



CARIBOU HOUSING AUTHORITY

In The Know

2025-01

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LANDLORD BEST PRACTICES

- **Register and use the Landlord Portal.** If you need assistance logging in, email Lisa at plourde@cariboumaine.org
- **ENFORCE YOUR LEASE!** If there are tenant issues or concerns, please keep CHA in the loop.
- **Landlords**, it is your responsibility to maintain your property. Preventive maintenance is crucial to avoid costly repairs.



DON'T FORGET - Caribou Housing Authority is giving out one FREE 10-year battery Smoke Alarm to every participating landlord.

Please stop by our office to pick yours up today!

KEEPING YOU "IN THE KNOW"

In an effort to keep our landlords and participants informed about happenings within the Caribou Housing Authority and the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, we are excited to announce a quarterly HCV Program Newsletter. The newsletter will be called "In The Know."

In The Know will be produced quarterly and will be shared via email and posted on the CHA website. We will share HCV policies, upcoming events, organizational news, and a message from the Caribou Housing Authority leadership.

NOTICE: CONTINUED COST-SAVING MEASURES DUE TO FUNDING SHORTFALL

As many of you may remember, in July 2025, the Caribou Housing Authority (CHA) issued a notice regarding the funding shortfall our agency has been facing. A "shortfall" occurs when the cost of Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) for participating voucher families is projected to exceed the total funding allocated to our agency by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This challenge is not unique to Caribou — many Public Housing Authorities nationwide are experiencing similar pressures due to rising housing costs.

Since July, CHA has been working to ensure that all currently utilized vouchers remain funded. To accomplish this, we have been shrinking the program through attrition. As participating families leave the program, their vouchers remain unissued. This practice will continue until the number of issued and leased vouchers is aligned with the level of funding allocated by Congress.

Providing service and sustaining rental assistance remain our top priorities. However, due to the ongoing possibility of a future shortfall, we must continue implementing cost-saving measures.

What does this mean for landlords and participants?

As required by HUD, CHA will continue the following actions until we are clear of shortfall risk:

(Notice, continued..)

Issuance of new vouchers remains paused. At this time, we do not know when voucher issuance will resume. As a result, applicants on the Section 8 Waiting List should expect longer wait times.

- **Strict enforcement of rent reasonableness for all rent increase requests.** CHA is asking landlords to work with us in establishing rent amounts that are reasonable and sustainable for both property owners and the Housing Authority.
- **Moves that increase HAP costs may be restricted.** Moves resulting in higher subsidy amounts may be limited to only those required as a reasonable accommodation.

We understand that these measures have significant effects on our community, especially families waiting for housing assistance. These decisions were not made lightly, but they are necessary to maintain stability for households currently receiving support.

We appreciate your cooperation and understanding during this challenging period. Our commitment to serving the community remains strong, and we will keep you informed of any changes related to funding or Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program policies.

If you have any questions about this notice, don't hesitate to get in touch with the Caribou Housing Authority by phone or email.

2026 PAYMENT STANDARDS

Effective January 1, 2025,

Caribou Housing Authority's payment Standards will be:

Zero Bedroom	- \$ 942
One Bedroom	- \$ 949
Two Bedrooms	- \$1,124
Three Bedrooms	- \$1,672
Four Bedrooms	- \$1,739

The Payment Standard represents the maximum amount the Housing Authority can use to calculate the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) for a family, including both rent AND tenant-paid utilities.

2026 UTILITY ALLOWANCES RATES

The 2026 Utility Allowances can be found on the Caribou Housing Authority's website at www.caribouhousing.org.

Utility allowances are based on the actual size of the unit leased by the family. However, there are two exceptions: (1) the allowance is based on the smaller of the two if the unit size exceeds the family's voucher size; or (2) a higher allowance may be provided as a reasonable accommodation for a person with disabilities.

LANDLORD INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

Effective December 31, 2025,

The Landlord Incentive Programs that many landlords have benefited from over the past couple of years are coming to an end.

These incentives were designed to support landlord participation in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program and help households secure stable housing.

The program consisted of:

- Lease-Up Bonus Payments – One-time payments provided to landlords when they successfully leased to a voucher holder for the first time or under specific qualifying circumstances.
- Repair Grant – Reimbursement funding for specific items that were filed during the initial Housing Quality Standards inspection.
- Repair Reimbursement for excessive damages beyond the security deposit once a participating tenant has vacated.

Between now and the end of the year, if you have any qualifying expenses, please reach out to the Caribou Housing Authority, before the funds are officially gone



HOW PHAS REVIEW RENT INCREASES:

UNDERSTANDING THE BALANCE BETWEEN PAYMENT STANDARDS, MARKET RENTS, AND FUNDING

As rental markets continue to shift, many landlords participating in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program are submitting rent increase requests. But approving those increases is far more complex than simply comparing last year's rent to this year's market. Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) must follow strict federal guidelines to ensure rents remain fair, reasonable, and affordable for families using vouchers.

