



Housing Allowance/Rent Supplement Program FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS for Tenants and Applicants

1. **How does the Housing Allowance/Rent Supplement (HA/RS) Program differ from the regular rent-geared-to-income program?**

The HA/RS Program is a supplement payment that Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) makes directly to the landlord to reduce the rent that you (the tenant) has to pay. The HA/RS Program is temporary and is only available until March 31, 2013. The supplement is intended to lower housing costs while you remain on the Affordable Housing Wait List. Once you accept a permanent rent-geared-to-income unit, you will be required to move to that unit, moving out of the Housing Allowance/Rent Supplement unit.

2. **What is the maximum amount that NRH can pay to the landlord?**

Families are eligible for a supplement to a maximum of \$300 per month for up to 3 years based on income and shelter costs. Adults without dependants are eligible for a supplement to a maximum of \$250 per month for up to 5 years based on income and shelter costs.

3. **Should I give notice now to my current landlord?**

No. You will be contacted directly by Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) staff when a unit that fits your needs is available based on your position on the Affordable Housing Wait List. At that time, if the unit is acceptable, NRH staff will notify you to give the required sixty (60) days notice to your current landlord.

4. I am on a priority list right now. Does that assist me in getting a unit sooner?

For the HA/RS program, NRH staff is contacting people on the Affordable Housing Wait List that applied after 2004. We are following the order in which names were placed on the Affordable Housing Wait List since that time. This is known as the chronological (ie. first-come, first-serve) category.

Staff will not refer "priority status" applicants to the HA/RS program, as they are already fast tracked into accommodations on an urgent basis.

5. I am listed as a single adult on the Affordable Housing Wait List . Can I apply for a 2-bedroom unit with a roommate?

No. NRH staff is using the same criteria for housing needs as applied under the Affordable Housing Wait List.

Should you wish to add an additional person to your application, both of you will need to complete a new application and supply appropriate information. If the additional person qualifies, they will be added to your original application.

6. When will I be offered a unit?

NRH staff is working with private landlords that are interested in participating in the program. As units become available, staff will notify applicants. As with the Affordable Housing Wait List, staff cannot estimate when units will become available.

7. How do I know how much subsidy my household qualifies for?

Calculations on subsidy amounts will be based upon income and the amount of the market rent plus utilities. Depending on the source of income and the rent plus the cost of utilities, families

may qualify for up to \$300 per month for a maximum of 3 years. Adults without dependants may qualify for up to \$250 to a maximum of 5 years.

8. How long will I have to decide if I want an offered unit?

If you live in Niagara you will have 2 days to view and accept the unit. If you live outside Niagara you will have up to 4 days to view and accept the unit.

9. If I don't want the unit offered to me, what happens?

NRH staff will contact the next eligible household to view the unit. Your name will remain on this program's waiting list and you will be offered another unit based on availability and position on the waiting list. You're permitted a maximum of 2 units to consider. If the second offer is refused, your name will be removed from this particular program. However, you continue to remain on the Affordable Housing Wait List for rent-geared-to-income accommodation.

10. If I don't participate in the HA/RS program, or if I turn down 2 units and am removed from the HA/RS program, what happens to my status on the Affordable Housing Wait List?

Your status on the Affordable Housing Wait List will not be affected if you refuse one or two units. Your name remains in the chronological order on the Affordable Housing Wait List for rent-geared-to income accommodation.

11. We are expecting a child in January. Do we qualify for an additional bedroom?

Any change in the information you gave on your application must be reported to Niagara Regional Housing. Staff will update your file to reflect your most current housing needs.

12. I can move in tomorrow. Do you have something available right now?

NRH staff is working with landlords to secure units as quickly as possible and we are committed to respecting the required sixty (60) day notice. If circumstances allow for an earlier move-in date, that can be discussed with NRH staff and the affected landlord.

13. My friend has a unit available. Can I move in there and have the program assist my rent?

No. Ask your friend to contact NRH so that our staff can determine if it is an eligible unit. If the unit qualifies, the next person on the program's waiting list will be offered the unit.

14. My income varies because I am seasonally employed. How do I show that on the income verification form?

The amount of housing allowance will be determined using the income you are receiving at the time that you are offered a unit. This income will be reviewed quarterly the first year, then once each following year.

15. What happens if my income changes while I am living in a HA/RS unit?

NRH staff will verify your income each year to determine the housing allowance amount paid to your landlord and to ensure your continued eligibility for the program. Should your income increase to an amount that would make you ineligible, you will be required to pay the full market rent for the unit you're occupying or give the landlord sixty (60) days notice that you intend to move.

16. What happens at the end of the 3 or 5 year term when the housing allowance ends?

Although we have no confirmation at this time, NRH is hopeful that tenants will be able to be housed under the rent-geared-to-income program at the end of the 3 or 5 year term.

If that is not possible, tenants under the HA/RS program will have 2 options. You can:

- 1) stay in the unit and pay the full market rent without receiving a subsidy from NRH or
- 2) give the required sixty (60) days notice to the landlord indicating a decision to move from the unit.

Your placement on the Affordable Housing Wait List will not be affected by either decision.

17. Is Niagara Regional Housing my landlord under this program?

No. Tenants are required to (1) sign a lease directly with the landlord and (2) sign an agreement with NRH so that NRH can pay the rent supplement portion directly to the landlord on your behalf. NRH has no role in the tenant-landlord relationship. Tenants speak directly to the landlord about any needs they have regarding the unit.

18. Where can I get more information about this program?

You can contact the Housing Co-ordinator at 905-682-9201 ext. 3927 or 1-800-232-3292 ext. 3927.