

APPENDIX A

THE RENT REFORM DEMONSTRATION

INFORMATION SHEET FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS

The [XX PHA] is participating in the national Rent Reform Study, which tests a new rent policy for households receiving a Section 8 housing voucher. This form describes the Rent Reform Demonstration and explains what it means for you. The questions in this survey have been reviewed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (OMB control # xxxx-xxxx, expiration date x/xx/2018). 12 U.S.C. 1701z-2(g).

What is the Rent Reform Demonstration?

Under the traditional Housing Choice Voucher program (also called Section 8), households meet with the PHA every year or two years (sometimes more often) to set their rent amount. The housing agency sets the rent amount at 30 percent of the “adjusted” income. Households pay higher rent when their income increases.

The Rent Reform Demonstration will test a different way of setting tenants’ rent contributions. The new way is intended to be easier for residents to understand and simpler for [PHA] to administer. Under the new rules, the [PHA] will charge a smaller portion of household income for rent but won’t adjust income downward for expenses by as much as it used to. Also, once the [PHA] sets the household’s share of rent and utilities (Total Tenant Payment) under the new rules, the household’s share generally won’t change for three years, even if the household’s earnings increase during that time. Households won’t need to report earnings increases to or meet with [PHA] for the purpose of another income redetermination process during those three years, unless they need help with a problem that affects their rent. The new policy brochure provides additional information on the alternative rent policy and the safeguards it includes.

The Rent Reform Demonstration will examine whether the changes to rent rules benefit households as well as the housing agencies. The new rent rules will not apply to all eligible households. Which households will be subject to the new rules is being determined randomly. Using a computer program, your housing agency has placed you at random into one of two groups:

The New Rent Rules Group: This group will pay rent under the new rules.

The Existing Rent Rules Group: This group will pay rent under the same rules that the HA has been using for the past few years.

A procedure called “**random assignment**” was used to place you into one of the two groups. Random assignment is like picking names out of a hat. As noted, this decision is made by a computer program and is not based on your personal characteristics or background.

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Your placement into one of the two groups and the way your rent will be calculated will last for at least 3 years or until the research team stops collecting information for the study, whichever comes sooner.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research (HUD-PDR), who is funding the demonstration, has selected MDRC, a non-profit social policy research organization, and its consultants to conduct the first phase of the Rent Reform study.

What does it mean to take part in the Rent Reform study?

The research team will collect information about you and hold on to the information for up to end of the study (09/30/2025). This includes: information you share with the [XX PHA]; information about your employment and earnings from [NAME, STATE AGENCY] Unemployment Insurance Wage records or from Unemployment Insurance Wage records kept by a federal agency, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; information from [NAME, AGENCY] or records kept by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services about your receipt of one or more of the following public benefits: Unemployment Insurance Benefits; Food stamps/SNAP; TANF/welfare; and Medicaid or other types of publicly financed health coverage. The research team might also consider collecting state and local need-based assistance, homelessness data, and other data that might be useful for understanding the short- and long-term impacts of the rent policy.

Over the next few years, you may be invited to complete two or more interviews. These will include a telephone survey approximately 12 months after study enrollment and a second telephone survey approximately 36 months after study enrollment. You will get a \$25 gift card for each telephone survey you complete, but you do not have to participate in any survey nor answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. The telephone surveys will be about your experiences with the program, your employment, household income, housing, financial circumstances, and your general well-being. In addition, you may be contacted and invited to complete (on a voluntary basis) other interviews about your experiences.

Our promise about your privacy

Members of the research team will follow strict rules to protect all of the data and no data will be disclosed to outside parties – including HUD administrators or employees. All personally identifiable data about you will be destroyed or returned to their respective agency upon the conclusion of the study. This research is conducted under the authority of the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to undertake programs of research, studies, testing and demonstration related to the mission and programs of HUD (12 USC 1701z-1 et seq.). The information collected for this study will be used only for research. It is protected by a Federal law called the Privacy Act of 1974.

What are the benefits and risks of participating in the Rent Reform study?

As described above, the Rent Reform study is examining a new way of calculating a household's rent. Many households subject to the new rules will pay less rent once those new rules take effect, but some will pay more. However, none of the households subject to the new rules will pay more in rent when their earnings increase during the three-year period between income reassessments. Households that are not subject to the new rent policy will continue having their rent calculated the way it is currently calculated.

Withdrawing from the study [Use text for DCHA, LEX, and SAHA]

You have been assigned by [PHA] to one of two groups. You cannot choose which group you will be in. In other words, you cannot choose which type of rent policy you must follow. Using random assignment procedures, that decision has already been made by [PHA]. However, if you wish to leave the study that will assess these policies, you may do so by contacting James Riccio, Project Director, by mail at MDRC, 16 E. 34th Street, New York, NY 10016, by phone at 212-532-3200, or by email at james.riccio@mdrc.org. If you withdraw from the study, any information collected by the researchers before that time may still be used for this study. Your decision to leave the study will not affect your eligibility for housing assistance or the way you rent amount is calculated by the HA. Your rent will continue to be calculated with the rules for the group the group that you're in.

Data collected may include information from three years prior to study enrollment through the end of the study.

Withdrawing from the new rent policy and the study [Use text for LMHA]

You have been assigned by [PHA] to one of two groups. Using random assignment procedures, that decision has been made by the housing agency.

If you have been assigned to the new rent policy group and you decide that you do not want to be assigned this new policy, you can follow-up with the [PHA - contact information] and discuss the process for switching back to the current rent rules.

Further, if you do not wish to have your data shared with the researchers that will assess the new rent policy, you may do so by contacting James Riccio, Project Director, by mail at MDRC, 16 E. 34th Street, New York, NY 10016, by phone at 212-532-3200, or by email at james.riccio@mdrc.org. If you decide not to share your personal data, any information collected by the researchers before that time may still be used for this study. Your decision about having (or not having) your data shared with the researchers will not affect your eligibility for housing assistance or the way your rent amount is calculated by LMHA.

Data collected may include information from three years prior to study enrollment through the end of the study.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 40 minutes per response to review the study information sheet and to complete the baseline information form.

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These estimates include the time for reviewing instructions and completing and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: Colette Pollard, Reports Management Officer, QDAM, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street SW., Washington, DC 20410. Do not return the completed form to this address.