

Section 8 Application Checklist

Everything you need to gather before applying for the Housing Choice Voucher program. Print this out, check off each item as you collect it, and bring the full packet to your Public Housing Authority (PHA).

Step 1: Before you apply

Section 8 waiting lists are not always open. Before gathering documents, confirm that your local PHA is accepting applications.

- Find your local PHA at hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts
- Check if the waiting list is currently open
- Note the application deadline (if any)
- Confirm whether applications are online, in person, or by mail
- Ask about any preference categories you may qualify for (veteran, disability, domestic violence, homeless)

Tip: Some PHAs open their list for only a few days. If the list is closed, ask when it is expected to reopen and whether you can be notified.

Step 2: Identity documents

You will need proof of identity for every household member who will live in the unit.

- Government-issued photo ID for all adults (driver's license, state ID, or passport)
- Social Security cards for all household members
- Birth certificates for all household members
- Immigration documentation (if applicable)

Tip: If you have lost your Social Security card, you can request a replacement at ssa.gov or your local Social Security office. Processing takes about two weeks.

Step 3: Income verification

Section 8 eligibility is based on household income. You must provide proof of all income sources for every adult household member.

Employment income

- Pay stubs from the last 30 to 60 days (for all working adults)

- Employer verification letter (some PHAs require this)
- Most recent federal tax return (1040) with W-2s
- Self-employment records, if applicable (1099s, profit/loss statements)

Benefits and other income

- Social Security or SSI/SSDI benefit letter (current year)
- Unemployment compensation records
- Pension or retirement income statements
- Child support documentation (court order and payment records)
- TANF or public assistance award letter
- VA benefit letter (if applicable)

If you have zero income

- Signed zero-income affidavit (your PHA will usually provide this form)
- Explanation of how you are meeting basic needs

Tip: PHAs verify income directly with employers and benefit agencies. Make sure your documents match — discrepancies can delay your application.

Step 4: Asset documentation

You may need to report bank accounts and other assets. Even if your balance is low, have these ready.

- Bank statements for all accounts (last 6 months)
- Investment or retirement account statements
- Vehicle registration (if you own a car)
- Life insurance policy details (if cash value exceeds \$1,000)

Step 5: Housing history

PHAs will check your rental history. Having this information ready speeds up the process.

- Addresses for the past 3 to 5 years
- Landlord names and contact information for each address
- Current lease agreement (if applicable)
- Eviction records documentation (if applicable — be prepared to explain)
- Homelessness verification letter from a shelter or service provider (if applicable)

Tip: If you have a past eviction, a letter explaining the circumstances and what has changed since then can help. Many PHAs consider context.

Step 6: Additional documents that may be required

- Disability verification letter (from a doctor or licensed professional)
- Custody or guardianship documentation for minor children
- Divorce decree or separation agreement (if applicable)
- Student enrollment verification (for full-time students over 18)
- Criminal background information (some PHAs require disclosure)
- Veteran status documentation (DD-214 or VA letter)
- Reasonable accommodation request (if you need an accessible unit or application help)

Step 7: After you submit your application

Getting on the waiting list is just the first step. Here is what to do while you wait.

- Save a copy of your completed application
- Note your application confirmation number
- Keep your contact information current with the PHA — if they cannot reach you, you may lose your place
- Respond to any PHA correspondence within the deadline (usually 10 to 15 business days)
- Update the PHA if your household size, income, or address changes
- Check your waiting list status periodically (ask your PHA how)

Tip: Waiting times vary widely — from months to years depending on your area. Do not give up. Apply to multiple PHAs if possible, and explore other programs like HUD-VASH, Section 811, or LIHTC.

This checklist is provided by Waythrough Project as a free resource. It is not legal advice. Requirements vary by PHA — always confirm with your local office.