



Renters' Guide for Market-Rate Apartment Buildings with Affordable Units

This guide is provided by the Office of Housing to assist low -income renters interested in applying for affordable housing opportunities through the City of Seattle’s Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE), Incentive Zoning (IZ) and Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) programs. The guide describes the programs’ eligibility requirements, benefits provided to qualifying tenants and answers many frequently asked questions.

- A. Program Overview1
- B. Finding an MFTE/IZ/MHA Unit2
- C. Program Eligibility- Income Maximum.....2
- D. Program Eligibility- Income Certification3
- E. Maintaining Program Eligibility During Tenancy.....4
- F. Affordability Period and Expiration.....5
- G. Rents in MFTE/IZ Programs6
- H. Rent Increases in MFTE/IZ7
- I. One-time Fees and Penalties.....8
- J. Use of Rental Vouchers in MFTE and IZ Programs8
- K. Compliance Issues9
- L. Questions.....10
- M. Income and Asset Documentation Tables.....10
- N. Frequently Asked Questions..... 14

A. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Office of Housing’s MFTE, IZ and MHA programs incentivize, or in the case of MHA require, developers to provide affordable housing opportunities to low-income renters. In return for leasing units at restricted rents, property owners receive a residential property tax exemption (MFTE), the ability to build extra residential floor area (IZ) or required to provide income and rent restricted units (MHA)

Properties participating in MFTE are required to provide 20-25% of the total units in the building as “affordable”, or income and rent restricted. Properties participating in IZ are required to provide a variable number of units as income and rent restricted, depending on the benefit received. Properties with MHA units have agreed to perform (provide restricted units) under the MHA regulations. With MHA developers can choose to perform and provide restricted unit or provide payments. Building who have agreed to provide payments in lieu of providing restricted units are not required to provide restricted units and will not be listed in Office of Housing Affordable Housing Incentive Programs materials. In all cases, units not subject to the programs’ restrictions will be rented at market rates.

When a unit participating in either program becomes available, renter applicants will complete the property’s standard rental screening process. Once complete, the property will certify the income of the

household to determine program eligibility. To be considered eligible the applicant must demonstrate that the total anticipated household income for the year after move-in is below a maximum income limit for the unit. Eligible tenants will receive a restricted rent that is capped at a maximum amount for a defined period. Ineligible applicants may not rent the income restricted unit, but are welcome to reapply if they believe they will qualify at a later date.

B. FINDING AN MFTE/IZ UNIT

To begin your search for a rent restricted MFTE/IZ/MHA unit, download the [Participating Property List](#) available on the Office of Housing's [Find Housing webpage](#).

The list is updated regularly. Applicants are encouraged to review the links to buildings' leasing websites and contact properties directly for more information on affordable unit availability. The Office of Housing does not maintain a waitlist or a list of vacancies and cannot provide estimates on when a unit will be available at a given property. If a building currently has no vacancies, property leasing staff can provide information on how to be alerted when a unit meeting your criteria becomes available.

MFTE/IZ/MHA units are a limited resource in extremely high demand and are available first-come, first-serve. Properties are only required to provide the specific number of income and rent restricted units detailed on the Participating Property List. Once these units are leased, there is no requirement for the property to accommodate additional applicants on account of falling under the maximum income.

C. PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY- INCOME MAXIMUM

Rental units in the Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE), Incentive Zoning (IZ) and Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) programs are open to all applicants that meet the property's rental screening criteria and are determined to be income eligible for the program. Applicants with rental vouchers (Housing Choice Vouchers, VASH, etc.) are encouraged to apply, but the voucher payment and tenant contribution must be able to cover the rent. Households comprised of students are allowable in the program.

To be considered eligible, a household's total gross income must be at or below the maximum allowable income cap for the unit. The maximum allowable income for the unit is determined by an income restriction placed on the unit by the City that does not change for the duration of the property's participation in the program. The restriction on the unit is expressed as a percentage of Area Median Income, or **%AMI**. For example, a unit with an 80%AMI restriction is only available to a household with a total annual gross income at or below 80% of the HUD Seattle-Bellevue Area Median Income.

You can determine the maximum income your household can earn to be eligible for a unit using a three-step process:

- 1.) **Find the %AMI of the unit you are interested in.** The %AMI for units in the program can be found for each property on the [Participating Property List](#). The list tells you the total number of

units the property is required to provide as affordable and at what %AMI. If you are unsure about the restriction on a specific unit, contact the property for more details.

