



## **Leasing a New Unit with your Section 8 Voucher: Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Q: Who is my housing specialist while I am moving?**

A: You can contact the Leased Housing Gateway at 617-425-6611 or [RelocationInfo@MetroHousingBoston.org](mailto:RelocationInfo@MetroHousingBoston.org) with questions while you are in the leasing process.

### **Q: How can I find a new unit?**

A: You are responsible for locating a new unit. A list of housing search websites that may be useful is included in this packet. Metro Housing|Boston's Leased Housing Department is not able to help with your search. However, our Housing Hub can provide housing-related resources in some cases where households are facing crises. Housing Hub can be contacted at 617-425-6700 or [ResourceLine@MetroHousingBoston.org](mailto:ResourceLine@MetroHousingBoston.org).

### **Q: Where can I move with my voucher?**

A: You can move anywhere in the country with your voucher. A map of the area that Metro Housing|Boston serves is included in this packet. If you would like to move outside of our area, please sign and return the document in this packet titled "Important Information for Section 8 Voucher Program Participants." If you are looking to move within Massachusetts, follow the steps below for submitting a unit request. If you are looking to move outside of Massachusetts, visit the Section 8 Forms page on our website, complete the Request to Move out of State form, and send it to our office. If you are unable to access the form in this way, please contact the Leased Housing Gateway at 617-425-6611 or [RelocationInfo@MetroHousingBoston.org](mailto:RelocationInfo@MetroHousingBoston.org).

### **Q: How does the payment standard affect my search?**

A: The payment standard, which can be found in this packet, is the maximum contract rent amount that Metro Housing|Boston can help pay for. If you rent a unit with a contract rent over the payment standard, you will be responsible for paying the amount that the rent is over in addition to your usual rent share, which is 30% of your income. It is your choice whether you are willing to pay this extra amount, though there is a limit on how much over the payment standard we can approve.

### **Q: Is there a maximum rent amount for units that I submit?**

A: Metro Housing|Boston cannot approve rents over the payment standard that would result in you paying more than 40% of your income on rent. If you submit one of these units, we will contact the property owner to try to negotiate the rent to a lower amount. If they do not accept our offer, we must deny the unit.

### **Q: Do I have to find a unit that has the same number of bedrooms as my voucher?**

A: No, but the payment standard used will be the standard for the lower of your voucher size or the actual bedroom size. You cannot lease a unit that would result in more than two people in your household for each bedroom. Please note that property owners usually request to increase unit rents each year and base the amount they request on the actual bedroom size of the unit.

### **Q: How do I get an extension on my voucher time?**

If your voucher has an expiration date: You are eligible for one 30-day extension, which can be made by emailing [RelocationInfo@MetroHousingBoston.org](mailto:RelocationInfo@MetroHousingBoston.org), sending us a letter, or by sending the form in this packet. Further extensions can only be approved by requesting a reasonable accommodation due to a disability.

If your voucher says "Relocation Purposes:" Your voucher does not have an expiration date as long as you are still in your unit. You are required to notify us as soon as you vacate your current unit.



**Q: What can property owners screen me for?**

A: Property owners can check for and deny you based on your credit score, amount of income, eviction record, and criminal background. You cannot be denied a unit based on race, religion, national origin, gender, disability, familial status, marital status, genetic information, sexual orientation, source of income (including having a rental voucher), military status, age, or gender identity/expression.

**Q: I think I may have been discriminated against in my search. What should I do?**

A: Please contact Metro Housing|Boston's Fair Housing Project at 617-425-6681 or [Barbara.Chandler@MetroHousingBoston.org](mailto:Barbara.Chandler@MetroHousingBoston.org) for assistance.

**Q: Will my voucher help with security deposits?**

A: Your voucher does not cover security deposits. For assistance on security deposits, you may be able to utilize the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) program. More information on RAFT is contained in this packet. The security deposit requested by the property owner cannot be more than the contract rent amount approved by Metro Housing|Boston.

