

# **GASTONIA HOUSING AUTHORITY**

## **SECTION 8 TENANT INFORMATION BOOKLET**

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**Welcome to the Gastonia Housing Authority's  
Section 8  
Housing Choice Voucher Program**

This pamphlet has been prepared for you as a guide to participation in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.

It is designed to provide you with accurate information about how the program works. Please take the time to read it carefully; it will help you to find a suitable place to live, and to remain in good standing with your landlord and the Gastonia Housing Authority. You are responsible for knowing all the information contained in this pamphlet.

**The Gastonia Housing Authority's Commitment**

As a public service agency, it is the housing authority's goal to provide excellent service to the families in Gaston County. The housing authority will make every effort to inform you of the program rules, and to advise you of how these rules affect you. Since Federal regulations are not always easy to understand, it is very important to ask questions if you are not sure of something. This pamphlet may not be all-inclusive and is subject to change.

**Notice to Families with a Disabled Family Member**

Persons with disabilities may request a reasonable accommodation in order to fully utilize this housing program and any related program and any related services. The housing authority will make all reasonable efforts to be flexible in assisting persons with disabilities to participate in the program successfully. Requests for accommodation will be verified to ensure that the accommodation is reasonable. Examples of reasonable accommodations are as follows:

- TDD or TDY devices
- The use of an advocate or an interpreter
- If the family includes a person with a disability, the family may request a current listing of accessible units known to the housing authority that may be available.

**CONTACTING GHA**

**GASTONIA HOUSING AUTHORITY HOURS OF OPERATION**

Office Hours: Monday –Thursday 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM  
Self-Serve Resource Area: Monday – Thursday 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

**THE GASTONIA HOUSING AUTHORITY IS CLOSED ON FRIDAYS**

**GHA no longer employs a receptionist.** Our lobby is self-serve. When you visit our office, please use the computer screen for instructions and information. We offer a resource area with computer access to the GHA website. The majority of forms and information you may need can be found on our website. If you are dropping off any other documents for your caseworker, you must date and time stamp it and drop it in the box located in the resource area.

## GENERAL APPLICANT BRIEFING INFORMATION

### Payment Standards

The GHA's current payment standard is set at 100% of the HUD published Fair Market Rents.

### Current Payment Standards

Payment Standards are used by the Housing Authority when calculating the tenant's rent. They are not the amounts landlords can charge for a particular size unit.

<b>FY 2021 Payment Standards</b>							<b>12/1/2020</b>
<b>Zip</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>0 BR</b>	<b>1 BR</b>	<b>2 BR</b>	<b>3 BR</b>	<b>4 BR</b>	<b>5BR</b>
28006	Alexis	\$720	\$430	\$850	\$1,120	\$1,390	\$1,598
28012	Belmont	\$820	\$840	\$960	\$1,270	\$1,630	\$1,874
28016	Bessemer City	\$710	\$730	\$830	\$1,090	\$1,410	\$1,621
28021	Cherryville	\$670	\$680	\$790	\$1,040	\$1,310	\$1,506
28032	Cramerton	\$890	\$910	\$1,040	\$1,370	\$1,770	\$2,035
28033	Crouse	\$700	\$710	\$850	\$1,120	\$1,330	\$1,529
28034	Dallas	\$690	\$710	\$810	\$1,070	\$1,380	\$1,587
28052	Gastonia	\$790	\$810	\$920	\$1,210	\$1,560	\$1,794
28054	Gastonia	\$870	\$890	\$1,020	\$1,340	\$1,730	\$1,989
28056	Gastonia	\$820	\$840	\$960	\$1,270	\$1,630	\$1,874
28077	High Shoals	\$690	\$700	\$800	\$1,050	\$1,360	\$1,564
28080	Iron Station	\$690	\$700	\$860	\$1,130	\$1,310	\$1,506
28086	Kings Mountain	\$710	\$730	\$830	\$1,090	\$1,410	\$1,621
28092	Boger City	\$690	\$690	\$850	\$1,120	\$1,280	\$1,472
28098	Lowell	\$700	\$720	\$820	\$1,080	\$1,390	\$1,598
28101	McAdenville	\$810	\$820	\$940	\$1,240	\$1,600	\$1,840
28120	Mount Holly	\$800	\$820	\$930	\$1,230	\$1,580	\$1,817
28164	Stanley	\$700	\$710	\$830	\$1,090	\$1,350	\$1,552

### Current Utility Estimates

Below are the estimated utility amounts GHA uses to help in determining affordability of a unit.

