**INTRODUCTION**

This chapter explains the briefing and voucher issuance process. When a family is determined to be eligible for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, the PHA must ensure that the family fully understands the way the program operates and the family’s obligations under the program. This is accomplished through both an oral briefing and provision of a briefing packet containing written documentation of information the family needs to know. Once the family is fully informed of the program’s requirements, the PHA issues the family a voucher. The voucher includes the unit size the family qualifies for based on the PHA’s subsidy standards, as well as the dates of issuance and expiration of the voucher. The voucher is the document that permits the family to begin its search for a unit and limits the amount of time the family has to successfully locate an acceptable unit.

These policies are contained in two parts:

Part I: Briefings and Family Obligations. This part details the program’s requirements for briefing families orally, and for providing written materials describing the program and its requirements. It includes a particular focus on the family’s obligations under the program.

Part II: Subsidy Standards and Voucher Issuance. This part discusses the PHA’s standards for determining how many bedrooms a family of a given composition qualifies for, which in turn affects the amount of subsidy the family can receive. It also discusses the policies that dictate how vouchers are issued, and how long families have to locate a unit.

**PART I: BRIEFINGS AND FAMILY OBLIGATIONS**

**5-I.A. OVERVIEW**

This section provides an overview of HUD-required briefings and family obligations under the voucher program. **No policy decisions are required.**

**5-I.B. BRIEFING [24 CFR 982.301]**

HUD requires that applicants attend a briefing, but allows the PHA discretion regarding some aspects of the process, such as whether briefings will be conducted individually or in groups, whether briefings will be conducted in-person or remotely, who must attend the briefing, and how to help families that have difficulty understanding the program’s requirements. This section addresses these areas of PHA discretion.

**Notification of Briefing**

🗹 **Decision Point: What will be the process for notifying families of their eligibility for assistance and invitation to attend a briefing? What information will be included in the notification?**

Things to Consider

* For administrative ease and consistency, the policies regarding notification and undeliverable notices should be consistent with similar policies elsewhere in the plan (e.g., eligibility interviews, reexaminations).
* The model plan policy does not specify whether briefings will be in-person, group briefing sessions, or remote briefing sessions to allow the PHA to offer any of these options in response to local, national, or PHA needs.
* If the briefing is to be conducted remotely, Notice PIH 2020-32 requires that the family receiving any relevant information and documents in advance so that the family has appropriate technological access to the remote briefing, and to give the PHA time to remove any technological barriers. For this reason, the default policy opts to include this information as part of the notification.

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

Families will be notified of their eligibility for assistance at the time they are invited to a briefing. The notice will be sent by first class mail and will also be sent by email if the family has provided a valid email address to the PHA.

The notice will advise the family of the type of briefing, who is required to be present at the briefing, and the date and time of the briefing. The notice will also inform the family of any additional requirements for in-person or remote briefings as addressed in relevant policy elsewhere in this section.

If the notice is returned by the post office with no forwarding address, the applicant will be denied, and their name will not be placed back on the waiting list. If the notice is returned by the post office with a forwarding address, the notice will be resent to the address indicated.

🞎 *Option 2: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

**In-Person Briefings**

🗹 **Decision Point: Will briefings be conducted individually or in groups?**

Things to Consider

* Families may be briefed individually or in a group setting. In determining which approach to take, PHAs may want to consider the amount of leasing activity that the PHA is experiencing, program size, jurisdiction size, family needs, and staffing levels (HCV GB p. 8-8). The PHA should also consider health and safety needs, as appropriate.

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

In-person briefings will generally be conducted in group meetings. At the family’s written request, the PHA may provide an individual briefing.

🞎 *Option 2: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

🗹 **Decision Point: Who is required to attend the briefing?**

# Things to Consider

* Generally, the head of household is required to attend the briefing. If the head of household is unable to attend, the PHA may approve another adult family member to attend the briefing.
* Some PHAs require that all adult household members attend the briefing, while other PHAs require attendance only by the head of household. (HCV GB p. 8-8).
* Requiring all adult family members to attend the briefing is the best guarantee that all family members are informed about PHA policies and program requirements, particularly family obligations and grounds for termination of assistance. There is some indication that when all adult members are successfully briefed, incidents of misreporting, fraud, and lease violations decrease.
* On the other hand, requiring all adult members to attend can create scheduling problems for the PHA and the family. It may be particularly problematic if one or more adult family members are working.
* Regardless of who is required to attend the briefing, PHAs may want to build exceptions into the policy (similar to the model plan language) in order to give the PHA maximum flexibility.

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

Generally, the head of household is required to attend the briefing. If the head of household is unable to attend, the PHA may approve another adult family member to attend the briefing.

