

CARES Housing Voucher to Housing Choice Voucher

Overview of Referral & Application Process

1. All CARES Housing Support Workers (HSW) review the basic requirements for a Housing Choice Voucher and pro-actively address barriers with all CARES Housing Clients.

Housing Choice Voucher Requirements:

- At least one household member must be a US citizen or an eligible immigrant
- Criminal non-negotiables that will not qualify:
 - ❖ Lifetime sex offender registry
 - ❖ Producing meth in a Federally assisted unit
- Household must not owe a debt to a Public Housing Authority (PHA)
- Documentation requirements:
 - ❖ Birth certificate
 - ❖ Social Security
 - ❖ Income verification

2. Monthly, CVOEO will identify current CARES clients who qualifies for the VSHA “move up” preference for a Housing Choice Voucher. By the 5th of each month, CVOEO will notify VSHA, identified clients and their CARES Housing Support Workers who newly qualifies for the preference based on the tenure of their lease.

Qualification for VSHA Move Up Preference:

- Must be enrolled and in good standing with the CARES Housing Voucher Program
- Must be leased for at least 6 months
- Must be in good standing with the landlord
- Agency must be available to provide support services

3. Housing Support Workers connect with identified clients and help them complete and submit:

A. [Appendix One: Application for Housing Preference](#)

Check the first box under “Move-Up preference” where it lists the CARES Voucher (ESG-CV), and the “Preference for Vermont residents”.

If clients qualify for any additional preferences, mark all relevant preferences.

B. Full-application – [Go here](#)

C. All supporting documentation, as required in the full-application.

D. HUD forms – [Go here](#)

The HUD forms include a Release of Information on Page 10. The client must include the Housing Support Worker name(s), agency, email and phone # on this Release Form to have future VSHA client communications also include the HSW. Please also include CVOEO on this release.

DO NOT complete the Pre-Application - [this Pre-application form](#) is **NOT** required. Complete the full application that is linked in 3B above.

4. HSW helps the client to submit a complete packet (including supporting documents) to the Vermont State Housing Authority:

- Encrypted Email to: section8applications@vsha.org
- Fax: 802-828-2111 Attn: Intake Division, Move-up CARES Preference

OR

- Mail/Drop Off: Vermont State Housing Authority
One Prospect St.
Montpelier, VT 05602
Attn: Intake Division, Move-up CARES Preference

*****Make sure documents are signed by client where needed*****

5. CARES Housing Support Worker emails [VSHA](#) & [CVOEO](#) to notify them that an application has been submitted by the CARES client.
6. If the application is incomplete, VSHA may require the client to submit additional information. If the HSW is on the client's release, then VSHA will cc: the Housing Support Worker so that the HSW can support the client.
7. VSHA approves or denies, sends a letter to the client, and includes CVOEO and Housing Support Worker on correspondence.
 - A. **If a client is denied a voucher**, there is an opportunity for appeal within 10 business days. VSHA approves or denies the appeal within 10 business days. Denials can happen, and appealing is a normal next step. Housing Support Workers should help clients appeal.
 - B. **If approved**, CVOEO sends a letter to the client and landlord informing them of the transition to a permanent Housing Choice Voucher.
8. Where the client's current rent exceeds the VSHA payment standards, VSHA and CVOEO may be able to work with their landlord to adjust their rent for the next 6 months.
9. VSHA staff will communicate with the client and the landlord about next steps. A new housing inspection will be required. Coordination and communication between the client, CARES Housing Support Worker, VSHA and the landlord will be important.
10. Clients who transition to a VSHA Housing Choice Voucher remain in the CARES Housing Program receiving services only.

*****[Please copy CVOEO on all communications](#) so they are aware of where things are with the CARES clients*****

cares.hvp@cvoeo.org

APPLICATION TIPS!

- Address possible issues proactively
 - HSW's should start with working with households on any barriers immediately and before the client qualifies for a preference (See more on barriers below)
- Don't check project-based – Check "Housing Choice Voucher" only
- Application and Supporting Documentation will expire after 60 days and new paperwork will need to be submitted, including verifications of income.
- If a client's information changes, they must **REPORT CHANGES!** and update their application.



Denials and Appeals:

- Many people are denied for not responding or for missing information
- Be proactive in addressing reasons for denial
- Applicant has 10 business days to request an appeal
(or just send in missing paperwork, if that's the problem)
- Applicant has 10 business days to produce documentation
- VSHA has 10 business days to give a decision
- Help with communication – communication with VSHA by the client is key!

Tips for approval

- Communicate!!!
- Respond to paperwork!!!
- Ask questions!!!
- Be honest!!!
- Inform about updated phone numbers!!!
- Address barriers proactively!!!
- Check off CARES and Vermonter preferences!!!

Reasonable accommodation:

Clients can always request a change in policy to address a disability.

- There needs to be a clear connection between the disability and the request
- VSHA uses Fair Housing Act definition of [disability](#)
- People with a disability may be able to make a request for a reasonable accommodation to increase the allowable FMR to 120% FMR

Addressing Barriers

- Address money owed to housing authority proactively. Use VERAP funds!
- Criminal background
 - Drug-related violent criminal activity is always flagged
 - Minor offenses are not considered
 - Look at everyone who is 18 and older in household
 - Within the last 7 years
 - Violent and drug activity
 - If you or the client anticipate something will come up in the background check, proactively address it in the application to avoid delays.

- Address criminal background:
 - Write a letter addressing the criminal background issues
 - Letters from advocates
 - Restorative justice
 - Letter from therapist and/or support system
 - Self-statement addressing the conditions of the past, what client is doing now in the present to address, and what will be done in the future to prevent repeating
 - If a criminal incident is recent and violent event, it will likely lead to application denial
 - Work through appeals process
 - Make sure it is known if it is disability related
 - Can request an appeal as a reasonable accommodation for disability
 - Write restorative letter
 - Evidence that the crime has been address & won't happen again
 - Time has passed

Addressing FMR Issues

Clients who took advantage of the CARES FMR waiver likely will exceed the standards set by the Vermont State Housing Authority for the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program.

If this happens, clients may have some choices that HSW can help with:

1. Client may choose to look for and move into a new unit that meets VSHA's standards.

OR

2. Client may request a waiver from VSHA to stay in their current unit, even though the rent exceeds VSHA's standards. They can only request a waiver if they have a disability.

OR

3. Client can decline the VSHA Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) and continue with their CARES Housing Voucher through June 2022.

OR

4. VSHA and CVOEO may be able to work with their landlord to adjust their rent for the next 6 months.

The waiver that allowed for self-attestation of documents (including verification of income, age, identity, disability status, immigration status, SS card, and Birth Certificate) has expired and this is no longer allowed.