

## Chapter 5

### BRIEFINGS AND VOUCHER ISSUANCE

#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the briefing and voucher issuance process. When a family is determined to be eligible for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, the MHC must ensure that the family fully understands the way the program operates and the family's obligations under the program. This is accomplished through both an oral briefing and provision of a briefing packet containing the HUD required documents and other information the family needs to know in order to lease a unit under the program. Once the family is fully informed of the program's requirements, the MHC issues the family a voucher. The voucher includes the unit size for which the family qualifies based on the MHC's subsidy standards, as well as the issue and expiration date of the voucher. The voucher is the document that authorizes the family to begin its search for a unit, and limits the amount of time the family has to successfully locate an acceptable unit.

This chapter describes HUD regulations and the MHC policies related to these topics in two parts:

Part I: Briefings and Family Obligations. This part details the program's requirements for briefing families orally, and for providing written materials describing the program and its requirements. It includes a particular focus on the family's obligations under the program.

Part II: Subsidy Standards and Voucher Issuance. This part discusses the MHC's standard for determining how many bedrooms a family of a given composition qualifies for, which in turn affects the amount of subsidy the family can receive. It also discusses the policies that dictate how vouchers are issued, and how long families have to locate a unit.

## **PART I: BRIEFINGS AND FAMILY**

### **OBLIGATIONS**

#### **5-1.A. OVERVIEW**

HUD regulations require the MHC to conduct mandatory briefings for applicant families who qualify for a voucher. The briefing provides a broad description of owner and family responsibilities, explains the MHC's procedures, and includes instructions on how to lease a unit. This part describes how oral briefings will be conducted, specifies what written information will be provided to families, and lists the family's obligations under the program.

#### **5-1.B. BRIEFING [24 CFR 982.301]**

The MHC must give the family an oral briefing and provide the family with a briefing packet containing written information about the program. Families may be briefed individually or in groups. At the briefing, the MHC must ensure effective communication in accordance with Section 504 requirements (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973), and ensure that the briefing site is accessible to individuals with disabilities. For a more thorough discussion of accessibility requirements, refer to Chapter 2.

##### Muskegon Housing Commission Policy

Briefings may be conducted in group meetings.

All adult household members are required to attend the briefing and sign required forms as identified in the Notification of Selection Letter (See Chapter 4).

Families that attend group briefings will also conclude with a face-to-face interview with an appropriate Program Manager.

Briefings will be conducted in English. For limited English proficient (LEP) applicants, The MHC will provide translation services in accordance with the MHC LEP plan (See Chapter 2).

#### **Notification and Attendance**

##### Muskegon Housing Commission Policy

The Housing Commission will not issue a Voucher to a family unless the household representative has attended a briefing and signed the Voucher. Applicants who provide prior notice of inability to attend a briefing will automatically be scheduled for the next briefing. Applicants who fail to attend two (2) scheduled briefings, without prior notification and approval of the Housing Commission, will be denied admission based on failure to supply information needed for program admission (see Chapter 3).. The Housing Commission will conduct individual briefings for families with disabilities over the phone, upon request by the family, if required for reasonable accommodations.

If the notice is returned by the post office with no forwarding address, the applicant will be denied and their name will not be placed back on the waiting list. If the notice is returned by the post office with a forwarding address, the notice will be re-sent to the address indicated.

### **Oral Briefing [24 CFR 982.301(a)]**

Each briefing must provide information on the following subjects:

- How the Housing Choice Voucher program works;
- Family and owner responsibilities;
- Where the family can lease a unit, including renting a unit inside or outside the MHC's jurisdiction;
- For families eligible under portability, an explanation of portability. The MHC cannot discourage eligible families from moving under portability;
- For families living in high-poverty census tracts, an explanation of the advantages of moving to areas outside of high-poverty concentrations; and
- For families receiving welfare-to-work vouchers, a description of any local obligations of a welfare-to-work family and an explanation that failure to meet the obligations is grounds for denial of admission or termination of assistance.