🞎 *Option 2: Delete model plan language and substitute language as shown below.*

Generally, the head of household and spouse (or co-head) are required to attend the briefing. If the head, spouse or co-head are unable to attend, the PHA may waive this requirement as long as one of these persons attends the briefing.

🞎 *Option 3: Delete model plan language and substitute language as shown below.*

Generally, all adult family members are required to attend the briefing. If any adult member is unable to attend, the PHA may waive this requirement as long as the head, spouse or co-head attends the briefing.

🞎 *Option 4: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

🗹 **Decision Point: How will the PHA help applicant families that have difficulty understanding the briefing?**

# Things to Consider

* The PHA is under an obligation to ensure that families understand how the program works and what their obligations will be if they receive a subsidy. Therefore, the PHA must have policies in place to ensure that any family that needs help to understand the program obtains that assistance.
* The model plan states that briefings will be conducted in English, and that for limited English proficient (LEP) applicants identified in the PHA’s LEP Implementation Plan, the PHA will provide interpretation services in accordance with the PHA’s LEP plan. The LEP plan is not part of the model administrative plan. Therefore, PHAs that adopt the model language must ensure that they have an LEP plan that explains the interpretation services to be offered and the circumstances under which they will be provided.
* PHAs with significant numbers of non-English speakers, may want to consider offering briefings in other languages.

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

Families that attend group briefings and still have the need for individual assistance will be referred to an appropriate PHA staff person.

Briefings will be conducted in English. For limited English proficient (LEP) applicants, the PHA will provide interpretation services in accordance with the PHA’s LEP plan (See Chapter 2).

🞎 *Option 2: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

*Attendance*

🗹 **Decision Point: What policies will the PHA establish for scheduling briefings and failure to appear at briefings?**

Things to Consider

* For administrative ease and consistency, the policies regarding failure to appear at briefings should be consistent with similar policies elsewhere in the plan (e.g., eligibility interviews, reexaminations).

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

Applicants who fail to attend a scheduled in-person briefing will automatically be scheduled for another briefing. The PHA will notify the family of the date and time of the second scheduled briefing. Applicants who fail to attend twoscheduled briefings, without PHA approval, will be denied assistance (see Chapter 3).

🞎 *Option 2: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

**Remote Briefings [Notice PIH 2020-32]**

🗹 **Decision Point: Will the PHA conduct any briefings remotely? If so, will the PHA conduct all briefings remotely or conduct briefings remotely only in certain circumstances? Will the PHA consider conducting remote briefings upon request of the applicant for certain criteria?**

Things to Consider

* While many PHAs conduct applicant briefings in person, there is no explicit regulatory requirement that briefings be conducted in person.
* Advances in technology provide opportunities for families to participate in briefings remotely. Absent an applicant’s request for an in-person briefing, remote briefings may be conducted over the phone, via video conferencing, or through other virtual platforms. As such, the PHA has discretion as to when and whether to conduct remote briefings.
* The PHA also has the authority to require remote briefings in cases such as local, state, or federal physical distancing orders, natural disasters, or inclement weather. While the PHA is not required to conduct briefings remotely in these cases, conducting briefings this way may aid the PHA in continuing normal operations and providing required services to families.
* The PHA should also consider offering remote briefings outside of times of extraordinary circumstances upon request of the applicant for certain PHA-defined criteria. The model policy suggests that these criteria include reasonable accommodation, lack of transportation or childcare, and when applicants are concerned about exposure to health risks by attending an in-person briefing. The PHA may wish to add other criteria to this list and consider other requests on a case-by-case basis.

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

The PHA has the sole discretion to require that briefings be conducted remotely in case of local, state, or national physical distancing orders, and in cases of inclement weather or natural disaster. If the PHA schedules a remote briefing, the PHA will conduct a face-to-face briefing upon request of the applicant as a reasonable accommodation for a person with a disability if safety and health concerns can be reasonably addressed.

In addition, the PHA will conduct a briefing remotely upon request of the applicant as a reasonable accommodation for a person with a disability, if an applicant does not have childcare or transportation that would enable them to attend the briefing, or if the applicant believes an in-person briefing would create an undue health risk. The PHA will consider other reasonable requests for a remote briefing on a case-by-case basis.

🞎 *Option 2: Delete model plan language and substitute language as shown below.*

The PHA will not conduct remote briefings.

