

# CHA Bulletin

Published by Caribou Housing Authority for Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Participants and Landlords  
Spring 2018



**Caribou Housing  
Authority**  
25 High Street  
Caribou ME 04736

**Lisa Plourde**  
Executive Director  
[lplourde@cariboumaine.org](mailto:lplourde@cariboumaine.org)

**Sue Ouellette**  
FSS & Homeownership  
Coordinator  
[souellette@cariboumaine.org](mailto:souellette@cariboumaine.org)

**Telephone:**  
(207) 493-4234

**Fax:**  
(207) 376-0178

**Hours:**  
Monday – Friday  
8AM – 4:30 PM



## Notice of Public Hearings: 2018 Section 8 Administration Plan & 2018 Family Self-Sufficiency Action Plan

On Wednesday, April 25, 2018 at 6PM, the Caribou Housing Authority will be holding two Public Hearings. One on the 2018 Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Administration Plan and the other one the 2018 Family Self-Sufficiency Action Plan.

Both Plans are required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The purpose of the Plans is to establish discretionary policies for carrying out the day-to-day activities of the Section 8 Program and the Family Self-Sufficiency Program in a manner that is consistent with HUD requirements and local goals and objectives in the Housing Authority's Agency Plan.

Copies of the Section 8 Administration Plan and the Family Self-Sufficiency Action Plan can be viewed during regular office hours at the Caribou Housing Authority office located at 25 High Street, Caribou, ME: and on the CHA website at <http://www.cariboumaine.org/index.php/departments/caribou-housing-agency-2/policies-procedures/>

(continued page 3)

## Updated: Payment Standards

Effective November 1, 2017, Caribou Housing Authority adopted the updated payment standards.

Voucher Size:	0	1	2	3	4
(Bedrooms)					
Payment Standard:	\$548	\$602	\$697	\$927	\$1,011

Please keep in mind, that the “basic” definition of a Payment Standard is the average gross rent of a unit size with all utilities included.

## April is Fair Housing Month

The month of April is National Fair Housing Month. This month is a designated time to recognize the advancement of equal housing access and to remind ourselves of the purpose of Fair Housing Act. Enacted by Congress in 1968, the Fair Housing Act applies to housing and housing-related activities including:

- Apartment and home rentals
- Mortgage lending
- Home owner's insurance
- Real estate sales.



The Fair Housing Act was enacted to protect persons from housing related discrimination on the basis, of race, color, religion, sex, nationality, familial status (children), disability or ancestry.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), two million instances of housing discrimination are estimated to take place each year across the nation. Despite this, less than two percent of those instances are reported as many renters and homebuyers do not fully understand what activities are illegal under the Fair Housing Act.

### Examples of discrimination under the Fair Housing Act include:

- Refusal to rent or sell housing
- Refusal to negotiate for housing
- Making housing unavailable
- Setting different terms, conditions or privileges for sale or rental of a property
- Providing different housing services or facilities
- Falsely denying housing is available for inspection, sale or rental of a property
- Advertising or making any statement that indicates a limitation or preference based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, disability, or ancestry. This prohibition applies to single family and owner-occupied housing that is otherwise exempt from the Fair Housing Act.

### Fair Housing Resources

- **Office of the Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity**

To learn more about the office of Fair Housing rights or to file a Fair Housing violation complaint, visit [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/fair\\_housing\\_equal\\_opp](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp). You may also contact the Housing Discrimination Hotline via email at [fheo-webmanager@hud.gov](mailto:fheo-webmanager@hud.gov) or at 1-800-669-777 (Voice) or 1-800-927-9275 (TTY)

- **Maine Human Rights Commission**

The Maine Human Rights Commission will encourage and endeavor to bring about respect, tolerance, and mutual understanding among all citizens of Maine regardless of their race, gender, religious persuasion, ethnicity, or disability. The Commission will administer and ensure adherence to, through education, investigation, mediation, and adjudication, the Human Rights Act which prohibits discrimination in employment, housing, and places of public accommodation. Learn more at <http://www.maine.gov/mhrc/index.shtml>.

## Public Hearings: Administration Plan (cont. page 1)

### Summary of Proposed Changes to Section 8 Policies

Caribou Housing Authority's changes to this Section 8 policies (aka, the Administration Plan) are important because they may directly affect participants, landlords, and applicants for the Section 8 Program. A couple of majority proposed changes is included here. Please visit the Caribou Housing Authority's website, for a complete list of the proposed changes.

