

5. Housing

Updated 10/31/04

Legal Restrictions on Housing ¹

An individual in financial transition may want to consider public housing that is usually lower cost than the average rent of private housing in the community. An individual desiring to apply for public housing should contact the local Housing Authority. According to the laws promulgated by Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Housing Authority *may* consider an applicant's past criminal history in the tenant selection process for public housing.

A. Standards for Public Housing Tenant Selection Criteria

According to §24 CFR 960.205, the Housing Authority may consider "criminal activity involving crimes of physical violence to persons or property and other criminal acts which would adversely affect the health, safety or welfare of other tenants."

If the Housing Authority does identify an individual with this type of criminal history they are not legally allowed to automatically reject his or her application.

Prior to rejection of an application for public housing, the Housing Authority must also consider evidence of rehabilitation by a public housing applicant

with a past criminal history. In addition, the law requires the Housing Authority to give applicants an opportunity to dispute both the accuracy and the relevance of the criminal record.

¹ "On Your Own, Information and Resources for Persons Formerly Incarcerated, The Convicted, and Their Families in the [New York State] Capital District," produced by the Center for Law and Justice, Albany, NY

Emergency Shelters ²

- Emergency Overnight Drop-In Shelter - 55 bed facility which operates between the hours of 11 p.m. and 7 a.m., and can be contacted at 949-0406.
- Shelters which can be accessed without a Department of Social Services referral:

Tarrytown Salvation Army 115 Wildey Street Phone: 631-1338	White Plains Drop-In Airport Shelter WC Airport 32 Loop Road Phone: 946-5500 995-9297 - Assessment
White Plains Open Arms Grace Church 86 East Post Road Phone: 948-5044 (Men)	Yonkers Yonkers Gospel Mission Home 191 North Broadway Phone: 968-6577 (Men)

Transitional Shelters and Assistance ³

How do I get Services?

Eligibility for temporary shelter and services is determined at the Yonkers, Peekskill, Mount Vernon, or White Plains offices of Social Services,

² Westchester County Gov. housing website,
<http://www.westchestergov.com/social/Housing/housingservices.htm#Available%20Resources>

³ <http://www.westchestergov.com/social/Housing/Househome.htm>

depending on where you last lived in the county of Westchester. They are open Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

DSS District Offices

<p>Mount Vernon Center 100 East First Street Mount Vernon, NY 10550-3442 (914) 813-6000</p>	<p>White Plains Center 85 Court Street White Plains, NY 10601-4201 (914) 995-5840</p>
<p>Peekskill Center 750 Washington Street Peekskill, NY 10566-5499 (914) 862-5000</p>	<p>Yonkers Center 137 Alexander Street Yonkers, NY 10701-2539 (914) 231-2000</p>

Available Resources through the Westchester County Department of Social Services

- Singles' Homeless Assessment Center - designed to assess newly homeless individuals to identify any health/mental health/ or substance abuse issues which may have contributed to homelessness and then recommend an appropriate level of placement and treatment
- Family Shelters –
- Singles' Emergency and Transitional Residences –
- Emergency Apartments
- Domestic Violence Shelters

What is RAP?

- The Rental Assistance Program (RAP) is an initiative by DSS to help homeless families transition from Public Assistance (PA) and to prevent non-PA families from needing assistance by subsidizing their rent. Eligible families contribute no more than 35% of income towards rent. They must be put on a Section 8 waiting list and are expected to transition to Section 8 housing within approximately one year.
- Any working family with income between 125% and 200% of the Federal poverty guidelines facing imminent risk of eviction due to non-

payment of rent, or homeless working families who would no longer need PA if they were permanently housed, may be eligible. Individuals without dependent children, non-working families, or families who are unable to qualify for Section 8 are not eligible.

- Non-PA families facing eviction for non-payment should go to their nearest DSS district office and apply for Emergency Assistance. District office staff will determine if a referral to RAP is appropriate. Homeless families who currently receive assistance are referred by their case manager

Section 8 and Public Housing⁴

What Is Provided?

- An apartment unit in a public housing facility, or
- A subsidy, known as Section Eight which can be used toward the rent on any private rental unit in the United States (apartment or house).

Eligibility

To be eligible for rental assistance or what is called a Section 8 Rental Housing Voucher, you must be within the household income levels established by the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) based on family size. You must be within the 50% of the Westchester County median level for income. Additionally, Section 8 Rental Housing Vouchers are limited to U.S. citizens or non-citizens who have eligible immigration status. *For further information please call the*

Westchester County Department of Planning
Section 8 Office
 150 Grand Street
 White Plains
Phone: 914-995-2415

⁴ Westchester Section 8 website
<http://www.mhwestchester.org/benefits/section8.asp>

To Apply for Section 8

- To apply for housing assistance, first contact the Section 8 office above. You must then appear in person at a Section 8 Office. In Westchester County there are 16 municipalities and the Westchester County Department of Planning that have Section 8 offices. You can apply to any municipality as long as their waiting list is not closed. You may also apply to the Westchester County Department of Planning for a Section 8 Rental Housing Voucher; their waiting list never closes. Although you do not have to be a resident of the municipality where you apply, most municipalities give priority in their waiting lists to their own residents or to persons working in that municipality
- Even though there is a very long waiting list for both public housing and Section Eight, new applications are still accepted.

Payments For Housing Using Section Eight Vouchers

- You pay only 30-40 percent of your gross family income for rent; the balance is paid by the Section Eight program.
- You are responsible for your own utilities. Also, you may be responsible for a security deposit to the landlord when you move in

Limitations Or Restrictions for Ex-Offenders

- Ex-offenders are not automatically denied public housing or Section Eight housing assistance based solely on their incarceration or conviction. With ex-offenders, the Housing Authority will consider the nature of the offense and the length of time it has been since the offense occurred in order to determine if rehabilitation has occurred. Factors which may be considered in the determination of rehabilitation include, but are not limited to:
 - Adequate and suitable employment or participation in a training program
 - Substance abuse treatment, if necessary
 - Successful completion of therapy directed at correcting the behavior which led to the criminal activity
 - Existence of a support network