

Glossary & Acronyms

Adjusted income: The amount of income that is used to determine eligibility for housing programs and rent. In generally, adjusted income is *gross yearly income* minus certain *deductions* and *exclusions*.

Administer: To run or manage a program.

Affidavit: A written statement that a person signs, swearing that the information in the statement is the truth.

AHVP: Alternative Housing Voucher Program.

Alias: A name that is not someone's real name, but a name that he or she has used, or a mistaken name that the police, court, or probation officer has improperly written down.

Amnesty: The common term for the program that allowed certain immigrants, who did not have a lawful immigration status, to become lawful permanent residents. One group—*general amnesty immigrants*—consisted of people who lived in the United States without lawful status since before January 1, 1982. The other group—*special agricultural workers*—were immigrant farm workers who had performed agricultural work in the United States for at least 90 days between May 1, 1985, and May 1, 1986. The amnesty program, created by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, established a two-step process by which eligible immigrants could obtain, first, temporary status and then *lawful permanent resident* status.

Annual Contributions Contract (ACC): A contract between HUD and a housing authority under which HUD commits to providing the housing authority with the funds to make housing assistance payments to private owners and to paying fees for the housing authority to administer the subsidy.

Annual Plan: The plan housing authorities must create on a yearly basis for federal public housing and the Section 8 program. This plan covers many issues that affect both tenants and people applying for housing, including what a housing authority's *priorities* and *preferences* are. Housing authorities must develop their *Annual Plan* in cooperation with their federal public housing and Section 8 tenants through a *Resident Advisory Board*.

Annual recertification: Yearly procedure where a housing agency or owner checks a household's family composition and income in order to determine whether the tenant's portion of the rent needs to be recalculated.

Appeal: A request that a higher authority review an administrative or judicial decision. For example, an *appeal* in court means that a higher court reviews the decision of a lower court to correct errors in how the lower court applied the law or court procedures.

Area median income: The midpoint of all households' incomes in a particular area. In other words, half of all households have incomes above the median, and half below. The median is not the average of all incomes.

Arraignment: the first formal step in a criminal case where the defendant is brought before the court to hear the charges.

Asylee: A person who has applied for and been granted *asylum*. In the United States, asylees may apply for *lawful permanent resident* status one year after being granted asylum.

Asylum: A lawful status permitting individuals to remain in the U.S. because they either have been persecuted or have a well-founded fear that they would be persecuted in their home country on account of race, nationality, religion, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Technically, an applicant for asylum in the U.S. must meet the same legal standard as a *refugee*. The difference is that an asylum applicant applies for this status while in the U.S., whereas a refugee is granted refugee status before arriving in the country. A person who has been granted asylum is an *asylee*.

Blotter sheets: Daily logs of police departments which record arrest information and initial charges. This information is often summarized in community newspapers. The logs do not contain information about the final outcome of the case.

Charge off: To transfer a credit account that is determined to be uncollectable to a category such as bad debt or loss. Collectors usually continue to solicit payments, but the accounts are no longer part of a company's receivable or profit picture.

Citizen (of the U.S.): A person born or naturalized in the U.S.

Client number or control number: The number given for each application for housing assistance that is accepted. It is very important for applicants to always keep a record of these numbers to find their place on the waiting list in the future.

Conditional entrant: An individual who was admitted to the United States, under a provision of pre-1980 immigration law, because the individual was persecuted or feared persecution in his or her home country. Conditional entrant status was available only to nationals of communist or Middle Eastern countries.

Conference: A meeting that allows an applicant or tenant an opportunity to convince a housing authority or subsidized landlord that a decision or proposed action is incorrect. See also *hearing* and *informal hearing* or *informal review*.

Congregate housing: A shared living environment that integrates the housing and service needs of elders and younger disabled individuals in order to increase their self-sufficiency through in a residential setting.

Consent form: A form that gives someone or some agency permission to do something. For example, a housing agency may ask an applicant to sign a consent form that gives the housing agency permission to request criminal records from law enforcement agencies.