**Q: Can the property owner for first/last month's rent up front?**

A: The property owner may only ask for your share of first/last month's rent up front. Our share of the first month will arrive after the unit is approved and we receive all leasing documents. Our share of the last month will arrive on the last month. The property owner may ask for your share, but is discouraged from doing so as the shares will not be determined until late in the process and your share will likely change many times during your tenancy. For assistance on first/last month's rent, you may be able to utilize the RAFT program. More information on RAFT is contained in this packet.

**Q: What do I do when I find a unit?**

A: When you find a unit that you like, give the property owner a copy of the other packet included with this one. They are responsible for reading through it and completing most of the paperwork in it, but you will have to sign off on the Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) form. If you need a new packet, you can visit our website, come to our office, or contact the Leased Housing Gateway at 617-425-6611 or [RelocationInfo@MetroHousingBoston.org](mailto:RelocationInfo@MetroHousingBoston.org). You may only submit one RFTA at a time. If you're looking to apply for RAFT, it is recommended that you submit your pre-application at the same time you submit your RFTA.

**Q: What happens when I submit an RFTA?**

A: Your Relocation Specialist will contact you via email regarding income documentation for your new rent share. They will also contact the property owner via email to let them know if any documents are missing. You and the property owner must both write your email addresses on the RFTA. Once we have everything from the property owner, we have to validate their W9, a process which takes up to 2 business days. After the W9 is validated, the unit will be given to the Inspections Department, which will contact the property owner to schedule an inspection.

**Q: How does the inspections process work?**

A: It usually takes at least 1 week from the time an RFTA is submitted to the inspection actually taking place. After the inspection, the rent will be reviewed by our Market Analysts to verify that it is reasonable based on inspection information. Rents under the payment standard are not always reasonable. If a rent is determined to be unreasonable, we will attempt to negotiate with the property owner before denying the unit. We will not receive verification from the inspections department that the unit has been approved until at least one day after the inspection.



**Q: What if the unit fails the inspection?**

A: If a unit fails inspection, the property owner will be given a list of things to fix. It is then their responsibility to make repairs and contact the Inspections Department to schedule a re-inspection. A re-inspection cannot take place until the rent is approved. We cannot approve you to move in any day before an inspection has passed and the rent has been approved.

**Q: What happens after the unit is approved?**

If your voucher has an expiration date: You are able to move in on the day that the unit is approved. Your lease will then begin on whatever day you moved in or plan to move in. If you are missing any paperwork, you will be asked to come into our office to provide it. Once we have everything we need, you and the property owner will be sent contracts to sign and return to us.

If your voucher says "Relocation Purposes:" You are able to move in on the day that the unit is approved OR after your current lease ends, whichever is later. If you reinstated your lease to a specific date, the reinstatement date must be honored. Your lease will then begin on whatever day you moved in or plan to move in. If you are missing any paperwork, you will be asked to come into our office to provide it. Once we have everything we need, you and the property owner will be sent contracts to sign and return to us.

**Q: What happens if I submit an RFTA but the unit isn't approved?**

If your voucher has an expiration date: If a unit ends up falling through for any reason, you will receive written confirmation from Metro Housing|Boston. Your voucher will be extended by the number of days that were left on the voucher when you submitted the RFTA. For example, if you submit an RFTA on the 1<sup>st</sup> of a month with 10 days left on your voucher, and the unit is denied on the 15<sup>th</sup>, you will be issued a new voucher that expires on the 25<sup>th</sup> of that month.

If your voucher says "Relocation Purposes:" If a unit ends up falling through for any reason, you will receive written confirmation from Metro Housing|Boston.

**Q: What if I have to stay in my current unit past the time my lease ends?**

A: Metro Housing|Boston will pay our share for every month you remain in the unit. You will still be liable for your share. If you are concerned that you may have to stay past the lease termination date, it is highly recommended that you complete a reinstatement of lease form with your current property owner to ensure timely and proper payment. You are required to notify us as soon as you vacate your current unit.