- 2.) **Determine your household size.** Household size has a specific definition for both programs and includes all adult household members and children. Include temporarily absent family members (such as on temporary work assignment in another state) unborn children of pregnant women, children in the process of being adopted, and children that are in the household 50% of the time or more. Guests, guarantors, live-in aides, and foster children do not count toward the household size.
- 3.) **Determine the unit's income maximum-** You can determine the maximum allowable income for the unit using the [current income and rent chart](#). Cross reference the %AMI of the unit with your household size to get the income maximum.

You should now have the maximum income cap for the unit you are interested in- if you are still unsure of the cap, please contact the property for details. Your household must earn at or below this amount over the first year of tenancy to be eligible for the program.

D. PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY- INCOME CERTIFICATION

Once you complete a property's standard rental application, you are required to have your income certified for the program to ensure it is under the maximum you calculated above. The income certification and eligibility determination must occur prior to signing the lease. **The property will calculate your household's gross annual income through a three-step process:**

- 1.) **Property will provide all adult applicants with an Income Declaration form (ID).** The ID is the applicant's disclosure of all incomes sources and assets available to the household over the twelve months after the anticipated move-in date. Once signed by the applicant, the property manager will request documentation to support each income and asset disclosed. Please note the following:
 - The ID must be completed in full to be accepted. Failing to disclose all anticipated income over the next 12 months may be grounds for removal from the program.
 - Gross annual income (before taxes) will be reported in all instances. Overtime, bonuses, tips and commissions must be disclosed. Applicants that are self-employed will report net amounts earned from the business.
 - **The value of an asset does not count towards income cap, only the income earned from an asset (interest, dividends, recurring distributions, etc.) counts as income.** You will report both the value of an asset and the annual income earned.
 - Personal property is not considered an asset. Laptops, furniture, personal vehicles, wedding rings, etc. are therefore not disclosed.
 - If a property does not provide all adult household members with an ID form, please contact the Office of Housing prior to signing a lease.

2.) **The property will request documentation to support all amounts disclosed on the ID.** The ID is an income disclosure only. Each income source you disclose must be supported by documentation that will be the basis for the final household income calculation. See tables in **Section M. Income and Asset Documentation** at end of this document for a list of documents that are required for each income source. The table is provided for informational purposes only and is intended as a general overview of documentation that may be requested. The property will provide specific guidance on what documentation is required once a complete ID form is signed and submitted.

3.) **Income Calculation and Eligibility Determination-** The property manager will calculate the total gross household income once documentation for each income and asset source is made available. If your household earns at or below the maximum income for the unit, you are eligible for the program. All information will be entered by the property into a document called the **Tenant Income Certification (TIC)**. If your household is determined to be eligible, you will be requested to sign the TIC document. If your household is determined to be ineligible, you may request to review the TIC document for accuracy and discuss with the property manager.

Please note that the Office of Housing does not conduct the income certification and does not provide pre-approvals. **Renters should work closely with the property and address questions or concerns directly to staff on-site. If there is a question they can't answer, staff at the property will contact their compliance department or the Office of Housing for guidance.**

The income certification process can take up to two weeks, however this is not guaranteed. Multiple factors may hold up an eligibility determination, including the need to request additional documentation, waiting on an unresponsive employer, or the application was received during a busy time of year. Properties that are pre-leasing units may have a particularly slow turnaround as they are typically completing multiple certifications at the same time. Applicants should keep in close touch with the property and request status updates when needed.

MFTE/IZ/MHA units are not intended as emergency housing and exceptions are never made to the income eligibility criteria or process, regardless of the potential impacts on a household. Applicants are requested to be responsive to information requests and plan accordingly in case an ineligibility determination is made.

Being determined income eligible for the program does not automatically entitle a household to rent the unit. Your household is required to meet all of the property's policies and screening criteria as well, which are not directly governed by the MFTE/IZ/MHA programs. The Office of Housing does not have the authority to lower the rental screening criteria at a property to accommodate a household, including for past evictions, poor credit history, inability to meet a minimum income policy, or economic hardships.