🞎 *Option 3: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

**Accessibility Requirements for Persons with Disabilities and LEP Individuals**

This section describes the requirements to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities and limited English Proficiency (LEP) as they relate to remote briefings. **No policy decisions are required.**

**Conducting Remote Briefings**

🗹 **Decision Point: How will the PHA conduct briefings remotely?**

Things to Consider

* If the PHA chooses not to conduct remote briefings, this section should be deleted.
* The PHA must ensure that the applicant has appropriate technological access in order to fully participate in the remote briefing. Notice PIH 2020-32 states the PHA should survey families participating in the remote briefing prior to the briefing to determine whether any technological barriers exist and to determine the resources to which families have access. This could mean asking whether the family has a computer, internet access, a phone, or a laptop, whether these items have cameras and microphones, and whether the family can go to a place with sufficient privacy and internet access.
* The PHA should attempt to resolve any identified technological barriers prior to the remote briefing. Section 6 of Notice PIH 2020-32 provides guidance on how to do so.
* Of the options presented in Notice PIH 2020-32, a voice-only or telephone option is the least preferrable due to challenges presented by the applicant being unable to view documents presented at the briefing and being unable to identify who is speaking during a phone call with multiple attendees. For this reason, the model policy states that the PHA will conduct remote briefings via videoconferencing when available, unless families are unable to adequately access the videoconferencing platform, in which case, telephone conferencing call-in will be used.
* In the event that the family still does not have proper technology access to allow them to fully participate, that is, if they cannot adequately access the videoconferencing platform or the telephone call-in, Notice PIH 2020-32 states that the remote briefing should be postponed or an in-person alternative must be provided. The model policy reflects this language.
* Further, login information and the briefing packet must be provided to the family prior to the remote briefing. This may present challenges since families may be unfamiliar with how to access the videoconferencing platform used by the PHA. The PHA should consider offering support to families around the time of each remote briefing to ensure that applicants are able to log into the videoconferencing system. The PHA should also consider that applicants may be unable to print the briefing packet prior to the briefing and should consider offering the briefing packet in paper form since applicants may be unable to read electronic documents on their phone or computer.
* The PHA must ensure that all electronic information stored or transmitted with respect to the briefing is secure per Notice PIH 2015-06, including personally identifiable information (PII). Also, keep in mind that for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP), materials may need to be provided in a translated format.
* Notice PIH 2020-32 also offers the following best practices that the PHA should consider when remote briefings are used:
  + The PHA should use other opportunities such as the annual reexamination to review voucher obligations with the family. Chapter 16 of the administrative includes this language.
  + The PHA should consider having PHA staff reach out to families by phone directly after the briefing to ensure that their questions have been answered.
  + PHAs that conduct annual recertifications by mail may want to consider the impact that remote briefings may have on families since the family will likely never meet face-to-face with anyone at the PHA. For these PHAs in particular, a follow-up phone call with the family may be appropriate.
* Notice PIH 2020-32 requires that the PHA provide remote briefing participants the opportunity to ask questions. The model policy also reflects this requirement.

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

At least 10 business days prior to scheduling the remote briefing, the PHA will provide written notification via first class mail and/or email to families participating in the briefing to advise of technological requirements and to request the family notify the PHA of any known barriers. If any family does not respond within five business days, or if the written notification is returned by the post office or the email is rejected, the PHA will contact the family by telephone to identify potential technological barriers and to determine which technology resources are accessible to the family. The PHA will resolve any barriers using the guidance in Section 6 of Notice PIH 2020-32, including offering the family the opportunity to attend an in-person briefing or have a one-on-one briefing over the phone, as appropriate.

The PHA will conduct remote briefings via a videoconferencing platform when available. If applicants are unable to adequately access the videoconferencing platform, the briefing will be conducted by telephone conferencing call-in. If the family is unable to adequately access the telephone conferencing call-in, the remote briefing will be postponed, and an in-person alternative or one-on-one briefing over the phone will be provided.

The PHA will provide login information and/or conferencing call-in information and an electronic copy of the briefing packet via email at least five business days before the briefing. The PHA will provide a paper copy of the briefing packet upon family request and may reschedule the briefing to allow adequate time for the family to receive the physical briefing packet.

The PHA will ensure that all electronic information stored or transmitted as part of the briefing meets the requirements for accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with LEP, and is secure, including ensuring personally identifiable information (PII) is protected.

The PHA will ensure that families who participate in remote briefings have the opportunity to ask questions as part of the briefing.

If families lose connectivity during any remote briefing or otherwise feel they were unable to access information presented during the briefing, the family may request a one-on-one briefing over the phone or in person with the PHA.

