$671.00	\$691.00
4 Bedroom	\$899.00	\$925.00
5 Bedroom	\$1033.00	\$1063.00
Mobile Home Lot Rent \$215		

Please Note: when looking at the Payment Standards, this is not necessarily what the rent will be but the method used in determining the total contract rent. The tenant's income will be used in determining the rent limit as well as any rent increase at annual renewal.

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## Landlords of Linn County

The Landlords of Linn County is a non-profit group of apartment owners and managers organized to:

1. Improve the management skills and abilities of its members so each can become a better and more efficient landlord.
2. Inform members of local and state legislation affecting rental properties and take action to cause that legislation to be approved or disapproved depending on its impact on rental properties.
3. Exchange information so that each of us can:
  - Reduce or maintain expenses
  - Reduce our vacancy rates
  - Reduce our tenant turnover rates
  - Improve our tenant relations
  - Reduce our legal problems and exposures

For More information about membership and resources visit their website at: [www.landlordsoflinncounty.org](http://www.landlordsoflinncounty.org)



# Holiday Food Box Registration

## Registration Dates:

**November 1st — November 18th  
Monday — Friday**

## Evening Opportunities

**November 3rd, 8th & 17th  
4:00pm—7:00pm**



**Register at The Salvation Army  
1000 C Avenue NW  
Cedar Rapids, IA  
319-364-9131**

To register you **MUST** have the following:

- **Current Iowa Drivers License or Photo Identification** – If you do not have Iowa identification, you will need to bring in a piece of mail with your name and Iowa address on it.
- **Social Security Cards for Every Member in Your Family** – If you do not currently have Social Security cards, you can apply for them at a Social Security office. You will be given a sheet of paper indicating that you have applied. The Social Security number (s) must be written on that paper and then it will be accepted. **Just Social Security numbers alone will NOT be accepted.** You must bring in the actual cards or the paper from the Social Security office as described.
- **Proof of Income (Must have one of the following) –**
  - Pay check stub from the last month
  - Bank statement indicating Social Security payments or employers direct deposit
  - Print out from Social Security or letter stating amount received
  - WIC Booklet
  - SNAP (Food Stamp) Card
  - LIHEAP Approval Letter
  - Note: Title 19 cards will **NOT** be accepted as a proof of income

**No registrations will be accepted after the 18th of November.** If you register with another organization for food or toys you may be removed from this program at any time without notice.

## Community Resources

- **2-1-1:** United Way 2-1-1 is a free, confidential service that connects individuals and families to community resources and the services they need, 24-hours a day, seven days a week. When you dial 2-1-1, a trained professional will listen to your situation, access a database of health and human services providers and then give you information about the most appropriate community services.
  - **To find help, dial 2-1-1 or toll-free at 1-866-469-2211**  
**From a cell phone or pay phone, dial (319) 739-4211**
- **Linn County Resource Sheets.** Linn County Community Services has an extensive list of area resources divided into the following categories: Affordable Housing; Basic Needs; Child Care; Counseling; Disabilities; Education; Emergency Shelter; Employment; Family & Youth; Financial; Food Assistance; Health; Legal; Older Adults; Parent Education; Transitional Housing; and Transportation. Each is a Microsoft Word document that can be printed or downloaded separately.
  - [www.linncounty.org](http://www.linncounty.org) — Click on Resource Sheets on the home page under Hot Topics: Health & Social Services.