E. MAINTAINING PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY DURING TENANCY

To maintain eligibility after the initial move-in certification, the unit must be the household's sole and primary residence. The unit may not be subleased or otherwise occupied by parties other than the income eligible household (even temporarily through services such as AirBnB) for the duration of the household's participation. Changes in the adult household composition (for example, adding a new roommate) will trigger an income certification. Tenants are required to contact the property management immediately when any change occurs to the adult household composition- this includes occupants who no longer meet the definition of guests. Failing to disclose additional adult residents at any point after move-in is in most instances a lease violation and may be grounds for permanent removal of the household's affordability restriction.

Transfers to units at the same building with the same %AMI do not require income certification. Transfers to units at the same building with a lower or higher %AMI require a new income certification.

If a resident wants to transfer to another building, even if managed by the same property management company, a new income certification will be required.

Some properties will be listed on the Participating Property List as "**P5- annual income recertification required**". This means each MFTE household at the property will complete income recertifications annually and will no longer be considered eligible for the program when the total annual income exceeds 1.5x the current income cap on the unit. The tenant is not required to move but will instead revert to market rate. The next comparable vacant unit will then be designated for the program. As an example, if the income cap for an 80%AMI unit was \$60,000, the household would no longer be eligible when their recertification indicates they earn more than \$90,000 ($\$60,000 \times 1.5$).

MHA properties will also be listed on the Participating Property List as "**MHA-annual recertification required**". For MHA will complete income recertifications annually and an MHA households will no longer be considered eligible for the MHA program when the total annual income exceeds 60% AMI for units with initial restriction of 40% AMI and 80% AMI for units with initial restriction of 60% AMI. When a MHA households income exceeds the recertification maximum the property must provide 6 months' notice before the rent is increased to market rate rent.

Please refer to the Participating Property List to see if this requirement applies at a property or contact the property directly for more information.

F. AFFORDABILITY PERIOD AND EXPIRATION

Each building participating in MFTE or Incentive Zoning must provide income and rent restricted units for a defined **affordability period**. Once the affordability period expires, the property is no longer required to provide units at restricted rents. Any new leases signed or renewed after the expiration date of the affordability period will be at the market rate.

Buildings participating in the MFTE program typically have affordability periods of 12 years. This applies to the property, not the resident. For example, if an income eligible household moves in in year 8 of the affordability period, the rent restriction will only apply for four more years. Units that are in the IZ program typically have restrictions for 20-50 years. MHA programs typically have restrictions for 75 years. Interested applicants and current renters can find a building's expiration date(s) on the Participating Property List.

All applicants and renters should note that once a property completes its affordability period, the property cannot renew either program. Renters in the MFTE program should be aware that as a voluntary program, it is possible for a building owner to cancel the tax exemption during the affordability period and no longer provide affordable housing. Regardless of whether the affordability restrictions cease due to expiration or cancellation, tenants will continue to pay their current rent for the duration of their lease term but will revert to market rate upon renewing or going month-to-month. Cancellation of the tax exemption by the property may come with a penalty, so should be considered a rare but possible occurrence. The Office of Housing and/or the property will notify all current residents in affordable units about their options when an expiration is pending, or a cancellation has occurred.

G. RENTS IN MFTE, IZ AND MHA PROGRAMS

Tenants participating in the MFTE/IZ or MHA programs benefit by receiving a rent restriction on their unit. The rent restriction is always the same %AMI as the income restriction for the unit. For example, a studio unit listed as 65%AMI on the Participating Property List has a 65%AMI income limit **and** a 65%AMI studio rent limit. So, even if the actual household income falls below the 40%AMI mark, the unit's rent maximum is still calculated based on the 65%AMI.

In affordability programs, this maximum rent figure represents the maximum gross rent that the property can charge for monthly occupancy. **Gross rent** includes your base rent, a utility allowance for any tenant paid utilities and any recurring fees that you are required to pay to occupy the unit.

The quickest way to determine the rent or find out more information on fees is to contact the property manager. For those interested in calculating the maximum monthly payment on their own, use the following formula:

$$\begin{array}{r} \textit{Maximum Gross Rent} \\ - \textit{Utility allowance} \\ - \textit{Required recurring fees} \\ \hline \textit{Maximum monthly rent payment} \end{array}$$

The three-step process to determine the maximum rent payment is as follows:

1.) Determine Maximum Gross Rent- Use the [Participating Property List](#) to find the property and unit type you are interested in renting (studio, 1BR, 2BR, etc.). Compare the %AMI and associated unit type to the current [rent schedule](#) (use the Multifamily Tax Exemption schedule for MFTE units and the Incentive Zoning schedule for IZ units and Mandatory Housing Affordability schedule for MHA units).

