



## Berkeley Housing Authority

1901 Fairview St., Berkeley, CA 94703  
Telephone: (510) 981 5470 Fax: (510) 981 5480

*Office of the Executive Director*

# S8 Hap'Nings December 2013

## We're Moving



After 10+ years of operations at 1901 Fairview St, the Berkeley Housing Authority is moving to **1936 University Ave (cross street MLK Jr Way)**. The new office is centrally located with public transit stops within short walking distance: AC Transit bus lines (the 52 and 12 lines) and BART (downtown station). We will open for business at the new location 1936 University Ave, Suite 150 on Thursday, January 2, 2014. All contact information: telephone, fax and email remain the same.

## Think Twice Before Porting Out?

Berkeley is an excellent City to live with excellent public school choices and robust services for the disabled community. If you decide to move – outside the City of Berkeley (port out) it is very important that you do your homework. Processing time varies from one Housing Authority to another. We have seen instances where a family requests to port out, and vacates the living unit ~ in hopes of moving to a unit in



another City, only to lose out on the new. Contact the receiving Housing Authority and learn the process and estimated time from receiving an RTA to a signed lease/HAP contract. We've also seen a number of families port out, complete one year in the new unit, then happily return to Berkeley.

## Safe, decent and sanitary

A basic requirement of the S8 program is that every unit is safe AND decent AND sanitary. The landlord is responsible for the unit meeting all requirements at the time you enter a lease. The owner is also responsible for making repairs as necessary during your tenancy. However, you have some responsibilities also. You must not cause damage beyond normal wear and tear; you must maintain basic utility service in accordance with your lease (gas, electricity, water are the most typical utilities); you must maintain good housekeeping standards; and you must report problems to the owner as soon as possible AND cooperate with the owner in allowing

repairs to be completed. Failure to do so can result in termination of your S8 assistance.

### Security Deposit Interest

Most likely you paid a security deposit when you moved into your unit. The owner is legally entitled to hold those funds through the end of your tenancy. However, under Berkeley's Rent Control ordinance the owner is required to refund to you, the interest earned each December; additional interest is added if payment is not processed by January 10<sup>th</sup>.



### Not Today, Please

We know how hard it is to stay on top of every day events in our lives so we try to limit our requests for your time. However, there are two mandatory requirements of Section 8 Program participation we have to complete each year – in order to continue providing you rental assistance:



- 1. Annual recertification of eligibility.** This is the “Recert” packet you complete updating the members of your household and your income. This is handled via mail or in some instances, you are asked to come to the office; and
- 2. Annual unit inspection.** This inspection is critical. It is the one time each year that we enter your unit to make sure it is safe, decent and sanitary. If we set a date (or time) that simply cannot work for

you (remember, you don't have to be present; anyone 18 or older can give us access) you can reschedule if (a) the appointment conflicts with your work schedule; (b) conflicts with a medical appointment; or (c) there is an emergency. Rescheduling is costly and time consuming, but sometimes necessary. If you must reschedule, we can change your appointment from morning to afternoon, or another date .... However, you may be asked to provide documentation and to complete a form documenting the need.

### Guard your S8 rental assistance



You may be aware of the challenges our elected leaders are experiencing as they try to strike a deal on the annual Federal budget, and how the limited funds should be used. Affordable housing programs (Section 8 and Public Housing) are still suffering from the cuts under the 2013 “Sequester” and the future doesn't look any brighter. You are considered one of the fortunate ones in that you have S8 rental assistance. We urge you to protect this assistance by complying with all program rules; paying your required rent on time every month; and abiding with all the terms in your rental Lease. If you are terminated from the program your name (and cause for termination) is entered into a HUD database that

can be viewed by every housing authority in the Country. Should you reapply to Berkeley, or any other housing authority, this information will be revealed as part of the process of determining your eligibility and may be grounds for denying assistance in the future.

### Reasonable Accommodation



We understand that some of our disabled customers require additional assistance – to (a) comply with program rules, and (b) enjoy the full benefits offered by the S8 program. The key is “reasonable.” For example, we cannot waive the basic requirements of the program (we won’t waive the annual inspection), but we can make arrangements to have the Inspector not use any fragrances before entering the unit. Another example is an adjustment to the utility allowance. We can’t grant 100% reimbursement of the monthly bill, but we can grant a slightly higher allowance (110% of the normal rate) if your doctor/care provider advises you require additional gas or electricity (i.e. to charge a battery operated wheelchair) and provided that you are participating in PG&E’s special medical baseline rate program. We include a form in every annual recertification packet advising you of the reasonable accommodation process – and inviting you to advise us of any special needs. If you have

any questions contact your Housing Specialist.

### Not in my neighborhood!

We often get reports about “criminal behavior in S8 units.”

Sometimes those reports are accurate, but in a fair number of instances – the unit isn’t rented to a household receiving assistance. Don’t let criminals take over your community. In addition to managing what occurs in YOUR home, you can:



- a. Be on the alert, and notify the Berkeley Police Department when you see criminal behavior (including nuisance behavior);
- b. Participate in the Neighborhood Watch program in your neighborhood; and
- c. Get to know your neighbors. This makes it easier to identify something out of the ordinary, and provides you an additional set of eyes to guard your property and possessions.

We work closely with the Berkeley Police Department to respond to reports of crime throughout the City, and in particular, units with S8 rental assistance; you have that same opportunity. Do your part to keep your neighborhood – a safe, decent place to live! And remember, YOU

are the greatest voice in our anti-crime campaign. To contact the Berkeley Police Department, please call:

911 Emergency  
981-5911 Emergency from a cell phone  
981-5900 Non Emergency  
981-5806 Community Services Bureau

### Reduced Service Schedule

*As a cost saving measure, BHA employees will be on non-paid furlough beginning Monday, December 23<sup>rd</sup> through Tuesday, December 31, 2013. In addition, the office will be closed, Monday, January 20<sup>th</sup> in observance of the MLK Jr. Birthday holiday.*

### Make Preparations for Winter



With the start of the cold weather season, staying safe and warm are at the top of most “to-do” lists. Many families are using the heating system for the first time in many months. If you experience a problem, PG&E is a good place to start (800-743-5000). Often times the correction is as simple as lighting the pilot, a service PG&E provides to all customers at **\$0** cost. It is also a good time to check, or better still replace, the battery in **all** the smoke detectors in your house.

### Need to Reach Us ....

BHA/1936 University Ave,  
Suite 150, 94704

(510) 981-5470, Front Desk

(510) 981-5480 Fax



Email [bha@cityofberkeley.info](mailto:bha@cityofberkeley.info)

Website

[www.cityofberkeley.info/bha](http://www.cityofberkeley.info/bha)

Office Hours: Mon. – Thurs. 8:15 am  
– 4:30 pm