Key Activities in the Housing Choice Voucher Program

Here are the basic stages of a household’s journey toward stable rental housing with a housing choice voucher (HCV). Individual situations, public housing agency (PHA) policies, and local housing markets are among the factors likely to influence your specific experience.

**APPLICATION PROCESS**
- A household in need of assistance applies for an HCV by completing a PHA application form
- If the waiting list is “open,” the agency administering the HCV program is accepting applications
- If the waiting list is “closed,” no one can apply for a voucher

**SELECTION FROM WAITING LIST**
Depending on how many vouchers are available, the applicant is either:
- Given a voucher (once eligibility is verified)
- Placed on a waiting list

Generally, households move from the bottom of the waiting list to the top, however some households may be selected before others based on the PHA’s waiting list preferences.

**SCREENING AND VERIFICATION**
- When a household reaches the top of the list, it will be required to supply documents that verify eligibility for the HCV program
- The PHA may also screen the household with regards to prior tenant history and recent criminal history

**BRIEFING AND ISSUANCE**
- When a household is determined eligible for the program, it is "issued" a voucher
- The household is required to attend a "briefing" to learn about how the HCV program works and the responsibilities of voucher holders
At least annually, the household must be re-certified for the program and the PHA must reinspect the unit and re-examine the contract rent amount to ensure they continue to meet HCV guidelines.

**Housing Search**
- The household has a short time (usually 60 days) to find a rental unit that meets HCV guidelines.
- In some cases, the household may already be living in a housing unit that meets the HCV guidelines and may choose to use the voucher in the existing unit.
- Once a unit is located and the owner agrees to participate in the HCV program, the household submits a Request for Tenancy Approval form to the PHA, which stops the clock on the housing search time.

**Unit Approval and Move-in**
- All paperwork is signed (i.e., lease between household and owner and contract between PHA and owner) and the household moves into the unit.
- HCV rental assistance begins. The household pays 30 – 40% of its income toward rent and any tenant-paid utilities, and the HCV subsidy pays the difference.

**Inspection and Rent Reasonableness Determination**
- The PHA inspects the unit to ensure that it is safe, decent, and of good quality.
- The rent of the unit is compared to rents of similar, unassisted units in the community to ensure it is reasonable.

**Annual Re-examination**