Properties can participate in both programs, so if you aren't sure what designation applies to a specific unit, contact the property for more information.

2.) Deduct the Utility Allowance- Deduct the utility allowance based on the Seattle Housing Authority's current [Utility Estimate Schedule](#). Utility allowances are determined based on the utility responsibility of the tenant and the unit type. **Please note that once this deduction is made, the tenant is then responsible for the full utility bills regardless of cost.** The utility allowance is intended to account for "average" utility usage only and does not represent a cap on your utility payment or a credit of any kind. Please contact the property directly for information on what utilities the tenant is responsible for.

3.) Deduct Required Recurring Fees that are a Condition of Tenancy- If the rental agreement requires you to pay a recurring fee to live at the property, this is factored into the gross monthly rent you are charged. For example, if renter's insurance is a requirement in the lease, the property must provide a deduction. At their option, properties may deduct your actual renter's insurance monthly premium, or use a \$17 deduction, or recommend an insurance carrier to you to cover the lease requirement and deduct that amount even if you turn it down in favor of another company. Another common recurring charge is the King County Sewer Capacity Fee, which is not considered a consumable utility covered above through the utility allowance. Any other mandatory recurring fee not covered here must be deducted as well.

Once the above information is known, the maximum monthly rent would be calculated by the property similar to the following example:

\$1,472 (2022 maximum gross rent on a 65%AMI studio unit)
-\$140 (utility allowance, tenant pays all utilities for a studio unit)
-\$57 (required recurring fees--\$17 renter's insurance, \$40 King County Sewer Capacity Fee)
\$1,275 (adjusted maximum monthly rent payment)

In this example, the tenant can be charged up to \$1,275 in rent, is responsible for their full electric bill (which includes heat), must obtain renter's insurance, and must pay the King County Sewer Capacity Fee.

The above calculation does not include optional recurring fees, such as for parking spaces, storage, pets (not service animals), etc. When the tenant elects to receive these optional amenities, the associated fees can be added to the adjusted rent. Using the above example of a maximum monthly rent of \$1,275, including the \$140 utility allowance and \$57 in required fees, then adding on a \$150 parking space and a \$75 for basement storage, the gross monthly expenses now total \$1,697, which is greater than the \$1,472 max gross rent amount. The property, however, is in compliance with the program because the optional fees do not count towards the maximum gross rent. Optional fees may be no greater than what market rate tenants pay for the same amenity but are not capped or otherwise restricted by the program in any way.

H. RENT INCREASES IN MFTE/IZ/MHA

The Office of Housing publishes [income and rent limit schedules](#) for each of its affordable housing programs. Income limits are based on American Community Survey data for the Seattle-Bellevue area published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Rent limits are in turn calculated by the Office of Housing based on the HUD income limits. New income and rent schedules typically come effective in the second quarter, but the publication date is wholly subject to federal resources and constraints.

The rent limit that will apply to your unit at move-in is based on the schedule currently effective as of the first day of your lease. This rent maximum will apply for the length of the lease term, and the property cannot raise your rent or otherwise change the terms of your lease without your consent. Once the lease term is due to expire, the property may send you a lease renewal letter or you may have the option of going month-to-month. Provided the required notice is given, the property can raise your rent so long as your monthly housing expenses are not greater than the current rent schedule.

Maximum rents in affordability programs are calculated based on income demographics, so will fluctuate accordingly. Incomes and rent maximums have gone down in some years, but have increased as high as 7.7% in others. The 10-year average annual increase for the period of 2008-2017 is 2.4%; the median for same period is 1.6%.

I. ONE-TIME FEES AND PENALTIES

The MFTE/IZ/MHA programs do not restrict or otherwise waive one-time or move-in fees. Seattle City Council passed an ordinance in December 2016 restricting move-in fees and allowing for payment plans dependent on the length of the fixed-term lease. This ordinance applies to rental properties citywide effective January 15th, 2017. More information on the ordinance and contact information for questions can be found [here](#).