🞎 *Option 2: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

**Oral Briefing [24 CFR 982.301(a)]**

HUD requires all oral briefings to include certain topics, and specifies that other topics need to be discussed only if they are applicable. These are listed in the plan. **No policy decisions are required.**

**Briefing Packet [24 CFR 982.301(b); New HCV GB, *Housing Search and Leasing,* p. 7]**

This section lists items that must be included in the briefing packet. **No policy decisions are required.**

**Additional Items to Be Included in the Briefing Packet**

🗹 **Decision Point: What additional items, if any, should be included in the briefing packet?**

Things to Consider

* PHAs are required to give families information on how to fill out and file a housing discrimination complaint form. Because this form is a required document in the briefing packet, it is logical to also include these instructions in the briefing packet.
* As discussed in section 16-IX.C of the model administrative plan, HUD requires PHAs to provide notice to HCV participants of their rights under the Violence against Women Act (VAWA) and 24 CFR Part 5, Subpart L [24 CFR 5.2005(a)] at the time of admission and with all notices of denial and termination. While providing VAWA information at the time of briefing is not required under VAWA, as a best practice, the model policy includes this information.
* The OIG pamphlet “Is Fraud Worth It?” is listed as an additional item in order to be consistent with model plan policies in Chapter 14, Program Integrity. If you decide not to include this pamphlet as part of the briefing packet, the policies in Chapter 14 will also need to be amended.
* The same is true of “What You Should Know about EIV.” Notice PIH 2017-12 strongly encourages, but does not require, PHAs to educate applicants about the Enterprise Income Verification (EIV) system by providing them with a copy of this guide.
* PHAs may wish to include supplemental materials to help explain the program to participants and owners. These could include any or all of the items listed below:
* Summary of the items included in the briefing packet
* Brochures/materials to explain the housing choice voucher program to owners
* A copy of Form HUD-52641, Housing Assistance Payments Contract for the Housing Choice Voucher Program
* Explanation of rent reasonableness
* A description of any PHA policy on security deposits, if the PHA has one
* Information on service organizations and utility companies
* A list of units known to be available for rent, including units outside areas of low-income or minority concentration
* Explanation of any special programs offered by the PHA, such as FSS
* Checklist of items to consider before signing a lease
* Contact information for PHA staff, and/or local service organizations
* Requirements for notifying the PHA of any changes in income or family composition
* A list of items that commonly fail HQS/NSPIRE, as applicable
* The grounds on which the PHA may terminate assistance for a participant family because of family action or failure to act
* Information on how disability-related expenses are treated in the rent calculation

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

The PHA will provide the following additional materials in the briefing packet:

The grounds on which the PHA may terminate assistance for a participant family because of family action or failure to act

Requirements for notifying the PHA of any changes in income or family composition

Information on how to fill out and file a housing discrimination complaint form

The form HUD-5380, notice of occupancy rights, and the form HUD-5382, domestic violence certification form, which contain information on VAWA protections for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking

“Is Fraud Worth It?” (form HUD-1141-OIG), which explains the types of actions a family must avoid and the penalties for program abuse

“What You Should Know about EIV,” a guide to the Enterprise Income Verification (EIV) system published by HUD as an attachment to Notice PIH 2017-12

🞎 *Option 2: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

**5-I.C. FAMILY OBLIGATIONS**

**Time Frames for Reporting Changes Required by Family Obligations**

🗹 **Decision Point: When family obligations require the family to respond to a request or report a change to the PHA, what time frames will be applied?**

Things to Consider

* For administrative ease and consistency, whenever feasible, the model plan language establishes a 10 business day time frame for families to report information or respond to requests. In addition, the model plan language establishes that whenever a notice to the PHA by the family is required, that notice must be in writing.

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

Unless otherwise noted, when family obligations require the family to respond to a request or notify the PHA of a change, notifying the PHA of the request or change within 10 business days is considered prompt notice.

When a family is required to provide notice to the PHA, the notice must be in writing.

🞎 *Option 2: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

**Family Obligations [24 CFR 982.551]**

Obligations of the family are described in the housing choice voucher (HCV) regulations and on the voucher itself. These obligations include responsibilities the family is required to fulfill, as well as prohibited actions. Many of the family obligations do not require a PHA policy. Only those obligations that do require PHA policy decisions are presented in this section.

🗹 **Decision Point: When determining whether an NSPIRE violation is family caused, what will be considered “damages beyond ordinary wear and tear”?**

* The regulation states that the family is responsible for any member of the household or guest damages in the dwelling unit or on the [premises](https://www.law.cornell.edu/definitions/index.php?width=840&height=800&iframe=true&def_id=955b3949dbd7cc3fb42baa4fd8d71549&term_occur=999&term_src=Title:24:Subtitle:B:Chapter:IX:Part:982:Subpart:I:982.404)  “beyond ordinary wear and tear” but does not define this term.
* Note, the policy found here must match the policy in Section 8.I.F. of the model administrative plan.

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

Damages beyond ordinary wear and tear will be considered to be damages which could be assessed against the security deposit under state law or in court practice.

