



Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Public and Indian Housing

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Special Attention:  
Section 8 Public Housing Agencies;  
Public Housing Office Directors

**Notice PIH 2000-02 (HA)**

Issued: January 4, 2000  
Expires: January 31, 2001

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Cross References:

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Subject: Customer Survey of Section 8 Tenant-Based Program  
Participants - OMB Approval 2528-0170 expires  
9/30/2002

**1. Purpose** This notice informs public housing agencies (PHAs) and HUD field staff of the January 2000 commencement of a customer survey to assess the quality of housing leased under the Section 8 tenant-based program. The customer survey is intended to provide valuable customer feedback to HUD and PHAs concerning participants' satisfaction with their housing units and neighborhoods. Attached for your information is a copy of the customer survey and cover letter.

Under an Executive Order for "Setting Customer Service Standards", the entire Federal government was asked to ensure that the highest quality of service is provided to the American people. HUD and other agencies were asked to "survey customers to determine the kind and quality of services they want and their level of satisfaction with existing services". This survey will provide a measure of customer satisfaction for the Section 8 tenant-based programs. The survey will also generate valuable outcome measures for HUD to report on Section 8 program performance under the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA).

**2. Background** In 1995, the Department considered whether a tenant survey might be a good means of gathering information about whether units leased under the Section 8 tenant-based programs meet housing quality standards (HQS). The Department's Office of Policy Development and Research developed and tested two mail survey questionnaires from 1995 to 1998. The pilot tests of the surveys resulted in high rates of return and highly accurate participant responses. Participants reliably reported whether or not their units met HQS. The Department concluded from the pilots that it is worthwhile to automate the customer survey and undertake the nationwide systematic gathering of information from randomly selected participants to help PHAs and HUD evaluate whether housing leased under the Section 8 tenant-based program meets HQS, and to learn more about the characteristics of neighborhoods where participants choose housing.

**3. Customer Survey Procedures** The Department has developed a process to continuously survey Section 8 participants from all PHAs. HUD will use the Multifamily Tenant Characteristics System (MTCS) to generate monthly random samples of Section 8 families to whom surveys will be mailed. To the extent possible, the families selected will be those whose units have passed HQS inspection within the last five months. The Department is using a mailing contractor to mail the surveys monthly and to receive the survey responses. The mailing contractor will track receipt of survey responses and will send up to two survey reminders to encourage participants to reply. The contractor will scan the completed participant surveys and transmit the survey results back to HUD on a monthly basis. The Department plans to report the survey results for each PHA in a new MTCS monthly or quarterly report that will be developed and implemented during Fiscal Year 2000.

The customer survey has been designed to have little if any impact on PHAs' administrative responsibilities. Participants who receive the surveys will be given a toll free number at the Department's Public and Indian Housing Information Resource Center where they may call with any questions or concerns about the survey. However, some participants may still call their PHAs or HUD field offices for more information about the survey. Please encourage families to complete and return the surveys, assure them that their responses will be kept confidential, and refer them to the toll free number if necessary.

**4. Use of the Survey Data** The customer survey will allow HUD to provide participant feedback to PHAs to help them improve their Section 8 programs, and it will help HUD to focus its monitoring and technical assistance resources where survey results indicate that improvement may be needed. The survey will provide HUD's policy, program and budget managers with improved measures for tracking nationwide housing conditions of Section 8 participants over time.

I look forward to the successful implementation of the Section 8 customer survey, and hope that by fiscal year end we will have useful information to share with PHAs about participants' views of their Section 8 housing. Thank you for your cooperation in this important effort.

/s/

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Harold Lucas  
Assistant Secretary for  
Public and Indian Housing

Attachment (not included in this file)