



Department of  
Housing Preservation  
& Development

# **Affordable Housing Guide for People with Disabilities**

*January 2022*

# Table of Contents

|                                                                             |           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Section 1. Introduction .....</b>                                        | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Section 2. Overview of the Affordable Housing Lottery .....</b>          | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Section 2a. Set-Aside Units for People with Disabilities .....</b>       | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Section 3. Apply for Affordable Housing.....</b>                         | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Section 3a. Tips for Completing your Housing Connect Profile .....</b>   | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>Section 3b. After You Apply .....</b>                                    | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Section 3c. Be Ready in Case You are Contacted for Documents ..</b>      | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Section 3d. After Sending in Your Documents .....</b>                    | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Section 3e. Tips for Preparing for the Eligibility Review Process ..</b> | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Section 4. Mitchell-Lama .....</b>                                       | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Section 5. Frequently Asked Questions .....</b>                          | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>Section 6. Resources.....</b>                                            | <b>12</b> |
| <b>Websites .....</b>                                                       | <b>12</b> |
| <b>Documents .....</b>                                                      | <b>12</b> |

## **Section 1. Introduction**

This document provides an overview of affordable housing and special considerations for people with disabilities in New York City. Topics covered include an explanation of affordable housing, set-aside units for people with disabilities, the HPD housing lottery application process through NYC Housing Connect, Mitchell-Lama units and frequently asked questions.

## **Section 2. Overview of the Affordable Housing Lottery**

The New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and Housing Development Corporation (HDC) create affordable housing opportunities for households of many income levels and sizes. To ensure fair distribution of affordable housing, these subsidized apartments are available to buy or rent through a randomized lottery system. These housing units are considered affordable because they cost about one-third or less of the resident's income.

### **Section 2a. Set-Aside Units for People with Disabilities**

The affordable housing projects financed by HPD and HDC set aside 7% of units for applicants with disabilities: 5% for mobility, 2% for vision and hearing. These are "disability set-aside units" and they are designed according to the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS). UFAS design features in a set-aside unit will depend on the reasonable accommodation required by the resident's disability.

- A mobility set-aside unit means that the floor plan is designed to be accessible to someone with a mobility disability. This could include removable under-counter cabinets, certain heights for kitchen appliances and counters, amongst other features.
- A vision or hearing set-aside unit can include alarm systems that use loud tones, flashing lights or vibrations, or smart appliances with communication technology.

Please note that affordable housing applicants with a disability are not only considered for disability set-aside units. When a household applies for a lottery and has a member with a mobility, vision, or hearing disability, their application is considered for both disability set-aside units and any other units in that development that they qualify for.

## **Section 3. Apply for Affordable Housing through HPD Housing Lottery**

NYC Housing Connect is your online portal to find and apply for affordable rental and homeownership opportunities across the five boroughs of New York City. Visit the NYC Housing Connect website at:

[HousingConnect.nyc.gov](https://HousingConnect.nyc.gov). When you see an advertisement that may be a good fit for you, make sure your Housing Connect profile is complete and start applying! Your Housing Connect profile becomes your application for every development you apply for in the system.

Applications are subject to income eligibility limits, which can differ from one housing development to another. We recommend that before applying, applicants review the project advertisement containing income limits to determine if they are within the eligible income range. **It is very important to update your profile information immediately any time your household members or their incomes change.** This can be done before or after you apply to any development.

Ads also contain information on which set-aside units and preferences are available for each development. For example, in addition to set-asides for people with disabilities, you may see preferences for municipal employees or for residents already living in the same community board as the development.

Advertisements for affordable housing developments are on the "Open Lotteries" page of NYC Housing Connect and in citywide and local publications. Each ad contains instructions on how to apply via Housing Connect or by mail-in application. If you prefer to apply with a paper application instead of online, you can request the developer mail you an application. Refer to the instructions on lottery advertisements to learn more about requesting a paper application and where to mail completed

applications. If you decide to submit a paper application, do not also apply online; submitting applications through the mail and online may disqualify you. You can find out more about how to get paper applications by calling 212-863-7990.

### **Section 3a. Tips for Completing your Housing Connect Profile**

Make sure to enter the incomes for everyone who will live with you in the Household Members section of your Housing Connect profile. Include all sources of income, this includes income from employment, self-employment, government benefits income (unemployment, public assistance, TANF, Armed Forces Reserve, etc.), Retirement or disability income (pension, annuity, social security, SSI/SSD, worker's compensation, etc.), and income from other sources (child support, gift income, alimony, rental income, etc.).

If you have a voucher or rental subsidy, make sure to indicate that in your profile. Minimum income requirements do not apply if you have a voucher or a rental subsidy. However, rent should be within maximum limits allowed by your voucher or rental assistance program. Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers (HPD or NYCHA), CityFHEPS, ISS, Medicaid Waiver, and VASH are some examples of rental subsidies and all are accepted through the affordable housing lottery.