🞎 *Option 2: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

🗹 **Decision Point: When determining whether a family has committed any serious or repeated violations of the lease, what information will the PHA consider when determining whether the violations are “serious” or “repeated”?**

Things to Consider

* The definition of serious or repeated violations of the lease is also included in section 12-I.D, “Mandatory Termination of Assistance.” If any changes are made to the definition here, they must also be made in Chapter 12.
* This policy provides examples of serious and repeated violations and also establishes a general criterion for the PHA to use when determining whether lease violations are serious and repeated.

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

The PHA will determine if a family has committed serious or repeated violations of the lease based on available evidence, including but not limited to, a court-ordered eviction or an owner’s notice to evict, police records, and affidavits from the owner, neighbors, or other credible parties with direct knowledge.

*Serious and repeated lease violations* will include, but not be limited to, nonpayment of rent, disturbance of neighbors, destruction of property, or living or housekeeping habits that cause damage to the unit or premises and criminal activity. Generally, the criterion to be used will be whether or not the reason for the eviction was the fault of the tenant or guests. Any incidents of, or criminal activity related to, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking will not be construed as serious or repeated lease violations by the victim [see 24 CFR 5.2005(c)(1)].

🞎 *Option 2: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

🗹 **Decision Point: What type of notice is a family required to provide to the owner and the PHA before moving out of a unit or terminating the lease, and when must the notices be provided?**

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

The family must comply with lease requirements regarding written notice to the owner. The family must provide written notice to the PHA at the same time the owner is notified.

🞎 *Option 2: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

🗹 **Decision Point: How and when must families request approval to add another family member?**

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

The request to add a family member must be submitted in writing and approved prior to the person moving into the unit. The PHA will determine eligibility of the new member in accordance with the policies in Chapter 3.

🞎 *Option 2: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

🗹 **Decision Point: What activities will be considered “subleasing” when the family continues to occupy the unit?**

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

Subleasing includes receiving payment to cover rent and utility costs by a person living in the unit who is not listed as a family member.

🞎 *Option 2: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

🗹 **Decision Point: Under what circumstances must families report their absence from a unit to the PHA?**

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

Notice is required under this provision only when all family members will be absent from the unit for an extended period. An extended period is defined as any period greater than 30 calendar days. Written notice must be provided to the PHA at the start of the extended absence.

🞎 *Option 2: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

### PART II: SUBSIDY STANDARDS AND VOUCHER ISSUANCE

**5-II.A. OVERVIEW**

The PHA must establish subsidy standards that determine the number of bedrooms needed for families of different sizes and compositions. This part presents the policies that will be used to determine the family unit size (also known as the voucher size) a particular family should receive, and the policies that govern making exceptions to those standards. The PHA must also establish policies related to the issuance of the voucher, to the voucher term, and to any extensions of the voucher term.

**5-II.B. DETERMINING FAMILY UNIT (VOUCHER) SIZE [24 CFR 982.402]**

HUD dictates many policies that PHAs must follow when determining family unit size, and these are presented in the plan. In addition, PHAs have the flexibility to impose their own additional criteria. The policies described in this section are used to determine the voucher size. The voucher size does not dictate the size of unit the family must actually lease, nor does it determine who within a household will share a bedroom/sleeping room

🗹 **Decision Point: How will the PHA determine the appropriate family unit (voucher size) for families of different sizes and compositions?**

Things to Consider

* Some PHAs have established subsidy standards of 2 persons per bedroom, regardless of relationship (see Option 2). This is the lowest-cost policy that the PHA is permitted to adopt, and may be helpful to PHAs facing greatly limited or reduced funding. However, most PHAs have chosen to establish additional policies that provide separate bedrooms for some types of individuals.
* Although most PHAs issue one-bedroom vouchers to single person families, PHAs are permitted to adopt a policy to issue zero-bedroom vouchers to these families in order to help the PHA reduce program costs. PHAs should only consider this option if the housing stock within the PHA’s jurisdiction contains an ample number of zero-bedroom units.
* Other PHA policies for allocating separate bedrooms vary widely. The model policy includes some of the most common elements used by PHAs to determine family unit size, while also taking into account limited or reduced funding.
* The presence of foster children in a family may complicate the PHAs determination of family unit size, particularly if the family is approved to provide foster care, but placements are made on a more temporary basis. For example, a family may provide care for four foster children throughout the year, but none remain longer than 30 days.
* To address this situation a PHA may want to adopt a policy that foster children will only be included in determining a family’s unit size if they will be living in the unit for a minimum number of months.

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

The PHA will assign one bedroom for each two persons within the household, except in the following circumstances:

Persons of the opposite sex (other than spouses, and children under age 5) will be allocated separate bedrooms.