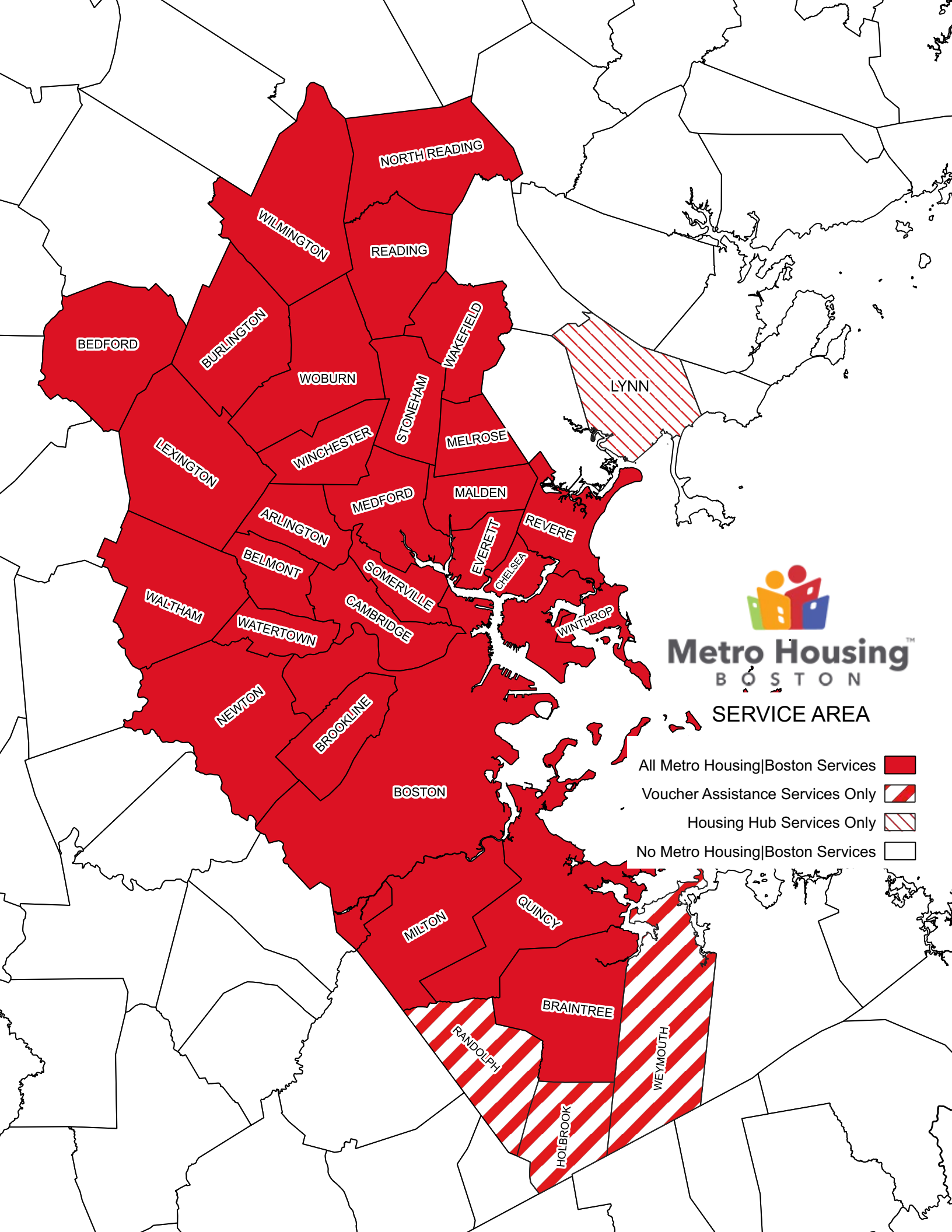


## Housing Search Websites

In addition to the Apartment Listings on <http://www.metrohousingboston.org/apartment-listings>, you may consider using the following websites in your housing search:





