

## New HUD Rule Changes How Utility Allowance Must Be Applied

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A change in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program rule requires OHFA to use the utility allowance for the lower of the actual unit size or the voucher bedroom size.

Under the previous rule, OHFA used the utility allowance for the actual unit size regardless of the voucher bedroom size.

Under the new rule, a family with a two-bedroom voucher who chooses to lease a three-bedroom unit will now have the two-bedroom utility allowance applied.

If necessary, OHFA will make exceptions to this rule as a reasonable accommodation for a family that includes a person with disabilities.

All reasonable accommodation requests must be made in writing and must include the reason for applying for the exception.

The new rule went into effect July 1, 2014. For current program participants, the new rule will be applied at the family's annual recertification.

However, if a current program participant chooses to move prior to their annual recertification, the new rule will apply when the participant leases into another unit.



A Newsletter for Section 8 Rental Assistance Landlords and Tenants  
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# News on 8

## REUNITED Housing Helps Mother Regain Custody of Her Kids



**R**obin Goodiron regretfully admits often dragging her children to the dope house during her long stretch of self-destruction with drugs and alcohol.

"I just couldn't stay sober," she said.

When she lost everything of value—her home, her car, and custody of her four children, she faced "no other choice but to go to rehab or go to jail."

Robin chose to go to Jordan's Crossing, a residential facility in Oklahoma City that provides long-term intensive treatments. September 14, 2009 marks the day Robin said goodbye to drugs and alcohol.

After 19 months of receiving men-

tal health and substance abuse treatment, she moved into a sober living apartment complex where she lived for two years.

From there she moved into a rental house using a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher from OHFA. Housing gave her the fresh start she needed and the foundation to piece her life back together.

"I had a home for my children and, therefore, I could get my children back," Robin said.

As her children moved back one at a time, she worked hard to earn their trust and to serve as a positive role model. She maintained a job, enrolled in a degree program at Rose State College, and stayed free of drugs and alcohol.

Robin's family, which also includes three rescue dogs, now thrives. Her children excel in school and the family regularly spends quality time together going to the public library and to amusement parks.

Her oldest daughter explained the impact of having a stable place to call home.

*(continued on page 3)*



## Contact List

TTY (405) 848-7471

Recertification Team 1 (405) 419-8166  
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Recertification Team 2 (405) 419-8167  
*Alphabet B,C,I,J,N,P,T,U, and Y* Fax: (405) 419-9167

Recertification Team 3 (405) 419-8168  
*Alphabet E,F,L,Q,R,S,V,W, and Z* Fax: (405) 419-9168

Initial Certification Team (405) 419-8169  
 Fax: (405) 419-9169

Preapp Status line 1-866-569-6306  
 or (405) 879-6365

Local Leasing line (405) 842-2471  
 Toll-free Leasing line 1-800-256-1489  
 Fax Number (405) 879-8822

Office Operations  
*Mary Hoock, Manager* (405) 419-8266  
*Ken Erb, Supervisor* (405) 419-8233

Field Operations  
*Kenneth Love, Manager* (405) 419-8268  
*Kimberly Mills, Supervisor* (405) 419-8230

FSSI Home Ownership Specialists  
*Kathy Stafford* (405) 419-8236  
*Ryland Moore* (405) 419-8197  
*Sheila Calvin* (405) 419-8171



Oklahoma Quality Award Winner

OHFA's Administrative Plan for the Section 8 Housing Voucher Program may be viewed at [www.ohfa.org](http://www.ohfa.org) or at its central office by appointment.

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**B. Summary Decision On Unit** (To be completed after form has b

<input type="checkbox"/> Pass	Number of Bedrooms for Purposes of the FMR or Payment Standard	Number c
<input type="checkbox"/> Fail		
<input type="checkbox"/> Inconclusive		

**Inspection Checklist**

Item No.		Yes Pass	No Fail
<b>1. Living Room</b>			
1.1	Living Room Present		
1.2	Electricity		
1.3	Electrical Hazards		
1.4	Security		



## Preparing for Initial Housing Inspections

Housing units scheduled for initial inspections must be move-in ready when OHFA inspectors arrive to conduct the inspection. OHFA does not conduct pre-inspections or “make-ready” inspections.

Conditions such as sheet rock and plaster not being applied to walls leaving exposed studs, unfinished flooring, missing light fixtures, interior doors not installed, excessive amounts of debris, and maintenance crews and/or individuals in the unit making extensive repairs while the inspection is being conducted are not acceptable.

If any of these conditions are present when an OHFA inspector arrives, the inspector may cancel the inspection and require it be rescheduled.

OHFA agents are trained to be very consistent in the items that they cite from inspection to inspection. The inspection criteria does not change from inspection to inspection or from agent to agent.

Landlords are encouraged to use the HUD Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspection Checklist as a guide when preparing a unit for inspection.

The checklist can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/HQSchecklist> or in OHFA's Briefing Book at [www.ohfa.org](http://www.ohfa.org) under the Renters & Landlords tab.

## OHFA Given Authority to Conduct Inspections Every Two Years

OHFA's Board of Trustees recently approved a policy change that will allow OHFA to conduct Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspections every two years instead of annually.

This change will be implemented January 1, 2015.

OHFA maintains the right to conduct annual HQS inspections for properties it deems necessary.

OHFA will also continue to conduct HQS inspections for units that are reported to be in substandard condition.

## Winter Heating B

The Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS) provides seasonal assistance to low-income households to assist with winter heating bills, and to provide help for some families who have received utility cut-off notices.

In order to qualify for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LI-HEAP), households must meet certain income limits.