### **Briefing Packet [24 CFR 982.301(b)]**

Documents and information provided in the briefing packet must include the following:

- The term of the voucher, and the MHC's policies on any extensions or suspensions of the term. If the MHC allows extensions, the packet must explain how the family can request an extension.
- A description of the method used to calculate the housing assistance payment for a family, including how the MHC determines the payment standard for a family, how the MHC determines total tenant payment for a family, and information on the payment standard and utility allowance schedule.
- An explanation of how the MHC determines the maximum allowable rent for an assisted unit.
- Where the family may lease a unit. For a family that qualifies to lease a unit outside the MHC's jurisdiction under portability procedures, the information must include an explanation of how portability works.
- The HUD-required tenancy addendum, which must be included in the lease.
- The form the family must use to request approval of tenancy, and a description of the procedure for requesting approval for a tenancy.

- A statement of the MHC policy on providing information about families to prospective owners.
- The MHC subsidy standards including when and how exceptions are made.
- The HUD brochure on how to select a unit.
- The HUD pamphlet on lead-based paint entitled *Protect Your Family from Lead in Your Home*.
- Information on federal, state and local equal opportunity laws and a copy of the housing discrimination complaint form.
- A list of landlords or other parties willing to lease to assisted families or help families find units, especially outside areas of poverty or minority concentration.
- Notice that if the family includes a person with disabilities, the family may request a list of available accessible units known to the MHC.
- The family obligations under the program, including any obligations of a welfare-to-work family.
- The grounds on which the MHC may terminate assistance for a participant family because of family action or failure to act.
- The MHC's informal hearing procedures including when the MHC is required to offer a participant family the opportunity for an informal hearing, and how to request the hearing.

The MHC is located in a metropolitan area, therefore, the following additional information must be included in the briefing packet in order to receive full points under SEMAP Indicator 7, Expanding Housing Opportunities [24 CFR 985.3(g)]:

- Maps showing areas with housing opportunities outside areas of poverty or minority concentration, both within its jurisdiction and its neighboring jurisdiction
- Information about the characteristics of these areas including job opportunities, schools, transportation, and other services
- An explanation of how portability works, including a list of portability contact persons for neighboring PHAs with names, addresses, and telephone numbers

### **Additional Items to Be Included in the Briefing Packet**

In addition to items required by the regulations, the MHC may wish to include supplemental materials to help explain the program to both participants and owners [HCV GB p. 8-7, Notice PIH 2010-19].

## Muskegon Housing Commission Policy

The MHC will provide the following additional materials in the briefing packet:

“Is Fraud Worth It?” (Form HUD-1141-OIG), which explains the types of actions a family must avoid and the penalties for program abuse

“What You Should Know about EIV,” a guide to the Enterprise Income Verification (EIV) system published by HUD as an attachment to Notice PIH 2010-19

### **5-I.C. FAMILY OBLIGATIONS**

Obligations of the family are described in the housing choice voucher (HCV) regulations and on the voucher itself. These obligations include responsibilities the family is required to fulfill, as well as prohibited actions. The MHC must inform families of these obligations during the oral briefing, and the same information must be included in the briefing packet. When the family’s unit is approved and the HAP contract is executed, the family must meet those obligations in order to continue participating in the program. Violation of any family obligation may result in termination of assistance, as described in Chapter 12.

#### **Time Frames for Reporting Changes Required By Family Obligations**

##### Muskegon Housing Commission Policy

Unless otherwise noted below, when family obligations require the family to respond to a request or notify the MHC of a change, notifying the MHC of the request or change within 10 business days is considered prompt notice.

When a family is required to provide notice to MHC, the notice must be in writing.

#### **Family Obligations [24 CFR 982.551]**

The family obligations of the voucher are listed as follows:

- The family must supply any information that the MHC or HUD determines to be necessary, including submission of required evidence of citizenship or eligible immigration status.
- The family must supply any information requested by the MHC or HUD for use in a regularly scheduled reexamination or interim reexamination of family income and composition.
- The family must disclose and verify social security numbers and sign and submit consent forms for obtaining information.
- Any information supplied by the family must be true and complete.

