

Types of Rental Housing

Below are some descriptions that may help you to understand different housing options.

Apartment

Three or more units in a common building.

Assisted Living Facility

A facility which offers in-home care in a group setting.

Boarding House

A facility that offers rooms for rent and provides meals.

Condominium

A complex of dwelling units in which each unit is individually owned, but the owner may rent out the unit, if permitted.

Duplex / Double / 2-Family

Side by side or up and down units in a common building.

Efficiency / Studio

Typically a one-room unit with an enclosed bathroom and limited kitchen facilities.

Fixed Below-Market Rate Rental Housing

A general term used to refer to housing where rents are lower than market rate (what people would normally pay for renting the unit), but where the rent is not based on a percentage of the tenant's income. Rent is generally based on a specified percentage of the median income for the area, and a tenant may have to be within a certain income range to live there.

Halfway Houses

Although not listed on this web site (because it is not considered permanent housing), halfway houses are places that provide housing and supportive services for people being released from prison, people with substance abuse issues, people who are mentally ill, or others who need help to move toward independent living.

Income-Based Rental Housing

A general term used to refer to housing where the tenant pays rent based on his income. Generally, the lower the income, the lower the rent. A common example is that a tenant may be asked to pay 30% of his income for rent. May also be called Sliding Scale.

Lease / Purchase Housing

A dwelling, generally a single-family unit or duplex, which is rented for a specified period of time with an option to purchase at the end of the lease period.

Market Rate Rental Housing

A general term used to refer to units where the rents are set by the landlord based on how much the unit is worth in the market (i.e., units that are not subsidized or discounted).

Public Housing

Housing owned by a local public housing agency. Tenants generally pay 30% of their income toward rent, and qualify based on family income (less than or equal to 80% of the median household income for the area) and other factors.

Section 8 Project Based Subsidy

Privately owned (either for-profit or non-profit) rental housing that is made available to people with low incomes. A contract between HUD (U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development) and the property owner governs the administration of the subsidies. Subsidies are paid directly to the owner of the property, who then rents units to tenants who generally pay 30% of their income toward rent. Some units are available specifically for those 62 and older, those who are chronically mentally ill, people with AIDS, families, and those with mobility-impairments.

Section 8 Voucher

Also known as the Housing Choice Voucher. Tenants receive a voucher and find a private landlord willing to lease to them and accept the voucher. Tenants generally pay 30% of their income toward rent and HUD (U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development) pays the rest.

Shared Living Facility

Rooms for rent sharing common indoor living areas.

Shelter Plus Care

Provides rental subsidies to individuals who are involved with a participating agency and their families. Eligible applicants must be aged 18 or older, low-income, homeless, AND have specific disabilities. Participants pay approximately 30% of their income toward rent and

utilities, and the program pays the remainder of the rent. Eligible housing must be inspected and approved by the agency to meet federal Housing Quality Standards (HQS).

Veteran or VASH

Local and federal programs offer housing assistance as well as housing counseling and other support to Veterans. VASH (or HUD-VASH: the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing program) combines Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance with case management and clinical services from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). For more information about VASH and other assistance programs available to Veterans and their families, visit <http://www.va.gov/homeless/housing.asp> 

Shelters

Although not listed on this web site, shelters are places that provide a temporary place to stay (usually a few days to a few weeks) for people who have no permanent housing. These are considered “emergency shelters” because you have fairly quick access to a place to stay (there is no complex application process). Types of shelters include homeless, domestic violence, and runaway shelters. Information on shelters can be obtained in most regions by calling 2-1-1, 24 hours a day, every day.

Single-Family Home

A freestanding single-family dwelling.

Single Room Occupancy (SRO)

A multi-room facility that offers single rooms for rent, typically with shared kitchen facilities.

Sober Living Facilities

Also known as 3/4-way housing. Properties where all residents have agreed to remain alcohol and drug-free. It is generally less restrictive than a halfway house. Some facilities may have shared bathroom and/or kitchen facilities, and/or may provide meals to residents.

Subsidized Housing

Also known as Government Subsidized Housing, this is the general term used to refer to any housing that is paid for in part by the local, state or federal government. Subsidized housing allows the tenant to pay rent that is less than market rate – often based on a percentage of the tenant’s income.

Project Based Vouchers

Project Based Vouchers provide assistance to eligible families, including the elderly and persons with disabilities, who use a voucher that is attached to an affordable safe decent rental unit.

Project Based vouchers are used at selected developments where providers of supportive services focus on special needs populations.

Tax Credit Properties

Buildings where the landlord received a tax break to develop the property and, in return, must offer a certain number of units at below market rents.

Transitional Housing

Although not listed on this web site (because it is not considered permanent housing), these programs offer a temporary place to stay for people who are trying to live on their own, but who do not currently have the financial resources or the ability to do so. These programs usually provide supportive services to help people become better prepared for independent living. Some programs require that people be transitioning from an emergency shelter. Transitional housing is generally provided with a higher degree of privacy than short-term homeless shelters; may be provided at no cost or low-cost to the resident, and may be configured for specialized groups such as veterans, people with AIDS/HIV, domestic violence victims, people with disabilities and other groups. Information on shelters can be obtained in most regions by calling 2-1-1, 24 hours a day, every day.