If a member of your household has a mobility, vision, or hearing disability, be sure to indicate that in the Household Members section of your Housing Connect profile. If you are applying with a mail-in application, this question is asked in the Household Information section of the paper application. A reasonable accommodation due to a disability could include a change, adaptation, or modification to a policy, program, service or workplace, such as the addition of a ramp to allow a wheelchair user to enter the building, allowing a service animal in a building with a no pet policy, or an extra bedroom for people with a live-in aid or certain medical equipment.

## **Section 3b. After You Apply**

After the application deadline, all online and paper applications are put into a random order and assigned a log number. Once all log numbers are randomly assigned, the Marketing Agent reviews the applications, beginning with set-aside units for people with disabilities and preferences.

Due to the volume of applications we receive, it can take several months or longer to hear back about your application. Sometimes you might not hear back, even if you qualify.

If you are not selected or do not hear back, keep searching for other apartments and apply when you are ready.

## **Section 3c. Be Ready in Case You are Contacted for Documents**

If your application is selected, you will be asked to respond to a document request to prove the information you put in your application. This request is very important. Agents from the building will confirm if you qualify for the opportunity you applied for. Get ready ahead of time to make sure you are prepared.

You will have to show:

- Who will live with you. Examples: birth certificates, picture IDs
- The incomes of everyone who will live with you. Examples: pay stubs; federal and state tax returns; proof of Social Security, veteran, or public assistance benefits income
- Information about your current apartment: Examples: your current lease, receipts for rent, recent gas or electric bills
- See the [After You Apply: Checklist and Resources](#) guide if you need help getting copies of these documents

## **Section 3d. After Sending in Your Documents**

Your eligibility will be reviewed, and your application may be selected for further consideration. If so, you will have to go through a few more steps before you are determined the successful candidate and offered the unit.

You might get a rejection notice saying you do not qualify and the reason why. If this happens, you have the right to appeal. This means you will get a chance to explain why you think the decision was not correct. The appeal process is included in the rejection notice. Remember:

- If you want to appeal, act quickly—you will only have a limited time to submit an appeal explaining why you think you should not have been turned down. Include any documents that support your appeal.
- The building agents will review your appeal and send you a notice with the outcome.
- If the appeal is successful, the agent will continue processing your application.
- If your appeal is not successful, you will receive an appeal rejection notice. If you think there is still an error, you can contact HPD or HDC within five business days with a complaint. Be sure to include an explanation and documents supporting why you think there is an error. The notice will give you instructions.

Even if you do not qualify for one housing opportunity, other applications you submitted for other units are still active. Remember to keep your Housing Connect information up to date in case you are selected for another unit.

### **Section 3e. Tips for Preparing for the Eligibility Review Process**

The process can move quickly once your eligibility is reviewed for an affordable development. Here is what you can do ahead of time to be prepared:

- See HPD's [After You Apply: Checklist and Resources](#) guide for the types of documents you may be asked to provide during the eligibility review.
- If you have a mobility, vision, or hearing disability, ask your doctor to complete the [Certificate of Eligibility for Units Set Aside for People with Disabilities](#), which is a form that HPD and HDC uses to verify that someone in a household qualifies for a disability set-aside unit. This form is valid for one year, and you can find a link to the form on the Housing

Connect website or on HPD's Resources for People with Disabilities page: [nyc.gov/hpd/accessibility](https://nyc.gov/hpd/accessibility).

- The eligibility review is primarily conducted online. If you need to meet with the Marketing Agent in-person and require a reasonable accommodation for the meeting, be sure to request the reasonable accommodation before the appointment.
- Know your credit and rental history. If you apply for an affordable rental, and are contacted for an eligibility review, you will have the option to either undergo a credit check or provide proof of positive rental history instead of a credit check. If you need help understanding or improving your credit history, schedule an appointment with a Ready to Rent financial counselor: [nyc.gov/ready-to-rent](https://nyc.gov/ready-to-rent).
- Be sure to check what your current lease says about moving out before the lease is over. This is helpful to know ahead of time because if you are offered an apartment, you might need to move quickly.

## Section 4. Mitchell-Lama

The Mitchell-Lama program provides affordable rental and cooperative housing to moderate- and middle-income families. If you are a veteran residing in New York State, you may be entitled to a preference for Mitchell-Lama developments with an open waiting list. Visit the [Mitchell-Lama website](#) to learn more.

Mitchell-Lama apartments are sold or rented through waiting lists maintained by each development. Many waiting lists are closed because there are already enough applicants to fill vacancies expected for the foreseeable future. However, once these waiting lists are depleted, these developments conduct lotteries to replenish their waiting lists. You can view a Housing List and apply to these lotteries on the Search page of the [Mitchell-Lama Connect website](#).

Some Mitchell-Lama buildings do not require lotteries to replenish their waiting lists. To apply, you must contact the management company directly to request an application. For a list of buildings with open waiting lists and the contact information for each management company, click "Waitlist" on the Search page of Mitchell-Lama Connect.