- The family is responsible for any Housing Quality Standards (HQS) breach caused by failure to pay tenant-provided utilities or appliances, or damages to the dwelling unit or premises beyond normal wear and tear caused by any member of the household or guest.

Muskegon Housing Commission Policy

Damages beyond normal wear and tear will be considered to be damages which could be assessed against the security deposit as determined by Michigan state law.

- The family must allow the MHC to inspect the unit at reasonable times and after reasonable notice, as described in Chapter 8 of this plan.
- The family must not commit any serious or repeated violation of the lease.

Muskegon Housing Commission Policy

The MHC will determine if a family has committed serious or repeated violations of the lease based on available evidence, including but not limited to, a court-ordered eviction or an owner's notice to evict, police reports, and affidavits from the owner, neighbors, or other credible parties with direct knowledge.

Serious and repeated lease violations will include, but not be limited to, nonpayment of rent, disturbance of neighbors, destruction of property, living or housekeeping habits that cause damage to the unit or premises, and criminal activity. Generally, the criterion to be used will be whether or not the reason for the eviction was the fault of the tenant or guests. Any incidents of, or criminal activity related to, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking will not be construed as serious or repeated lease violations by the victim [24 CFR 5.2005(c)(1)].

- The family must notify the MHC and the owner before moving out of the unit or terminating the lease.
- The family must promptly give the MHC a copy of any owner eviction notice.
- The family must use the assisted unit for residence by the family. The unit must be the family's only residence.
- The composition of the assisted family residing in the unit must be approved by the MHC.
- The family must promptly notify the MHC in writing of the birth, adoption, or court-awarded custody of a child. The family must request MHC approval to add any other family member as an occupant of the unit.

### Muskegon Housing Commission Policy

The request to add a family member must be submitted in writing and approved prior to the person moving into the unit. The MHC will determine eligibility of the new member in accordance with the policies in Chapter 3.

- The family must promptly notify the MHC in writing if any family member no longer lives in the unit.
- If the MHC has given approval, a foster child or a live-in aide may reside in the unit.
- The MHC has the discretion to adopt reasonable policies concerning residency by a foster child or a live-in aide, and to define when MHC consent may be given or denied. For policies related to the request and approval/disapproval of foster children, foster adults, and live-in aides, see Chapter 3 (sections I.K and I.M), and Chapter 11 (section II.B).
- The family must not sublease the unit, assign the lease, or transfer the unit.

### Muskegon Housing Commission Policy

Subleasing includes receiving payment to cover rent and utility costs by a person living in the unit who is not listed as a family member.

- The family must supply any information requested by the MHC to verify that the family is living in the unit or information related to family absence from the unit.
- The family must promptly notify the MHC when the family is absent from the unit.

### Muskegon Housing Commission Policy

The Housing Commission must compute all applicable income of every family member who is on the lease, including those who are temporarily absent. In addition, the MHC must count the income of the spouse or the head of the household if that person is temporarily absent, even if that person is not on the lease.

"Temporarily absent" is defined as away from the unit for more than 60 days.

Income of persons permanently absent will not be counted. If the spouse is temporarily absent and in the military, all military pay and allowances (except hazardous duty pay when exposed to hostile fire and any other exceptions to military pay rate]) may define) is counted as income.

It is the responsibility of the head of household to report changes in family composition with ten (10) days.

The Housing Commission will evaluate absences from the unit using this policy.

### Absence of Any Member

Any member of the household will be considered permanently absent if s/he is away from the unit for 6 consecutive months except as otherwise provided in this Chapter.

### Absence due to Medical Reasons

If any family member leaves the household to enter a facility such as hospital, nursing home, or rehabilitation center, the Housing Commission will seek advice from a reliable qualified source as to the likelihood and timing of their return. If the verification indicates that the family member will be permanently confined to a nursing home, the family member will be considered permanently absent. If the verification indicates that the family member will return in less than 180 consecutive days, the family member will not be considered permanently absent.