Tenants occupying units in the program are subject to all terms agreed to in their lease that are otherwise legal and do not conflict with MFTE/IZ/MHA program guidance. The Office of Housing governs the income eligibility and monthly rent restrictions on the unit only, and does not have authority to reduce or otherwise waive fees for late rent payments, breaking the lease prior to the end of term, damages, etc. Because of this, the Office of Housing does not mediate disputes between the tenant and landlord or otherwise comment on the merit of any fees/penalties assessed.

J. USE OF RENTAL VOUCHERS IN MFTE/IZ/MHA PROGRAMS

The use of rental subsidies, such as Housing Choice Vouchers (formerly Section 8) or Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH), is allowable in MFTE/IZ/MHA units. However, applicants to these units must meet the property's screening criteria, the voucher payment and tenant contribution must be able to cover the rent, and the property must otherwise meet the subsidy program's guidelines. The Office of Housing does not administer these subsidy programs, so cannot make a determination on what will

be allowable. Applicants with vouchers should refer to the following resources if there are questions about how to lease a unit or what the program will cover.

- [Housing Choice Voucher Program](#) (Section 8)
- [Veteran's Affairs Supportive Housing](#) (VASH)

Voucher holders are required to complete an Income Declaration form. In order for the project to complete the income certification voucher holders may provide a Calculation Summary in lieu of all other income and asset verification forms so long as the Summary does not pre-date the initial lease date by 120 days. This only applies at the initial certification. Recertifications do not allow for the submission of the Calculation Summary in lieu of all other income and asset verification.

Any rental subsidy received, however, is excluded from the income projection for the purposes of determining program eligibility only. Otherwise, the rental assistance is counted as income (such as for meeting a minimum income policy) and it is illegal for a property to discriminate against the use of rental subsidies as a source of income.

K. COMPLIANCE ISSUES

There are many laws, ordinances and rules that govern the rental of your unit. The Office of Housing's MFTE/IZ/MHA programs govern the income maximum and rent restrictions on the unit only. The Office of Housing requires that properties remedy issues upon discovery when income certifications or rent calculations are not in line with program standards. Current applicants and renters should contact the Office of Housing in the following situations:

As a **current applicant** to the program, contact the Office of Housing if:

- The property does not provide a MFTE/IZ/MHA Income Declaration form (ID) to your household when you apply for a designated MFTE/IZ/MHA unit.
- Two weeks or more have passed since your household submitted a complete ID form (based on signature date) and the property has not determined your eligibility status or otherwise been in communication. Applicants should contact the property in writing requesting a status update and allow at least one full business day for a response prior to contacting the Office of Housing.
- The property determines your household is income ineligible for the unit but does not allow you to review documentation or is unresponsive to questions.
- You believe that an income calculation was incorrectly performed. Please note that properties are required to look at all anticipated income for the 12 months after the lease will begin and will annualize amounts received. In instances where a household receives very little income, there are income fluctuations or there is no solid third-party verification of current and expected income, the property may certify the household's income based on income received over the previous 12 months.

As a **current resident** to the program(s), contact the Office of Housing if:

- You believe your rent is above the maximum allowable. The Office of Housing requests that tenants first discuss the rent calculation with property management.
- There are changes to your MFTE/IZ/MHA rent while you are in a current fixed-term lease that result in your household paying higher rent.
- The property has communicated that you are no longer eligible for the program after move-in without an explanation.
- The property requires an income recertification when there is no change in adult household members, you are not transferring to a unit with a lower or higher %AMI, or you are not in a building that requires annual recertifications.
- The property says the MFTE/IZ/MHA program is requiring you to move out.

L. QUESTIONS?

- **Interested applicants** should contact properties directly for more information on vacancies, completing the income certification process, rents and fees currently charged, utilities required to be paid, unit layouts and property-specific policies.
- **Current applicants and residents with routine compliance related questions** (how rent for unit is calculated, utility billings, adding new residents, transfers, income certification timeframe, etc.) should contact the property leasing agent or property manager as appropriate.
- For **general program inquiries** not covered in this guide and that are not potential compliance issues, contact the Office of Housing (206) 684-0721.
- **Current applicants and residents that believe there is a compliance issue specific to the MFTE, IZ or MHA program affordability restrictions** should contact housing@seattle.gov, 206-684-0721 Please include the following information:
 - Your name and contact information, preferably phone and email.
 - Property Name
 - Unit #
 - MFTE/IZ compliance issue related to an income certification or error in rent calculation.

MFTE/IZ/MHA Compliance should only be contacted for issues specifically pertaining to the income eligibility and/or the rent restriction requirements of a participating unit. Please note that the Office of Housing does not provide tenant legal assistance, consultation services, or applicant coaching through the leasing process. Similarly, the programs cannot act as advocates to request properties relax their screening criteria or offer a lower rent or optional fees. Routine questions about the terms of a lease, rent calculations, utility billing, etc. that do not represent potential compliance issues for the programs should be directed to the property manager.

M. INCOME AND ASSET DOCUMENTATION TABLES

The following tables are meant as a general overview to the types of income applicants must disclose, amounts counted as income, and documentation that it is helpful to have on hand when applying. Property managers will provide specific guidance on what is required once the Resident Eligibility Application (REA) is submitted. Direct questions about the income documentation required to the property manager or leasing staff responsible for administering the income certification process. If there is a question they can't answer, they will contact their compliance department or the program and get back to you.

Income Sources

Income Source	What counts as income	Documentation to have on hand
Employment Income	Gross wages, tips, commissions, bonuses, shift differential, raises and overtime anticipated to be earned in next 12 months. No deductions are allowed for wage garnishments, healthcare, taxes, etc. Deductions may be allowable for reimbursed work-related expenses.	Provide employer contact information to property- they will contact your employer directly. Have six most recent consecutive paystubs available as back up if requested. If your employer uses the Work Number of similar income verification service, the cost may be passed on to you.
Self-Employment	Net amounts earned from the business. Gross income – business expenses – interest on loans unrelated to business expansion – depreciation of business assets.	Self-Employment Verification Form will be provided to you. For businesses one year or older, have most recent signed 1040 with schedules, or if business less than a year old, bring Profit and Loss statement. Additional documentation may be required to support amounts disclosed.
Social Security Income	Anticipated payments to be received during 12-month period.	Bring award letter or most recent SSI benefits statement. Property may contact Social Security Administration directly.
Child Support	Anticipated payments to be received during 12-month period.	Complete Child Support Affidavit on-site or bring print out from DSHS Support Enforcement or notarized letter from parent paying support.
Alimony/Spousal Payments	Anticipated payments to be received during 12-month period	Decree or letter submitted by applicant.
Public Assistance	Anticipated payments to be received during 12-month period. Food stamps, HUD housing assistance (Section 8) and Shelter Plus Care are <u>excluded</u> from the income calculation for the purposes of MFTE/IZ/MHA eligibility only.	Property will send form to agency or applicant may submit most recent benefits statement.
Unemployment, L&I Disability	Anticipated amounts to be received during 12-month period.	Property will send Unemployment Benefits Verification form to agency or applicant may submit most recent benefits statement.
Military Pay	Anticipated gross amounts to be received during 12-month period.	Leave and Earnings Statement or property will submit Military Pay Verification Form to Commanding Officer.

Other Periodic Distributions	Anticipated amounts to be received during 12-month period.	Form submitted to financial institution <u>or</u> statement of income received.
Gift Income	Anticipated amounts to be received during 12-month period.	The person providing income will complete and have notarized a Gift Affidavit.
Rental Property Income	Net of rental payments less mortgage payments, taxes, insurance, maintenance costs.	Most recent signed 1040 tax form with Schedule E.
Education Assistance- Student Loans, Grants, Work Study, Financial Aid Packages Post 9/11 GI Bill	Student financial assistance (grants, loans, work study, financial aid packages etc.) are excluded from income for the purposes of the income certification only, unless the tenant has a Section 8 voucher. The Post 9/11 GI Bill is also excluded in full. The basic allowance for housing is excluded as well.	Provide FAFSA and/or WASFA application and financial aid award letters to property and documentation showing student status. Please note that income provided by family or other sources that is not part of a student financial aid package, even if used for tuition payments, must be counted as gift income.
Other Income Sources	Anticipated amounts to be received during 12-month period.	Dependent on source.

Assets

Assets are items of value that a household has access to that may be turned into cash. The cash value of assets and the income from assets must be taken into consideration when determining the income eligibility of a household. In general, **only the income earned or other regular distributions from assets will count towards the household income.** For example, for a household with \$2,000 in a savings account (the asset value) that is anticipated to earn \$5.00 in interest in 12 months (income earned from assets), only \$5.00 would count towards income for the certification. **There is no cap on assets in the MFTE, IZ or MHA programs, only a cap on income.**

Personal property may be an item of value that can be turned into cash, but is not counted in the calculation unless it is held as an investment. A personal wedding ring, for example, is personal property and is not disclosed. A coin collection, however, would be personal property held as an investment and is disclosed.

Properties are required to obtain documentation to verify the value of all assets disclosed on the REA and any income generated from those assets.

Asset	What counts as income	Documentation to have on hand
Checking Account	Interest income anticipated to be received (if interest bearing account) during 12-month period.	Have six most recent account statements available to quickly provide the asset value and income earned from assets. Full, unredacted statements must be provided.

Savings Account	Interest income anticipated to be received during 12-month period.	Have six most recent account statements available to quickly provide the asset value and income earned from assets. Full, unredacted statements must be provided.
Stocks, Bonds, Money Market Funds, CDs, IRA, 401k, Annuities.	Interest income anticipated to be received during 12-month period.	Recommend bringing recent monthly/quarterly statements. Property will either submit Annuity, Stock, and 401k Verification Form to financial institution <u>or</u> will accept statements submitted by applicant showing asset value and interest earned.
Trusts	If beneficiary of a trust and has access, will calculate any interest. If receiving recurring payments, these will be counted as income. If grantor and trust is revocable, any interest on value is counted. If grant and trust is nonrevocable, it is not counted.	Applicant will provide documentation showing terms of trust, any recurring payments received. Additional information may be requested.
Personal Property Held as an Investment	Personal property is typically not counted unless it is being held as an investment. Assets that are part of active business are not counted. Interest income will be calculated at actual amount or minimum imputed value of 0.06%.	Documentation provided by applicant, including appraisal.
Assets Disposed of For Less Than Fair Market Value in Prior 2 years	Asset value is difference between the fair market value of the asset and the amount received for the asset. Interest income will be calculated at actual amount minimum imputed value of 0.06%.	Self-certification by applicant or person who purchased or received asset and an appraisal.
Cash on Hand	Asset value is current amount of cash on hand, income will be amount as if earning interest at 0.06%.	Cash on Hand Affidavit will be provided by property. Only include if cash on hand is \$1,000 or more.

N. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This section covers many common questions about the programs and is updated periodically.

- I. Income Minimum Policies..... 14
- II. Guarantors/Cosigners..... 15
- III. Student Eligibility..... 15
- IV. Breaking Leases and Lease Takeovers..... 16
- V. Unit Transfers 16
- VI. Subleasing 17
- VII. Income Certification..... 17

I. INCOME MINIMUM POLICIES

Q. The property has an income minimum. Is this allowable?

A. Yes, income minimum policies are established by the property and are allowable when they do not exceed the MFTE/IZ/MHA income maximum or otherwise create such a small income window that the unit cannot be rented. Properties typically enforce policies that require monthly income to be 2.5 to 3 times the rent or greater. For example, if a 2.5x policy was in effect and the rent is \$900, the applicant would be required to earn \$2,250 a month (\$27,000 annual income) to be eligible for the unit. Please contact the property directly for more information on their income minimum policy.

Q. Certain income is excluded from the MFTE/IZ/MHA income calculation, which makes it harder to meet the income minimum. Is this allowed?

A. It is best to treat the MFTE/IZ/MHA income calculation as separate from the property's income minimum calculation.

MFTE/IZ/MHA income maximum- In the MFTE/IZ/MHA programs, some forms of income are excluded from the calculation. This includes rental assistance payment through the Section 8 program, some forms of military income, and student financial assistance, just to name a few. Because the applicant is trying to fall under an income cap, these exclusions serve to assist the applicant in qualifying for the unit. Excluding sources of income from the calculation will always work in the applicant's favor.

Property income minimum- For the income minimum/income-to-rent ratio calculation, properties are required to include income from Section 8, and may include amounts of student financial assistance over and above tuition. Please contact the property if there is any question about what gets counted for their income minimum calculation.

Q. I fall well under the MFTE/IZ/MHA maximum income for the unit but do not meet the income minimum. What are my options?

