

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER POLICIES & PROCEDURES

BACKGROUND

The Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program is a federally funded program administered by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) that provides rental assistance to help eligible, low-income households pay their rent. MSHDA's HCV program reserves a portion of vouchers for households experiencing homelessness and allocates these through a separate HCV Homeless Preference (HP) Waitlist.

MSHDA mandates that this HP waitlist is managed by the coordinated entry lead agency, which is the Coordinated Assessment Model (CAM) for Detroit. In this role, CAM places people onto the HCV waitlist portal for MSHDA, completes recertification to verify a household's homeless status while on the waitlist, and communicates when households have been pulled from the waitlist.

TERMS

Homeless: For HCV HP Waitlist, household must meet the Categories 1 (literally homeless) or 4 (fleeing from domestic violence) of the [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\) definition of homelessness](#)¹, be receiving Rapid Re-Housing financial assistance, or be receiving Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA).

Household: A general term for any configuration of household members, including single adults and families with children.

Rapid Re-Housing (RRH): Time-limited rental assistance and supportive services meant to be delivered as a light-touch and tailored to meet the needs of each household.

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https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/HomelessDefinition_RecordkeepingRequirementsandCriteria.pdf

SPDAT or Full SPDAT: The Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT) was developed as an in-depth assessment tool for frontline workers that work with homeless clients to prioritize which of those clients should receive assistance first.

VI-SPDAT: The Vulnerability Index- Service Prioritization Decision Assistant Tool is pre-screening tool that uses a brief survey to determine acuity and prioritization when providing assistance to homeless and at-risk of homelessness persons.

Housing Agent: A Housing Agent is contracted by MSHDA to administer HCVs.

HCV Pre-Application: This pre-application is completed to add households to the waitlist. The full application is completed later once the household is pulled from the waitlist.

Recertification: MSHDA requires all households on the waitlist to verify their homeless status every 120 days through a recertification process. Households not recertified are removed from the waitlist. Households are eligible recertify after 90 days, giving households 30 days to recertify by the 120 day deadline.

Pull: When vouchers are available, households are “pulled” from the waitlist and are required to submit an application packet and attend a briefing before receiving the voucher.

Briefing: All pulled households must attend a briefing to learn about the voucher and complete next steps.

Lease Up: This occurs when a household is able to successfully find housing that meets HCV criteria and has signed a lease.

CAM Liaison: Homeless service provider staff that serve as primary point of contact for CAM and relay information learned through subcommittee meetings and other CAM Liaison communications to other staff at their agency.

ELIGIBILITY & RESOURCE PRIORITIZATION

Eligibility for a homeless preference HCV includes:

- Households that meet the Category 1 (literally homeless) or Category 4 (fleeing/attempting to flee from domestic violence) of the federal definition of homelessness; or
- Households receiving Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) financial assistance; or
- Households receiving Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA); AND
- Meet local prioritization criteria (below)

For more information about eligibility, visit the [MSHDA Homeless Preference Policy and Procedures manual](#).

The Detroit coordinated entry system uses the common assessment tool the VI-SPDAT to determine vulnerabilities and prioritize resources to those most in need. The tool will recommend the level of housing intervention, such as RRH or Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH), (i.e. permanent rental assistance and supportive services). In Detroit, HCV resources are prioritized for the following populations:

- Households scoring in the Acuity Group 2 or Acuity Group 3 range on the VI-SPDAT or Full SPDAT

HCV PROCESS OVERVIEW

1. **Pre-Application:** Households scoring in the Acuity Group 2 or 3 range complete an HCV pre-application to be entered onto the HCV HP Waitlist.
2. **Prepare for Lease Up:** Before a pull occurs, households and service providers should collect required documents and begin the housing search to secure housing that meets HCV criteria and passes HQS inspection.
3. **Recertification:** To remain on the waitlist, households must recertify their homeless status every 90-120 days. Households not recertified by day 120 are removed from the waitlist by MSHDA.
4. **HCV Pull:** MSHDA and Housing Agents pull names from the HP HCV Waitlist
5. **Initial Request for Verification:** Households receive an "Initial Request for Verification" packet to inform them that they have been pulled from the waitlist and next steps to complete. Required paperwork must be submitted to MSHDA by the due date listed in the packet (usually within 10 days of pull, not when packet is received).
6. **Briefing:** Households attend a briefing to learn next steps to leasing up within 60 days of briefing. Briefings can take a few hours and can be held individually or in groups.
7. **Lease Up:** If they have not already done so, households find and secure housing that meets HCV criteria and passes HQS inspection.

