HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

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NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY

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MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT CATHY PENNINGTON

In an effort to serve you better, I am pleased to announce that the Leased Housing Department is adding a new "Program Updates" section to the Owner Extranet and Tenant Self-Service portals. This new section will allow us to provide Section 8 participants and property owners with important program updates in real time. We will continue to use the newsletter to recap important updates.

Happy reading!

Cathy Pennington
Cathy Pennington

ADDING A RENT COMPARABLE ON GOSECTION8

Owners can add new rent comparables through GoSection8. Any comparables submitted will be validated by GoSection8. Owners may be required to document that an added comparable is true and accurate by providing a lease agreement for the comparable unit and/or the tenant's contact information.

1. **Visit** http://www.gosection8.com/
2. **Sign In.** Click on "Sign In" from the drop down menu and select "Landlord/Advertiser Sign in" to log in. If you do not have an account, click "Sign Up" to create a free account. You will need to enter a valid email address, first name, last name, and phone number to create a new account.
3. **Add a New Rent Comparable.** Click on "Add New Comparable" under the My Comparables section of the website; and then enter the information about the comparable unit, like zip code, city, state, address, and the rent amount. Click on "Start Comparables Process."
4. **Contact GoSection8 Customer Support with any Questions.** If you have any questions regarding adding an owner comparable, please contact GoSection8 customer support, toll free, at 1-866-466-7328.

NO SIDE DEALS!

Section 8 owners and tenants are reminded that any side agreements that charge more than the NYCHA approved Section 8 contract rent are prohibited. NYCHA is actively conducting investigations on all claims of side deals between Section 8 owners and tenants. It is important to remember that only NYCHA can authorize changes to the contract rent and the tenant share. Refer to your HAP contract and lease. Don't risk losing your Section 8 subsidy!

REMINDER FOR TENANTS: TIMELY EXECUTION OF YOUR LEASE IS IMPORTANT

As of January 2015, a lease cannot be 'deemed' renewed in lieu of a lease renewal signed by the tenant and owner. A tenant who fails to either sign a lease renewal or move out of their unit will now be considered a 'holdover' tenant, which would allow the property owner to initiate court proceedings. If a tenant plans to remain in the apartment, they must give the property owner 60 days notice of his/her intention to do so.

Note: Per the New York City Lease Rider for Rent Stabilized Tenants (RA-LR1), "If a tenant wishes to remain in occupancy beyond the expiration of the lease, the tenant may not refuse to sign a proper renewal lease."

TOP FIVE HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS (HQS) INSPECTION VIOLATIONS

NYCHA conducts regular inspections to ensure all Section 8 units meet U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Housing Quality Standards (HQS).

Section 8 property owners can plan ahead by assessing the condition of the tenant's unit and the exterior/public space prior to a scheduled inspection. This will help to ensure there are no issues that could result in a failed inspection. Correcting a problem prior to an inspection helps to avoid suspensions of Housing Assistance Payments.

Please check the Information for Owners under Section 8 Assistance on the NYCHA website to learn more about HQS Standards.

Top Five HQS Failures in 2014

1. GFCI inoperable or missing in the kitchen or bathroom
2. Oven/Stove Conditions (inoperable burners, missing knobs, etc.)
3. Refrigerator/Freezer Conditions (temperature too high or too low, door seal broken, etc.)
4. Floor Conditions (tripping hazards, uneven floors, etc.)
5. Wall Conditions (peeling, bubbling, cracks, in need of paint, etc.)

NYCHA'S "TENANT NO ACCESS" POLICY

NYCHA must ensure that every unit on the Section 8 program complies with Housing Quality Standards (HQS). Tenants must allow NYCHA Inspectors access to the unit. If the unit fails inspection, the tenant must allow the owner access to the unit to complete repairs. It is a violation of Section 8 program rules if the tenant does not allow the owner access to the unit to complete repairs.