If the person who is determined to be permanently absent is the sole member of the household, assistance will be terminated in accordance with the Housing Commission's "Absence of Entire Family" policy.

### Absence Due to Full-time Student Status

Full time students who attend school away from the home will be treated in the following manner:

A student (other than head of household or spouse) who attends school away from home but lives with the family during school recesses may, at the family's choice, be considered either temporarily or permanently absent. If the family decides that the member is permanently absent, income of that member will not be included in total household income, the member will not be included on the lease, and the member will not be included for determination of Voucher size.

### Absence due to Incarceration

If the sole member is incarcerated for more than 60 consecutive days, s/he will be considered permanently absent. Any member of the household, other than the sole member, will be considered permanently absent if s/he is incarcerated for 180 days.

The Housing Commission will determine if the reason for incarceration is for drug-related or violent criminal activity.

### Absence of Children due to Placement in Foster Care

If the family includes a child or children temporarily absent from the home due to placement in foster care, the Housing Commission will determine from the appropriate agency when the child/children will be returned to the home.

If the time period is to be greater than 6 months from the date of removal of the child/ren, the Voucher size will be reduced. If all children are removed from the home permanently, the voucher size will be reduced in accordance with the Housing Commission's subsidy standards.

#### Absence of Entire Family

These policy guidelines address situations when the family is absent from the unit, but has not moved out of the unit. In cases where the family has moved out of the unit, the Housing Commission will terminate assistance in accordance with appropriate termination procedures contained in this Plan.

Families are required both to notify the Housing Commission before they move out of a unit and to give the Housing Commission information about any family absence from the unit.

Families must notify the Housing Commission no less than 30 days after leaving the unit if they are going to be absent from the unit for more than 60 consecutive days.

If the entire family is absent from the assisted unit for more than 60 consecutive days, the unit will be considered to be vacated and the assistance will be terminated.

If it is determined that the family is absent from the unit, the Housing Commission will not continue assistance payments.

HUD regulations require the Housing Commission to terminate assistance if the entire family is absent from the unit for a period of more than 180 consecutive calendar days.

"Absence" means that no family member is residing in the unit.

In order to determine if the family is absent from the unit, the Housing Commission may:

- Wire letters to the family at the unit
- Telephone the family at the unit
- Verify if utilities are in service
- Check with the post office

A person with a disability may request an extension of time as an accommodation, provided that the extension does not go beyond the HUD-allowed 180 consecutive days limit.

If the absence which resulted in termination of assistance was due to a person's disability, and the Housing Commission can verify that the person was unable to notify the Housing Commission in accordance with the family's responsibilities, and if funding is available, the Housing Commission may reinstate the family as an accommodation if requested by the family, [as long as the period was within 180 days]

### Visitors

Any adults not included on the HUD 50058 who has been in the unit more than 30 consecutive days without Housing Commission approval, or a total of 60 days in a 12-month period, will be considered to be living in the unit as an unauthorized household member.

Absence of evidence of any other address will be considered verification that the visitor is a member of the household.

Statements from neighbors and/or the landlord will be considered in making the determination.

Use of the unit address as the visitor's current residence for any purpose that is not explicitly temporary shall be construed as permanent residence.

The burden of proof that the individual is a visitor rests on the family. In the absence of such proof, the individual will be considered an unauthorized member of the household and the Housing Commission will terminate assistance since prior approval was not requested for the addition.

Minors and college students who were part of the family but who now live away from home during the school year and are no longer on the lease may visit for up to 120 days per year without being considered a member of the household

In a joint custody arrangement, if the minor is in the household less than 180 days per year, the minor will be considered to be an eligible visitor and not a family member.

### Reporting Additions to Owner and Housing Commission

Reporting changes in household composition to the Housing Commission is both a HUD and a Housing Commission requirement.

The family obligations require the family to request Housing Commission approval to add any other family member as an occupant of the unit and to inform the Housing Commission of the birth, adoption or court-awarded custody of a child. The family must request prior approval of additional household members in writing.

If the family does not obtain prior written approval from the Housing Commission, any person the family has permitted to move in will be considered an unauthorized household member.