A person who participates or has family members who participate in

# “No Pets” Policies

## Must Be Waived for Persons With Disabilities

The Fair Housing Act requires all public and private housing providers to make reasonable accommodations in their rules, policies, practices, and services when needed to provide persons with disabilities an equal opportunity to use or enjoy a dwelling. This includes waiving “no-pets” policies for persons with disabilities.

A HUD notice states, “An assistance animal is not a pet. It is an animal that works, provides assistance, or performs tasks for the benefit of a person with a

disability, or provides emotional support that alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person’s disability.”

Assistance animals are not limited to dogs alone and may sometimes be referred to as service animals or support animals.

The Fair Housing Act makes it illegal for landlords to do the following:

- refuse to rent to tenants with assistance animals
- ignore requests for reasonable accommodations
- evict tenants solely for having assistance animals

Individuals who believe they have

been denied a reasonable accommodation request may file a complaint by contacting HUD’s Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at (800) 669-9777 (voice) or (800) 927-9275 (TTY).

Housing discrimination complaints may also be filed by going to [www.hud.gov/fairhousing](http://www.hud.gov/fairhousing).



## REUNITED... [CONTINUED]

“We can pursue things like normal people. The housing really helps with that and helps make us feel like a normal family again,” she said.

Robin’s 16-year old son talked about the family’s mantra to “Finish what you start.”

Robin upheld that phrase when she graduated with honors in May from Rose State College with an Associates of Arts degree in Native American Studies. She will continue to pursue a bachelor’s degree in the same field.

Wanting to raise her family’s income level, Robin secured a job as a phlebotomist for Integris Regional, where she will work while attending school.

Robin envisions a bright future for her family—made possible with education, a dedication to maintaining her sobriety, and having a home for her children.

“What do you have to live for as a mother or as a parent if you don’t have your children?” Robin said. “Your life just crumbles. Your motivation for getting out of bed just comes to a stop.”

### Changes to Phone Number, Email & Mailing Address

Please immediately notify OHFA in writing every time your telephone number, email or mailing address changes.

### Housing Assistance Payment Line

Report concerns or questions regarding rental assistance payments to (405) 848-1144, Ext. 2898. Leave a detailed message and a phone number where you can be reached.

### Listing of Available Rental Properties

Visit <http://ohfa.gosection8.com> to view or list available units for free or call (866) 466-7328.

### Field Agents

- |                                           |                                             |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| • Chris Anderson<br><i>Floater Agent</i>  | • Philippe Jamet<br><i>Floater Agent</i>    |
| • Luke Brooks<br><i>East Oklahoma</i>     | • Steve Jett<br><i>East Oklahoma</i>        |
| • Senna Franklin<br><i>Floater Agent</i>  | • Sandy Lindsley<br><i>East &amp; NE OK</i> |
| • Christina Hines<br><i>Floater Agent</i> | • Debbie Mauldin<br><i>Floater Agent</i>    |
| • Jack Howell<br><i>East Oklahoma</i>     | • Shannon Ogle<br><i>SE Oklahoma</i>        |
| • Gary Kessinger<br><i>SW Oklahoma</i>    | • Dodie Pool<br><i>Floater Agent</i>        |
| • Corey King<br><i>Floater Agent</i>      | • Shawnta Ward<br><i>Floater Agent</i>      |
| • Rhonda Murrell<br><i>Floater Agent</i>  | • Judi Wright<br><i>Floater Agent</i>       |



## Bill Assistance

certain other benefit programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or certain needs-tested veterans benefits may be automatically eligible.

The application period for LIHEAP begins December 9. To apply for this program, visit your local county DHS office or call (405) 521-3444 or (866) 411-1877.

## Important Dates

### 2014-2015 Holidays (Offices Closed)

November 11, Veterans Day  
November 27 & 28, Thanksgiving  
December 24 & 25, Christmas  
January 1, New Year's Day  
January 19, MLK, Jr. Day  
February 16, Presidents Day  
May 25, Memorial Day

### 2014 Landlord Meetings

November 6 - Oklahoma City  
November 13 - Tulsa  
November 20 - Lawton

### 2014-2015 Rental Assistance Trainings (Staff Unavailable)

December 4, March 5 & June 4

### 2014-2015 Family Self-Sufficiency/ Homebuyer Education Classes

December 6, March 28, June 27, September 19 & December 5

### 2014-2015 Resident Advisory Board Meetings

November 17, February 27, May 29 & August 28

### 2015 Program Coordinating Committee Meetings

January 30, April 24, July 31 & October 30



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## SEE WHAT'S INSIDE!



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**"No Pets" Policies Must Be Waived for Persons With Disabilities**

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## Cold Weather Tips for Your Home



Check for drafts around windows and doors. If you feel a draft, ask your landlord to caulk or install weather stripping.

Leave water dripping if temperatures fall to freezing or below to help prevent pipes from freezing.



## Landlord Takes Service-Oriented Approach to His Role

As a landlord, "I'm providing a service," said Brian Walz, owner of BMG Property, LLC. Brian rents houses to 20 voucher holders in OHFA's Section 8 Program.

"The whole point is to make them happy," he added.

For six years, Brian has purchased and fixed up properties to rent.

"I enjoy buying ugly ones and fixing it up and having someone come in and say, 'This is really nice!'" Brian said.

Based on what he knows, he would

share these tips with newer landlords:

- *If they call, call them back.*
- *Listen, if they've got an issue.*
- *If it's broken, you fix it.*
- *Keep them happy so they don't move.*
- *Watch out what neighborhood you buy in.*
- *Screen your tenants.*
- *Take care of your properties.*
- *Buy right and don't overpay.*
- *Be remembered in a good light.*



**Brian Walz strives to make his tenants happy.**

P4