<u>Unit Size</u>	<u>House</u>	<u>Apartment</u>
1 BR	\$190	\$170
2 BR	\$235	\$194
3 BR	\$280	\$222
4 BR	\$320	\$252
5 BR	\$350	\$290

### Determination of Family's TTP

Gross Annual Income – Allowances & Deductions = Adjusted Annual Income.

Adjusted Annual Income / 12 = Adjusted Monthly Income.

Adjusted Monthly Income X 30% = Total Tenant Payment (TTP)

Your portion of the rent will be between 30%-40% of your gross income less deductibles

### Term of Voucher

The initial term of the voucher is sixty days. The family must submit a Request for Tenancy Approval within the sixty-day period unless an extension has been granted by the PHA.

### Extensions

The PHA may extend the term of the voucher up to sixty additional days (In thirty-day increments) for the following reasons:

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- Extenuating circumstances such as, medical or family emergency which significantly affects the family's ability to locate a unit during the initial sixty-day term. Verification Required.
- The PHA is satisfied that the family has made a reasonable effort to locate a unit, including seeking assistance from the PHA, during the initial voucher term.
- The family was unable to locate an accessible unit or a large size unit.

The PHA will request an extension of the one-hundred-and-twenty-day maximum voucher term from HUD as a reasonable accommodation for a family member with a disability.

**\*\*\*ALL EXTENSION REQUESTS MUST BE SUBMITTED IN WRITING\*\*\***

**Maximum Rent for An Assisted Unit**

The PHA will use its Rent Reasonableness Scale to determine the maximum rent for an assisted unit. Proposed rents must not exceed the rent charged for comparable unassisted units or the rent charged by the owner for a comparable unassisted unit in the same building or on the same premises.

**Subsidy Standards**

The subsidy standards must provide for the smallest number of bedrooms needed to house a family without overcrowding.

The PHA will assign one bedroom for head of house and one bedroom for each two persons within the household, except in the following circumstances:

- Live-in aides will be allocated a separate bedroom.
- Two children will be allocated separate bedrooms if 10-years age difference and opposite sex.
- Single person families will be allocated one bedroom.

**Guidelines for Determining Bedroom Size**

<u>Voucher Size</u>	<u>Min #</u>	<u>Max #</u>
0 Bedroom	1	1
1 Bedroom	1	2
2 Bedroom	2	6
3 Bedroom	3	8
4 Bedroom	4	10
5 Bedroom	6	12
6 Bedroom	8	14

The PHA will consider exceptions to the above subsidy standards upon request from the family if:

- The PHA determines the exception is justified by the relationship, age, sex, health or disability of family members, or other individual circumstances.
- For a family that contains a disabled or elderly member and there is a verified medical or health reason or when a live-in aide is required.

**Information to Owners**

In accordance with HUD requirements and upon written request, the PHA will furnish owners with the family's current address, prior address and if known the owner's name of the family's current and/or prior addresses.

The PHA will make exception to this requirement if the family's whereabouts must be protected due to domestic abuse or witness protection.

The PHA will not conduct additional screening to determine an applicant family's suitability for tenancy.

The PHA will inform owners that **it is their responsibility to determine the suitability of prospective tenants**. The PHA will encourage owners to screen applicants for rent payment history, utility payment history, eviction history, respecting the rights of other residents, damage to units, drug-related criminal activity, other criminal activity that is a threat to the health safety or property of others, and compliance with other essential conditions of tenancy.

