



How to get into Public Housing in Nashville

Public housing is a group of apartment buildings owned by the city. Your rent there is based on

your income. In some of the buildings, you don't pay a light bill or water bill. In other buildings, you pay all or part of the light and water bills.



Tips to help you apply for public housing

1. **Apply** at the apartment office where you want to live. To find out when the office will be open, call before you go. **OR** go to www.nashville.gov/mdha on the internet.
2. Try to take with you the **papers** you need to apply. See the list on this page.
3. Tell the housing application worker if you are a "**priority.**" (See page 2.)
4. They may put you on their waiting list. Make sure they always have **your right address and phone number.** (See page 2.)
5. If they **turn you down** for an apartment, see page 3 for what to do.

When you apply, take the papers they need to see.

This should speed things up. Here's what they will want to see.

- Social Security** cards for everyone in the family.
- Birth certificates** for everyone in the family. No birth certificate? Tell them when you apply. They may be able to help you. Born outside the U. S.? Then you don't need a birth certificate. Instead, bring an I-94 form or naturalization papers.
- Picture ID** of everyone in the family who is 18 or older.
- Proof of your income.** If your income is from Social Security or the VA, bring your letter from them.
- Proof** of any stocks, bonds, life insurance, 401K, owned by you. **OR** owned by someone who will be on your lease
- If you work,** bring your work address. They will send a paper to your boss to fill out and mail back. Make sure your boss sends the paper back right away.
- Name and address** of your landlord now and your last landlord.



If you pay for day care, the name, address and zip code of your child's day care. You can get a letter on the day care's letterhead saying how much you pay. **OR**, you can get a paper from Metro Housing for the day care to fill out.

What if you don't have these papers yet?

You can still apply. But they can't decide if you will get an apartment until they get these papers.



The Metro Housing office will check **police records**. But, a criminal record will not always keep you out of public housing. They look at how long it was since you were arrested. You must show you have turned your life around.

If you were arrested for drugs, you must be clean. You must show you have turned your life around.

You can **never** get in **IF**:

- You are on any state sex offender registry or
- You were convicted of making meth (methamphetamines) on the grounds of any federally assisted housing

Tell them if you are a "priority."

If you are what they call a "**priority**," you will get an apartment faster. Look below to see what could make you a priority. If one of these is true for you, tell the housing application worker.

1. You had to leave your home because your life was in danger. For example, you were afraid



of someone in your family. Bring your Court Order of Protection.

2. **OR** you had to leave your home because of a disaster, such as a fire, flood or tornado. If the housing worker wants written proof, ask them where you can get it.
3. **OR** the government made you leave your home. For example, your home was condemned. Bring your letter that says your home was condemned.
4. **OR** the head of the family or their husband or wife has had a full-time job for a year or more. Bring a letter from the employer.
5. **OR** you are age 62 or older.
6. **OR** you are disabled. You don't have be getting disability payments from Social Security. You can bring a letter from your doctor. The letter should say your disability will last at least a year. Need an apartment set up for someone with a disability? Tell the housing worker.
7. **OR** you are homeless.

You will get a letter saying if they OK'd you to get an apartment. If they OK'd you, you may still have to wait awhile to move in.

If you get on the waiting list, make sure they can always reach you.



If you move or change your phone number, let them know. Call the place where you applied. Tell them your new address or phone number.

If the Metro Housing office asks you to contact them, do it right away. If they can't reach you, they will take you off the waiting list. Then you would have to apply all over again.

What to do if they turn you down for an apartment

If they turn you down for public housing, a letter will tell you why. You can try to change their minds. You have **only 10 days to do this after you are turned down**. Ask in writing for a “grievance hearing.” Fill out the form that came with the letter. **OR** just write, “I want to have a hearing because I was turned down for an apartment.” Put the name of the place where you applied. Put your name, address and phone number. Send it in within 10 days.



You will get a letter telling you the date and time of your hearing. At the hearing, you tell your side of the story to some new people. Or, you can take a lawyer or someone else to speak for you.

To win at the hearing, you need to prove one of these things:

- That they turned you down because of something that is not true.
- That they turned you down because of something that is no longer true.
- That they turned you down because of something that was not your fault.