Consolidated Plan: A plan that cities and towns that receive federal dollars are required by law to develop. The plan includes a lot of information about the housing needs of residents in the area. Copies are available at the city or town planning department or the office of the city or town clerk. It is also usually available at the local public library.

Continued without a finding: A decision or *disposition* by a judge that leaves a case open for a specified period of time, with the understanding that it will be dismissed if the defendant meets certain conditions.

Control number: see *client number*.

CORI: Criminal Offender Record Information. See *CORI Report*.

CORI report: Criminal Offender Record Information report prepared by the state Criminal History Systems Board. A CORI report includes the history of each criminal charge, from pre-trial through court proceedings through sentencing.

Corroborate: To confirm, support, strengthen or make more certain.

Criminal Offender Record Information: See *CORI* and *CORI Report*.

Dating Violence: A violent crime committed against a person with whom the perpetrator is or was in a romantic or intimate relationship. See also *domestic violence* and *stalking*.

Debt: Money currently owed.

Deduction: An amount of money that is subtracted from *gross yearly income* for the purposes of determining eligibility for housing and rent.

Deep subsidy: A housing subsidy in which the rent is based on the tenant's income and is adjusted as the tenant's income changes. For many deep subsidy programs, the tenant's rent share is fixed at 30% of income, but that is not always the case.

Default: A court decision in favor of one party in a court case if the other either failed to respond within the time required by law or failed to appear in court on the date of the *hearing*.

Default warrant: An order for someone's arrest if they have failed to appear in court or pay a fine.

DHCD: Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development. *DHCD* funds state housing programs and establishes and enforces policies related to those programs. *DHCD* also operates its own *Housing Choice Voucher* program.

Disability: Under state and federal law, disability is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of your major life activities.

Discretion: The power to decide based on one's own view of what is fair. If an agency has *discretion*, it has the freedom to choose its own course of action, usually based on certain guidelines.

Discretionary preference: Favored status or *preference* that the housing agency is not required to adopt, but may if they choose to.

Disposition: The outcome of a case.

Docket sheet or **docket entry sheet:** Formal court record in which a clerk briefly notes all proceedings and filings for a court case.

Domestic Violence: A violent crime committed against a current or former spouse, a person with whom the perpetrator shares a child, a person who has lived with the perpetrator as a spouse, or someone otherwise protected. The type of crime can include causing physical harm, attempting to cause physical harm, making someone afraid of imminent serious physical harm, or forcing sexual relations. See also *dating violence* and *stalking*.

Drug-related criminal activity: Under federal law, drug-related criminal activity means the manufacture, distribution, possession with intent to distribute, and personal use or possession of any controlled substance.

DTA: Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance.

EAEDC: Emergency Aid to Elderly, Disabled and Children.

Eligible noncitizen: A person who is not a U.S. *citizen* but is an immigrant who belongs to a group that is allowed, under federal law, to apply to federal *restricted programs*. Allowable groups include *lawful permanent residents*, *refugees*, and *asylees*. For a complete list of eligible noncitizens, see **Booklet 9: Immigrants and Housing**.

Emergency Case Plan: A plan that each housing authority in Massachusetts is required to have for any state public housing, which must be approved by DHCD. The plan sets out circumstances under which the housing authority must give *priority* to people who are homeless, in abusive situations, or encountering severe medical emergencies. The plan must be posted at all times in the housing authority's administrative office.

Exclusion: An amount of money that is excluded from *gross yearly income* for the purposes of determining eligibility for housing and rent.

Extremely low income: The government's term for people who are at or below 30% of the *area median income*.

Fair market rent (FMR): The maximum rents for HUD's Section 8 program. *FMRs* vary from area to area. (Generally, *FMRs* represent slightly over the median rents for a geographic area.) A tenant's share of her rent combined with the amount of her subsidy and the amount of her utility payments may not exceed the *FMR* for the area. HUD determines new *FMRs* once a year.

Federal poverty guideline: The financial guidelines established by the federal government to determine who is financially eligible for particular programs.

General amnesty immigrant: An immigrant who has lived unlawfully in the United States since before January 1, 1982, who is allowed under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 to legalize his or her immigration status. See *amnesty*.