## GENERAL SECTION 8 TENANT INFORMATION

### PAYMENT OF RENT

You must find out from the landlord where to pay your portion of the rent. Under no circumstances does the Housing Authority collect rent. Failure to pay your portion of the rent is considered a violation of your lease. If you are evicted by your landlord for non-payment of rent or any other serious or repeated lease violation, your housing assistance will be terminated. **NEVER** pay more rent than the amount GHA sets as the Tenant's Share. **If your landlord asks you to pay additional rent, report this to your caseworker immediately.**

### UTILITY PAYMENTS

Unless you rent from a landlord who includes the cost of utilities in your rent, you are responsible for the payment of your own utilities. In the event that your income is so low that the Housing Authority is paying all of your contract rent, there may be a small amount left over that will be applied to your utilities. This is called a Utility Reimbursement Payment. In most cases, URP's are made directly to the utility company. If you are told you will receive a URP, you cannot count on it to pay your utility bill. Always pay the bill and the URP will be credited towards the next month. Your housing assistance will be terminated if your utilities are turned off, even if it is the result of a delayed URP. **YOU** are responsible for the payment of all utilities.

### UNAUTHORIZED OCCUPANTS

**Only the persons listed on your lease are to live in the subsidized unit. Unauthorized persons residing in the units will result in the termination of your housing assistance.** Changes to household composition must be approved by the owner **and** the Housing Authority in advance.

### REPORTING CHANGES

**Changes to family income and/or family composition must be reported to the Housing Authority in writing within 14 days.** To report a change complete a rent change form located on our website [www.ghanc.org](http://www.ghanc.org) or in our resource room located in the lobby of our main office. It is not necessary to see your caseworker to report changes. **DO NOT** call to report a rent change. HUD participates in computer income matching with the IRS and the Social Security Administration. If you fail to report income to the housing authority, we will be notified by HUD. Failure to report changes to income or household composition is grounds for termination of your housing assistance.

### RE-CERTIFICATION

Once you become a participant in the Section 8 Program, you must be re-certified each year. Your re-certification date will be determined by the month in which your housing assistance starts (Example- If GHA begins assisting you with your rent on April 15, 2011; your re-certification date will be April 1). Each year you will be sent re-certification papers to fill-out and return. These papers will be mailed to you approximately ninety days prior to your re-certification date. Make sure that your re-certification papers are filled-out completely and returned along with any documents requested by your caseworker by the date indicated on your letter. Failure to complete the re-certification process in a timely manner will result in the termination of your housing assistance.

### CORRESPONDENCE AND APPOINTMENTS

It is absolutely necessary that you read all correspondence from this agency **very thoroughly** and **comply** exactly as requested. You are required to provide all information the Housing Authority or HUD determines necessary for the administration of the program. All forms are to be filled out completely. When our office notifies you of an appointment, you are required to attend. Failure to comply or attend appointments will result in the termination of your housing assistance.

## **TRANSFERS**

Once you have signed a lease with an Owner, you cannot transfer until your initial year lease expires. Transfer requests must be submitted in writing prior to your annual re-certification. Transfers will only be approved when sufficient funding is available. If you receive permission to transfer, you must give your landlord a 30-day written notice of your intent to vacate and provide a copy of that statement to the Housing Authority. Always notify your caseworker when you move out of a unit.

## **INSPECTIONS**

All units are inspected bi-annually. Tenants will be notified in writing of their inspection date approximately seven to fourteen days in advance. You are required to allow access to your unit for inspection. The unit cannot be inspected unless either you (or an adult family member) and the landlord are both present. If you miss an inspection appointment, **YOUR HOUSING ASSISTANCE MAY BE TERMINATED.** If you are unable to be at home on the day the inspector has scheduled, you will need to make arrangements for an adult family member to let the inspector in. You are responsible for all damage to your unit beyond normal wear and tear. Tenant damage will be documented and GHA will encourage landlords to charge you for repairs or require that you repair the damage yourself. Examples of common tenant damage which will be documented will include: Missing light globes, missing batteries from smoke detectors, holes in walls, damage to floor covering, broken screen doors and window screens, dirty appliances. If any tenant damage items are not corrected within the specified timeframe, your housing assistance will be terminated.