At the center of every rent increase review, there are three key elements: **payment standards**, **rent reasonableness**, and the **landlord's requested rent amount**.

Payment Standards: The Subsidy Ceiling

Payment standards represent the maximum subsidy the PHA can provide toward a tenant's rent. Based on HUD's Fair Market Rents, they're designed to reflect the cost of a modest unit in the region.

When payment standards increase, landlords often assume their rent increases will automatically be approved. However, payment standards are only the **subsidy ceiling**—not the approval threshold. Every rent request must still meet additional federal requirements before the PHA can authorize it.

Rent Reasonableness: A Required Market Test

One of the most important federal safeguards is the rent reasonableness requirement. PHAs must compare the proposed rent to similar unassisted units in the private market. This analysis considers:

- Unit size and type
- Location
- Amenities and utilities
- Condition and quality
- Current private-market rents

If comparable units in the community are rented for less, the PHA is **not permitted** to approve the request—even if the payment standards are higher. This ensures that voucher families are not charged above-market rents and that HUD funds are used responsibly.

Reviewing Rent Increase Requests

When a landlord submits an increase request—typically once per year—the PHA must evaluate multiple factors:

- The newly requested rent amount
- Current payment standards
- The tenant's ability to afford their portion
- Rent reasonableness data
- The PHA's funding availability

Even a timely and correctly submitted request must meet **all** federal criteria. If a requested increase would cause the tenant's share to exceed affordability limits, or if the PHA is experiencing a funding shortfall, the request may be reduced or denied.

How the Pieces Fit Together

The interaction between payment standards, rent reasonableness, and rent requests creates a structured review process:

- **Payment Standards:** Set the maximum subsidy the PHA can offer.
- **Rent Reasonableness:** Sets the market-based limit on what the PHA is allowed to approve.
- **Requested Rent:** Must fit within both boundaries *and* align with funding and affordability rules.

A rent increase can only be approved if it is both **reasonable** in the market and **supported** by the program's subsidy limits and funding levels.

Why It Matters

For landlords, understanding how these rules work can help them plan realistic rent strategies and avoid frustration when increases cannot be fully approved. For tenants, these safeguards protect against sudden or excessive rent burdens. And for PHAs, the process ensures compliance with HUD rules while maintaining the long-term stability of the voucher program.

Conclusion

Rent increases within the Housing Choice Voucher program require a careful balancing act between market conditions, HUD regulations, and local funding. By understanding how payment standards, rent reasonableness, and rent requests work together, landlords, tenants, and communities can better navigate the rental landscape—and support stable, affordable housing for voucher families.



Why did the family's share of the rent go up when I requested a rent increase, instead of the Caribou Housing Authority's share?

When the PHA receives a rent increase from a landlord, the PHA compares the **gross rent** to the **payment standard** to calculate the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and the tenant's portion.

Example:

- Landlord rent: \$1,200
- Utility allowance: \$150
- Gross rent: \$1,350
- Payment standard: \$1,300

In this scenario, the gross rent is \$50 above the payment standard, so the tenant would need to cover that difference (as long as it stays within affordability rules).

THINKING OF SELLING YOUR RENTAL PROPERTY?

If you're considering selling a unit currently occupied by a Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) participant, please reach out to our office as early as possible. Early communication helps ensure a smooth transition for both you and the family. We can help clarify essential steps, including notice requirements, lease impacts, inspection needs, and whether the new owner wishes to continue participation in the HCV program.

Even if you are only exploring the possibility of selling, we encourage you to contact us so we can walk you through what to expect and help prevent avoidable delays or disruptions.



CITY OF CARIBOU'S HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT!

The City of Caribou is conducting a Housing Needs Assessment and is asking residents to participate by completing a short survey. Your input helps guide future housing planning and community development efforts!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Y6CF29R>

Please help us to understand local needs.

HCV POLICY OF THE MONTH

In each edition of "In The Know," we will share a portion of a policy that is important to landlords, which can be found in our Administration Plan. In this edition, we will explain what happens if the landlord doesn't correct Housing Quality Standards (HQS) deficiencies found during an inspection within the required time frame outlined in Section 8.II.G.

"If an owner fails to correct deficiencies by the time specified by the PHA, HUD requires the PHA to abate housing assistance payments no later than the first of the month following the specified correction period (including any approved extension) [24 CFR 985.3(f)]. No retroactive payments will be made to the owner for the period of time the rent was abated. Owner rents are not abated as a result of deficiencies that are the family's responsibility."

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LIST YOUR PROPERTIES ON AFFORDABLEHOUSING.COM

To better serve both our landlords and participants, the Caribou Housing Authority encourages all of our property owners to list their properties for rent on the [AffordableHousing.com](https://www.affordablehousing.com) listing service. It is recommended that landlords add photos to listings to improve advertising and accelerate lease-up.

If you have any questions about registering, creating, or viewing property listings, please get in touch with AffordableHousing.com's toll-free helpline at 1-866-466-7328