

NEWSLETTER



Letter from the Executive Director

Happy Summer! As we at the Housing Authority of Washington County welcome the vibrant season of summer, I am filled with optimism and excitement for the opportunities that lie ahead. This time of renewal and growth is the perfect moment to reflect on our achievements and set our sights on the future. Our collective efforts have

brought us to new heights, and I am confident that together, we will continue to thrive and innovate.

The Housing Authority of Washington County offers a variety of programs and services which are reflected through our Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8). HAWC also provides property management and maintenance for several communities and single-family homes throughout Washington County. Check out the article below to read more about the specific programs offered through our HCV programs.

Exciting News! Construction is underway at our new central office in Williamsport, Maryland. This will be the new administrative location to serve all residents in Washington County. We plan to be in the new office this time next year and will be hosting a community Open House. Stay tuned for updates as construction progresses.

On a final note, you may have noticed a couple of new faces at the agency. Check out some new and familiar faces of our HCV team.

Be safe.

Morgan Gower, Executive Director

I N D E X

Pg. 2 HCV Program Reminders

Pg. 3 Reasonable Accommodations & Interims

Pg. 4 Family Self Sufficiency and Portability

Pg. 5 HOTMA: What you need to know

Pg. 6 Meet Our Staff

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER

PROGRAM REMINDERS

- Your annual recertification is completed online via your RentCafe resident portal, located on our website: www.hawcmd.org. You will receive an email and letter in the mail notifying you that it is time to recertify.
- You must notify our office of any changes in family composition. All new members must be screened and approved by both HAWC and your landlord prior to allowing them to move in.
- You must report changes in household income to our office within 14 days. Failure to do so may result in a voucher violation or termination.
- Your unit must pass the NSPIRE inspection (previously the HQS Inspection) at least every 2 years. It is both you and your landlord's responsibility to keep your unit in a clean, safe, and habitable condition. Inspections are completed by our contractors with the Hagerstown Housing Authority.
- You are required to provide accurate and complete information to the Housing Authority. Failure to provide verification documents and report changes can lead to termination of assistance.

RECERTIFICATION

The recertification requested by the HCV Department is a requirement in receiving federal funded rental assistance. We are available in office for appointments to assist you in completing this online. There is a deadline for when recertifications must be completed. Please don't delay. When you are asked to provide any missing paperwork, please respond as soon as possible to avoid a potential voucher violation or termination.

Call 301-791-3168 x 206
for assistance!



PROPERTY MANAGEMENT



HAWC's Property Management department oversees six senior apartment communities and one mixed-age community.



There are 30 single-family scattered homes throughout Washington County.

For any comments, questions, or concerns regarding the Property Management and Maintenance departments, please contact Sandra Lunsford at 301-791-3168 x 226.

RA & INTERIMS

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

Requesting a Reasonable
ACCOMMODATION



A reasonable accommodation is an adjustment made to a rule, policy, or service that allows a person with a disability to have equal access to the HCV program. Federal regulations stipulate that requests for accommodations will be considered if they do not create an “undue financial and administrative burden” for the Public Housing Authority, or result in a “fundamental alteration” in the nature of the program or service offered.

For more information on Reasonable Accommodations, please contact Allison Palmer at 301-791-3168 x 205



INTERIMS

Started or lost a job? Want to add a significant other to your voucher household? Need to report a change in income, family composition, or other circumstance? Submit the information directly on your RentCafe resident portal! By clicking the “Report a Change” icon. You can upload the required verification documents directly on the portal!



Report a Change

Interims submitted with the required verification documents prior to the 20th of the month will be processed for the following month. As always, give us a call to make an appointment! 301-791-3168 x 206

FSS & PORTS

FAMILY SELF SUFFICIENCY (FSS)

Our FSS Program is a 5-year, low-level case management program aimed at helping families on the HCV program increase job skills, obtain employment, learn financial literacy and become free of welfare assistance programs. Utilizing a solution-focused theory, we assist clients in creating goals for their family. We link them to community resources and provide advocacy, coaching, and support.