- AAA Apartment Rentals: <http://www.aaaapts.com/>
- Apartments.com: <https://apartments.com/>
- Craigslist: <https://boston.craigslist.org/search/hhh>
- City of Boston Metrolist: <http://www.boston.gov/metrolist>
- Boston Housing Authority:  
<http://www.bostonhousing.org/en/Apartment-Listing-Search.aspx>
- Cheap Apartments Coalition: <http://cheapapartmentscoalition.com/>
- HomeFinder: <https://homefinder.com/>
- Homes.com: <https://www.homes.com/>
- GoSection8: <http://gosection8.com/>
- MassAccess: <https://www.massaccesshousingregistry.org/>
- MassHousing: <https://www.masshousing.com/>
- Rentals.com: <https://www.rentals.com/>
- RentHop: <https://renthop.com/boston-apartments-for-rent>
- Rent Jungle: <https://rentjungle.com/>
- Socialserve: <http://www.socialserve.com/>
- Trulia: <https://www.trulia.com/>
- Zillow: <https://www.zillow.com/>

**Please Note:** Metro Housing|Boston is not affiliated with these websites in any way and cannot vouch for the information they provide. Search at your own risk. If you encounter housing discrimination, you can contact our Housing Consumer Education Center at 617-425-6700 or email [ResourceLine@metrohousingboston.org](mailto:ResourceLine@metrohousingboston.org) for assistance.



**Metro Housing**  
BOSTON

**SERVICE AREA**

- All Metro Housing|Boston Services 
- Voucher Assistance Services Only 
- Housing Hub Services Only 
- No Metro Housing|Boston Services 



## Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8) Payment Standards Effective 01/01/2020

The following payment standards are in effect starting the date listed above for all cities and towns covered by Metro Housing|Boston. These towns are:

ARLINGTON	HOLBROOK	REVERE
BEDFORD	LEXINGTON	SOMERVILLE
BELMONT	MALDEN	STONEHAM
BOSTON	MEDFORD	WAKEFIELD
BRAINTREE	MELROSE	WALTHAM
BROOKLINE	MILTON	WATERTOWN
BURLINGTON	NEWTON	WEYMOUTH
CAMBRIDGE	NORTH READING	WILMINGTON
CHELSEA	QUINCY	WINCHESTER
CHESTNUT HILL	RANDOLPH	WINTHROP
EVERETT	READING	WOBURN

PAYMENT STANDARDS FOR ALL TOWNS BY BEDROOM SIZE AND UTILITY CONFIGURATION								
Owner pays for:	SRO	STUDIO	1 BR	2 BR	3 BR	4 BR	5 BR	6 BR
Neither Heat nor Electricity	\$1,356	\$1,809	\$1,978	\$2,398	\$2,995	\$3,243	\$3,713	\$4,184
Electricity, not Heat	\$1,376	\$1,836	\$2,008	\$2,429	\$3,027	\$3,276	\$3,747	\$4,219
Heat, not Electricity	\$1,394	\$1,859	\$2,060	\$2,511	\$3,136	\$3,411	\$3,926	\$4,442
Heat and Electricity	\$1,414	\$1,886	\$2,090	\$2,542	\$3,168	\$3,444	\$3,960	\$4,477





## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT RAFT**

Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) is a state-funded program that allows families and individuals to stay housed or move into their next home during periods of housing instability and crisis.

Eligible households can receive up to \$4,000 in a 12-month period. Funds can be used for: rental or mortgage arrearages; security deposits; first and last month's rent; utility arrearages; furniture; employment-related transportation costs.

### **How do I apply for RAFT?**

If you are interested in applying for the RAFT program, please fill out the online pre-application at [bit.ly/RAFTpreapp](https://bit.ly/RAFTpreapp) or text 'RAFT' to (617) 858-5173. After you complete the pre-application, monitor your email for the next steps. A case manager will reach out within **3** business days. (NOTE: The above web address is case sensitive. Please type as is.)