## **Section 5. Frequently Asked Questions**

### **I have a disability, but it does not affect my mobility, vision, or hearing. Can I still apply through Housing Connect?**

Yes. Applicants who do not have a mobility, vision, or hearing disability can still apply for affordable housing in the general affordable housing lottery and request reasonable accommodations from the building owner if alterations to the unit are required. Disability set aside units are reserved for people with mobility, vision, and hearing disabilities, are supplemented with federal funding and are required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

### **What happens if I am contacted about a disability set-aside unit but do not have a mobility, vision, or hearing disability?**

If you indicate having a mobility, vision, or hearing disability on your application and are later found not to have one, your application will be put back into the general pool of applications. You may be contacted again for consideration later.

### **What is a reasonable accommodation?**

A reasonable accommodation is a change, adaptation, or modification to a policy, program, service, workplace, or home which will allow a person with a disability equal access as a person without a disability. Examples of reasonable accommodations include the addition of a ramp to allow a wheelchair user to enter the building; allowing a service animal in a building that has a no pet policy.

### **What is the process for requesting a reasonable accommodation to your apartment or home, due to a disability?**

You can request reasonable accommodations due to a disability directly from your landlord or building owner, which must be provided at no cost to you, as long as the work required does not create an undue burden.

## **What can I do if my landlord is not willing to make reasonable accommodations to the apartment due to a disability?**

Under the NYC Human Rights Law, you have the right to reasonable accommodations due to a disability unless it would create an undue hardship. If your housing provider is not willing to provide and pay for reasonable accommodations, you may contact the NYC Human Rights Commission to support the cooperative dialog process between you and your landlord.

## **How do I file a complaint about my affordable housing application or the Marketing Agent that conducted my eligibility review?**

Contact HPD compliance at [hpdcompliance@hpd.nyc.gov](mailto:hpdcompliance@hpd.nyc.gov) or HDC compliance at [hdccompliance@nychdc.com](mailto:hdccompliance@nychdc.com).

If you believe you have experienced discrimination, please call 311 or visit [nyc.gov/cchr](http://nyc.gov/cchr) to learn more about your rights or file a complaint with the NYC Commission on Human Rights.

## **What medical documentation is required in my application for Housing Connect lotteries?**

- *Certificate of Eligibility for Units Set Aside for People with Disabilities (Medical Certification)* - please note that this Medical Certification has a life span of 1 year and you will have 2 weeks to collect and submit your documents from the time you are offered a unit (for example, ID, birth certificate, income verification and proof of current residence).
- *Certificate of Disability Cover Letter* - If you are not able to have the Medical Certification form completed by a medical professional within the allotted time for the eligibility review, you can instead complete and submit the Certificate of Disability Cover Letter form yourself, until you are able to have the Medical Certification form completed by a medical professional.

## **Need help with the application process?**

HPD Housing Ambassadors are community organizations that help people prepare and apply for affordable housing lotteries. In addition to general Ambassadors, HPD partners with Housing Ambassadors for People with Disabilities that may be able to provide more specialized support for applicants with mobility disabilities. Call 311 or visit our website to connect with a Housing Ambassador near you: [nyc.gov/housing-ambassadors](https://nyc.gov/housing-ambassadors).

You may also contact Zenzile Vialva, HPD's Disability Service Facilitator, for information about Housing Ambassadors or HPD services in general: 212-863-6486 and [accessibility@hpd.nyc.gov](mailto:accessibility@hpd.nyc.gov).

## **Who to contact to check on the status of an application, or when locked out of the Housing Connect platform:**

[NYCHousingConnect@hpd.nyc.gov](mailto:NYCHousingConnect@hpd.nyc.gov) or 212-863-7990

## **Who to contact about Section 8 and other vouchers:**

- HPD does not issue tenant-based Housing Choice Vouchers directly to the public, though Section 8 Tenant-Based Vouchers are available through New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) and the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). HCR can be contacted by phone at 866-275-3427 and NYCHA at 718-707-7771. You may also contact the NYC Department of Social Services for homelessness prevention services through its Homebase Program: [www1.nyc.gov/site/hra/help/homebase.page](http://www1.nyc.gov/site/hra/help/homebase.page).
- [CityFHEPS](#) – City administered rental assistance supplement to help individuals and families find and keep housing.
- [HASA](#) – City administered services to assist individuals living with AIDS or HIV illness to live healthier, more independent lives.
- [NHTD](#) – State administered nursing home transition and diversion waiver.
- [ISS](#) – State administered housing subsidy for adults with developmental disabilities.

## Section 6. Resources

### Websites

- [HPD Resources for People with Disabilities](#)
- [NYC Housing Connect](#)
- [NYC Mitchell-Lama Connect](#)
- [MOPD Access Housing: Your Guide to Accessing Housing in NYC](#)
- [Housing Ambassador Program](#)
- [Ready to Rent Program](#)

### Documents

- [NYC Housing Connect Application Guides](#)
- [Certificate of Disability Cover Letter](#)
- [Certificate of Eligibility for Units Set Aside for People with Disabilities \(Medical Certification\)](#)