- Eligibility (Chapter 3)
  - Absent Family Members, temporarily absences of individual family members for more than 30 days in a 45-day period must be approved by Caribou Housing.
- Briefings with Changes (Chapter 5)
  - Family Obligations
    - If the family is found to owe the landlord money for damages (current or back), the amount must be paid in full (no more than 30 days), or termination may start on the voucher.
    - If the family is found to owe the landlord rent (current or back), the rent must be paid in full, before the Housing Authority will issue the family a voucher to move.
- Housing Quality Standards (Chapter 8):
  - Carbon Monoxide Detectors must be installed within 15 feet of all bedrooms and powered by both electrical service and battery backup or a non-replaceable 10-year battery.
  - GFCI outlets that do not trip when tested with a tester, will be a "Fail". If the GFCI outlet is not grounded, (i.e., due to age of unit), it must be labeled properly – "Not Grounded".
  - Health Concerns, the inspectors may choose not to perform an inspection, when scheduled, if they determine that a unit contain any health hazards (i.e. flu, blood, bugs, etc.) that may constitute a threat to their health and safety. The unit will be rescheduled at a later date, to give the tenant or landlord a chance to clean up the health containments.
  - Smoke Detectors, hard-wired with battery backup, must be installed on all floors including the basement and enclosed interior common hallways in units.
- Moving with Changes (Chapter 10)
  - Restrictions on Elective Moves, the housing Authority will deny a family to move if they are not a tenant in good standing. A tenant is NOT in good standing in the following situations: damages to the unit exceeding or greater than one month's rent, debt to the landlords of 3 or more month's rent, or the court determines the participant has committed serious violations of the lease.

## New Section 8 Waiting List



### MAINE CENTRALIZED SECTION 8/HCV WAITING LIST

Caribou Housing Authority is now available on the Maine Centralized Section 8/HCV Waiting List. Applicants can now apply online to the Section 8 Waiting List through <http://mainesection8centralwaitlist.org/dup/> from their home, library or any other location with an internet connection. All an applicant needs is their own unique email address.

Applicants only need to apply for the waiting list once, and are automatically placed on the list and available for selection by all participating housing authorities. Housing Authorities then select eligible Section 8/HCV applicants from this list, using their own program preference and priorities. If an applicant doesn't have internet or an email address, the new application can be picked up a local housing authority.



## Section 8 Participants: Remember to Report Every Change to Your Income

It is very important that you notify Caribou Housing Authority of any change to your income within 10 days of the change. To protect your housing assistance, always report any new or changed income, including (but not limited to):

- Employment wages, including changes to your pay or the number of hours you work;
- Child support payments received;
- Social Security (SS), Social Security Disability Income (SSDI), and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI);
- Money received from family or friends, including bills paid by anyone outside of your household.

Changes must be reported in writing using the Tenant Information Form available in the Caribou Housing Office.

Failure to report changes in income can result in unfortunate consequences, including:

- Being required to repay the Housing Authority
- Termination from the Section 8 Program
- Prosecution for fraud

If you have any questions about whether or not you need to report something, contact the Caribou Housing Authority.

## Landlords: Help Us Protect the Integrity of the Section 8 Program

The Section 8 Program would not be possible without the ongoing participation of the property owners and landlords. Through the partnership between property owners and Caribou Housing Authority, families obtain affordable and safe housing. Property owners also help us to protect the integrity of the program by informing us when there is a problem with an assisted tenant that Caribou Housing may need to address. Some of the issues you should always report to Caribou Housing are:

- Unauthorized persons living in the unit (anyone not listed on your lease or on the Section 8 paperwork).
- Lease violations that result in notices to the tenant (such as late or non-payment of rent, disturbance of neighbors, damage to the unit, and other lease violations).
  - Please remember to send Caribou Housing a copy of any notice you issue the tenant.
- Deceased tenants, especially if the deceased person is the only person on the lease.

Not reporting these issues can be a violation of the property owner's obligations under the Section 8 Program, so it is very important to report them to the Caribou Housing when they occur.

## Don't Get Shocked

May is National Electrical Safety Month, and in recognition of the occasion, we are raising awareness about potential home electrical hazards and the importance of electrical safety. An average of 51,000 electrical home structure fires occur each year, claiming almost 500 lives, injuring more than 1,400 people and causing more than \$1.3 billion in property damage each year, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). In addition, the US Consumer Product Safety Commission reports that nearly 400 people are electrocuted in the United States each year

Please take the time to check your home for these potentially hazardous electrical situations:

### Inside the Home:

- Inspect electrical cords often for broken connectors or fraying.
- Throw away any worn cords to eliminate the possibility of shock, short circuit or fire.
- Don't overload power outlets.
- The wattage of the bulbs you use in your home should match the wattage indicated on the light fixture. Overheated fixtures can lead to a fire.
- When trying to unplug something from an outlet, pull on the plug, not the cord.
- Keep in mind that turned off appliances are still connected to electricity until they are unplugged. To clean or repair these appliances always unplug them first.
- Use extension cords only for short-term purposes, and make sure the cord is adequately suited for the amount of electricity it will be transferring.
- Turn off and unplug all portable electrical appliances, like hairdryers, irons and shavers, when you're finished using them.
- Be familiar with the location of your breaker box and make sure the switches are clearly labeled so you can shut off electricity quickly in the event of an emergency.

### Outside the Home:

- If there is a downed power line nearby, leave the area immediately and call 911.
- If others are around, let them know that they need to stay away.
- "Never use electrical equipment near any wet areas, such as pools or ponds.

Safety is a year-round responsibility, but take the time right now to recognize National Electrical Safety Month by checking your home for potential risks. It only takes a few minutes to make sure you won't become one of these troubling statistics.





