

# Landlord Link

The Housing Authority of the City  
of Santa Barbara

## Section 8 Myths

In our day-to-day operations, we occasionally come across misconceptions about the Section 8 program. We thought we'd take this opportunity to dispel some of the common ones.

*Section 8 tenants are more problematic than open-market tenants.* This can be the case with a very small percentage of families, just as it can be the case with non-Section 8 families. We strongly encourage landlords to screen prospective Section 8 tenants in the same way that they screen other tenants. If they fail your screening, you can refuse to rent to them. If a Section 8 tenant violates their lease, they not only risk losing their home, but also their Section 8 rental assistance.

*If a landlord rents to one voucher holder, they are obligated to rent to all voucher holders.* Landlords are

(Continued on page 2)



## In the words of a Section 8 Landlord...

*Meridian Group, formerly known as BDC Management, has been working with the Housing Authority and Section 8 Program for many years. While some of the staff members may have changed throughout the years, the relationship between the Housing Authority and Meridian Group has been a positive one in working together to achieve financial goals for the owners and providing affordable housing for tenants in the community. During the past 12-18 months, we have experienced variances in the rental market which increased our tenant move-out/move-in activity. We manage several buildings that participate in the Section 8 Program and we have relied heavily upon the Housing authority staff to assist us with application paperwork, unit inspections, and payment processing. The Housing Authority staff is always courteous and prompt with our requests, which makes our job easier! Over the years, we have encountered a few deaths of Section 8 tenants as well as a few evictions. Through both of these unfortunate situations, the process was handled professionally and efficiently by the Housing Authority team. While a death or an eviction can be emotional, the business side of the matter must remain in focus and the Housing Authority staff always makes sure to coordinate the paperwork with us to ensure proper payments are made to the owners. We appreciate their efforts particularly during these instances. Overall, our experience with the Housing Authority and the Section 8 Program has been positive and we look forward to a continued long-term working relationship.*

Karen Quinn  
Property Supervisor

Robert V. Kooyman  
President

## Advertising Vacancies...Keep Clear of Discriminatory Language

### What words and phrases can I use, and which must I avoid, in advertising my rentals?

Fair housing laws prohibit the making, printing and publishing of advertisements which state a preference, limitation or discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, handicap, sexual orientation, familial status, source of income or national origin. The prohibition applies to publishers as well as to those who place rental advertisements. Here is a summary of HUD's policy guidance on advertising:

1. **RACE, COLOR, NATIONAL ORIGIN:** Do not use words that describe the housing, the current or potential residents, or the neighbors or neighborhood in racial or ethnic terms. Ads with neutral phrases are OK.
2. **RELIGION:** An ad should not contain explicit preference, limitation or discrimination based on religion.
3. **SEX/GENDER:** Ads for single family dwellings or separate units in a multifamily dwelling should contain no explicit preference, limitation or discrimination based on gender.
4. **DISABILITY/HANDICAP:** It is ok to run ads with descriptions of properties, services, facilities or neighborhoods and ads that describe required resident conduct. Ads should not contain explicit exclusions, limitations, or other indications of discrimination based on disability. Ads that contain descriptions of accessible features are lawful.
5. **FAMILIAL STATUS:** Ads should neither limit the number or ages of children, nor state a preference for adults, couples or singles.

Learn more at: California Department of Fair Employment and Housing ([www.dfeh.ca.gov](http://www.dfeh.ca.gov)), HUD ([www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov)) or contact an attorney familiar with fair housing law.

## Section 8 Myths continued...

not obligated to rent to more than one voucher holder.

*Section 8 rents are low in comparison with open market rents, and there is a lot of paperwork for landlords who accept the program. We feel the recent increase in our Fair Market Rents are comparable to open market rents. More importantly, Housing Authority's rent is guaranteed to be on time and the tenant is paying an affordable rent—this equals dependable rental*

income. Sometimes higher rent equals more turnover, less income. The main obligation of the landlord to the Housing Authority is to be in compliance with the HQS inspection and to sign paperwork for initial lease-up.

We are always looking for ideas and suggestions to improve the Program to fit the needs of our Landlords, so please feel free to contact us!