HCV Process

1 apply

*app submitted by
CAM staff*



3 pull!



5 briefing &
voucher



*if needed, shelter
submits request for
security deposit funds*

*10 days
MSDHA send's paperwork*

*voucher valid for
60 days*

*recert every 90 days
removed from waitlist if not
recertified by 120 days*

*client must return
paperwork to MSHDA within
10 days*

2 recert

*if client still in shelter,
VDH submitted to
camdetroit@swsot.org
or dropped off at HRC*



4 paperwork



6 lease up



1. PRE-APPLICATION

Completing a pre-application is an immediate priority upon entry into the homelessness response system

Eligible households work with providers to complete an HCV pre-application. This creates an account with MSHDA and adds the household to the HCV HP Waitlist.

Depending on where the client is being served, CAM Navigation staff, Street Outreach staff, or RRH/TH case managers will work with the household to complete the pre-application.

Pre-application process is as follows:

1. CAM Navigation Staff or Street Outreach staff complete an HCV pre-application with eligible clients; RRH/TH providers complete as needed
2. CAM Administrative Staff enters the pre-application into the MSHDA portal and enters confirmation number and recertification date into HMIS
3. Clients create an account with MSHDA within 2 weeks after their pre-application is submitted.
 - a. Registration page: <https://mshda.myhousing.com/Account/Login>
 - b. In order to create an account to check their status, client will need:
 - Date of birth
 - Social Security Number (SNN)
 - HCV confirmation number

Shelter Clients

Once households are on the HCV waitlist, shelter providers are responsible for the following:

1. Provide household with their confirmation number and help clients create an account in the portal.
2. Ensure that clients update the portal with any address or contact information changes. *This is crucial as this is how MSHDA or a Housing Agent will contact the household if they are pulled.*
3. Help the client learn how to navigate the portal.
4. Recertification: Provide a Verification of Homelessness (VOH) to CAM as outlined on page 9.
5. Refer to Addendum A for further information about HCV case manager lead.

RRH/Transitional Housing Clients

RRH/TH clients may need help applying for an HCV or with recertifying depending on where they are in the process. Refer to Addendum A for further information about HCV case manager lead.

RRH/TH case managers can follow the following steps as soon as they receive a RRH/TH referral:

Reminder: This information is included in the CAM referral email

1. Verify household is on the HCV waitlist.

➤ If on the waitlist:

1. Provide households with their confirmation number and help clients create an account in the portal.
2. Ensure that clients update the portal with any address or contact information changes. *This is crucial as this is how MSHDA or a Housing Agent will contact the household if they are pulled.*
3. Help the client learn how to navigate the portal.
4. Recertification: Provide a Verification of Homelessness (VOH) to CAM as outlined on page 9.

➤ If NOT on the waitlist:

Complete and Submit a Pre-Application: If a household is not on the HCV waitlist, meet with the household in person to complete an application with the household immediately.

1. Ensure pre-application is completed properly. **Make sure to complete the supplemental contact information with your agency information.** This guarantees that your agency also receives critical pull information.
2. Submit complete and accurate HCV pre-application to CAM (email to camdetroit@swsol.org)
3. Teach applicant how to use and update information on the portal

2. PREPARE FOR LEASE UP:

Whether a household is in shelter or receiving RRH or TH, the goal for any provider is to assist the household end their homelessness by finding stable, safe, and affordable housing.

With this in mind, providers should assist households in the housing search process and with obtaining required documents in the event of an HCV pull.

Housing Search

Providers should assist household with their housing search that will lead to an end of their homelessness. Keeping in mind that households receiving RRH/TH could be pulled for an HCV, providers should help households:

- Find housing that will accept a voucher, meet Rent Reasonableness, and pass Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspection.
- Understand budgeting, affordability, housing needs, priorities (e.g. near child's school) and other decision-points related to a housing search
- Have conversations about property maintenance and housekeeping to determine a need for skill development in these areas

Is it important to have regular check-ins once housing is secure to ensure that the tenant would want to stay in the rental property if pulled for an HCV. This will help to prepare the household and the RRH case manager in the event that they would not want to continue in current housing.

Gather Required HCV Documents:

In anticipation of an HCV pull, shelter and RRH/TH providers should be assisting households in the gathering of required documentation. *This includes devising a plan with the client to determine any barriers, such as fees.*

- A targeted conversation will help to know where documents are located and if there are any fees or barriers to obtaining the documents. Help your clients to determine a plan and timeframe for gathering documents.
- Ensure *legible* copies of required documentation

Required documentation is outlined below and can be found in the most recent [MSHDA Admin Plan](#).