## Got Housing Questions?

### Q. When can I request a rent increase for my Section 8 tenant?

A. In general, you may request a rent increase any time after the initial 1-year lease has expired. Caribou Housing is prohibited from approving any rent increase during the initial 1-year lease for any reason, including the addition of more persons to the lease.

If you want to increase the rent after the initial 1-year lease, you must submit your request to Caribou Housing Authority a minimum of 60 days before the rent increase will go into effect. Caribou Housing must verify that the increase is reasonable before approving it. Caribou Housing will notify you of the determination in writing, and – if approved – the increase will go into effect on the first day of the month following the 60-day period after you requested the rent change OR the date you specified, whichever is later.

### Q. My Section 8 tenant want to add someone to their lease. I've approved them. Can they move in right away?

A. No. The tenant must get written approval from both the landlord and the Caribou Housing Authority before the new household member can move in. The Caribou Housing Authority will not approve the new member until the person passes the required background check and has received written approval from the landlord. Once the new household member has been approved by both the Landlord and the Housing Authority, the Authority will issue a written notice of approval adding the new member to the Section 8 Assistance.

---

## Celebrating National Homeownership Month.

In 2002, President George W. Bush proclaimed June as the **National Homeownership Month**, where the goal is to help families achieve the American Dream.

For many families, owning a home has come to symbolize the realization of the American Dream. A home is an important financial investment, a place of shelter where memories are made, and a source of great personal pride. However, for some families, the thought of purchasing a home and being a homeowner can be a scary thought, especially for families with low to moderate income.



In 2008, the Caribou Housing Authority implemented a program called the Section 8 Homeownership Program, which was designed to support families transitioning from renting a home to homeownership. Caribou Housing continues to support families through the Section 8 Homeownership Program and assists with mortgage payments. When a family can improve its circumstances in such a way that they are able to move from requiring rental assistance to owning their own home, we know that our services are working to improve lives for Caribou residents. Because, when one family thrives, we all thrive.

If you are a current Section 8 Participant with Caribou Housing Authority and are interested in participating in the Section 8 Homeownership Program, please contact the office at (207) 493-4234 or [housing@cariboumaine.org](mailto:housing@cariboumaine.org) to get started. We can't wait to help you on your path to successful homeownership.

## Tips: Bed Bug Prevention and Control



Bed bugs have become an increasing problem for many families around the country. It is important to be able to identify if you have a bed bug problem, and what steps to take to eliminate them and to prevent them from returning.

Bed bugs are reddish brown in color, flat, and oval-shaped. They are about ¼ inch long, which is about the size of an apple seed. They often leave behind tiny, rust-colored stains that have a syrup-like smell, similar to soda, or black specks. Look for signs of bugs here:

- On mattress tags and seams
- On ceilings
- Under seat cushions
- Behind headboards
- In tiny cracks and crevices
- Around light switches

Bed bugs like to settle close to their food source...which is you! During the day, they do not live in the bed, but often hide within 5 feet of the bed. Make sure to check under your mattress and bed frame, near baseboards, behind picture frames, in night stands, under buckling wallpaper or carpet, and in the areas with excessive heat or moisture.

Although bed bugs do not transmit disease, they do bite, draw blood, and can cause welts and itching. Just the fact that you are sharing a bed with these bugs can cause much anxiety and anguish. There are many ways to prevent them:

- Clear any clutter such as paper or trash.
- Be sure to inspect any second-hand furniture you receive.
- Do not bring discarded furniture into your unit.
- Inspect your luggage after traveling.
- Dry your cloths on high heat.
- Inspect your unit regularly, especially after moving in or after trips.

IF YOU HAVE AN INFESTATION, NOTIFY YOUR LANDLORD IMMEDIATELY. For more information on bed bugs, see the state of Maine's page at <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/bedbugs/>.

### Upcoming Events at Caribou Housing Authority

Date	Event
Monday, April 16	Holiday, Patriot's Day – Office Closed
Wednesday, April 25	Board of Commissioner's Meeting & Public Hearings at 6 PM at Caribou City Council Chambers
Monday, May 28	Holiday, Memorial Day – Office Closed
Wednesday, May 30	Office Closing at Noon
Thursday, May 31	Office Closing at Noon
Friday, June 15	Office Closed

---

## **Did you remember to update the Housing Authority?**

To be able to assist landlords in an efficient manner, the Housing Authority requires that landlords report any updates to their ownership status.

The following updates must be reported in writing:

- Change in ownership name, person to be paid;
- Change in owner's mailing address;
- Change in owner's telephone phone number;
- Change in ownership of rental unit.

Written correspondence to update owner information must include and authorized owner or agent signature.

All correspondence can be: mailed to Caribou Housing Authority, 25 High Street, Caribou ME 04736.; emailed to [housing@ caribouamine.org](mailto:housing@caribouamine.org); or fax to (207) 376-0178.

---

**Caribou Housing Authority**  
**25 High Street**  
**Caribou ME 04736**