As employment is obtained or earnings increase, monthly deposits are placed in an escrow account held by HAWC. When the family completes the goals of their contract, the escrow is paid to the family. Families can use the money as they please; some graduates have purchased a new vehicle, saved for their children's education, and even used the funds as a down payment on their own home.



Interested or want to know more information? Please reach out to Stephanie San Nicolas at 301.791.3168 ext. 208 or by email at ssannicolas@hawcmd.org.



PORTABILITY

Looking to re-locate? Did you know that you can transfer or what we call "Port" your voucher to another jurisdiction? It is simple, we just need some information to complete this!



Port-in to HAWC:

- Provide a copy of your notice of intent to vacate form. This form must include your anticipated move-out date with signatures from both you and your landlord.
- Once we receive the completed form from, we will issue you a new voucher.

Port-out from HAWC to another Jurisdiction:

- Complete the Portability form.
 - Name of the Housing Authority you are looking to port to.
 - Contact, including name, phone number, email address and telephone and/or fax number.
 - Is this HA billing or absorbing vouchers?
 - What is the current payment standard for your voucher size.
- Sign the Portability form and return to your HAWC HCV Specialist.

HOTMA

HUD's new guidelines and what you need to know!

SUMMARY

"The Housing Opportunity through Modernization Act of 2016 (HOTMA). On July 29, 2016, HOTMA was signed into law. HOTMA makes numerous amendments to Section 3, 8 and 16 of the United States Housing Act of 1937, including significant changes to income calculations, net family assets and income reviews. The final rule became effective on January 1, 2024.

HOTMA has provided an array of changes to the way that PHA staff calculate your eligibility and review your income.

KEY POINTS

1. Assets & Real Property

- Can not have more than \$100,000 worth of net family assets.
 - These assets do not include retirement or life insurance accounts.
- Residents may not own property that is suitable for them to live in.
 - If you are listed as an owner of a property, please contact our staff to see if this rule applies to your situation.

2. Health, Medical and Childcare Deductions

- Medical Expenses:
 - Medical expense deduction rate has changed from 3% to 10%. Meaning that you had to spend over 3% of your income to qualify your medical expenses to be deducted from your income. You now have to spend more than 10% of your income to qualify your medical expenses. This may result in an increase in your tenant portion of rent.
- Childcare Expenses:
 - New rule adds a hardship exemption for families who still need childcare but are not in work or school. If you qualify, childcare expenses can continue to be deducted from your annual income calculation. Please contact our staff to discuss if your family may be eligible for this hardship.

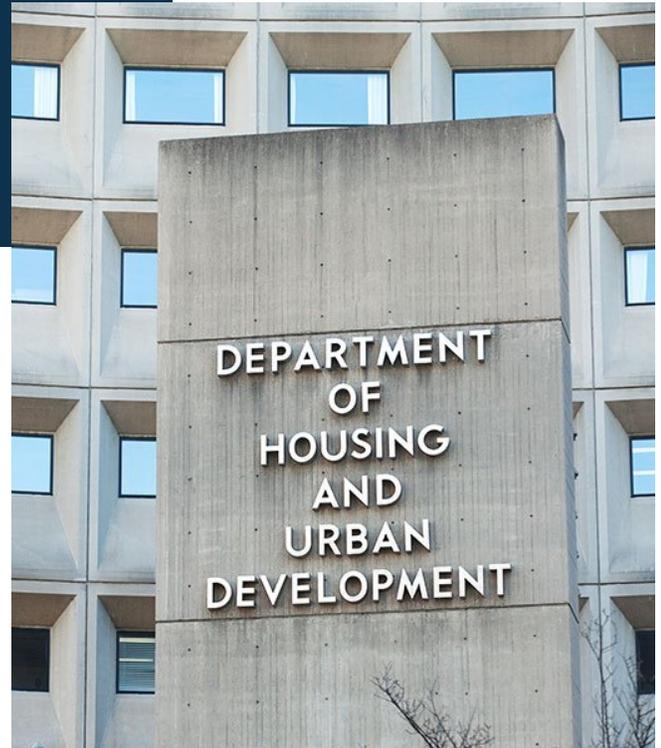
3. Income Calculations and Review

HOTMA has added definition and emphasis on both Earned income and Unearned income fields.