A. Verification of Legal Identity is required for all family members

Adults

- Certificate of birth
- Naturalization papers
- Current, valid driver's license or State ID
- Church issued baptismal certificate
- U.S. military discharge (DD 214)
- U.S. passport

Children

- Certificate of birth
- Adoption papers
- Department of Human Services ID
- Custody Agreement
- Affidavit of Parentage

TIP: Begin with birth certificates as this can be a lengthy process

B. Proof of Age is required for all family members (adults and children)

Listed in order of preference:

- A birth certificate or other official record of birth
- For elderly individuals, an original document that provides evidence of the receipt of social security retirement benefits is acceptable, if the individual's date of birth is on the document.

If neither of the above documents can be provided, one of the following documents can be accepted:

- Driver's license or State ID, if the individual's birth year is on the document
- School records, if the individual's birth year is on the document

C. Proof of Social Security number is required for all family members (adults and children)

Listed in order of preference:

- An original SSN card issued by the Social Security Administration (SSA)
- An original SSA-issued document which contains the name and SSN of the individual
- An original document issued by a federal, state, or local government agency which contains the name, SSN, and other identifying information of the individual

D. Proof of Residency is required by head of household, spouse, or co-head

Proof that the head of household, spouse, or co-head currently lives in the County:

- A copy of a valid driver's license which includes a current address
- A copy of a valid state ID card which includes a current address
- A copy of a valid Medicaid card which includes a current address
- A valid Social Security printout letter which includes a current address
- A copy of a valid voter's registration card which includes a current address
- A letter from the Homeless Shelter, HARA, or Lead Agency indicating residency

Proof that the head of household, spouse, or co-head currently works in the County:

- A letter from the employer stating the applicant is employed in the County.
- A letter from the employer stating the applicant will be employed in the County. A start date for employment must be within 60 calendar days of the date of application.
- A copy of a valid paycheck stub with the employer's address showing the business is located in the County. The paycheck stub must be dated within 60 calendar days of the date of application.

3. RECERTIFICATION

All households on the HCV HP waitlist are eligible to recertify their homelessness every 90 days. **Both shelter and RRH/TH providers are responsible for submitting a Verification of Homelessness (VOH) to CAM so they can complete the recertification process.**

If a household does not recertify within 120 days, MSHDA removes them from the waitlist, impacting their access to this critical resource.

By the 20th of each month, CAM staff determines which pre-applications are set to expire in the following month and sends a password-protected list of clients to all CAM Liaisons at each agency (example of document below). *Shelter and RRH/TH providers are expected to find their clients on the document and submit a current Verification of Homelessness (VOH) to CAM by the date listed in the spreadsheet.*

HMIS #	Last Name	First Name	Current (or most recent) Agency	Date SWS needs to receive VOH in order to remain on waitlist
123456	Doe	Jane	ABC Agency	5/2/2019
1234567	Smith	John	XYZ Agency	5/24/2019

Additionally, providers can also find this date in HMIS as indicated below.

Indicates date application was submitted in portal.

Housing Voucher Information							
	Start Date *	End Date	Type of Housing Voucher	Date Application Submitted	Agency Submitting the Application	Detroit Housing Commission Date of Briefing	Housing Choice Voucher Confirmation Number
	02/12/2018	06/09/2018	Housing Choice Voucher	02/09/2018	CAM		0270400927347245

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Client will be removed from the waitlist by MSHDA if clients are not recertified by this date

In order to recertify, a current VOH dated by the date included in the spreadsheet must be submitted to CAM. The VOH can be:

- E-mailed to camdetroit@swsol.org- preferred method
- Delivered to Housing Resource Center at 1600 Porter St. (building may not be open due to COVID-19, check before dropping off documents)

When VOH is received, CAM administrative staff recertify client in the MSHDA portal. The recertification date is then updated in HMIS so service providers can verify it was completed within 2 business days after recertification was completed.

It is ultimately the case manager's responsibility to ensure a timely recertification. Please be vigilant about due dates for your clients!

In the event that a case manager is recertifying the last day of the 120 day deadline, CAM should be contacted immediately so they know to rush the recertification. Because CAM sends notice of recertification 30 days before the 120 day deadline, this situation should be extremely rare.

