



Disability Housing: **FAQ Series**

Federal Housing Programs

Q: Are there any federal housing programs that help people with disabilities?

A: The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers a number of different federal housing programs. Low-income people with disabilities are eligible for most of these programs including the Public Housing program, the Housing Choice Voucher program and HUD's multifamily housing programs.

HUD also has targeted programs including the Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly program, targeted to persons age 62 and older, and the Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities program, targeted to persons ages 18 to 61 who have disabilities.

While these programs vary in some important ways—how assistance is provided, who administers the assistance, whether the assistance is restricted to certain populations—they use many of the same or similar standards when establishing tenants' income eligibility and their minimum contributions toward rent.

Q: Are there income limits to be eligible for these programs?

A: Yes, each HUD program has a specific income limit for eligibility. These can be as low as 30 percent of area median income to as high as 80 percent of area median income. Income eligibility is determined based on gross income with some exclusions. **How much do people pay in rent under these HUD programs?**

Once a family is determined eligible for HUD assistance and is selected to receive it, the rent they pay is generally based on 30 percent of their adjusted income. Those adjustments include deductions for elderly and disabled family members, certain medical costs, and certain child care costs.

Q: How are assets treated under HUD-assisted housing rules?

A: There is no asset limit for eligibility under many HUD programs. Instead, public housing authorities and owners of multifamily housing must either count the actual income earned on assets, or impute income from assets, and include that amount in a household's annual income calculation for purposes of determining eligibility and rent. Assets include real property, savings

accounts, stocks, and bonds. They do not include necessary personal items such as furniture and automobiles.

Q: What is included in income in determining eligibility or calculating a tenant's rent?

A: Among items included in income are:

- earnings from employment, including overtime pay, tips, and bonuses;
- income earned on assets;
- payments from Social Security, pensions, or other retirement benefits;
- disability income, including veterans' disability benefits, death benefits, and insurance payments;
- unemployment compensation, disability compensation, and workers' compensation; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance (with exceptions);
- alimony and child support; and
- military pay.

Q: Are veterans' benefits included in determining eligibility for HUD-assisted housing?

A: Sometimes questions arise about whether veterans' benefits are included in determining eligibility for HUD-assisted housing. Under the law and HUD regulations, all forms of veterans' benefits are included as income except for lump-sum disability payments.

Q: What lump-sum disability payments are not counted?

A: Lump-sum deferred payments for Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security, or veterans' disability benefits are not considered income for purposes of HUD-assisted housing. Such payments may occur when back payments are made to cover the period during which the beneficiary appealed a denial of benefits or if prior payments were underestimated.

Q: What is excluded from income?

A: HUD regulations currently identify [17 items](#) that are excluded from income. Among these are: employment income earned by children under age 18; adoption assistance in excess of \$480 per child; amounts received to pay for medical expenses; income of a live-in aide; special pay of a family member in the Armed Forces exposed to hostile fire; the full amount of student financial assistance paid directly to the student or to the educational institution; income set-aside for use under a Plan to Attain Self-Sufficiency (PASS); and items excluded in other federal statutes.

Q: What are those items excluded by other federal laws?

A: There are 26 categories of federal payments or benefits excluded from income and HUD has published [notices in the Federal Register when new categories of assistance were excluded](#). Some of the programs where benefits are excluded include Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps) benefits; payments under the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP); payments received on or after January 1, 1989, from the Agent Orange Settlement Fund; allowances paid to children of Vietnam veterans born with spina bifida, children of women Vietnam veterans born with certain birth defects, and children

of certain Korean service veterans born with spina bifida; and major disaster and emergency assistance received by individuals and families.

Q: Is the Aid and Attendance benefit that I receive as part of my VA Pension considered income?

A: The Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act that passed in 2014 excluded from income calculations expenses related to aid and attendance (A&A) received by low-income veterans for non-service-connected disabilities. HUD issued regulations implementing this change on February 14, 2023.

Q: Where can I find out about HUD rental properties in my area?

A: [HUD's website](#) provides more information about [public housing](#) assistance and about specific public housing programs such as [housing choice vouchers](#).