

RENO HOUSING AUTHORITY

Lease-Up Process



Welcome!

This video will include a brief guide to the lease-up process, including either paper or online RFTA submission.

Upon conclusion, you should have the information you need to locate a unit, submit a RFTA, and move-in with rental assistance.



Frequently Used Acronyms

- **HAP** – Housing Assistance Payment: The portion of the rent RHA is responsible for paying to the landlord.
- **HQS** – Housing Quality Standards: HUD standards for the condition of assisted housing.
- **NSPIRE** – National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate: The inspection protocol used by RHA to conduct the HQS inspections.
- **RFTA** – Request for Tenancy Approval: The document completed by a landlord and tenant to request housing assistance at a unit.
- **RHA** – Reno Housing Authority

Questions Regarding Your Assistance?



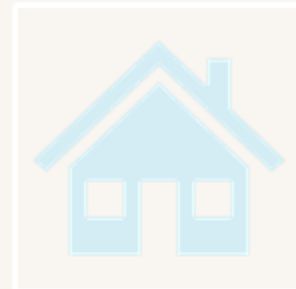
Email

Send any questions to section8@renoha.org for a response within 1-2 business days.



Phone Call

775-329-3630 option 5 to leave a message with your name, Social Security Number and detailed message. We will return your call within 1-2 business days.



Walk-In

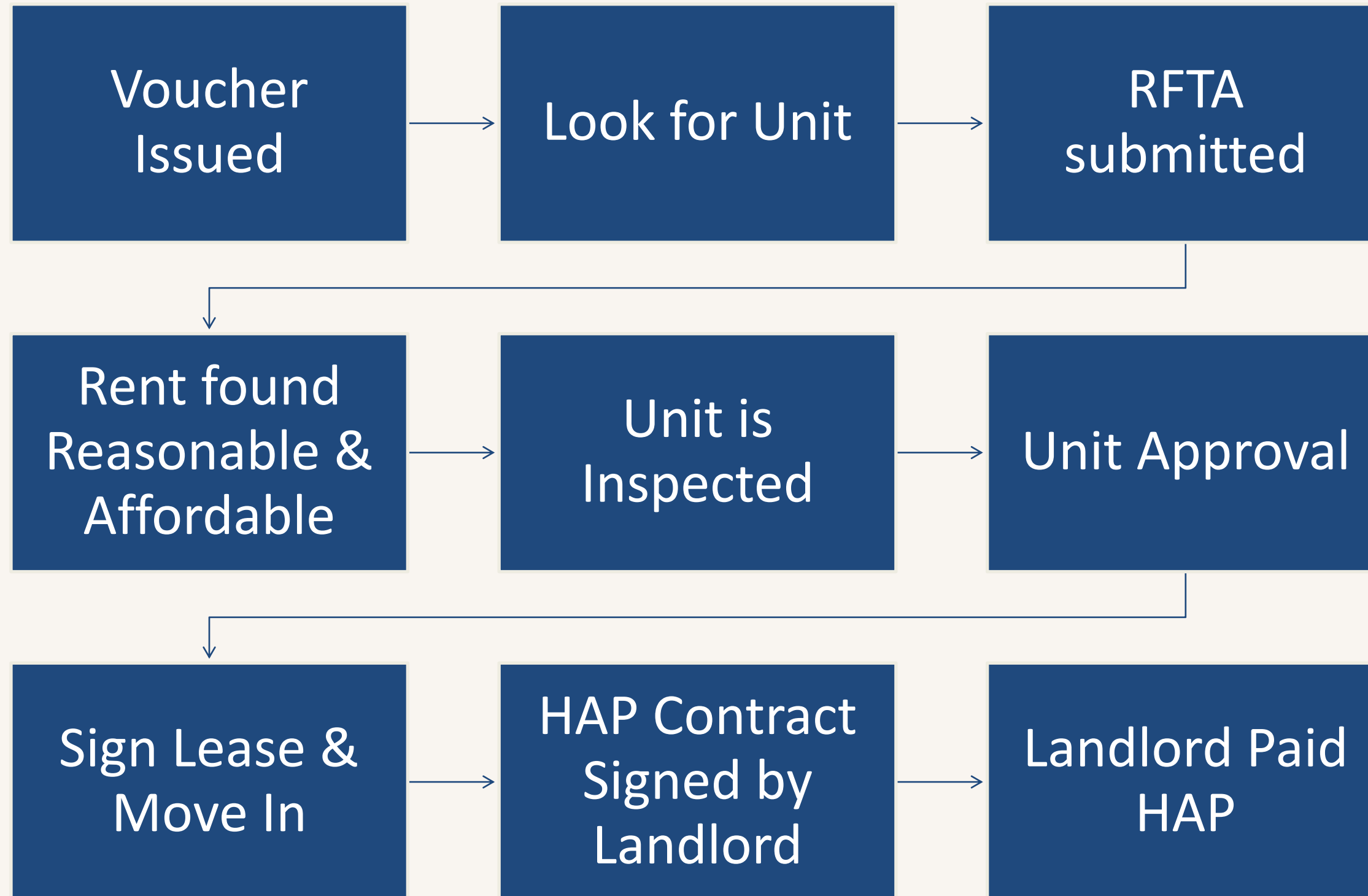
Thursdays from 9am - 11:30am and 1pm - 4 pm, no appointment needed. You will see the On-Duty Housing Specialist.