**All maintenance problems should be reported to the OWNER. You should only contact the Housing Authority with maintenance reports if the owner fails to make repairs in a timely manner.** Be familiar with your landlord's phone number and mailing address. Make sure you have an after-hours number from your landlord in case of emergency repairs.

The Housing Authority does not work a 24-hour shift. If there are problems call the proper authority (Ex. In the event of a fire- contact the fire department immediately). Once you are a Section 8 Tenant, you are responsible for reporting problems with your unit to your landlord. You are also responsible for following up with your landlord to ensure that repairs are completed. However, if after repeated attempts, you are unable to get repairs made- contact your caseworker.

**For Emergency repairs- Contact your landlord.** If your landlord does not attempt to make repairs of the items listed below immediately, call your caseworker.

## **EMERGENCY REPAIR ITEMS**

Some items are considered by the Housing Authority and by HUD to be emergencies and must be repaired within 24 – 48 hours. If you have maintenance problem listed below, first call your landlord. If this does not get results, contact the inspections department at your housing authority.

- Lack of security for the unit (doors or windows broken).
- Waterlogged ceiling in danger of falling.
- Major Plumbing leaks or flooding.
- Natural gas leaks or fumes (call 911 first!).
- Electrical problems that result in shock or fire.
- Obstruction that prevents entrance or exit.
- No heat (outside temperature below 40° and inside below 60°).
- Utilities not in service.
- No running hot water.
- Broken glass that could cause injury.
- Lack of functioning toilet.
- Inoperable smoke detector.
- Any other repair item that causes and immediate threat to the safety of the occupants

**\*\*\*\*\* TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR UNIT AND TREAT IT AS IF IT BELONGED TO YOU. \*\*\*\*\***

# GASTONIA HOUSING AUTHORITY

## FAMILY OBLIGATIONS

### **1. The Family must:**

- a.** Supply any information, that the PHA or HUD determines to be necessary including evidence of citizenship or eligible immigration status, and information for use in regularly scheduled reexamination or interim reexamination of family income and composition.
- b.** Disclose and verify social security numbers by signing and submitting-forms for obtaining information.
- c.** Supply any information requested by GHA to verify the family is living in the unit or information related to absence from the unit.
- d.** Promptly notify GHA in writing when the family is away from the unit for an extended period of time in accordance with GHA policies
- e.** All information provided by the family must be true and complete.
- f.** Allow GHA to inspect the unit at a reasonable time given reasonable notice. The family cannot cause a breach in Housing Quality Standards (HQS) which pertains to the following:
  - Tenant supplied utilities
  - Appliances supplied by the tenant
  - Tenant damages to the unit or premises beyond normal wear and tear
- g.** Notify GHA and the property owner in writing before moving out of the unit or terminating the lease.
- h.** Use the assisted unit for residence by the family THE unit must be the family's only residence.
- i.** Promptly notify GHA in writing of the birth, adoption, or court-awarded custody of a child.
- j.** Request written approval to add any other person as an occupant of the unit.
- k.** Promptly notify GHA in writing if any family member no longer lives in the unit.
- l.** Give GHA a copy of any owner eviction notice.
- m.** Pay utility bills, provide and maintain any appliances that the owner is not required to provide under the lease.

### **2. The Family must NOT:**

- a.** Own or have any interest in the unit. Commit any serious or repeated lease violations. Commit fraud, bribery, or any other corrupt or criminal act in connection with the program.
- b.** Engage in drug-related criminal activity that threatens the health safety or right to peaceful enjoyment or other residents and persons residing in the immediate vicinity of the premises.
- c.** Sublease or let the unit or assign the lease or transfer the unit.
- d.** Receive housing choice voucher program assistance while receiving another housing subsidy, for the same unit or a different unit under any other Federal, State or local housing assistance program.
- e.** Damage the unit or premises (other than normal wear and tear) or permit any guest to damage the unit or premises.
- f.** Receive housing choice voucher program housing assistance while residing in a unit by a parent, child, grandparent, grandchild, sister or brother of any family member of the family, unless GHA has determined (and has notified the owner and the family) that approving rental of the unit,



