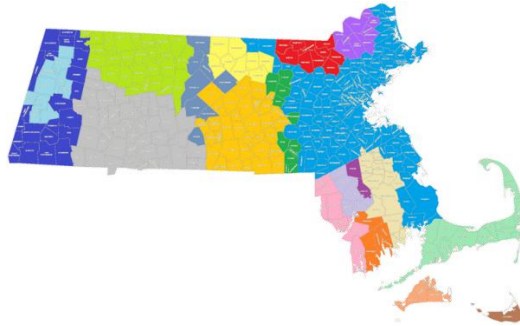


CHANGES TO PAYMENT STANDARDS IN THE HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER (HCV) PROGRAM EFFECTIVE MARCH 1, 2024

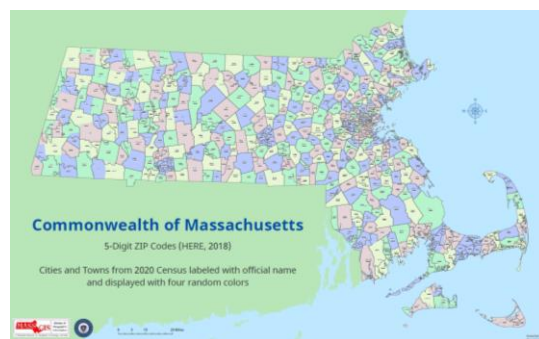
What is changing on March 1, 2024?

Effective March 1, 2024 and going forward, payment standards for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities' (EOHLC) Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program¹ will be determined by **ZIP code** instead of by **metropolitan area**.

In the past, payment standards have generally been based on HUD's "area-wide" Fair Market Rents. This meant that there was one rent standard for an entire metropolitan area. For example, the same rent standard was used in Beverly and Plymouth because they are both part of HUD's Boston-Cambridge-Quincy Metro FMR area.



Going forward, payment standards will be based on HUD's Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMRs), which are individualized for each ZIP code.



¹ EOHLC administers a statewide Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. These vouchers are administered locally by nine Regional Administering Agencies (Berkshire Housing Development Corporation, Community Teamwork Inc., Housing Assistance Corporation, Lynn Housing Authority and Neighborhood Development, Metro Housing Boston, NeighborWorks Housing Solutions, RCAP Solutions, South Middlesex Opportunity Council, and Way Finders). Please note that this information applies only to these HCV vouchers and not to HCV vouchers administered by other housing authorities.

Why is this change being made?

The goal of this change is to have voucher payment standards that **more accurately reflect the market rents within individual neighborhoods**. This should make it easier for you to utilize your voucher to lease a unit in an area with higher rents that may not have been accessible to you previously.

How will this change impact me?

When the payment standards change on March 1, 2024, **it might not impact your rent immediately or at all**. The potential impact will depend on:

- Where you live;
- The size of your voucher and unit;
- What the payment standard was at your last recertification;
- What the current payment standard is for your area; and/or
- Whether you are relocating to a new unit or remaining in your current unit.

The payment standard that is applied to your household is only updated at certain times, typically: a) during your regular recertification process, b) if there has been a rent increase requested by your landlord, or c) if you are moving to a new unit.

What if I am interested in staying in my current unit?

If you are remaining in your current unit and the applicable payment standard for your household has **increased** since your last recertification:

- The **new** payment standard (the one based on ZIP code) will be applied at your next regular recertification or rent increase, as this will be beneficial for your household.

If you are remaining in your current unit and the applicable payment standard for your household has **decreased** since your last recertification:

- The payment standard **from your last recertification** will continue to be applied to your household **until/unless you relocate or there is a change in your voucher size**.

What if I am interested in relocating to a new unit?

If your household is requesting to **relocate**:

- The **new** payment standard (the one based on ZIP code) will be applied.

What else should I keep in mind?

Rents must still be deemed reasonable in comparison to similar, unassisted units in the area. Rents must also be affordable for your household upon initial leasing of the unit, meaning not cause you to pay more than 40% of your monthly income towards rent.

Please also note that EOHLC will continue to use area-wide FMR for the City of Lynn, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket.

Where can I find the payment standards for a particular ZIP code?

EOHLC's HCV payment standards, effective March 1, 2024, can be found using this link:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/2024-federal-voucher-payment-standards-by-raa/download>

More background about payment standards

In the tenant-based ("mobile") voucher program, payment standards are used to calculate voucher subsidy amounts and determine the maximum payment that a housing agency can provide a landlord on behalf of a tenant.

The "Applicable Payment Standard" that applies to your household is based on either your voucher size or the actual unit size you rent, whichever is lower. For example, if you have a 2-bedroom voucher and rent a 3-bedroom unit, your payment standard will be based on a 2-bedroom unit.

Payment standards are established in relation to "Fair Market Rents" (FMRs) or "Small Area Fair Market Rents" (SAFMRs). FMRs and SAFMRs are set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and are meant to represent typical rents for the area. EOHLC reviews FMR or SAFMR amounts released by HUD, typically on an annual basis, and establishes the Applicable Payment Standards as a certain percentage of the FMR amounts to ensure that these amounts accurately reflect market rents in the area.