In the event that a visitor continues to reside in the unit after the maximum allowable time, the family must report it to the Housing Commission in writing within 30 days of the maximum allowable time.

Families are required to report any additions to the household in writing to the Housing Commission within 10 days of the move-in date.

An interim reexamination will be conducted for any additions to the household.

In addition, the lease may require the family to obtain prior written approval from the owner when there are changes in family composition other than birth, adoption or court awarded custody.

### Reporting Absences to the Housing Commission

Reporting changes in household composition is both a HUD and a Housing Commission requirement.

If a family member leaves the household, the family must report this change in the Housing Commission, in writing, within 10 days of the change and certify as to whether the member is temporarily absent or permanently absent.

The Housing Commission will conduct an interim evaluation for changes which affect the Total Tenant Payment in accordance with the interim policy

If any family member leaves the household to enter a facility such as hospital, nursing home, or rehabilitation center, the Housing Commission will seek advice from a reliable qualified source as to the likelihood and timing of their return. If the verification indicates that the family member will be permanently confined to a nursing home, the family member will be considered permanently absent. If the verification indicates that the family member will return in less than 180 consecutive days, the family member will not be considered permanently absent.

If the person who is determined to be permanently absent is the sole member of the household, assistance will be terminated in accordance with the Housing Commission's "Absence of Entire Family" policy.

- The family must pay utility bills and provide and maintain any appliances that the owner is not required to provide under the lease [Form HUD-52646, Voucher].
- The family must not own or have any interest in the unit, (other than in a cooperative and owners of a manufactured home leasing a manufactured home space).
- Family members must not commit fraud, bribery, or any other corrupt or criminal act in connection with the program. (See Chapter 14, Program Integrity for additional information).
- Family members must not engage in drug-related criminal activity or violent criminal activity or other criminal activity that threatens the health, safety or right to peaceful enjoyment of other residents and persons residing in the immediate vicinity of the premises. See Chapter 12 for HUD and MHC policies related to drug-related and violent criminal activity.

- Members of the household must not engage in abuse of alcohol in a way that threatens the health, safety or right to peaceful enjoyment of the other residents and persons residing in the immediate vicinity of the premises. See Chapter 12 for a discussion of HUD and MHC policies related to alcohol abuse.
- An assisted family or member of the family must not receive HCV program assistance while receiving another housing subsidy, for the same unit or a different unit under any other federal, state or local housing assistance program.
- A family must not receive HCV program assistance while residing in a unit owned by a parent, child, grandparent, grandchild, sister or brother of any member of the family, unless the PHA has determined (and has notified the owner and the family of such determination) that approving rental of the unit, notwithstanding such relationship, would provide reasonable accommodation for a family member who is a person with disabilities. [Form HUD-52646, Voucher].

## **PART II: SUBSIDY STANDARDS AND VOUCHER ISSUANCE**

### **5-II.A. OVERVIEW**

The MHC must establish subsidy standards that determine the number of bedrooms needed for families of different sizes and compositions. This part presents the policies that will be used to determine the family unit size (also known as the voucher size) a particular family should receive, and the policies that govern making exceptions to those standards. The MHC must also establish policies related to the issuance of the voucher, to the voucher term, and to any extensions or suspensions of the voucher term.

### **5-II.B. DETERMINING FAMILY UNIT (VOUCHER) SIZE [24 CFR 982.402]**

For each family, the MHC determines the appropriate number of bedrooms under the MHC's subsidy standards and enters the family unit size on the voucher that is issued to the family. The family unit size does not dictate the size of unit the family must actually lease, nor does it determine who within a household will share a bedroom/sleeping room.

The following requirements apply when the MHC determines family unit size:

- The subsidy standards must provide for the smallest number of bedrooms needed to house a family without overcrowding.
- The subsidy standards must be consistent with space requirements under the housing quality standards.
- The subsidy standards must be applied consistently for all families of like size and composition.
- A child who is temporarily away from the home because of placement in foster care is considered a member of the family in determining the family unit size.
- A family that consists of a pregnant woman (with no other persons) must be treated as a two-person family.
- Any live-in aide (approved by the MHC to reside in the unit to care for a family member who is disabled or is at least 50 years of age) must be counted in determining the family unit size;
- Unless a live-in-aide resides with a family, the family unit size for any family consisting of a single person must be either a zero- or one-bedroom unit, as determined under the PHA subsidy standards.

