



Berkeley Housing Authority

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William E. Wilkins, Executive Director

Section 8 News

Message from new Executive Director

Hello my name is *Bill Wilkins* and I was appointed as the new Berkeley Housing Authority Executive Director on June 27, 2016. I am extremely happy to have the opportunity to serve you and the many families in need of housing assistance in the City of Berkeley. I have spent the better part of four decades working in housing. Most recently I worked for the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, assigned to the State of Illinois, as the Public Housing Director. Prior to working for HUD I worked for a number of housing authorities across the country, including the Cities of Oxnard, California; Des Moines, Iowa; East City Saint Louis, Illinois; Inglewood, California; Compton, California; Santa Monica, California and Los Angeles.

I believe our challenge going forward will be to ensure that all families seeking housing through our program have the opportunity to find decent, safe, sanitary and affordable housing. As you all know the housing market in Northern California has become increasingly difficult if not impossible for families served by the Section 8 Program to locate units. It is my intent and responsibility to work diligently to attract new housing opportunities, but also to educate everyone on the importance of helping to maintain the properties we currently have in our program.

I have begun to hold regular meetings with landlords under contract with the Housing Choice Voucher Program in an effort to determine what we can do to keep their units on the program, but more importantly attract new properties. To this end I have stressed to them, that I support landlords who make sure their units fully meet the Housing Quality Housing Standards, and nothing less. BHA does not support our participants living in any environment that is less than safe, healthy and in good repair.

I will expect that participants who have issues with repairs not being addressed by their landlord (s) to notify our office.

On the other hand, I am also deeply concerned with a number of the complaints received from landlords regarding tenants who fail to pay their portion of the rent on time (in some cases several months); tenants who fail to provide access to their unit for the landlord representative to enter and make repairs; tenants who have guests that are disruptive to the peace and quiet of the neighborhood and more importantly, the building where they live. Please note that having the opportunity to receive financial housing assistance is not a right, it's a privilege as anyone of the almost 1,000 applicants on the BHA waiting list for the last 7 years will tell you. We must do better, and we will, with your commitment to help us!

Thank you, and I look forward to being here to work with all of our families to gain access to decent, affordable, and safe housing.

Think Twice Before Porting Out?

Berkeley is an excellent City to live with quality public schools 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 new unit without getting approvals and processing necessary paperwork. Make sure you keep your Section 8 Voucher, do your homework before you move.

Reasonable Accommodations

A Reasonable Accommodation is a change in policies or procedures in order for disabled persons to enjoy the full benefits of the S8 rental assistance program. A frequent request is for an additional bedroom for (a) Live-in aide or (b) store necessary medical equipment and/or supplies.

Over the years we have discovered a number of cases where the Live-in aide is not living in the unit as his/her only residence. This is a violation of the program rules and considered fraud, which could cause the family to be terminated from the program for falsely reporting a “live-in aide. Requests for reasonable accommodation (s) should be supported by documentation from a medical provider. Every year we enclose a “Notice of Reasonable Accommodation” form with the Annual Recertification paperwork.

Two HUD Required Policies

We know how hard it is to stay on top of every day events with various daily commitments, so we try to limit our requests for your time. However, there are **two mandatory** (required by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development) 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. HUD can and will in some cases withhold funding for cases where an annual recertification has not occurred within the required one (1) year period, unless there are clear extenuating circumstances that have prevented the completion of the Recertification.
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 identifying the need. Effective immediately, BHA will no longer permit delays of inspections to go beyond 3 months, unless you are hospitalized. Failure to permit inspections in a timely manner may result in the termination of assistance through the Section 8 Program.

What about my rent?

We determine your rent by “projecting” what we think your income will be for the next 12 months. If something changes – income goes up or down – you are required to report that to your Housing Specialist within 14-calendar days.

- If the change results in an increase, it will be effective after a 30-day notice.
- If the change results in a decrease, it will be effective the 1st of the following month, if we receive notice with enough time to process. Our goal is to process within 5 working days.

2017 Resident Advisory Board

Every year we review our discretionary policies – in the Section 8 “Administrative Plan” - and where appropriate, propose changes. As part of the process we appoint a body made up of program participants – a Resident Advisory Board (RAB) – and ask those individuals to review the plan and provide comments.

Please consider participating as a member of the RAB. If you agree to review the proposed Administrative Plan changes, and attend one meeting to share your comments (approximately 2-hours), you will receive \$50!

This is not considered “income” so it won’t change your rent, and it won’t be reported to Internal Revenue Service.

To volunteer for the RAB contact us in writing by February 7, 2017 with your name, address, phone number and email. You can send by regular mail, drop off in the office or email the information to caguilar-vasquez@ci.berkeley.ca.us. If you have any questions call Celinda at (510) 981-5483. Remember ... two minds are better than one!

Monthly Meetings for Berkeley Housing Authority Board of Commissioners

The BHA Board of Commissioners has a scheduled meeting the 2nd Thursday of each month at the North Berkeley Senior Center. The meeting starts at 6:00 p.m. and is open to the public.