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Section 8 Application Checklist & Field Guide

Download the PDF checklist before you go to your housing authority (PHA), city hall, or apply online. Check items off as you go.

https://section8calculator.com

How to use this guide

There is no single national Section 8 application. You apply through a local Public Housing Authority (PHA). This checklist helps you remember what to bring, what to ask, and what to watch for.

1. Before you apply or visit the office

- ☐ Checked income limits and rent estimate with the calculator (ZIP code).
- ☐ Identified the correct PHA for my city or county (some areas have more than one).
- ☐ Confirmed whether the waiting list is open, lottery-based, or preference-only.
- ☐ Wrote down the PHA address, phone, website, and office hours.
- ☐ Asked if I need an appointment or if walk-ins / online-only apply.
- ☐ Set up an email and phone I check daily (the PHA must be able to reach me).

2. Documents to bring (or upload online)

- ☐ Photo ID (driver's license, state ID, or passport) for each adult.
- ☐ Social Security numbers or immigration eligibility documents (as your PHA requires).
- ☐ Birth certificates or proof of relationship for children in the household.
- ☐ Income proofs: pay stubs, employer letter, SSI/SSDI, pension, child support, etc.
- ☐ Bank statements or other asset info if the PHA asks for them.
- ☐ Current lease, rent receipts, or landlord letter (if applicable).
- ☐ Utility bills or proof of current address.
- ☐ Preference documents (veteran, disability, domestic violence, homelessness) if they apply.
- ☐ Extra copies: avoid giving away your only originals when possible.

3. At the PHA, city hall, or online application

- ☐ Arrived 10–15 minutes early (or submitted online before the deadline).
- ☐ Brought this printed checklist and a pen.
- ☐ Filled every required field; did not leave blanks without asking.
- ☐ Listed everyone who will live in the household.
- ☐ Reported all income and recent job changes honestly.
- ☐ Requested a confirmation number, receipt, or submission screenshot.
- ☐ Asked how I will learn my application status (mail, portal, phone).
- ☐ Was polite and wrote down the staff member's name if I met in person.

4. Important questions to ask

- ☐ Is the waiting list open right now? Until when?

- [ ] Is selection by lottery, first-come, or local preferences?
- [ ] Which preferences can move me up (veteran, disability, local resident)?
- [ ] How long is the typical wait for this PHA?
- [ ] Do I need to renew or update my application every year?
- [ ] Can I apply to other PHAs at the same time?
- [ ] What happens if I move or change phone/email while waiting?
- [ ] When I get a voucher, how many days will I have to find a unit?

5. After you submit

- [ ] Saved the receipt / confirmation number somewhere safe.
- [ ] Added the PHA email and phone to my contacts.
- [ ] Set a monthly reminder to check mail, spam, and any online portal.
- [ ] Will update the PHA if my address, income, or household changes.
- [ ] Will not pay anyone who promises to "move me up" the list (that is a scam).
- [ ] While waiting, checked other PHAs with open lists.

6. If you receive a voucher

- [ ] Wrote down the voucher expiration date (deadline to find a unit).
- [ ] Asked for the payment standard and approved bedroom size.
- [ ] Understood the ~30% income share and the 40% initial rent cap.
- [ ] Looked for units that accept vouchers and can pass HQS inspection.
- [ ] Did not sign a lease until the PHA approves the unit.
- [ ] Kept copies of the RFTA / landlord paperwork and inspection dates.

Notes (PHA name, dates, case / confirmation numbers)

Write here after printing or jot notes on your downloaded PDF.

Disclaimer

This resource is educational and is not affiliated with HUD or any PHA. Requirements vary by agency. Always confirm official instructions with your local housing authority.

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