### **What documentation will I need to provide?**

#### **ID (for all household members)**

- If 18 or over, photo ID
- If under 18, birth certificate or passport for all members

#### **Proof of Income- must be within 30 days**

- Paystubs - four most recent (must be consecutive/in a row)
- Benefit award letter dated within last 30 days (SSI, SSP, TAFDC, etc.)
- Child Support (most current 30 days. Must show actual payments, no court orders!)

#### **Proof of Crisis**

- **For households facing eviction:** Summary Process Summons and Complaint\*\*  
\*\*Tenants who have a housing subsidy and are facing eviction due to non-payment of rent must also provide proof of financial hardship that explains cause for arrears in order to receive assistance.
- **For households with rental arrears:** Written documentation of rental arrears, demonstration of a financial hardship (reduction in revenue and/or increase in expenses) that caused the nonpayment of rent, and demonstration that payment of the arrears will allow the household to retain their housing.
- **For households leaving doubled-up housing:** Letter from landlord or primary tenant explaining that the family must leave. This must also include the address, date, and contact name and info of person writing letter. A copy of new lease or letter of intent to rent for new apartment.
- **For households leaving unsafe housing:** Verification of unsafe housing conditions and copy of new lease/letter of intent to rent for new apartment.
- **For households facing foreclosure or mortgage arrears:** Current mortgage statement and letter from lender indicating that family is at least 30 days in arrears and at risk of foreclosure.

**RAFT APPLICATION IN THREE STEPS**

**STEP ONE: Pre-application (Online)**

**STEP TWO: Eligibility questions (Email)**

**STEP THREE: Full application (Fillable form)**

- For households facing utility shutoff: Utility shutoff notice and current bill.

### **Social Security Cards**

- For **ALL** members of the household (original or copy of physical card)
  - If you are missing a card, go immediately to SSA office and apply for new one; Provide proof that you have applied, but you will still need to provide actual card for approval

### **Proof of Housing**

- If currently housed without a voucher, your lease or tenancy-at-will agreement.
- If currently housed with a voucher (Section 8, public housing, etc.), you will need to bring your tenant share letter.
- If currently temporarily housed with a friend or family, provide a letter that you can no longer stay with them. This must also include the full address, date, and contact name and info of person writing letter.

### **Will I need to provide any additional forms once I'm eligible?**

Additional documentation may be requested after you complete the application. You will have two weeks from the date of your application to provide any additional requested documentation. If all requested documentation is not provided within two weeks, you will be denied for the RAFT program.

### **Once I fill out the application, will I definitely receive financial assistance?**

No, RAFT funding is not guaranteed. Metro Housing has a set amount of funds that can potentially run out. If your file has not been approved before funds run out, you will not receive payments.

### **Will I be scheduled for an in-office appointment?**

Metro Housing is no longer requiring in-office appointments for the RAFT program. Everything will be processed online and via email.

If you are unable to complete the RAFT process online, please contact our Housing Hub Resource Line at (617)425-6700. In your message, please indicate that you are not able to do the online process. Please keep in mind that the fastest way to access RAFT is through the online pre-application.



## **Important Information For Section 8 Voucher Program Participants Who Want To Move Or Who Want To Give Up Their Section 8 Voucher**

### **Part I: If You Want to Move with Your Section 8 Voucher:**

If you want to move to another location with your Section 8 voucher, please read the following information.

What follows is a summary of your "mobility" rights as a participant in the Section 8 voucher program. This summary is not intended to substitute for a discussion with your program representative. If you want to move to another city or town with your Section 8 subsidy you should discuss your individual circumstances with your program representative as soon as you decide to move.

### **Where you Can Use Your Section 8 Voucher**

If you have a Section 8 Voucher you can use it anywhere in the United States that has a public housing authority. Your program representative will contact any appropriate housing agency to arrange for your transfer.

### **Relocating to another Public Housing Agency's area**

If you wish to move to a different community your program representative will first determine if you are income eligible in the community that you want to move to. They will advise you how to contact and request assistance from the new housing agency and will let the new agency know to expect you. The new housing agency will either issue you one of their own vouchers, or they will bill your current housing agency for your assistance. You will be required to follow the rules and policies of the new housing agency. Their rules may be somewhat different than the ones you are used to.