Scheduled Appointments

Your Housing Specialist will reach out (by mail) if an in-person meeting is necessary, but you are welcome to call and request a scheduled in-person meeting as well.

Leasing Process Overview



Voucher Issuance – New Admissions & Transfers

- Your voucher was issued on the date you were notified of your briefing or on the date you requested to transfer.
- Your voucher is good for 180 days from that date.
 - Unless you turn in a RFTA on or before this date, your voucher will expire and you will be withdrawn from the voucher waiting list or your assistance will terminate.
 - You would need to re-apply for assistance when a waiting list opens.
- You may request a 30-day extension to your voucher PRIOR to the expiration date.
 - The request must be done in writing and explain why it is needed.
 - EXTENSIONS ARE NOT GUARANTEED

Voucher Issuance – Port-Ins

- Your voucher was issued by your initial PHA, and they set the issuance and expiration dates.
- RHA provides an additional 30 days from that date.
 - This extension is only good in RHA's jurisdiction.
 - If you decide to port somewhere else or return to your initial PHA, they do not have to honor the extension so make those decisions BEFORE your original expiration date.
- Unless you turn in a RFTA on or before the expiration date, your voucher will expire and your portability packet will be returned to your initial PHA.

RHA's Jurisdiction

- RHA serves all of Washoe County.
- Outside of Washoe County, the other PHAs are Southern NV Regional Housing Authority (serving Clark County) and NV Rural Housing Authority (serving all other counties).