Good cause: A legally sufficient reason. For example, a housing authority must have good cause to evict someone.

Grieve or grievance: To *grieve* is to file a complaint about an injury, injustice, or wrong. The *grievance* is the actual complaint that is filed.

Gross yearly income: The total income from all sources before any *deductions* or *exclusions* have been taken.

Hearing: A formal process where a judge, a hearing officer, or other officials listen to the parties, consider evidence, and make a ruling or decision. See also *conference* and *informal hearing* or *informal review*.

Housing authority: A government entity that owns and operates government-funded housing. A *housing authority* may administer other housing programs, as well.

Housing Choice Voucher Program: A federal rental assistance program also known as a Section 8 voucher that is used to provide subsidized housing in the private market. Vouchers can be *tenant-based rental assistance* or *project-based rental assistance*.

Housing emergency: This is defined by each housing authority, but generally includes people who are facing domestic violence, have severe medical emergencies, are homeless or have been evicted through no fault of their own.

HUD: The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. *HUD* funds federal housing programs and establishes and enforces policies related to those programs.

Illegal activity: Activity forbidden by law.

Immigration authorities: The government agencies that handle immigration matters specifically the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the State Department, and the Department of Justice. The primary immigration authority used to be called INS, the Immigration and Naturalization Service. It has been reorganized, and most of its functions are now handled by DHS.

(1) **DHS** is responsible for the approval of all immigrant and nonimmigrant petitions, the authorization of permission to work in the U.S., the issuance of extensions of stay, and change or adjustment of an applicant's status while the applicant is in the U.S. It is also responsible for enforcing federal immigration laws, customs laws, and air security laws. It has several divisions that specifically deal with immigrants including US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and US Customs and Border Patrol (CBP). USCIS processes and decides on petitions and applications of potential immigrants. CBP is responsible for securing and facilitating travel into the U.S. ICE is responsible for enforcing immigration laws.

(2) The **State Department**, which includes embassies and consulates abroad, issues U.S. visas to citizens of foreign countries who want to enter the United States. A U.S. visa allows you to travel to a port of entry, airport or land border crossing, and request permission of the CBP to enter the U.S.

(3) The **Executive Office for Immigration Review**, a division of the Department of Justice, is the court that decides on immigration cases and determines whether an immigrant will be allowed to remain in the U.S. or be removed to another country.

In perpetuity: Indefinitely.

Income eligible: When income falls below certain limits, making someone eligible for a program or assistance.

Independent living center: An organization that provides services and advocacy to people with disabilities.

Indigent: Poor. Financially needy. People who meet certain Federal Poverty Guidelines can file a form called an Affidavit of Indigency to ask not to pay certain fees, such as a fee to obtain a CORI.

Informal hearing or informal review: A meeting that allows parties to try and convince a housing authority or subsidized landlord that a decision or proposed action is incorrect. See also *conference* and *hearing*.

Involuntarily displaced: When you are forced to leave your apartment even if you wish to stay. Examples include: when you are forced to leave because of damage from a natural disaster; when the government has declared that your home is not sanitary and will not allow your landlord to rent the unit anymore; or, in some cases, when you are forced to leave your home because of abuse.

Lawful permanent resident: An immigrant who has been granted a status that allows him or her to live and work permanently in the United States. Most lawful permanent residents can apply for naturalization to U.S. citizenship after living in the U.S. for five years. This is commonly known as a person who has a green card.

Lease: A written agreement between a landlord and a tenant that contains the terms of the tenancy and is for a fixed period of time.

Lease up: The term used in voucher programs when a tenant signs a lease with a landlord.

Major life activities: Major life activities include caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. The term is usually used in relation to a person with disabilities.

Mandatory preferences: Favored status or *preferences* for applicants that a housing agency is required to adopt.

Maximum subsidy: The total amount a housing authority will pay to a private landlord in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program. The exact amount depends on the housing authority's *payment standard* and takes into account the tenant's income.

Mitigating circumstances: Circumstances surrounding an act which in fairness can be considered in making a decision.

