



# TENANT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## WHAT IS THE SUPPORTIVE HOUSING CONNECTION (SHC)?

The SHC is a partnership between the New Jersey Department of Human Services (NJ DHS) and the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (NJ DCA) to administer NJ DHS rental subsidies and connect its clients to quality housing opportunities across the state.

Additionally, the SHC conducts inspections of participating housing units to ensure their physical integrity and compliance with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Housing Quality Standards. The SHC also provides resident inquiry resolution services for tenants and landlords, as needed.

The goal of the SHC is to provide access to affordable housing for New Jersey residents with special needs by consolidating NJ DHS's rental subsidy resources into one location for convenient and efficient management.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SHC?

1. SHC connects individuals served by NJ DHS to a broader pool of housing opportunities through the New Jersey Housing Resource Center (NJHRC.gov).
2. SHC will assist individuals and families served in this program to establish leases, which will protect their rights as tenants under NJ law. Through its inspections, the SHC will ensure that participants live in safe, high quality housing.
3. By assisting in the separation of housing and services, as well as facilitating lease-based housing in a variety of settings, the SHC will help ensure that housing supported by NJ DHS follows national best practices and NJ's compliance with the CMS Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Final Rule.

## HOW DOES THE SHC AFFECT ME?

### WHAT REMAINS THE SAME:

- The SHC will not change your supportive services.
- Who receives subsidy will still be determined by DHS.

### WHAT HAS CHANGED:

- You have more resources and tools to find a suitable housing unit.
  - o New Jersey Housing Resource Center ([www.njhrc.gov](http://www.njhrc.gov), available in 72 languages online)

- o New Jersey Housing Resource Center's Toll-Free Call Center 1-877-428-8844 (available in English and Spanish)
- You will receive communication directly from the SHC regarding your subsidy.
- You will be able to contact the SHC regarding unresolved housing issues.
- The amount of your subsidy will be determined by the SHC.
- Your rental subsidy will be paid by the SHC to your landlord.
- The SHC will conduct initial and annual inspections of your unit.

## ARE THERE NEW SUBSIDIES?

The SHC will administer rental subsidies with existing funds provided by NJ DHS. Should there be any new housing assistance subsidies or programs available to NJ DHS clients, the SHC will administer them accordingly.

## HOW ARE CONTRACT RENTS DETERMINED?

Contract rents are determined by the landlords, and may not exceed the rents listed in the NJ DHS Subsidy Program Rent Schedule. The SHC does not set rents.

## WHAT IS THE LEASING PROCESS?

After you receive your welcome package, you have 90 days to find a unit. Your service provider may assist you in locating a unit. If you need additional assistance, you may browse the New Jersey Housing Resource Center at [www.njhrc.gov](http://www.njhrc.gov), or you may call the SHC at 1-844-216-6988. Once you have identified a unit, the SHC will inspect the unit to make sure it is safe and suitable for occupancy. As soon as you are informed that the unit has passed inspection, the SHC will perform an income review, and will collect your signed Tenant's Rental Subsidy Agreement, the executed lease, and all income documents. Lastly, the SHC will inform you of your contribution to rent, as well as the subsidy's contribution, and will clear you to move in to your unit. Please be aware that tenants should not sign a lease until after a unit has passed the inspection!

## WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO TO FIND HOUSING?

As a tenant, it is your responsibility, with the assistance of your service provider, to find a unit. If you need assistance in locating potential units, you may log onto the New Jersey Housing Resource Center's website at [www.njhrc.gov](http://www.njhrc.gov), or you

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may call the SHC at 1-844-216-6988 for assistance. The New Jersey Housing Resource Center is a searchable database of affordable units throughout the State of New Jersey. It is available online in 72 different languages, and has a toll-free call center with representatives available who speak both English and Spanish (1-877-428-8844).

## **WHO DO I CONTACT IF MY LANDLORD SAYS HE DIDN'T RECEIVE THE RENTAL SUBSIDY FOR MY UNIT OR IF IT'S AN INCORRECT AMOUNT?**

You don't need to do anything. Your landlord should directly contact the SHC toll-free at 1-844-216-6988 or email [SHC-CustomerService@dca.nj.gov](mailto:SHC-CustomerService@dca.nj.gov) to reach a staff member who will assist your landlord.

## **CAN I MOVE OUT DURING A LEASE TERM?**

First and foremost, you need to follow the provisions of your lease agreement with respect to moving out of your unit during the lease term.

Before considering any move, you must contact the SHC. Your family must be in compliance with family obligations and the terms of your lease to transfer to a new unit, and there must be a unit available.

## **COULD I GET EVICTED FOR NON-PAYMENT OF RENT?**

As a tenant, you have all the rights and responsibilities granted to you under NJ law. You could get evicted by your landlord for non-payment of rent and/or the following additional reasons:

- Serious or repeated violations of the lease
- Violation of local, state, or federal laws applicable to the tenant's occupancy of the unit
- Violent criminal behavior by the tenant, a household member, or guest that threatens other residents or persons residing near the unit
- Drug-related criminal activity

It is your responsibility to know your rights and responsibilities under the lease agreement and you can also contact the SHC toll free at 1-844-216-6988 or email [SHC-CustomerService@dca.nj.gov](mailto:SHC-CustomerService@dca.nj.gov) in regard to these matters.

## **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I DON'T WANT TO RENEW MY LEASE AFTER THE FIRST YEAR?**

If you do not want to renew your lease after the first year, you must let the SHC know at least 90 days prior to your lease expiration date. It is your responsibility, with the assistance of your service provider, to locate a new unit. If you need assistance in locating potential units, contact the SHC.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF MY UNIT DOESN'T PASS THE ANNUAL INSPECTION?**

After a failed annual inspection we will send a letter to your landlord scheduling a re-inspection 30 days from the date of the failed inspection. If the re-inspection fails, the subsidy payment will be abated effective the first day of the month following the fail date. Your landlord may request a third inspection, but the rent will continue to be abated until the unit passes inspection. The abatement will only be lifted if the unit passes. However, if the unit does not pass due to tenant-caused damage, rent will not be abated.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF A UNIT DOESN'T PASS INSPECTION BUT THE FAIL ITEMS ARE MY RESPONSIBILITY?**

As the tenant, and in accordance with your lease, you are responsible for any damage that you cause to your unit. If the unit fails inspection for a reason that is determined by the SHC to be the tenant's responsibility, the SHC will contact you to ensure that you address any damage that you have caused to the unit.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF I CAN'T PAY UTILITIES FOR WHICH I AM RESPONSIBLE?**

As the tenant, if you are responsible for utilities you must be sure they are paid. If you are unable to pay your utilities, please contact your service provider and the SHC immediately.

## **WHAT TYPES OF SUPPORTS ARE PROVIDED TO ME?**

The SHC does not determine the supports received by an individual. The types of supports and frequency of face-to-face visits will continue to be determined by the needs of the tenant and in accordance with NJDHS policies. If you need more assistance than you are currently receiving, you can contact the DHS Office of Housing or other resources such as [www.NJHelps.org](http://www.NJHelps.org) or 211.

## **HOW DO I KNOW HOW TO CONTACT THE SHC?**

Again, please feel free to contact the SHC at 1-844-216-6988 or [SHC-CustomerService@dca.nj.gov](mailto:SHC-CustomerService@dca.nj.gov).