Live-in aides will be allocated a separate bedroom.

Single person families will be allocated one bedroom.

The PHA will reference the following chart in determining the appropriate voucher size for a family:

**Voucher Size Persons in Household**

**(Minimum – Maximum)**

1 Bedroom 1-2

2 Bedrooms 2-4

3 Bedrooms 3-6

4 Bedrooms 4-8

5 Bedrooms 6-10

🞎 *Option 2: Delete model plan language and substitute language as shown below.*

The PHA will assign one bedroom for each two persons within the household.

🞎 *Option 3:* *Select from the additional options below (Note: some options need to be completed by the PHA):*

Children of separate genders regardless of age (i.e., from birth) will be allocated separate bedrooms.

Children of the same gender with an age difference exceeding **[number of]** years will be allocated separate bedrooms.

Unrelated adults of the same gender will be allocated separate bedrooms.

Persons of different generations will be allocated separate bedrooms.

Foster children will be included in determining unit size only if they will be in the unit for more than **[number of]** months.

🞎 *Option 4: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

**5-II.C. EXCEPTIONS TO SUBSIDY STANDARDS**

In determining the family unit size for a particular family, the PHA may grant an exception to its subsidy standards if the PHA determines that the exception is justified by the age, sex, health, handicap or relationship of family members or other personal circumstances [24 CFR 982.402(b)(8)]. Reasons may include, but are not limited to:

* Need for an additional bedroom for medical equipment
* Need for a separate bedroom for reasons related to a family member’s disability, medical or health condition

For a single person who is not elderly, disabled, or a remaining family member, an exception cannot override the regulatory limit of a zero or one bedroom.

🗹 **Decision Point: What criteria can be used as the basis for a request for an exception to the PHA’s established subsidy standards?**

Things to Consider

* The model plan allows families to request exceptions based on any of the criteria identified in the regulations (age, sex, health, etc.). However, PHAs could limit or specify the types of exceptions they will consider. For example, exception requests could be limited to those who are disabled and need the exception as a reasonable accommodation. This type of policy would limit the number of requests to be processed, but could also unduly restrict the PHA from granting exceptions in cases where they may be warranted.

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

The PHA will consider granting an exception for any of the reasons specified in the regulation: the age, sex, health, handicap, or relationship of family members or other personal circumstances.

🞎 *Option 2: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

🗹 **Decision Point: What information must a request for an exception contain, and how will the PHA process such requests?**

Things to Consider

* PHAs should consider whether or not the model language giving the PHA 10 business days to notify the family of its decision to approve or deny the request is reasonable. In making this determination the PHA should consider conditions at the PHA (e.g. staffing, workload, etc.), as well as the impact on the family of further delaying the lease-up process.
* PHAs could require the family to submit an exception request within a certain number of days of the PHA’s determination of family unit size. However, this may unnecessarily restrict the PHA’s ability to process a valid request in cases where the family did not realize the exception was needed until later in the family’s search for a unit.

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

The family must request any exception to the subsidy standards in writing, which will include email. The request must explain the need or justification for a larger family unit size and must include appropriate documentation. Requests based on health-related reasons must be verified by a knowledgeable professional source (e.g., doctor or health professional), unless the disability and the disability–related need for accommodation is readily apparent or otherwise known. The family’s continued need for an additional bedroom due to special medical equipment must be re-verified at annual reexamination.

The PHA will notify the family of its determination within 10 business days of receiving the family’s request. If a participant family’s request is denied, the notice will inform the family of their right to request an informal hearing.

🞎 *Option 2: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

**5-II.D. VOUCHER ISSUANCE [24 CFR 982.302]**

🗹 **Decision Point: When will vouchers be issued to eligible families?**

Things to Consider

* The PHA may decide whether to issue the voucher independently or in conjunction with the briefing session. Issuing the voucher immediately after the briefing session is an efficient use of staff time and also limits the number of times the family must return to the PHA office to complete paperwork. (HCV GB, p. 8-11).

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

Vouchers will be issued to eligible applicants immediately following the mandatory briefing.

🞎 *Option 2: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

🗹 **Decision Point: How will the PHA determine whether or not there is sufficient funding to issue vouchers?**

Things to Consider

* The PHA’s policy for determining insufficient funding is contained in Chapter 16. Therefore, the policy in this section simply states that prior to issuing vouchers the PHA will ensure there is sufficient funding in accordance with the policy in   
  Chapter 16.

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

Prior to issuing any vouchers, the PHA will determine whether it has sufficient funding in accordance with the policies in Part VIII of Chapter 16.