Mixed household: A household applying to certain federal housing programs whose members have different immigration statuses. Some members may be U.S. *citizens*, some may be *lawful permanent residents*, and some may have no immigration documentation. As long as one household member is a citizen or *eligible noncitizen* according to the federal rules, the mixed household can be accepted in *restricted* federal programs. For other federal programs and state programs, it does not matter whether the household is mixed or not.

Mixed-income housing: Housing where some apartments are subsidized for low- and moderate-income people and some are rented at market-rate rents.

MRVP: Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program.

Multifamily subsidized housing: Housing where a government subsidy has been given to a private owner to make housing affordable. Usually, these are larger buildings. The subsidy stays with the property.

Naturalization: The process by which immigrants become U.S. *citizens*. To be eligible to apply for naturalization, an individual must have lived in the U.S. as a *lawful permanent resident* for five years, or three years if married to a U.S. citizen, or one year for certain persons in the military and veterans.

Net yearly income: *Gross yearly income* minus certain *exclusions* and *deductions*. State housing programs base eligibility and rent on net yearly income.

No-fault eviction: Where a landlord is evicting a tenant who has done nothing wrong. For example, if a landlord wants to reclaim an apartment for a family member and have the tenant move out, this would be a no-fault eviction. The tenant has done nothing wrong.

Nol prosequere: A statement by a prosecutor that the state does not wish to prosecute the case.

Noncitizen: A person who either was not born in the United States or has not been *naturalized* to U.S. citizenship, or is not eligible for citizenship under special laws.

Non-contending form: A form on which a person indicates that he or she is not asserting to have *eligible noncitizen* status for *restricted* federal housing assistance programs.

Notarized: Certification of a document by a *notary public*.

Notary public: A person authorized by the state to administer oaths, certify documents, and attest to the authenticity of signatures. For a statement of *affidavit*, the person who wrote the statement swears under the pains and penalties of perjury in front of the *notary public* that everything in the statement is true.

Notice to quit: A written notice from a landlord to a tenant that officially ends a tenancy. However, if you receive a *notice to quit*, this does not mean you have to move out by the date on the notice. A landlord must always get a court's permission to move a tenant out.

On file: Refers to a case that is pending because there may not be enough evidence. The case is not closed and may be reopened at any time.

Parole: In the context of immigration rules, parole is the procedure that allows a *noncitizen* to come into the United States without granting him or her admission to the U.S. People who have been paroled into the U.S. for a period of at least one year are *eligible noncitizens* for federal housing programs, subject to certain exceptions.

Parolee: A *noncitizen* who has been granted *parole*.

Payment standard: An amount that a housing authority uses to determine how much subsidy it will pay a private landlord with a Section 8 voucher. Payment standards are based on *fair market rents*.

Portability: The ability to use a Section 8 voucher in a place that is different from the area where it was issued.

Preference: A term used by housing programs to describe categories of people with special status or urgent needs for housing. See *priority*.

Pre-pay: Early payment of a subsidized mortgage by an owner of privately owned multifamily subsidized housing. If pre-payment happens, the restrictions that keep rents affordable can be lost and rents can be raised to market rate.

Priority: A term used by housing programs to describe categories of people with special status or urgent need for housing. See *preference*.

Project-based or Project-based rental assistance: Rental assistance provided to private owners, where the owner agrees to rent the subsidized apartments to *income eligible* tenants for a period of time. The assistance stays with the housing and does not move with the tenant.

Project-based subsidy: A subsidy that is based or stays with a development, not with a particular tenant.

Pro-rated assistance or rent or pro-ration: The process by which a *restricted* federal program calculates rent or subsidy for a *mixed household*. Federal restricted programs will allow *undocumented immigrants* to reside in an apartment, but will adjust the subsidy to cover only the *citizens* or *eligible noncitizens*. Generally, the calculation of the benefit amount is based on the proportion of eligible individuals to ineligible individuals. For example, for rental assistance, the pro-rated benefit for a family of four that includes three eligible members would be three-fourths of the subsidy that they would have received had all four family members been eligible. Therefore, a *mixed household* may pay more than the standard 30% of income for rent in many federal housing programs.

