What is Public Housing?

Public housing is a program that helps low-income people and families pay for a place to live. The local Housing Authority runs the program with money from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The amount of money they get depends on how many public housing units they have and how much rent they collect. **The Housing Authority owns the housing units and acts as the landlord.** When a tenant moves out, the subsidy stays with the unit, not the tenant.

Public Housing Waiting Lists

If you qualify for public housing, you may be put on a waiting list because there are not enough units for everyone. Each Housing Authority has rules about who gets on the list, how they pick people, and how they remove people from the list. These rules must be fair and not discriminate based on things like race, gender, or disability. Waiting lists are shared online, at the Housing Authority office, or in local newspapers.

Denial of Admission

Each Housing Authority sets its own rules for who can get into public housing, but they must follow HUD guidelines. They will have a written policy called the Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP) that anyone can see.

You may be denied housing if:

- you were evicted from public housing for drug-related reasons in the last 3 years,
- you have past crimes that make it unsafe for others,
- you used illegal drugs,
- you sold or made drugs in public housing,
- you are a registered sex offender (you will always be denied), or
- you use medical marijuana.

The Housing Authority must provide you with a written notice explaining the reason for the denial of admission. If you believe you were unfairly denied admission, you may send a written request for an informal grievance hearing.

Rent

You can choose how to calculate your rent:

- **Flat rent:** A set amount based on similar housing in the area.
- **Income-based rent:** 30% of your monthly income after certain deductions, minus any help for utilities.

Adjusted Monthly Income

Adjusted monthly income is your Gross Annual Income minus allowable deductions, divided by 12. Your income includes wages, tips, Social Security, unemployment, and more. Deductions include amounts for dependents, elderly or disabled family members, childcare, and certain medical costs.

Utility Allowances

Each year, HUD sets an amount to help pay for utilities not included in your rent.

Recertification

Every year, the Housing Authority checks to make sure you still qualify. You need to share proof of your income. If your income changes during the year, you must tell the Housing Authority. Chanes in your income may cause your rent to change.

Termination

The Housing Authority may end a lease for **serious or repeated violations** of the lease or for **good cause**. Depending on the violation, you will get 7 to 30 days to

correct the problem.

The Housing Authority must provide a written notice which **specifically describes the alleged violation** and includes **the right to request informal grievance** hearing.

Good cause includes:

- not paying rent,
- having unapproved people living with you,
- using illegal drugs,
- being convicted of selling or making drugs on any federally assisted housing property,
- drug-related criminal activity on or off the premises,
- criminal activity that threatens the health and safety of other residents or staff,
- lying or committing fraud during the application or recertification process,
- not notifying the Housing Authority of changes in your family size or income, and
- not completing the recertification on time.

What To Do if You Get a Termination Notice

1. Read your lease and any notices carefully.
2. Ask for copies of any evidence the Housing Authority plans to use against you.

You can ask for a **hearing in writing** by the deadline in the notice. Be prepared to present any evidence you have that shows why you should not be terminated.

Your Rights as a Tenant

As a tenant, you have the right to:

- Get written notices,
- Ask for a hearing,
- See and copy Housing Authority documents,
- Have a lawyer,
- Share your side of the story, and
- Report problems with your unit.

Eviction

If you do not leave after getting a termination notice, the Housing Authority can take you to court. To learn more about the eviction process, go to “What is an Eviction?”

Additional Resources

- HUD’s Public Housing Fact Sheet
- Find your local Public Housing Agency
- HUD’s Florida Homepage