If the tenant refuses access to complete repairs, the owner must submit a written statement that the tenant refuses to allow access to the unit to complete repairs, along with proof, within 30 calendar days of the date on the 'Hazardous Conditions NE-1 Inspection' notice. Owners also must submit a copy of a certified letter sent to the tenant requesting access to complete repairs. This serves as proof that the owner made an attempt to access the unit to complete repairs. The Section 8 subsidy will remain suspended until repairs are made and confirmed by NYCHA. If NYCHA receives a copy of the certified letter sent to the tenant within the required 30 days of the failed HQS inspection, the Authority will make full payment from the suspension effective date once repairs are made and confirmed.

The fastest way to submit this documentation is online through the Owner Extranet. Owners can scan documents or use a smartphone or tablet to take a picture of the documents and upload it to a computer for online submission.

Any Section 8 tenant who does not allow access for repairs will receive a termination notice in the mail and is at risk of losing their Section 8 subsidy.

ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION IN NEW YORK CITY

Accessible transportation is essential for enabling persons with disabilities to achieve and maintain independence. There are many accessible transportation options available in New York City. Here are a few:

- **New York City Transit Subway and Staten Island Railway** currently have 103 stations accessible to customers who have mobility challenges and other disabilities. All fully-accessible stations and newly renovated stations feature elevators and ramps, handrails on ramps and stairs, large-print and tactile Braille signs, audio and visual information systems, accessible station booth windows, service entry gates, platform-edge warning strips, platform gap modifications or bridge plates to reduce or eliminate the gap between trains and platforms, telephones at an accessible height with volume control, and text telephones (TTYs). Some commuter rail stations have accessible restrooms.

- **New York City Transit Buses** serve local and express routes throughout the five boroughs. Buses are equipped with ramps to accommodate individuals with mobility challenges and there are seating areas where customers with wheelchairs or scooters can be accommodated. The base fare to ride the subways and buses is $2.75; but individuals with a qualifying disability, or who are aged 65 or older, can apply for a Reduced-Fare MetroCard. If the application is approved, the fare is only $1.35. Information about service hours, changes and elevator/escalator access is available online at http://www.mta.info and at the New York State transit and traffic line (511).

- **Access-A-Ride** is New York City's paratransit system operated by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority New York City Transit 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including holidays. For the same price as a one-way fare on a public bus or subway, individuals who are unable to use public transportation can obtain a shared, door-to-door ride with either a Personal Care Attendant (who rides for free) or one paying guest. Additional information can be obtained at http://mta.info/accessibility or at (877) 337-2017 (toll-free).

- **Freedom Van**, which is operated by the New York Foundation for Senior Citizens, serves individuals with disabilities and seniors (60 years and older) in Manhattan. It is a free service, which must be booked at least one week in advance. Customer escorts are available on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Van service can be booked from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at (212) 956-0840.

- **US Ambulette Services**, which is regulated by the Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC), provides para-transportation services for people with special needs. Wheelchairs, recliners, oxygen tanks, and non-emergency stretchers are all accommodated; and service dogs are allowed in all vehicles. Service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Up to five family members/companions can accompany a customer at no cost. Advance reservations are not required. Obtain additional information or schedule trip service at http://www.usambulette.com or at (718) 332-1216.

- **Wheelchair Taxis** provides wheelchair-accessible taxi service to people with disabilities 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Manhattan serves as the pickup location for any destination within the five boroughs. The fare is the same as for any other taxi ride in Manhattan. Service can be scheduled online at http://accessibledispatch.com or by calling 311 or the dispatch center at (646) 599-9999. In addition, service requests can be made by sending a text to (646) 400-0789 and by using the accessible dispatch mobile app: WOW Taxi (Wheels on Wheels).

- **The Staten Island Ferry**, which is free-to-ride**,** runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and provides another accessible transportation option. During weekday hours—from 6:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.—the ferry runs every 15 to 20 minutes. Trips into the city begin at the St. George Terminal and end at the Whitehall Ferry (also called the South Ferry). Additional information can be obtained by calling (718) 876-8441.