- Earned income
 - Money from a job; wages, salaries, tips or other payments.
 - Money you make from your business.
 - Money you earn as a day labor, seasonal work or as an independent contractor.
- Unearned income
 - Government benefits; TANF, Social Security or disability
 - Pension or annuities
 - Child Support Payments
 - Income from assets (stocks, bonds or other financial investments).

All changes to household composition, income, expenses or assets are required to be reported within 14 days of the change.

The PHA Staff will determine if the report meets the threshold of a change in the tenant portion rent. To report your changes, please login to your RentCafe portal or contact our staff to set up an in person appointment to complete the change.



MEET OUR HCV STAFF!

Allison Palmer, Director of Housing Stabilization



Allison has been with HAWC for 5 years. As a social worker, she is committed to empowering and advocating for others, including addressing the concerns of affordable housing in Washington County. As the program director, she's had the opportunity to infuse her leadership with core social work values, ensuring her team delivers services with empathy and a commitment to improving the lives of those they serve. With quite the zest for life, Allison enjoys reading, karaoke, and spending time outdoors with her family and spoiled dogs, Howie and Theodora.

Kendra Parker, HCV Manager



Kendra is a U.S. Navy Veteran with over 15 years of experience in the Public Housing industry. She brings with her a range of skill sets which include public housing eligibility, the Housing Choice Voucher Program and Housing Quality Standards. During her free time you can find Kendra exploring new destinations and immersing herself in different cultures. Traveling is one of her many passions.

Stephanie San Nicolas, HCV Specialist & FSS Coordinator



Steph, a native of Las Vegas, joined the HAWC team late 2023. She has several years experience working in different branches of social services and is passionate about serving the residents of Washington County. Since joining us, she has earned her Housing Choice Voucher Specialist Certificate along with her Family Self Sufficiency Coordinator Certificate. In her free time, she enjoys traveling to Florida to visit her granddaughter, exploring new restaurants and candle shopping.

Sierra Koontz, Client Services Coordinator



Sierra is a recent addition to our staff. Sierra believes that with a positive mindset and empathy, she can connect with people from all walks of life. Her past experience, as a foster care case manager and a Title I, School Family Liaison for WCPS, has led her to continue providing resources for her community. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her husband and being a boy mom. She thrives on competition, whether it's one of her sons' sporting events or a Pittsburgh Penguins hockey game.



STAY CONNECTED

HAWC STAFF

HCV DEPT:

- SIERRA KOONTZ, EXT 206
- KENDRA PARKER, EXT 223
- STEPHANIE SAN NICOLAS, EXT 208
- ALLISON PALMER, EXT 205

FINANCE:

- HOLLY BURCH, EXT 220

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT:

- SANDRA LUNSFORD, EXT 226
- MELANIE GOZORA, EXT 225
- CHRISTINA LEWIS, EXT 216

OFFICE CLOSURES

JUNETEETH- THURSDAY, JUNE 19, 2025

INDEPENDENCE DAY- FRIDAY, JULY 4, 2025

LABOR DAY- TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2025

THANKSGIVING DAY- THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2025

DAY AFTER THANKSGIVING- FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2025

CHRISTMAS EVE- WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2025

CHRISTMAS- THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2025

NEW YEAR'S EVE- WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2025

CONTACT HAWC



301-791-3168



HAWCMD.ORG



319 E ANTIETAM
STREET, 2ND FLOOR
HAGERSTOWN, MD



[Housing Authority of Washington County](https://www.hawc.org)