Take any witnesses or papers that can back you up. Here are some examples:

Example: Maybe Metro Housing evicted you in the past because of drugs. But, this is no longer true. You could show them a letter from a drug treatment program. The letter should say that you finished the program and have stayed drug free. Or, you could prove that the person who bought or sold drugs no longer lives with you.

Example: Maybe you did not pay your rent when you lived in public housing before. You can bring your medical bills to the hearing. They could prove that you got

behind because you were sick. This was something that you could not help.

What to do if they turn you down because of unpaid rent

Do you owe rent from the last time you lived in public housing? You can't be OK'd for public housing until you pay it.

Here's what you can do:

- Look at the old file they have on you. See if you really owe what they say.
- If you owe the money, you will need to pay it.
- If you can't pay it, a Chapter 7 or a Chapter 13 bankruptcy may help. See a lawyer or call Legal Aid. As soon as you file bankruptcy, Metro Housing can't hold the unpaid rent against you. But, they may still turn you down for public housing. This can happen if you used to get behind on rent a lot.



Legal Aid can send you pamphlets about these two kinds of bankruptcy.

Other places to apply for low-cost apartments

Subsidized apartment buildings

You can get a list of these apartment buildings from Metro Housing or Metro Social Services. **OR** go to www.TNhousingsearch.org on the internet. These buildings have some apartments where the rent is based on your income.



You apply at the apartment building. There is a long waiting list. But, they have the same “priorities” as public housing. Tell the manager you only want an apartment where the rent is based on your income.

Section 8 vouchers

A **Section 8 voucher** is a paper. It says Metro Housing will pay part of your rent. You can live anywhere that the landlord will take a Section 8 voucher. Your part of the rent is based on your income. If you must pay the light bill, your rent is set lower. You must keep the light bill paid up or you can be evicted.

You apply for Section 8 vouchers at 620 Dew Street. But, you can only apply when the waiting list is open. To see if the waiting list is open, call **252-6500**. After you apply, you may have to wait a while to get a voucher.

Hope VI (Hope 6) apartments

These are newer apartments. Your rent is based on your income. You pay the water and light bills. To live there, you must:



1. Not have a recent police record **AND**
2. Not have a bad report from another landlord **AND**
3. Have low income for the size of your family **AND**
4. Be paid up on rent where you live now **AND**
5. Have paid rent pretty much on time for the last 12 months **AND**
6. Have no household members who bought or sold drugs **or** did violent crimes in the last 3 years **AND**
7. Not owe back rent to any public housing program **AND**

8. Be able to have water and lights turned on in your name **AND**
9. Take part in “self-sufficiency” to help you get off government help. Elderly or disabled? Then you don’t have to do this.

One of these must also be true for the head of your household:

- Has worked for the past 12 months making at least \$200 a week **OR**
- Is elderly or disabled and on Social Security, SSI or other disability or retirement **OR**
- Has other income of at least \$10,000 a year **OR**
- Is on Families First and in a training program at least 20 hours a week for the past 6 months

Have you lived in public housing in Nashville before? Then you must also:

- Have no poor housekeeping reports in the last 12 months
- Have no history of arguments with neighbors or management in the last 12 months
- If you moved out of public housing, it can’t be because you were evicted

If you are what they call a “**priority**,” you will get an apartment faster. Look on page 3 of this booklet to see what could make you a priority.

There are 5 places with Hope VI apartments. Go there to apply or get on the waiting list. The places are:

J. Henry Hale Apartments

1433 Jo Johnston Ave. N, Nashville, TN 37203

Phone: 615-252-3667

Historic Preston Taylor Apartments

3904 Preston Taylor Place, Nashville, TN 37209

Phone: 615-252-3680

Levy Place

303 Foster Street, Nashville, TN 37206
Phone: 615-252-3674

**Parkway Terrace**

196 N. 7th Street, Nashville, TN 37206
Phone: 615-252-3737

Vine Hill Apartments

601 Benton Ave., Nashville, TN 37204
Phone: 615-383-5205

Legal Aid Society

of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland

300 Deaderick Street Nashville, TN 37201

In Davidson or Williamson Counties, call

(615) 244-6610

On the internet at **www.las.org**

This information is not meant to take the place of legal advice. Every case is different and needs individual attention. Rev 4/11