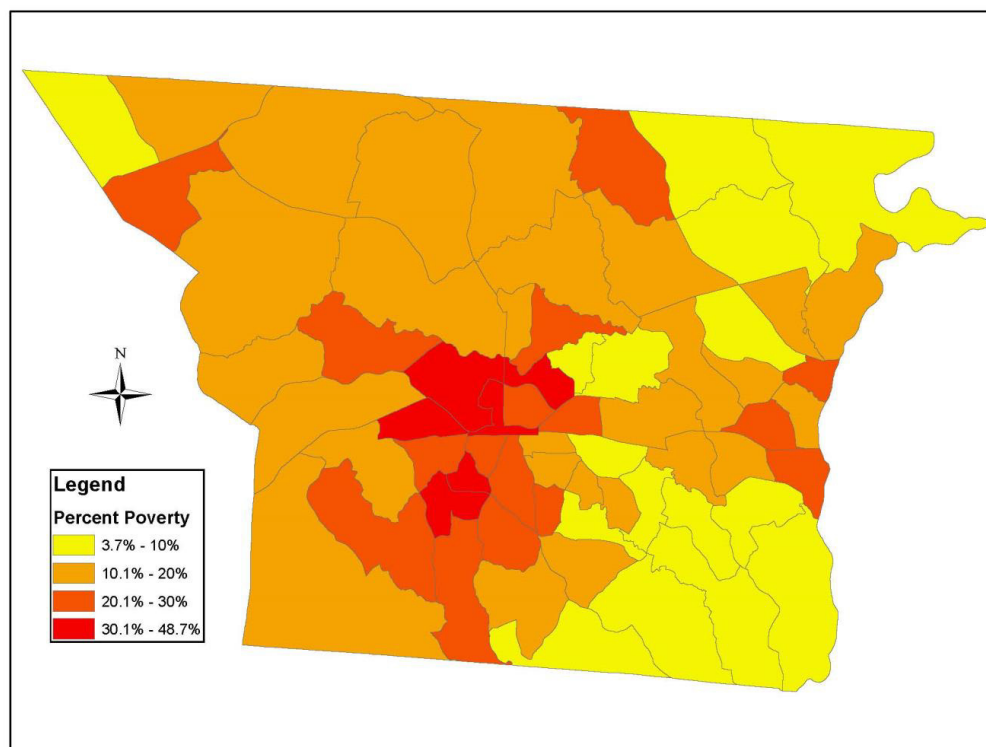
notwithstanding such relationship, would provide reasonable accommodation for a family member with disabilities.

- g.** Engage in the abuse of alcohol in a way that threatens the health, safety or right to peaceful enjoyment of the other residents and persons residing in the immediate vicinity or the premises.
- h.** Owe rent or other amounts to GHA or any other housing authority.
- i.** Violate an agreement with GHA to pay amounts owed to GHA or amounts paid to an owner by the housing authority.
- j.** Engage in or threatened abusive or violent behavior toward any GHA employee.
- k.** Fail to comply with the FSS program without good cause

## **MOVES AND PORTABILITY**

1. The housing authority can prohibit any moves the first year of assistance.
2. The housing authority can limit the number of moves in a one-year period.
3. If a family terminates a lease agreement, they must supply the housing authority with a copy of the written notice of their intent at the same time it is given to the landlord.
4. The family must notify the housing authority and the owner before moving to new unit.
5. The housing authority may deny a move if there is insufficient funding available.
6. If neither the head of household or their spouse had a “legal residence” in the jurisdiction of the Gastonia Housing Authority at the time of their original application, the family cannot move out of the housing authority’s jurisdiction under portability for at least 12 months after admission into the program (unless both the Gastonia Housing Authority and the receiving housing authority agree).
7. Families whose initial lease agreement is outside of the jurisdiction of the Gastonia Housing Authority are subject to the receiving housing authority’s income limits.
8. When moving under portability, the family must promptly contact the receiving housing authority and comply with their procedures for incoming portable families. The receiving housing authority will determine the family unit size.

