



SOUTH MISSISSIPPI HOUSING AUTHORITY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

How to apply?

SMHA uses an online application portal for all applications. To access the online application portal, please visit our website at: <https://www.southmississippihousing.org>. You will need to click on the "Apply Now" tab in the top-right corner of the site and then follow all prompts and instruction to register and complete your application. For assistance, please contact our helpdesk at (228) 365-7792 or via email at helpdesk@mrha8.org. You can also watch video tutorials here: <https://vimeo.com/834147141?share=copy>

What is the lottery?

SMHA conducts an electronic lottery for the Housing Choice Voucher when the waitlist is opened. Each application is assigned a number, and a computer program randomly selects the lottery winners, that is, the number of applicants to which SMHA estimates will be able to provide housing assistance.

- When SMHA conducts a lottery, all applications in the lottery pool have an equal chance of being selected.
- Only the total number of applicants in the lottery pool impacts your chance of being selected as a lottery winner. No application has a better chance of being selected than another.
- Applicants selected in the lottery are added to South MS Housing Authority wait list. *Preference points are added after lottery selection.
- Those not selected in the lottery are not added to the wait list and can re-apply the next time the wait list opens.

What are Preference Points?

PHAs are permitted to establish local preferences, and to give priority to serving families that meet those criteria. HUD specifically authorizes and places restrictions on certain types of local preferences. HUD also permits the PHA to establish other local preferences, at its discretion. Any local preferences established must be consistent with the PHA plan and the consolidated plan and must be based on local housing needs and priorities that can be documented by generally accepted data sources. All other Applicants are selected by the preference, date and time the completed application is received by PHA.

The PHA provides an aggregate preference system and has the following local preferences:

1. Super Preferences: (50 points) The following will be considered "super preferences", which means that the following persons will be allowed to apply to the MRHA VIII online applicant portal by referral, and applications will be accepted and reviewed regardless of whether the HCV waiting list is open or not. A voucher will be issued only if there is a voucher available.

*The PHA will offer a super preference to families living in the PHA's public housing unit, RAD unit or other PBV unit who have been displaced and where there is no safe alternative in the public housing program, or another RAD or PBV site available for transfer. This preference will only be offered if there is an available voucher and funding is available. This preference will be offered regardless of whether the family was on the housing choice voucher waiting list. The family must meet the definition of "continuously assisted" under the 1937 Housing Act.

2. Natural Disaster Preference (25 points): Those who have been displaced by a federally declared natural disaster and who are still without adequate housing may qualify for this preference. Such federally declared disaster must have occurred or a family must have been displaced because of a presidentially

declared natural disaster occurring no more than 180 days prior to the application date. MRHA VIII must be able to verify the displacement and the disaster from a third-party city, state, or federal agency that is familiar with both the disaster and the family's circumstances.

*Adequate housing is described as housing that is intended as permanent housing and sufficient in unit size so that the PHA does not consider the family significantly under housed. Adequate housing includes a place for a stove, refrigerator and bathroom which includes a toilet, sink, and shower or bathtub.

3. Disabled Preference:(15 points)- A disabled family whose head or spouse or sole member is a person with disabilities; or two or more persons with disabilities; or one or more persons with disabilities with one or more live-in aides.

4. Elderly Preference:(15 points)- An elderly family whose head, co-head, spouse, or sole member is at least sixty-two (62) years of age; or two or more persons, each of whom are at least 62, living together; or one or more persons who are at least 62 living with one or more live-in aides.

5. Families with children: (15 points) - There must be at least one person in the household under 18 years old.

*The above 3 preferences will not have points combined together, however, either of the 3 applicable categories may be aggregated with any of the PHA's other local preferences.

6. Working Preference:(10 points)- A family whose head, spouse, co-head, or sole member is currently employed and has worked an average of 30 hours per week for the previous 6 months at the time eligibility is determined. However, an applicant must be given the benefit of the working family preference if the head and spouse, or sole member is age 62 or older, or is a person with disabilities.

7. Homeless Preference:(10 points)-A family or individual meeting HUD's definition of Homelessness. This preference must be verified through a 3rd party. i.e. CoC-Continuum of Care.

8. Residency Preference:(5 points)- A family whose head, co-head, spouse, or sole member resides in any of the 14 counties in the jurisdiction prior to the date of application. Applicants who are working or who have been notified that they are hired to work in a residency preference area will be treated as residents of the residency preference area.

9. Veteran:(5 points)- A family or individual verified as a Veteran through Veterans Affairs or as a state veteran as a person who served in the active military, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.

All other Applicants are selected by the date and time the completed application is received by PHA

Who's Eligible?

The PHA is responsible for ensuring that every individual and family admitted to the HCV program meets all program eligibility requirements. This includes any individual approved to join the family after the family has been admitted to the program. The family must provide any information needed by the PHA to confirm eligibility and determine the level of the family's assistance. To be eligible for the HCV program, the applicant family must:

- Qualify as a family as defined by HUD and the PHA.
- Have income at or below HUD-specified income limits.
- Qualify based on citizenship or the eligible immigrant status of family members.

If you or anyone in your family is a person with disabilities, and you require a specific accommodation in order to fully utilize our programs and services, please contact the housing authority.



- Provide social security number information for household members as required.
- Consent to the PHA's collection and use of family information as provided for in PHA-provided consent forms.
- Not currently receiving a duplicative subsidy.
- The PHA must determine that the current or past behavior of household members does not include activities that are prohibited by HUD or the PHA.

What Documents Are Required?

To be eligible for the HCV program, the applicant family must also provide the following additional documentation:

- Birth Certificate & SS Card for everyone in the household.
- Picture ID for everyone in the household 18 years or older.
- Tax Transcript for everyone in the household 18 years or older.
- Proof of Income for all household members (SS, SSI, Two current check stubs, retirement, alimony, child support, contributions, self-employment income, etc.).
- Current Bank Statement

What Counties do you serve?

- South MS Housing Authority currently serves the following counties: Covington, Forrest, George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Jones, Lamar, Marion, Pearl River, Perry, Stone, and Wayne.

What is Portability?

Within the limitations of the regulations and this plan, a participant family or an applicant family that has been issued a voucher has the right to use tenant-based voucher assistance to lease a unit anywhere in the United States providing that the unit is located within the jurisdiction of a PHA administering a tenant-based voucher program [24 CFR 982.353(b)]. The process by which a family obtains a voucher from one PHA and uses it to lease a unit in the jurisdiction of another PHA is known as portability.

MRHA VIII Policy:

- The family must lease a unit within the initial PHA's jurisdiction for at least 12 months before requesting portability.
- The PHA will consider exceptions to this policy for purposes of reasonable accommodation (see Chapter 2) or reasons related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, or human trafficking.

Need a status update?

Get status updates on SMHA Portal @ www.southmississippihousing.org.

Registered and can't get into the portal? Get technical assistance @ helpdesk@mrha8.org.

If you or anyone in your family is a person with disabilities, and you require a specific accommodation in order to fully utilize our programs and services, please contact the housing authority.

