

## **Mainstream Vouchers: Frequently Asked Questions\***

### **1. What is a Mainstream voucher?**

These are special purpose federally funded vouchers offered through the Sauk County Housing Authority (SCHA) Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Section 8 program. A Mainstream voucher is a type of rental assistance for families with an adult member age 18-61 who has a disability, and who is homeless, living in an institution such as a hospital or a nursing home, or at risk of being homelessness or institutionalized. SCHA has been allocated a limited number of Mainstream vouchers. Mainstream vouchers assist households that locate housing of their choice and that pay a portion of the monthly rent to the owner. The household will typically pay 30% of their household income towards rent and SCHA pays the difference.

### **2. Who is eligible for a Mainstream voucher?**

For your household to be eligible for a Mainstream voucher, your family must include a member who is age 18 to 61 years old, has a disability, and must document that they meet one of the following criteria:

- **Currently homeless:** living in a shelter, a public space like a park or car, or in immediate danger of losing your home, including due to domestic violence or other life-threatening situation; OR
- **At risk of becoming homeless:** living in an unstable housing situation where your inability to pay rent, or the lack of support from family or friends, will lead to homelessness; OR
- **Currently living in an institution:** living in a hospital, nursing home or adult home where privacy and independence are limited; OR
- **At risk of being institutionalized:** at risk of being institutionalized in a nursing or adult home due to the absence of supportive community services.

Documentation must be provided to verify the age, disability and housing status of the qualifying household member.

### **3. How does the Mainstream voucher program define disability?**

In order to be considered disabled for purposes of Mainstream voucher eligibility, the adult age 18-61 in your household must meet one of the following federal requirements:

- Receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) as a result of their disability.
- Is unable to be employed for 12 months or more as a result of a physical or mental condition that is medically documented;
- Has a physical, mental, or emotional condition:
  - o that is expected to be long-term or last indefinitely;
  - o that substantially interferes with their ability to live independently, and
  - o where their ability to live independently could be improved by better housing conditions.
- Has a severe, chronic disability that:
  - o is related to one or a combination of mental or physical conditions;
  - o is likely to continue throughout their life;
  - o results in major limitations in three or more of the following areas: self-care, communication, learning, ability to move freely, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency; and
  - o results in an individual's need for lifelong, individualized support.

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### **4. Does the eligible person in my household have to be the head of household?**

For the Mainstream voucher program, the qualifying household member is not required to be the head of household. However, if the qualifying member of the household leaves the household before the family is admitted to the program and there is no other qualifying member of the household, the household will no longer be eligible for assistance through the Mainstream program. Being admitted into the Mainstream program means that you have located housing, SCHA has approved the unit, you have signed a lease with the owner and SCHA has sent you written notice that you are admitted to the Mainstream program.

### **5. I'm going to turn 62 soon. Am I still eligible for this voucher?**

The qualifying family member of the household (which may be yourself) **must** be age 18 to 61 at the time your household is formally admitted into the Mainstream voucher program. If you turn 62 after being admitted, your family will remain eligible for the Mainstream voucher program as long as you continue to comply with program requirements. You are formally admitted to the program after:

- you have located an apartment;
- you have submitted a completed Request for Tenants approval to the office;
- you have received SCHA approval of the rent and the apartment;
- the owner of the unit has signed a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract with SCHA for the subsidy; and
- you have signed a lease for the apartment.

HAP is the subsidy, or the amount that SCHA pays your landlord towards your rent each month. If you turn 62 at any point in this process prior to formal program admission, and there is no other qualifying member in your household, you will be unable to receive subsidy through the Mainstream voucher program.

### **6. What happens if the qualifying family member for the Mainstream Voucher Program leaves the household?**

If the qualifying member leaves the household prior to being formally admitted to the Mainstream voucher program, and there is no other qualifying member of the household, the family will no longer be eligible. If the qualifying member leaves the household after being formally admitted to the Mainstream voucher program, the household may continue to be subsidized.

### **7. I am being told there are no more vouchers available. Why?**

SCHA has been allocated a limited number of Mainstream vouchers by the federal government. Once these vouchers have been issued to qualifying families, SCHA can NOT issue any more vouchers for the Mainstream program until one becomes available.

### **8. How long does my Mainstream voucher last?**

The initial term of the voucher is listed on the voucher as 120 days. If you are close to the end of your voucher term and you have not yet located housing, you may submit a request for an extension within 30 days of your voucher's expiration date. If you do not use the voucher within the approved term, the voucher will expire, and you will not receive rental assistance. If the qualifying member of your household turns 62 at the time of voucher expiration, and there is no other qualifying member in your household, you will not be eligible for a voucher extension.

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### **9. What documentation will I be asked for as part of the application process?**

To receive a Mainstream voucher, you will be asked to provide documentation to verify your family's eligibility. These may include but not limited to:

- 1) A Verification of Disability form completed and returned by professional or a letter from the Social Security Disability (SSD) Program;
- 2) A letter indicating your qualifying member's housing status:
  - o *Homeless or at-risk of homelessness: copy of eviction letter, hotel verification, Letter from social worker or support team worker, etc.*
  - o *Institutionalized or at risk of institutionalization: letter from a government agency, healthcare provider or social service provider*
- 3) Documentation of all income and assets for all members of the household
- 4) Proof of Sauk County residency, working or Bonafede job offer
- 5) Proof of Citizenship