Protective payments: Payments made on someone's behalf from some source of funds. For example, a person who receives welfare benefits can have the Department of Transitional Assistance use her welfare benefits to pay her rent directly to the housing authority. These are also called *vendor payments*.

Public charge: A term used by *immigration authorities* to refer to a person who is considered primarily dependent on the government for financial support, as demonstrated by either receipt of public cash assistance for income maintenance or institutionalization for long-term care at government expense. An immigrant who is found "likely at any time to become a public charge" can be denied admission to the U.S. or denied status as a *lawful permanent resident*. In very specific and rare circumstances, an immigrant who is found to have become a public charge may be removed from the United States.

Reasonable accommodation: The legal requirement that a landlord provide some services or equipment or change a *lease* or rules to allow a disabled tenant to remain in her home.

Refugee: A refugee is a *noncitizen* given permission to come to the United States because he or she was persecuted, or has a well-founded fear of being persecuted, in his or her home country on account of race, nationality, religion, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Refugees are given this status before coming to the U.S., usually when they are temporarily located in a third country. A refugee is granted the right to live and work in the U.S. and, after a one-year period, may apply to become a *lawful permanent resident*.

Regional nonprofit housing agency: A nonprofit organization that covers a certain region and provides a variety of housing assistance and services. There are nine regional nonprofit housing agencies in Massachusetts.

Registry: In the context of immigration law, a process whereby *lawful permanent resident* status may be granted to a *noncitizen* who has lived in the United States since before January 1, 1972, whether or not he or she is an *undocumented immigrant*. To be eligible for registry, the person must have maintained continuous residence in the U.S. However, some absences—even extended ones—will not break the continuity of residence, provided the person never intended to abandon his or her residence.

Representative payee: A person or program that will pay a bill on behalf of another person. For example, a person can pay rent directly to the housing authority on someone's behalf.

Request for tenancy approval: The form that a landlord who is willing to rent to a household with a Section 8 voucher holder submits to the housing authority or regional nonprofit with certain information, such as the amount of rent.

Resident Advisory Board (RAB): The tenant group whose role is to assist housing authorities that receive federal funds in developing *Annual Plans*.

Restraining order: A temporary or permanent order by a court that prevents someone from doing something. See *Temporary Restraining Order*.

Restricted program: Any of the federal housing programs which must check the immigration status of eligible applicants and which require that one or more household members be *citizens* or *eligible noncitizens*.

Revised and revoked: A disposition or sentence that has been changed (*revised*) or taken back (*revoked*). The legal standard for doing this is strict, and the decision to revise and revoke must arise from facts not known to the judge at the time of sentencing.

Screen: In the context of housing, the process of reviewing records and references to determine if someone will be a good tenant.

Sealed: When a criminal record cannot be seen by most requesters of criminal record information. While sealed records cannot be viewed, they are still part of a person's criminal record.

Search period: The amount of time a person is allowed to find an apartment after getting a voucher.

Section 214 Declaration: A declaration that a household member is either a *citizen* or *noncitizen* eligible for federal housing assistance under Section 214 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1980. See 42 U.S.C. § 1436a; 24 C.F.R. Part 5, Subpart E.

Severe form of trafficking in persons: "Trafficking in persons" means, generally, running a business in which people or people's labor or services are the main things being traded or sold. A "severe form" of this practice is one in which people are seriously exploited or abused. Severe forms of trafficking include forcing people to work as prostitutes (sex trafficking), making them do an unreasonable amount of work to pay off a debt, forcing them to believe that they would be harmed if they did not work under certain conditions, threatening to abuse any legal process, or slavery.

Shallow Subsidy: A housing subsidy in which the rent for an apartment is reduced to below the market rate in the area, but is not based on the income of the individual tenant who lives there.

Sponsor-based rental assistance: Rental assistance that provides grants to sponsor organizations which may be private or nonprofit.

SSDI: Social Security Disability Insurance.

SSI: Supplemental Security Income.

SSN: Social Security Number.

Stalking: A crime where the perpetrator follows, pursues or repeatedly engages in behavior to seek to intimidate or harm someone else. This can include putting a person under surveillance. As a result, the victim, the victim's spouse, partner or a family member has experienced harm or has a reasonable fear of harm. See also *dating violence* and *domestic violence*.