🞎 *Option 2: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

**Voucher Rescissions**

Because many PHAs will not have the need to rescind vouchers, the model plan does not include policy language on this issue. For those who are concerned about the need to rescind vouchers, policy language is provided below. If this language is added, you may want to change the section heading to Voucher Issuance and Rescissions, as well as add a subheading entitled Voucher Rescissions.

🗹 **Decision Point: What policies, if any, does the PHA need concerning rescission of vouchers?**

Things to Consider

* Although vouchers are issued on the basis that the PHA will have enough money to subsidize families that locate an approvable unit within the term of their voucher, it is possible for the PHA to discover after vouchers have been issued that there is not enough funding to provide subsidy to all of the applicant families that are currently searching for a unit. If this occurs, the PHA may need to rescind vouchers.
* This guide includes two options for voucher rescission language. The first distinguishes between vouchers for which a Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA) has been submitted to the PHA and those for which an RTA has not been submitted. This distinction is intended to allow families that have already found a unit to continue with the leasing process, help maintain good relationships with prospective landlords, and utilize work that may have already been completed by a PHA (e.g. inspections).
* Another option for rescinding vouchers is to simply pull them back in the same order in which they were issued, beginning with vouchers that were issued most recently. Although this method doesn’t consider where families are in the lease-up process or work the PHA may have already completed in processing an RTA, it may be perceived as the most impartial method.
* You will notice that the policy language below states that families who have their vouchers rescinded will be returned to their former position on the waiting list. Although it is conceivable that a PHA could develop a different policy, fairness dictates that families, who have had vouchers rescinded through no fault of their own, should not lose their position on the waiting list.

🞎 *Option 1: Follow the model plan and do not include policy language on rescinding vouchers.*

🞎 *Option 2: Add language as shown below.*

If, due to budgetary constraints, the PHA must rescind vouchers that have already been issued to families, the PHA will do so according to the instructions under each of the categories below. The PHA will first rescind vouchers that fall under Category 1. Vouchers in Category 2 will only be rescinded after all vouchers under Category 1 have been rescinded.

Category 1: Vouchers for which a Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA) and proposed lease have **not** been submitted to the PHA.

Vouchers will be rescinded in order of the date and time they were issued, starting with the most recently issued vouchers.

Category 2: Vouchers for which a Request for Tenancy Approval and proposed lease have been submitted to the PHA.

Vouchers will be rescinded in order of the date and time the RTA was submitted to the PHA, starting with the most recently submitted requests.

Families who have their voucher rescinded will be notified in writing and will be reinstated to their former position on the waiting list. When funding is again available, families will be selected from the waiting list in accordance with PHA selection policies described in Chapter 4.

🞎 *Option 3: Add language as shown below.*

If, due to budgetary constraints, the PHA must rescind vouchers that have already been issued to families, vouchers will be rescinded in order of the date and time they were issued, starting with the most recently issued vouchers.

Families who have their voucher rescinded will be notified in writing and will be reinstated to their former position on the waiting list. When funding is again available, families will be selected from the waiting list in accordance with PHA selection policies described in Chapter 4.

🞎 *Option 4: Insert PHA-established policy.*

**5-II.E. VOUCHER TERM AND EXTENSIONS**

**Voucher Term [24 CFR 982.303]**

🗹 **Decision Point: What is the time limit for the initial term of a voucher?**

Things to Consider

* The PHA should consider the local housing market when establishing policies governing the voucher term. In areas where the vacancy rate is low and renters compete for affordable units, it is likely to take voucher holders longer to locate an approvable unit. PHAs in these areas may wish to establish a longer initial term for the voucher.
* The minimum initial voucher term is 60 calendar days; there is no maximum initial voucher term.
* Generally, PHAs that establish an initial voucher term of longer than 60 days have more restrictive policies for extensions than other PHAs; however, this is not required by regulations.

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

The initial voucher term will be 60 calendar days.

The family must submit a Request for Tenancy Approval and proposed lease within the 60-day period unless the PHA grants an extension.

🞎 *Option 2: Delete model plan language and substitute language as shown below.*

The initial voucher term will be 120 calendar days.

The family must submit a Request for Tenancy Approval and proposed lease within the 120-day period unless an extension has been granted by the PHA.

🞎 *Option 3: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

**Extensions of Voucher Term [24 CFR 982.303(b)]**

🗹 **Decision Point: What policies will the PHA establish for extensions of the voucher term?**

Things to Consider

* There is no limit on the number of extensions the PHA may approve.
* There is no requirement to offer extensions to voucher terms, with one exception. If a family needs and requests an extension to the initial voucher term as a reasonable accommodation, to make the program accessible to a family member who is a person with disabilities, the PHA must extend the voucher term up to the term reasonably required for that purpose.
* The PHA may require families to report progress in leasing a unit at any time during the initial or extended term of the voucher. However, it is most common for PHAs to require families to report progress in leasing a unit at the time they submit a request for an extension.
* It is not necessary to include the circumstances that the PHA will consider when determining whether or not to extend a voucher based on reasons beyond the family’s control. However, including that information in the model plan does help to make the PHA’s policies more transparent, while still providing flexibility to the PHA.