1. The current Public Housing Agency may refuse to issue another Voucher for a move to another unit, approve a new lease, or execute a new contract if:
2. You currently owe rent or other amounts to the Public Housing Agency or another Public Housing Agency in connection with Section 8.
3. As a current or previous participant on the Section 8 program, you have failed to pay back any Public Housing Agency for any amounts paid to an owner for rent or other amounts owed by you under your lease or for a vacant unit.
4. You have violated any Family obligation listed on your Voucher
5. You have engaged in drug related criminal activity or violent criminal activity.
6. You have breached certain repayment agreements with a Public Housing Agency
7. You have committed any fraud in connection with any federal housing program.
8. You were a participant in the Family Self Sufficiency Program and failed to comply with the terms of the family's contract of participation.

### Preserve Eligibility and Move

If you want to move out of Massachusetts but do not know where you are going to live, you must notify the Public Housing Agency before leaving the unit you occupy. Provided you are still eligible for the Section 8 program, the Public Housing Agency may issue to you a new voucher which will maintain your eligibility for 90 days after you move from your subsidized unit. If you return to Massachusetts within 90 days you will still be able to use your voucher in Massachusetts. After 90 days your Section 8 voucher will expire, and then you must reapply for another Section 8 voucher and wait until your name reaches the top of the list.

***NOTE: If you do not contact your program representative before you move and/or vacate your unit without giving the required notice to the owner, you will jeopardize your ability to retain your Section 8 eligibility for the 90 day period.***

## **Part II: If You Want to Withdraw from the Section 8 Program/Give Up Your Voucher**

What follows is important information about your rights as a Section 8 participant. This summary is not intended to be a substitute for a discussion with your program representative.

***Note: If you voluntarily give up your Section 8 voucher (this is sometimes called withdrawing), you will be terminated from the Section 8 program. Once this happens, you will not be able to get your Section 8 voucher back.***

In order to get assistance under the Section 8 program after you have given up your Section 8 subsidy, you will have to re-apply. The waiting list for applicants is often very long. As a result, it may take many months, or even years, before you could get another Section 8 voucher.

Before you give up your Section 8 voucher, you should know the following:

1. If you are thinking about giving up your Section 8 voucher because you want to move, you may be able to take your Section 8 voucher with you. Make sure you read Part I of this document.
2. If you are thinking about giving up your Section 8 voucher because you will not be able to use it soon enough (for example, because you need to enter the hospital for an extended period of time), you may be able to get your Section 8 subsidy "frozen".
3. If you are thinking about giving up your Section 8 voucher because your income is too high (for example, because you got married), you may be able to stay in the Section 8 program without receiving any subsidy for up to six months. If you again need a subsidy during that period (for example, because your income decreases), you may be able to get your subsidy reinstated.
4. If you are giving up your Section 8 voucher because you simply don't want to be in the Section 8 program, you can have your housing agency issue you a voucher good for sixty days, which may be extended for another thirty days, for a total of 90 days. If you change your mind before your voucher expires (that is, during the 60 - 90 days), you can use the voucher to look for housing. However, once the voucher expires, you will be out of the Section 8 program.

**You should make sure that you are fully informed of your rights under the section 8 program before you give up your section 8 voucher.**

**Do not give up your section 8 voucher until you talk to your program representative and/or your nearest legal services organization to be sure you are fully informed.**

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**CERTIFICATION OF RECEIPT**

I hereby certify that I have received a copy of this document entitled, "Important Information for Section 8 Program Participants Who Want To Move Or Who Want to Give Up Their Section 8 Subsidy".

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Tenant/Head of Household Signature

Date

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Tenant/Head of Household Printed Name

I hereby certify that the Tenant was provided with a copy of this document entitled, "Important Information for Section 8 Program Participants Who Want To Move Or Who Want to Give Up Their Section 8 Subsidy".

By mail

In person

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Program Representative Signature

Date

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Program Representative Printed Name