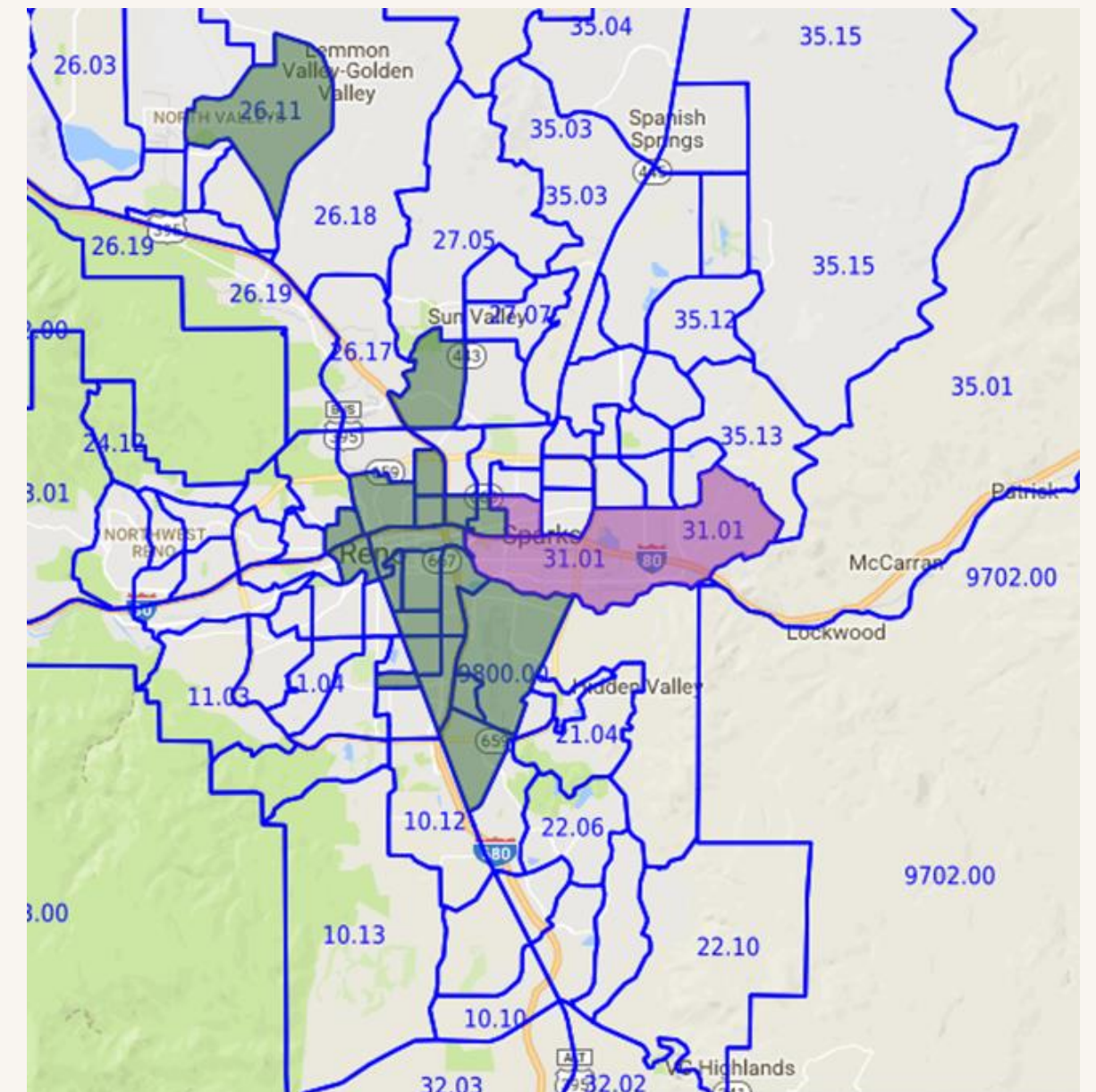


Things to consider when looking for a unit

- Neighborhood
 - Safety
 - Surrounding schools
 - Available transportation
 - Proximity to job opportunities
- Costs
 - What utilities will you be responsible for?
 - What other fees will you be responsible for, not covered by RHA?
- General condition of the unit and complex
 - Is the unit well taken care of?
 - Will it pass inspection?

Advantages of renting in a low poverty area

- Areas of low-poverty offer benefits to residents including:
 - Increased mental and physical health outcomes
 - Increased likelihood of finding employment
 - Increased likelihood of having higher income
 - Higher scores in schools for children
 - Children more likely to enroll in college
- The shaded areas on the map represent high poverty areas. You are not prevented from renting in these areas. The map is provided for you to make the best-informed decision for your household.



Looking for a Unit

There are lots of online resources for finding available units:

- [AffordableHousing.com](https://www.AffordableHousing.com)
- [NVHousingSearch.org](https://www.NVHousingSearch.org)
- [Zillow.com](https://www.Zillow.com)
- [Nevada211.org](https://www.Nevada211.org)
- [RGJ.com](https://www.RGJ.com)
- [RenoHa.org](https://www.RenoHa.org)

You can also look for “For Rent” signs in neighborhoods you are interested in, or check out the Partial Listing of Participating Landlords, available on our website.

- This listing contains information on landlords who have historically accepted vouchers, including contact information and property characteristics.

Portability: Moving to another City

Having an HCV allows you to maintain your housing assistance while moving anywhere in the U.S. that has a PHA with an HCV program.

To be eligible to port out, you must:

- Be a Washoe County resident when you receive your voucher, OR
- Live in Washoe County for 12 months before requesting to move

Other PHA's may have different requirements / rules, including what size voucher you are eligible for and re-screening you for eligibility. It is recommended to reach out to the PHA you are choosing to port to regarding their rules.

Please contact the Leasing Agent before beginning the port process.

Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA)

When you have found a unit and the landlord has agreed to lease to you, please have the landlord complete the entire RFTA packet.

- If you were issued your voucher through the Rent Café portal, this will involve providing the landlord with the link / access information to complete & submit the RFTA electronically.
- If you received a paper RFTA packet, you will be responsible for returning the completed packet to RHA. It is recommended that you ensure the landlord answers all sections, as incomplete RFTA packets will not be accepted.

Lease-In Place clients must still have their landlords complete a RFTA packet.

What Can Be Included in the Rent?

When the landlord is filling out the RFTA, it is important to understand what is considered rent.

- Rent should only be the “base rent” for the unit.
- Rent should not include any additional fees, such as:
 - Pet rent
 - Garage rent
 - Storage fees
 - Community fees
 - Smart Home fees
 - Valet Trash
- If the “fee” is for a utility (such as valet trash or a flat fee for water or sewer) RHA considers those utilities and accounts for those with the utility allowance. DO NOT include them in the rent amount.

Check for Affordability

When the RHA receives a completed RFTA, our Leasing Agent will check for Affordability.

Affordability means your portion of the rent is within 30–40% of your adjusted income, as required by HUD.

- As long as you shop within the budgets you were provided, the unit should be affordable for you.

**Affordability =
Family-based**

Check for Reasonableness

When RHA receives a completed RFTA and has verified the rent is affordable for you, they will then check that the rent is reasonable.

Reasonableness means the rent the landlord is asking is similar to the rent being charged for nearby units with similar amenities.

- This is why the Rent Reasonable Valuation form is so important.

**Reasonableness
= Unit-based**

Affordable ≠ Reasonable

Because Affordability is family-based and Reasonableness is unit-based, it is possible for the rent to be:

- **Affordable but not Reasonable**
 - You shopped within your budget but the rent being requested is higher than the market supports.