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

The PHA will automatically approve one 30-day extension upon written request from the family.

The PHA will approve additional extensions only in the following circumstances:

It is necessary as a reasonable accommodation for a person with disabilities.

It is necessary due to reasons beyond the family’s control, as determined by the PHA. Following is a list of extenuating circumstances that the PHA may consider in making its decision. The presence of these circumstances does not guarantee that an extension will be granted:

Serious illness or death in the family

Other family emergency

Obstacles due to employment

Whether the family has already submitted requests for tenancy approval that were not approved by the PHA

Whether family size or other special circumstances make it difficult to find a suitable unit

Any request for an additional extension must include the reason(s) an additional extension is necessary. The PHA may require the family to provide documentation to support the request or obtain verification from a qualified third party.

🞎 *Option 2: Delete model plan language and substitute language as shown below.*

Generally, the PHA will not approve extensions to the term of the voucher.

The PHA will approve extensions only in the following circumstances:

An extension is necessary as a reasonable accommodation for a person with disabilities.

It is necessary due to reasons beyond the family’s control, as determined by the PHA. Following is a list of extenuating circumstances that the PHA may consider in making its decision. The presence of these circumstances does not guarantee that an extension will be granted:

Serious illness or death in the family

Other family emergency

Obstacles due to employment

Whether the family has already submitted requests for tenancy approval that were not approved by the PHA

Whether family size or other special requirements make finding a unit difficult

Any request must include the reason(s) an extension is necessary. The PHA may require the family to provide documentation to support the request.

🞎 *Option 3: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

🗹 **Decision Point: What are the requirements for requesting, and approving or denying extensions of the voucher term?**

# Things to Consider

* The model language gives the PHA 10 business days to approve or deny the voucher extension request. As long as the family submits the request prior to the expiration date of the voucher term, this language allows the PHA to approve the extension request retroactively.
* If your PHA does not want to allow for retroactive approvals, language may be added that requires the family to submit the written request within a certain number of days prior to the expiration date of the voucher.

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

All requests for extensions to the voucher term must be made in writing and submitted to the PHA prior to the expiration date of the voucher (or extended term of the voucher).

The PHA will decide whether to approve or deny an extension request within 10 business days of the date the request is received and will immediately provide the family written notice of its decision.

🞎 *Option 2: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

**Expiration of Voucher Term**

🗹 **Decision Point: How will the PHA deal with families whose voucher term expires without an extension?**

🞎 *Option 1: Use the model plan language shown below. No changes to the model plan are needed.*

If an applicant family’s voucher term or extension expires before the PHA has approved a tenancy, the PHA will require the family to reapply for assistance.

Within 10 business days after the expiration of the voucher term or any extension, the PHA will notify the family in writing that the voucher term has expired and that the family must reapply when the waiting list is open in order to be placed on the waiting list.

🞎 *Option 2: If family will not be required to reapply for assistance when voucher expires, delete model plan language and substitute language as shown below.*

When an applicant family’s voucher term expires, the PHA will automatically place the family back on the waiting list. The family’s application date will be changed to the date the voucher expired.

Within 10 working days after the expiration of the voucher term or any extension, the PHA will notify the family in writing that the voucher term has expired and that the family is not required to reapply for assistance. The notification will also include the revised date of the family’s application.

🞎 *Option 3: Use PHA-established policy. Edit the model plan language or delete it and insert the PHA’s policy.*

**FINALIZING THE DOCUMENT**

Take a final look at the changes you have made in this chapter of the administrative plan.  
Have you:

(1) Added or subtracted any exhibits at the end of the chapter?  Yes  No.

(2) Added, subtracted or reordered any major sections (at the A, B, or C level?)  Yes  No

If you answered yes to either of these questions, you must adjust the chapter to match your changes.

**☑ Decision Point: Are any changes required to this chapter?**

No. No changes to the model plan are needed.

Yes. Edits only. Edit and insert PHA language as appropriate.

Yes. PHA changed the organization of the chapter. Adjust the chapter to reflect your changes **and** review the rest of the document to make sure that any references to section numbers are correct.

**☑ Decision Point: Are changes required in other chapters as a result of changes to this chapter?**

Check the “Things to Consider” under each decision point to identify if changes to the model plan policy will require changes to policies in other chapters of the plan.

No. Changes to other chapters are not necessary.

Yes. Changes to the following chapters are also required: