

HOUSING SEARCH TIPS for VOUCHER HOLDERS



Neighbors
Together

*Created by Suzanne Adler, Housing Advocate
& Annie Carforo, Community Organizer*

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Before You Start, Read This! (or whenever you're feeling stuck, read this again!)



WHAT YOU NEED

- A copy of your voucher
- A working smart phone with voice mail and email set up
- Internet access and some housing apps downloaded on your phone
- Copies of important documents such as current bank statements, award letters, taxes, etc. See pg. 3 under Get Organized
- A positive attitude. Sometimes you will get frustrated by the process, but power forward and you will see success.



SOME FRIENDLY ADVICE

- **Work on your housing search every day.** This is like a job.
- **Keep organized, take good notes and collect all your evidence.**
- **Be open minded.** The choosier you are, the fewer choices you will have and the longer it will take.
- **Be prepared to move quickly.** The early bird catches the worm!
- **Do not pay money or give your personal information to anyone over the internet.** If you aren't sure, ask us!

Getting Started

WHAT IS SID... AND HOW DO YOU FIGHT IT?

When a landlord refuses to accept your housing voucher, that is called **Source of Income Discrimination (SID)**, and it is illegal. If you plan on using your voucher program or public assistance to pay rent and a landlord or broker tells you...



- No vouchers
- They have nothing available for voucher holders
- You don't meet the credit or income requirements
- They ignore you or tell you they will call you back after you mention your voucher

...they are discriminating against you and it should be reported! We can fight back against discriminating landlords and even help you get an apartment when we report discrimination against vouchers.

Learn more at landlordwatch.nyc/justice and stopsidnyc.com

ONLINE SEARCHES

Use online websites to look at vacant apartments. DO NOT call real estate agencies and ask for help. They will not help you **so don't waste your time**. To find out what is available, go to one of these online places:

- StreetEasy.com
- Trulia.com
- Apartments.com
- Facebook Marketplace *(proceed with caution!)
- Zillow.com
- Craigslist.com *(proceed with caution!)



PRO TIP : Go for apartments in buildings with 6 or more units. You can tell by looking at photos of the listing, searching the address on Google Maps or by checking the WhoOwnsWhat website (see Additional Resources on page 5)

5 STEPS TO FINDING AN APARTMENT

1. Organize yourself (see page 1 for tips)
2. Go on an app or website (see list above) and look for an apartment that is no more than the voucher amount and matches the size (studio, 1-bedroom, etc) that the voucher covers
3. Look through the different apartment listings and click on the apartments that interest you
4. Read everything carefully! Keep an eye out for credit score or income requirements, or documents that you may not have. These requirements do not apply to voucher holders in the same way, so **you should apply even if you don't meet the requirements listed**
5. **Contact** the person who is showing the apartment (see 'Successful Housing Searches' and 'How to Reach Out' on pages 5 and 6 for important tips on how to make contact)

Successful Housing Searches

People who successfully find housing keep organized and updated notes (a sample sheet is found on pg. 5). **We cannot stress this enough.** Taking a picture of the apartment listing with your phone before you apply is a really good habit to get into.



PRO TIP : KEEP RECORDS OF EVERYTHING. Make sure you are keeping track of texts and emails with brokers and landlords, and you are recording phone calls. This will be necessary evidence to prove discrimination.

GET ORGANIZED

Landlords or brokers might ask for documents and even say they are required, but that is not true! You can only provide items you have, and no one has a right to refuse to accept your application if you do not have those documents. Here's a list of typical documents a broker or landlord may ask for, and what you can use if you don't have them:

What they ask for... Paystubs | Bank Statements | Credit Scores | Tax Returns

What you can give... Voucher or Shopping Letter | SSI, SSDI Award Letters
| Character Reference Letters

Keep electronic copies of all your documents in one safe location. If you need help, we can help you! Just call us at 718-498-7256 ext. 5007 for help.

Be sure to black out your social security number or account number on your documents before you scan them to protect yourself from identity theft.

RECORD YOUR CONVERSATIONS

Keep a written trail of all your texts and emails between you and the broker when searching for an apartment. It's also a good idea to record your calls. Try to make calls on speaker phone, and have a friend who can record for you. That way, if you are discriminated against, you have evidence that could help bring you justice. Some smartphones have built-in features to record calls also.



You can download the free, easy-to-use Call Recorder app if you have an android.

BE VERY SPECIFIC

"Hi! I'm (your name). Is this (name of contact)? I'm interested in (exact address). Is it available and if so may I please come see it (specific time)?"

When you make contact, whether by phone, email or text, be sure to repeat back the exact street address and apartment number you are interested in. Suggest specific times you can see the apartment. Try to see the apartment as soon as possible, usually within the next day or two. **Do not mention your voucher in the beginning of the call.** For more information on communication with the broker, check out 'How To Reach Out' on the next page.

How to Reach Out

SEND AN EMAIL



- Include the **exact address** in your email.
- Say specifically **when** you want to see the apartment.
- Emails should be friendly. Be sure to say please and thank you.
- If you do not hear back in a few hours, try texting or calling. (If you call, be sure to record your call (see page 4).)

MAKE A PHONE CALL



- If you haven't already done so, please read page 3 about recording your call and what to say. If they don't answer, **be sure to leave a message**.
- In your message include the exact address of the apartment you want to view and give them your phone number slowly, repeating it twice.
- When you leave a message, if you think you are calling a cell phone, follow up with a text.

SEND A TEXT



- Texting is the way to get a fast reply.
- When you text be sure to include the exact address and be polite.
- If the broker stops replying once they hear you have a voucher, that is a form of discrimination and you need to report it.

Additional Resources

<https://stosidnyc.com>

This website has an e-version of this brochure and information and a portal to file a discrimination complaint

<https://landlordwatch.nyc/>

A great website with lots of valuable information, updated constantly

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cchr/index.page>

New York City Commission on Human Rights webpage has lots of information about discrimination and how to file a complaint.

<https://whoownswhat.justfix.nyc/en/>

This website can help you determine if the landlord owns 6 or more units.

Source of Income Discrimination

Housing Search Tracking Sheet (SAMPLE)

ADDRESS	PRICE	WEBSITE
CONTACT NAME	PHONE NUMBER	CALL BACK?

OUTREACH DETAILS	DATE	TIME

Get Involved

At Neighbors Together, we know that housing vouchers are promising tools to help people find housing. We also know that right now, vouchers are failing to help people find housing.

We believe that everyone deserves access to housing, regardless of their form of income. We empower voucher holders to exercise their rights, as we build a voucher system that is competitive, transparent, dignified and respected by landlords and brokers.

Together, we can put an end to source of income discrimination and strengthen voucher programs so they can offer real help to low income New Yorkers. Join our campaign to make vouchers work!

For more information, please contact our Campaign Manager, Annie Carforo, at 718-498-7256 ext. 5010.

Neighbors Together



2094 Fulton Street
Brooklyn NY 11233



718.498.7256



neighborstogether.org