# New Affordable Housing!

The Housing Authority has partnered with the Mental Health Association of Santa Barbara County in a new affordable housing development, Garden Street Apartments, located at 617 Garden Street. The project, consisting of 51 studio, 1 and 2 bedroom units, is designed to provide affordable housing solutions for a mix of special needs residents and downtown workers. Garden Street Apartments will offer on-site supportive services for residents, as well as be the new home to many of Mental Health Association's

programs, including the Fellowship Club, a socialization, rehabilitation and recovery center. Garden Street Apartments is also targeting lower income individuals gainfully employed within Santa Barbara's downtown business district, with preference for those who don't own or use a vehicle. Construction is due to be completed at the end of November with new residents moving in by December 1, 2008. Applications may be picked up at the Housing Authority main office at 808 Laguna Street.

## Inspector's Corner...Rent Increases

Rent increases is a topic that we speak to landlords about almost on a daily basis. As a reminder, the Housing Authority (and tenant) must be provided a copy of a rent increase at least 60 days in advance of any rent change. As of 2003, the Housing Authority's policy on rent increases has been 5% per year. In 2003, HUD suffered major budget cuts that forced many Housing Authorities to stop approving rent increases altogether. Fortunately, we were able to allow a substantial 5% per year rent increase policy. A 2% to 3% rent increase per year is usually considered the norm for this area. The Housing Authority may deny a 5% increase if the rent is at or above the current rental rates and try to negotiate a more suitable increase. We encourage landlords to request a rent increase on an annual basis, hopefully with the intention of keeping their rents fair and properties in good working condition. Please feel free to contact us with any comments, suggestions or questions!

Ramon Escobedo, Housing Authority Inspector



## Security Deposit Loans

The Housing Authority is happy to announce that we have partnered with City of Santa Barbara to secure additional funds to assist Section 8 participants with no-interest security deposit loans. One of the greatest barriers to renting a unit for our families is coming up with the large security deposits. This new program is targeted to very low income families who lease a unit

within the City limits. In addition, our other security deposit loan program, whose resources were previously 100% utilized, now has funds available. Security deposits are paid directly to the landlord upon lease up, and the tenant makes payments on the loan to the Housing Authority. Please contact our office for more information about these programs.



We're on the Web!

[www.hacsb.org](http://www.hacsb.org)



## The Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara

808 Laguna Street  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Phone: 805-965-1071

Fax: 805-564-7041

[www.hacsb.org](http://www.hacsb.org)

### OUR MISSION:

The Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara is a local public agency created under state law for the purpose of providing safe, decent, and quality affordable housing and supportive services to eligible persons with limited incomes, through a variety of federal, state, local and private resources.

### OUR VISION:

The Housing Authority does more than handle the day-to-day demands of providing affordable housing solutions to lower income families, seniors and the disabled. We strive to craft solutions to our community's affordable housing dilemma in a holistic manner and turn them into a reality.

# News Flash!

## List Your Vacancies...FREE!

The Housing Authority maintains a **FREE** listing service for your vacancies. If you want to fill a vacancy quickly, add it to our list which is sent out to all Voucher holders currently looking for a unit. Please contact Ramon Escobedo at 897-1049 or go to our website at [www.hacsb.org](http://www.hacsb.org) to list your unit.

## Who to Call...

For HAP contract/lease-up questions:  
Andrea Fink, 897-1034

For inspection questions: Ramon  
Escobedo, 897-1049 or Ronnie  
Anderson, 897-1045

For HAP payment questions: Ruben  
Venegas, 897-1046

Director of Housing Management:  
Veronica Loza, 897-1032

## New Staff

We'd like to introduce the newest member of our Housing Authority staff, Teresa Alvaro. Teresa will most likely be the person you speak to when you call our main line, 965-1071—she is managing the phones for the entire agency. Please say "hello" to Teresa the next time you call in!

## Housing Authority Office Hours

As a reminder, the Housing Authority works a flex schedule, with alternate Fridays closed to the public. We also have extended daily customer service hours:

Monday—Thursday:

7:30 am - 5:30 pm

Alternate Fridays:

8:00 am - 4:00 pm

## Furniture Closet

Providing housing to families is a great accomplishment—but we discovered that many of the families we assist move into their new home with little or no furnishings. The Housing Authority's Department of Resident Services began working diligently with local non-profit organizations, private businesses and citizens of Santa Barbara to secure home furnishing donations. These donations are set aside for recently housed families, seniors and disabled residents in need. Everything from kitchenware, sofas, dressers, tables, chairs to televisions have been donated. If you have furniture in good condition that you would like to donate, or know of a tenant in need, please contact Angel Velazquez or Marcus Lopez at 897-1044.