Standard applicant: An applicant for housing who does not qualify for any *preferences*, who will have to wait much longer for housing.

Stay of execution: An order delaying an eviction. A judge may delay (*stay*) an order or execution to evict a tenant to give a person more time to move.

Sufficient evidence: The amount of evidence needed to justify a finding of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

Surrendering or Surrender: The procedure where a criminal defendant, usually someone on probation, must appear before the court for a judicial hearing about an alleged violation of probation.

Suspended: Stopped for a period of time.

TAFDC: Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

Temporary deferral of termination of assistance: An option for *mixed households* that are already in federal public or assisted housing. It can apply either where there are no eligible household members or where there is at least one ineligible household member and the family does not choose to have *pro-rated rent*. Temporary deferral is granted in six-month increments, and usually has a maximum period of 18 months. There is an unlimited deferral period, however, where the household has an application for *asylum* or *refugee* status which has not been finally determined.

Temporary restraining order (TRO): An order that a court issues in an emergency situation for someone to stop doing something illegal or for someone to take action to correct a problem. Usually, the *temporary restraining order* will last for only 10 days.

Tenant-based or Tenant-based rental assistance: Rental subsidy that helps individual households rent a place in the private market. The assistance is based with the tenant, not with a particular property. Often these are called *vouchers*.

Tenant-based subsidy: Same as *tenant-based rental assistance*.

Tenant screening: When housing authorities or landlord does a background check to determine whether to rent to someone. Background checks generally include a credit check, a request for references from prior landlords, and criminal record check.

Tenant selection plan or policy: The document that a multifamily subsidized owner prepares that explains all policies and procedures related to tenant selection in that development. It sets out *preferences* and *priorities*, procedures for processing and selecting applicants, occupancy standards, rejection standards, and the process of appeals of rejections.

Test or testing: In the context of housing, a method of investigating a landlord's behavior to help determine whether that person is illegally discriminating. There are agencies that can help in testing a landlord.

Total tenant payment: The amount a tenant will pay to the landlord in the Section 8 Housing Choice voucher program, which includes an adjustment for the *utility allowance*.

Undocumented immigrant: A *noncitizen* who does not have lawful immigration status. Most undocumented immigrants either entered the United States without going through the required inspection process or were lawfully admitted but violated the terms of that status.

Utility Allowance: An amount that a housing authority will deduct from the rent you pay if you live in housing where you pay for some or all of your utilities (light, heat, hot water, cooking). Usually this allowance is set according to the type and size of the housing you live in.

Vendor payment: Rent or other payments (such as for utilities) that are deducted directly from a tenant's public assistance grant. The most common example is where a welfare recipient arranges with the *Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)* to deduct the rent amount from a *TAFDC* benefit check and forward that directly to the housing authority.

Verified: Confirmed.

Victim of trafficking: An individual who has been subjected to a *severe form of trafficking in persons*. A victim of trafficking may obtain permission to remain in the U.S. and to work if the individual is in the U.S. as a result of trafficking, has not unreasonably refused to cooperate in any investigation of the trafficking (if 15 years of age or older), and if the individual would suffer extreme hardship involving unusual and severe harm if deported. Victims of trafficking cannot be denied residence on *public charge* grounds and are eligible for housing assistance.

Voucher: In the context of a housing program, a voucher is a government subsidy paid to a private landlord to make housing affordable to low- and moderate-income people. A voucher can be a *project-based* voucher and stay with the project, or it can be a *tenant-based* voucher and stay with the tenant.

Waive, Waiver: To voluntarily give up. For example, if your landlord accepts rent from you without protest while she knows that you have a pet in a no-pet tenancy, your landlord *waives* (gives up) her right to evict you for having a pet.

Withholding of removal: In the context of immigration law, where *immigration authorities* are prohibited from returning an individual to a country where his or her life or freedom would be endangered. This status is similar to, but separate from, *asylum*. People granted withholding may be deported to a third country if one will accept them, but they cannot be returned to their home country. People who are granted withholding may apply for, and be granted, permission to work.