4. HCV PULL

When vouchers are available, households are "pulled" from the waitlist by the Housing Agents that hold the available vouchers. This section reviews what happens once a pull occurs.

Pull Notifications

When a Household is pulled from the HCV HP Waitlist, MSHDA and the Housing Agents notifies CAM and the household. CAM will receive the information via email that will be shared with providers as soon as possible within 2 business days. The household will be mailed a MSHDA "Initial Request for Verification" packet, which contains important information that needs to be completed by the due date listed in the packet (typically within 10 days of the pull).

The packet is sent to the address listed in the pre-application or the address that was updated in the portal. This is why it is critical for clients to update their contact information in the portal.

Once notified, CAM staff look up each person in HMIS to document current (or most recent) provider. CAM staff then distribute the list of clients to all CAM Liaisons within 2 business days of the notification being received from MSHDA.

The pull list and information sent by CAM follows the format below:

HMIS #	First Name	Last Name	Current (or most recent) Agency	Address Listed on Pre-Application

This column will include the agency the client is currently working with or was most recently working with (according to HMIS)

This column will include the address the client listed on the pre-application (unless it has since been updated in their MSHDA portal account)

Once notified, shelter and RRH/TH providers:

1. Review the pull list
2. Check the address listed in the portal and tell the client where the paperwork was sent. **If the application was sent to a previous shelter, call the shelter and get application from them. If it was sent to a different previous location, contact the Housing Agent and give them an updated address. They are willing to change the location or resend to accommodate this change.**
3. Immediately contact their clients to alert them of a mailing from MSHDA that is time-sensitive.
4. **If the packet is not received within 7 days of pull, case managers should contact the Housing Agent and request a new packet (pick up in person if timing is urgent).**

INITIAL REQUEST FOR VERIFICATION

Once households receive the Initial Request for Verification (also referred to as the HCV packet), they must submit all paperwork (below) and submit it to MSHDA by the deadline (typically within 10 business days of pull). *This is critical since it allows MSHDA to determine whether or not the client is eligible for a briefing.*

The following will be sent to households depending on their status:

Form	MSDHA #	Sent	Due
Notice of Selection	MSDHA 1634c	Within 2 business days of pull	N/A
Initial Request for Verification	MSDHA 1791	Within 10 business days of pull	Within 10 business days
Request for Additional Required Docs	MSDHA 53a	After MSDHA 1791 is received	Within 10 business days
Notice of Briefing	MSDHA 144	Typically within 10 business days of eligibility determination	N/A

Program Denial Notice	MSDHA 1634d	If applicant doesn't respond	N/A
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Once packet is received, shelter and RRH/TH providers:

1. Complete the packet with the household in person and mail it in for the household.
2. **5 business days after documents are submitted, verify that Housing Agents received paperwork and check in on the following:**
 - a. **Any missing or incomplete paperwork**
 - b. **If money is owed**
 - c. **If there is a criminal history that can be addressed**
3. If case managers do not see a briefing date, follow up with the client and Housing Agent to determine the reason, such as missing documents.
4. Notify households of any denial reasons and that they have a right to an informal review process should they be denied.
5. If household is housed, visit unit to determine if it will pass HQS Inspection and determine if it meets required rent reasonableness.

DENIALS

If an applicant receives a Program Denial (MSHDA 1634d) for any of the below reasons, they may request an informal review **within 15 days** of the date on the Program Denial Notice.

Program Denial Reasons:

- Unable to contact by mail
- Applicant did not respond to the MSHDA 1791, Request for Initial Verification
- Household income exceeds the HCV Program's [annual gross income limit](#)
- Prohibited criminal activity
- No documentation of residency

Please note, RRH case managers need a copy of denials for their case files. This also helps with data collection as it relates to denials.

5. BRIEFING

Once MSHDA determines if household is eligible for a briefing, a Notice of Briefing will be sent to households within 10 business days of eligibility determination (this may vary by Housing Agent).

Client *and* case manager attend scheduled briefing and client receives:

- **Voucher**

- Issued for 60 days
- One 30-day extension may be granted.
- **Additional program forms & notifications:**
 - Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) to begin housing search (explained below)

Extension process varies by Housing Agent-communication is key!

Case managers should talk to their clients about taking initiative and checking in with Housing Agents when they have not received their briefing notification.

Case manager should be proactive and talk to the landlord to determine if tenant can stay in the unit, as well as the tenant to see if they would like to continue in the unit. The case manager or inspector can ensure the unit will pass HQS. If the unit is not eligible or household has not found housing yet, the household with the case manager's assistance needs to locate housing immediately.

Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) or Landlord Packet

Case managers should be available to assist landlords in completing required landlord packet and facilitate the inspection if necessary. **This packet is time-sensitive (due within 60 days of briefing) and the packet will be sent back if something is not filled out correctly.**

- Applicant submits all paperwork to determine if unit is eligible
- Housing agent will:
 - Determine Rent Reasonableness & Affordability
 - Complete HQS Inspection (generally within 15 business days of completed RFTA)
 - If the unit doesn't pass inspection – Housing Agent determines date for repairs, not to exceed 30 days
 - Sign Housing Assistance Payment Contact

Unit Inspection

Case managers should monitor inspection proceedings to see if it has passed or failed, and be informed of why a unit may have failed inspection.

1. If a unit passes inspection, a copy of the Pass Report is needed for case manager files.
2. If a unit fails inspection, case managers should:

- a. Read the deficiency report
- b. Determine if landlord is willing to correct deficiencies
- c. Determine if deficiencies are evidence of larger issues
- d. Assist with finding a new unit if the issues cannot be resolved

Case managers can check if property taxes are being paid as an indicator of a reliable landlord.

Voucher “Clock”

Vouchers have to be leased up 60 days from briefing, however the “clock” can be paused or restarted for a number of factors as follows:

- Voucher expiration date is given at briefing (60 days from briefing)
- The 60 day “clock” is paused when a RFTA is submitted and when a unit is scheduled for inspection.
 - The clock remains paused if anything is missing or incorrect from the RFTA and corrections are being made
 - If the property fails inspection, landlords have 30 days to make repairs
- If landlord does not make needed repairs or the unit does not meet rent reasonableness, then the clock for resets for the time the tenant had left. A new RFTA will need to be completed.

Due to many factors that can affect the 60 day “clock,” it is key to communicate with the Housing agent to clarify how much time a client has left to lease up. A request for a 30 day extension may be needed.

6. LEASE-UP

After RFTA process and unit is determined eligible:

- Household signs a lease with the landlord
- Housing Agent executes a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract with landlord or owner

Security Deposit

Households that are literally homeless and need a security deposit are eligible for one through RRH funds. Shelter and Outreach providers can request a security deposit for eligible households via this [link](#).

Continued Enrollment in RRH Case Management

RRH clients can still receive case management, if needed, after RRH rental assistance ends and the HCV is now subsidizing the rent. As with all individual plans of service, case managers should work with the client to determine the level of support needed after HCV lease up. Providers are able to provide case management services only as long as the client has not exceeded the length of time available through their RRH funding. Providers are responsible for tracking the number of months of assistance to ensure regulatory compliance. It is critical that households receive the support they need to be successfully in their HCV unit. Case managers should connect clients to behavioral health and workforce development services, if needed.

Addendum A

Homeless Preference HCV Procedure for Identifying Key Point of Contact

Effective April 6, 2021 in response to the 2021 HCV surge. This procedure will be revisited as needed.

When a household has already been pulled from the HCV waitlist at the time they are referred to a RRH/TH provider, the RRH/TH provider will become the lead to guide that household through the HCV process after confirming eligibility for RRH/TH. As a reminder, RRH providers have 30 days to determine eligibility. The following further describes this process:

- If, within 30 days, the household's referral is marked as "accepted" and/or there is a RRH/TH program entry in HMIS for the household, the RRH or TH provider will become the lead and will coordinate with SO, ES, and/or CAM staff as necessary.
- If, after 30 days, the household's referral is marked as "declined" in HMIS, CAM staff will know that the household is ineligible for RRH and the SO, ES, TH, and/or CAM staff will continue as the lead to guide the household through the HCV process.
- If, after 30 days, there is no outcome information (ie. referral outcome or program entry) in HMIS for the household, CAM staff will assume the household is eligible for RRH/TH and the RRH/TH provider will become the lead, coordinating with SO, ES, and/or CAM staff as necessary.

CAM staff will be monitoring this information in HMIS; any questions can be directed to camdetroit@swsol.org.

Definitions

Lead (as used in this document): main point of contact for reps from CAM and MSHDA; communicate with staff from shelter, SO, or CAM to understand the household's current HCV status and steps that still need to be completed; assist household with remaining steps in HCV process

SO: Street Outreach

ES: Emergency Shelter

TH: Transitional Housing

RRH: Rapid Re-Housing