

# SECTION 8 VOUCHERS

## Renters: Know Your Rights!

Even if you owe rent, lose your voucher, or break your lease, your landlord **CAN'T**:



Change the locks to make you leave



Shut off your utilities (lights, water, gas)



Set your things on the street before the sheriff comes

If this happens to you, call Legal Aid or Conexión Américas.

### What is a Section 8 voucher?

- A Section 8 voucher is a “**housing subsidy**” that is attached to a person (a **voucher holder**) instead of an apartment. If you move, you can **take your voucher with you**.
- If you have a voucher, you’ll pay about **30% of your monthly household income** towards your rent. The government will make up the difference and pay the rest of the rent to your landlord each month.
- Sometimes, buildings will have something called “**project-based Section 8.**” This is a different housing subsidy that’s attached to the building instead of a person. If you **move out** of a project-based Section 8 complex, the subsidy **won’t come with you**.
- Every Section 8 voucher holder has a **caseworker**. Make sure you know yours!

### What are my responsibilities with a Section 8 voucher?



- **Locate a unit within 60 days.** Landlords do not have to accept Section 8. For more time, make sure to request an extension **before** the voucher expires!
- **Recertify every year and whenever your household size or income changes.** Give proof of income for your household to your Section 8 worker.
- **Pay your portion of the rent every month.** Tell your worker if your income changes - it might affect your rent! **Sign** required consent and verification forms.
- **DO NOT** violate your lease, make the place unhealthy/unsafe, or threaten/ do something dangerous. **This includes your guests.**
- **Notify your landlord and your worker in writing** of needed repairs.



LEGAL AID SOCIETY  
OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE AND THE CUMBERLANDS

(833) 837-HOME



conexión  
américas

(615) 701-7957

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## When can Section 8 try to **terminate** my voucher?



You can only lose your voucher **FOR CAUSE** (for a specific reason). For example, you could be at risk of losing your voucher for:

- **Program Violations.** This could mean breaking your lease, failing to report income or people in your household, damaging the unit, threatening to do or doing something dangerous, or engaging in criminal activity.
- **Failed Inspections.** If the landlord fails to make repairs in the timeframe set by Section 8, you will have to transfer your voucher to a new unit. If you don't find somewhere to move in 60 days, you could lose your voucher. Make sure to ask for an extension in writing **before** the voucher expires if you can't find a place within 60 days.
- **Prolonged Absences.** If you are going to be away from your home for more than 14 days, tell your landlord and your Section 8 worker in writing. Be clear that you are **not** abandoning your unit and let them know why and for how long you think you will be gone.

## What happens if my voucher is **terminated**?

You have the right to a hearing with Section 8 before they terminate your assistance. Ask for a **“grievance” meeting** within **10 days** of the date on the paper that says your voucher is being terminated.

- Make sure you bring any **proof** or **information** about the problem that you have with you to your grievance meeting.
- Your first meeting will usually be an **informal** meeting. If you can't resolve the problem at your first meeting, you can usually request a **formal** hearing.
- If you lose Section 8, you become responsible for **100%** of the rent. If you're not able to pay the rent, the landlord may try to **evict** you.
- Even if you get behind on your rent, your landlord **can't** just change your locks or kick you out. They have to bring you to **court** first.

**If you get court papers, GO TO COURT! If you don't, you will lose automatically.**

## When can I move without losing my voucher?

You can move with your voucher if you give **written notice** to your landlord and your Section 8 caseworker **after your lease ends.**



If you told your landlord and worker **in writing** about repairs you need but your landlord still didn't fix them, Section 8 should **cite** them. If the landlord still doesn't fix things after that, you should be able to move with your voucher.



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