City of Gastonia – Gastonia Consortium



Consolidated Plan GASTONIA

OMB Control No: 2506-0117 (exp. 07/31/2015)

## Home Sweet Home

### Locate a Suitable Unit

- Start Looking Right Away
- Vouchers expire 60 days after issuance.
- NO Extensions (except family or medical reasons)
- Request For Tenancy Approval (RFTA) must be submitted by landlord **before** your voucher expires.

### Be Choosy

- You are choosing where you want to live.
- You will live in this unit for at least one year (the initial lease term). If you choose a unit and then decide that you don't like it, you will not be moved to another unit. After the first year's lease is satisfied, you can **apply** for a transfer. Transfers are only granted when funding is available.
- You can select any unit in Gaston County as long as
  1. You are not renting from immediate family.
  2. The landlord is willing to accept a reasonable amount of rent according to the rent reasonableness scale.
  3. The unit will pass HQS Inspection (See Reverse side).

### Check Out The Neighborhood

- Call the police and ask about crime in that area.
- Talk with the neighbors or other people who are familiar with the area.
- Is the unit located near schools, shopping, family, etc.

### Check Out The Utilities

- Find out from the landlord or the utility service provider how much the average utility bills have been in the past. Make sure and check average bills for all seasons (Ex. heating bills will be higher in the winter).
- Once you have signed a lease, we cannot move you because you cannot afford to pay the utility bills.

### Check Out The Landlord

- Ask how long they have owned the property.
- Ask how many other properties they have.
- Ask for references from other tenants.
- Ask how they handle repairs.
- If you sense that they lack pride in their unit-**BEWARE!!!**

DO NOT SELECT A UNIT THAT WILL REQUIRE EXTENSIVE REPAIRS.

### General HQS Requirements

- Exterior and interior structurally sound with no chipping, peeling, or chalking paint.
- Walls, Ceilings and Floors in good condition.
- Windows and exterior doors in good condition and weather-tight with working locks.
- Operable indoor plumbing with no leaks.
- Adequate heating.
- Properly working appliances.
- Properly working smoke detectors in required locations.
- Light globes must be in place.
- No electrical hazards.
- No exposed wiring.
- No garbage or debris in yard (glass, bottles, trash, etc.).
- No trip hazards.

### **I've located a suitable unit. What Next?**

- The owner sets the amount of the security deposit (typically one month's rent). Applicants are responsible for the payment of the Security Deposit to the owner, which should be paid before you move in.
- Once the unit is ready, you must have the utilities turned on in your name and provide receipts to the Admissions Inspector showing your name, address, and account number. If your landlord wishes to leave the utilities in his or her name until after the unit is inspected, they may sign a form certifying that the utilities are on. The unit will not be inspected until the receipts or the landlord certification is submitted to the caseworker. If you are to provide your own appliances, they must be in the unit and in working condition before the final inspection.
- Give landlord your Request For Tenancy Approval Form (RFTA).
- Initial inspections will be performed within 15 days of receipt of RFTA's (provided the unit is ready and utility receipts or landlord certification has been provided).
- You must make arrangements with the landlord to gain access to have the utilities turned on and the appliances installed.
- If you have already moved into the unit, someone must be present during the inspection.
- If you move into the unit before it passes inspection, you are responsible for the rent.
- No more than 2 inspections will be made. If the unit does not pass after two inspections, or the repairs will take longer than 30 days, the unit will not go be accepted.
- All new units must be inspected by the Housing Authority and must meet the specified Housing Quality Standards before payments will be made to the owner. Applicants who choose to move in prior to the unit passing inspection are responsible for their own rent until the unit does pass.
- Your assistance will not begin until after the utilities have been transferred into the Head of Households name with the proper receipts submitted, all final income verifications have been provided, and applicant and landlord have signed all the necessary documents.