

## Protect Yourself and Spread the Word about Voucher Waiting List Scams

If you're looking for housing assistance, here's something you need to know: scammers have made websites that look like registration sites for waiting lists. If you pay a fee or give your personal information, the scammers will take it. And you still won't be on a waiting list. **There is never a fee to apply for a HUD funded public waiting list.**

If you search online for the Section 8 voucher waiting list, the top search results often are bogus sites. The sites look very real and their names may say "Section 8," and might even show an Equal Housing Opportunity logo. They ask for fees and your personal information, like your Social Security number, but they won't do anything for you. The scammers will keep your money and disappear. They also may give your personal information to identity thieves.

Here's the **real** way things work: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) voucher program provides funding to local housing authorities. The housing authorities issue housing choice vouchers to help people find housing in privately-owned rental units. To get on the waiting list for a voucher, find your local housing authority and contact them. Most agencies will have a website with their application details and when you can apply.

In another twist, some fake sites list properties that supposedly are available. The sites promise you can rent one if you pay the first month's rent via wire transfer or a prepaid card. The properties might exist, but the ads are fakes placed by scammers. If you pay, you just lose your money.

People have lost money and personal information to scammers – but they have also lost the chance to apply for the actual waiting list. Most people don't realize they have been scammed until after the waiting list is closed. Keep these tips in mind to avoid a Section 8 housing choice voucher lottery scam:

- Contact your local housing authority to find out how to apply for the Section 8 housing choice voucher waiting list.
- Housing authorities **do not** charge fees to apply for housing and they will never contact you by phone or email to suggest that you apply for a waiting list. Those are sure signs of a scam.
- Treat your Social Security number and other personal information like cash. Never give this information out on a website you find through a search.