OR

- **Reasonable but not Affordable**
 - The requested rent is supported by the market based on similar units, but it is too much for your income and household size.

Negotiating the Rent

If the RFTA fails either the Affordability or Reasonableness test, RHA will contact the landlord and request that they lower the rent.

- Landlords are not required to lower the rent, but it doesn't hurt to ask.
 - Remember – you are not allowed to pay the extra in a “side deal”.
- If they agree, RHA will request the move-in inspection and notify you what your portion of the rent will be.
- If they do not agree, RHA will deny the RFTA and issue you a new one to continue your search.
 - The “clock” on your voucher is paused when a RFTA is submitted to allow RHA time to process it. If the RFTA is denied, the clock restarts and your expiration date is extended by the number of days the RFTA was being processed.

Move-In Inspection

RHA will schedule the move-in inspection directly with the landlord based on when they said the unit would be available. This may take up to 2 weeks.

- If you are a Lease-In Place tenant (meaning you were living in the unit when your voucher was issued), RHA will contact you to schedule the inspection.

A move-in inspection DOES NOT take the place of your own walk-through of the unit prior to moving in.

- RHA will be inspecting following HUD's NSPIRE protocol, but you need to make sure the unit meets your family's needs.

DO NOT sign a lease prior to the unit passing inspection and receiving approval from RHA.

Approval to Move-In

After the inspection, RHA will verify that the size and amenities of the unit as noted by the Inspector match what the landlord reported on the RFTA and Rent Reasonable Valuation form.

- If there are discrepancies it could change the affordability or reasonableness of the rent, so don't sign the lease just yet.

Once everything has been verified, RHA will notify the landlord you are approved to sign a one-year lease.

- RHA cannot pay for overlapping assistance, so if you are transferring, your move-in date cannot be before your approved move-out date from the old unit.
- Even Lease-In-Place tenants must sign a new one-year lease.

Executing the HAP Contract

Once you have signed a one-year lease, your landlord will need to submit a copy to RHA.

- Our staff will verify that the information in the lease matches the RFTA, Rent Reasonable Valuation form, and inspection in a process called Quality Control.

Once the Quality Control has passed, the HAP Contract will be sent to your landlord to sign.

- RHA cannot pay your assistance until the HAP Contract has been signed and returned to our office; however, once that has been completed, we will pay HAP back to the approved move-in date.
- Your landlord cannot charge you late fees for THE RHA PORTION while this process is completed.

Frequently Asked Questions

If the rent and utilities are more than what my voucher is worth, can I pay the extra?

No. HUD states you cannot pay more than 40% of your monthly adjusted income for rent plus utilities at the initial lease-up. Paying more in a “side deal” with a landlord may cause you to lose your voucher.

When can I sign the lease?

After the unit passes inspection and the rent is determined reasonable for the area and affordable for your household, RHA will notify your landlord that you are approved to sign the lease.

Can I rent a larger unit than my voucher is for?

Yes, as long as the rent and utilities are less than your budget. Your voucher size does not limit the size of unit you can rent, but it does limit the amount of rent RHA can cover for your household.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I decide to rent a smaller unit than my voucher is for?

Your budget will decrease based on the payment standard for that unit size. You will need to contact the Leasing Agent for updated budgets.

What if I am responsible for utilities?

ALL utilities that are listed as your responsibility in the lease and HAP contract are your responsibility to pay.

Can my utilities be in someone else's name?

NO. Utilities must be in your name directly (or someone in the household). Review your lease carefully!

Frequently Asked Questions

Will I ever be responsible for paying more than 40% of my adjusted income in rent?

Yes, if at lease renewal the rent is raised above the payment standard, you will be responsible for the difference IF you decide to stay in the unit.

Does RHA help with security deposits or credit checks?

No, the deposit is your responsibility. RHA can only assist with rent, not including any optional amenities offered by a complex (ex. garage, storage unit, etc.)

What happens if my income goes down after move-in?

Your portion of the rent is based on your household's income. If your income goes down, please report changes to your Housing Specialist with an Update Form.

Important Takeaways!

Know your voucher expiration date. Extensions take time and are NOT guaranteed.

Unless it is part of an approved Reasonable Accommodation, you CANNOT rent from a family member.

Information on maintaining your assistance and other important topics can be found at our online video resource library located at www.renoha.org.

Information on RHA's Resident Services program can be found online at www.renoha.org/for-residents/.

Thank you for your time.

We are here to help you throughout this process. Please reach out to us if you have any questions or concerns.

Rental Assistance contact information:

- Phone: 775-329-3630 option 5
- Email: section8@renoха.org
- Walk-in: Thursdays 9am – 11:30am and 1pm – 4pm