#### Muskegon Housing Commission Policy

The MHC will assign one bedroom for each two persons within the household, except in the following circumstances:

- Single head of household with additional family members not designated as a spouse or co-head will be allocated a separate bedroom.

- Children under 18 of different genders will be allocated separate bedrooms.
- Live-in aides will be allocated a separate bedroom.
- Single person families will be allocated one bedroom.

The MHC will reference the following chart in determining the appropriate voucher size for a family:

<b>Voucher Size</b>	<b>Persons in Household (Minimum – Maximum)</b>
1 Bedroom	1-2
2 Bedrooms	2-4
3 Bedrooms	3-6
4 Bedrooms	4-8
5 Bedrooms	6-10
6 Bedrooms	7-12

### **5-II.C. EXCEPTIONS TO SUBSIDY STANDARDS**

In determining family unit size for a particular family, the PHA may grant an exception to its established subsidy standards if the PHA determines that the exception is justified by the age, sex, health, handicap, or relationship of family members or other personal circumstances [24 CFR 982.402(b)(8)]. Reasons may include, but are not limited to:

- A need for an additional bedroom for medical equipment
- A need for a separate bedroom for reasons related to a family member’s disability, medical or health condition

For a single person who is not elderly, disabled, or a remaining family member, an exception cannot override the regulatory limit of a zero or one bedroom [24 CFR 982.402(b)(8)].

#### Muskegon Housing Commission Policy

The MHC will consider granting an exception for any of the reasons specified in the regulation: health or disability.

The family must request any exception to the subsidy standards in writing. The request must explain the need or justification for a larger family unit size, and must include appropriate documentation. Requests based on health-related reasons must be verified by a knowledgeable professional source (e.g., doctor or health professional), unless the disability and the disability-related request for accommodation is readily apparent or otherwise known. The family’s continued need for an additional bedroom due to special medical equipment must be re-verified at annual reexamination. PIH Notice 2010-51

The MHC will notify the family of its determination within 10 business days of receiving the family's request. If a participant family's request is denied, the notice will inform the family of their right to request an informal hearing.

#### **5-II.D. VOUCHER ISSUANCE [24 CFR 982.302]**

When a family is selected from the waiting list (or as a special admission as described in Chapter 4), or when a participant family wants to move to another unit, the MHC issues a Housing Choice Voucher, form HUD-52646. This chapter deals only with voucher issuance for applicants. For voucher issuance associated with moves of program participants, please refer to Chapter 10.

The voucher is the family's authorization to search for housing. It specifies the unit size for which the family qualifies, and includes both the date of voucher issuance and date of expiration. It contains a brief description of how the program works and explains the family obligations under the program. The voucher is evidence that the MHC has determined the family to be eligible for the program, and that the MHC expects to have money available to subsidize the family if the family finds an approvable unit. However, the PHA does not have any liability to any party by the issuance of the voucher, and the voucher does not give the family any right to participate in the MHC's housing choice voucher program [Voucher, form HUD-52646].

A voucher can be issued to an applicant family only after the M has determined that the family is eligible for the program based on verification of information received within the 60 days prior to issuance [24 CFR 982.201(e)] and after the family has attended an oral briefing [HCV 8-1].

##### Muskegon Housing Commission Policy

Vouchers will be issued to eligible applicants immediately following the mandatory briefing.

The PHA should have sufficient funds to house an applicant before issuing a voucher. If funds are insufficient to house the family at the top of the waiting list, the PHA must wait until it has adequate funds before it calls another family from the list [HCV GB p. 8-10].

##### Muskegon Housing Commission Policy

Prior to issuing any vouchers, the MHC will determine whether it has sufficient funding in accordance with the policies in Part VIII of Chapter 16.

If the MHC determines that there is insufficient funding after a voucher has been issued, the MHC may rescind the voucher and place the affected family back on the waiting list.

## **5-II.E. VOUCHER TERM, EXTENSIONS, AND SUSPENSIONS**

### **Voucher Term [24 CFR 982.303]**

The initial term of a voucher must be at least 60 calendar days. The initial term must be stated on the voucher [24 CFR 982.303(a)].

#### Muskegon Housing Commission Policy

The initial voucher term will be 60 calendar days.

The family must submit a Request for Tenancy Approval and proposed lease within the 60-day period.

### **Extensions of Voucher Term [24 CFR 982.303(b)]**

The PHA has the authority to grant extensions of search time, to specify the length of an extension, and to determine the circumstances under which extensions will be granted. There is no limit on the number of extensions that the PHA can approve. Discretionary policies related to extension and expiration of search time must be described in the PHA's administrative plan [24 CFR 982.54].

PHAs must approve additional search time if needed as a reasonable accommodation to make the program accessible to and usable by a person with disabilities. The extension period must be reasonable for the purpose.

The family must be notified in writing of the PHA's decision to approve or deny an extension. The PHA's decision to deny a request for an extension of the voucher term is not subject to informal review [24 CFR 982.554(c)(4)].

#### Muskegon Housing Commission Policy

A family may request a written request for an extension of the Voucher time period. All requests for extensions must be received prior to the expiration date of the Voucher.

Extensions are permissible at the discretion of the Housing Commission up to a maximum of an additional 60 days primarily for these reasons:

- Extenuating circumstances such as hospitalization or a family emergency for an extended period of time which has affected the family's ability to find a unit within the initial sixty-day period. Verification is required.
- The Housing Commission is satisfied that the family has made a reasonable effort to locate a unit, including seeking the assistance of the Housing Commission, throughout the initial sixty-day period. A completed search record is not required.

The family was prevented from finding a unit due to disability accessibility requirements or large size bedroom unit requirement. The Search Record is not part of the required verification.

The MHC will decide whether to approve or deny an extension request within 10 business days of the date the request is received, and will immediately provide the family written notice of its decision.

### **Suspensions of Voucher Term [24 CFR 982.303(c)]**

The MHC must suspend the housing choice voucher term if the family has submitted a Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA) during the voucher term. "Suspension" means stopping the clock on a family's voucher term from the time a family submits the RTA until the time the MHC approves or denies the request [24 CFR 982.4], in writing (Final Portability Rule – September 2015).

#### Muskegon Housing Commission Policy

The Request for Lease Approval and a copy of the proposed Lease, including the HUD prescribed tenancy addendum, must be submitted by the family during the term of the Voucher. The family must submit the Request for Approval of Tenancy in the form and manner required by the Housing Commission.

The Request for Lease Approval must be signed by both the owner and Voucher holder.

The Housing Commission will not permit the family to submit more than one Request at a time.

The Housing Commission will review the proposed lease and the Request for Lease Approval documents to determine whether or not they are approvable. The Request will be approved if:

- The unit is an eligible type of housing.
- The unit meets HUD's Housing Quality Standards (and any additional criteria as identified in this Administrative Plan)
- The rent is reasonable

### **Expiration of Voucher Term**

Once a family's housing choice voucher term (including any extensions) expires, the family is no longer eligible to search for housing under the program. If the family still wishes to receive assistance, the MHC may require that the family reapply, or may place the family on the waiting list with a new application date but without requiring reapplication. Such a family does not become ineligible for the program on the grounds that it was unable to locate a unit before the voucher expired [HCV GB p. 8-13].

#### Muskegon Housing Commission Policy

If an applicant family's voucher term or extension expires before the family has submitted a Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA), the MHC will remove the family from the waiting list for failure to lease up within the given voucher term and/or extension(s).

Within 10 business days after the expiration of the voucher term or any extension, the MHC will notify the family in writing that the voucher term has expired and that the family must reapply in order to be placed on the waiting list.