A. The MFTE/IZ/MHA programs do not govern the income minimum for a property, so tenants are encouraged to contact the property directly to see what options are available. Some properties allow for a guarantor provided their monthly income is four times the rent. The income of the guarantor does not count towards the MFTE/IZ/MHA income maximum because the guarantor is not listed as an occupant on the lease. If the guarantor provides recurring gift income payments to the resident, this is counted as income toward the MFTE/IZ/MHA income cap.

Q. I have a Housing Choice (Section 8) voucher that covers most of the rent, but there is no way I could meet the income minimum. Is the property calculating the income minimum correctly?

A. For Housing Choice Voucher holders, the property must calculate the income to rent ratio based on the portion of rent the tenant is responsible for paying, not the full rent amount (resident payment and the voucher subsidy payment). **As an example**, we will assume the rent

for a one-bedroom unit is \$1,200. The voucher will cover \$1,000 in rent and the resident is required to pay 30% of their income toward rent for at \$200. If the property uses a 2.5x income minimum policy, the minimum income they could earn would be calculated as \$500 a month (\$200 tenant payment x 2.5), not \$3,000 a month (\$1,200 full rent amount x 2.5).

II. GUARANTORS/CO-SIGNERS

Q. Am I allowed to have a guarantor that assists with rent payments? Will the guarantor's income put me over the income maximum?

A. The property may or may not allow a guarantor. When this is an option, the guarantor is acceptable for the program provided the individual is not on the lease and has no rights to the unit. The income of the guarantor does not count towards the MFTE/IZ/MHA income calculation because they are not a member of the household. However, if the guarantor provides gift income in any form to the tenant (assistance with rent, school, etc.), this will be counted towards the MFTE/IZ/MHA income cap.

Please note that the property will count the guarantor's income towards meeting the property's income minimum, but this is separate from the calculation for MFTE/IZ/MHA program eligibility. See Income Minimum Policies (above) for more information.

III. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

Q. Are students eligible for MFTE/IZ/MHA?

A. Yes, student households are eligible to participate in the MFTE/IZ/MHA programs. The exception to this is when a property has received funding through another affordable housing funder that has more restrictive rules on student household eligibility (such as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program). This is a relatively rare occurrence in the MFTE/IZ/MHA program and most properties will not have a student restriction. Questions regarding student eligibility restrictions should be directed to the property.

Q. I am a full-time student living off student loans, grants, and/or other awards I receive as a part of a financial aid package. Does this count as income?

A. The MFTE/IZ/MHA programs follow HUD 4350.3 income certification rules, which state that: *"All forms of student financial assistance (grants, scholarships, educational entitlements, work study programs, and financial aid packages) are **excluded** from annual income except for students receiving Section 8 assistance. This is true whether the assistance is paid to the student directly or to the educational institution."*

This exclusion applies to the MFTE/IZ/MHA income certification only. Any income determination the property conducts for meeting the income minimum should be treated as separate, and income beyond tuition and other expenses may be counted towards meeting the income minimum. Please direct questions about the property's income minimum policy directly to the property manager.

To be excluded, student financial assistance must be part of a financial aid package awarded to student and intended to assist the student in pursuing a degree. This exclusion **does not** apply

to assistance from family or other outside entities, even if the assistance is intended to be used for books, tuition, or other academic related expenses. Recurring payments from family, regardless of the intended purpose, is considered gift income. Disclose these amounts in the Resident Eligibility Application and you will complete an MFTE/IZ/MHA Gift Affidavit.

If you are a student and receive Section 8 rental assistance (Housing Choice Voucher), the MFTE/IZ/MHA programs includes any financial assistance received in excess of amounts received for tuition is included in annual income except if 1.) the student is over the age of 23 with dependent children or 2.) the student is living with his or her parents who are receiving Section 8 assistance. When either of these two situations apply, the full amount of student financial assistance is excluded.

IV. BREAKING LEASES AND LEASE TAKEOVERS

Q. Can the MFTE/IZ/MHA programs assist me with breaking my lease?

A. The MFTE/IZ/MHA programs provide no additional protections in regard to penalties incurred for breaking a lease prior to the end of its term. Tenants are encouraged to read their lease carefully and understand the consequences of early termination, which often requires a large fee or forfeiture of the security deposit. The programs cannot act as advocates to release a tenant from a lease. Tenants must negotiate with the property to see if an agreement can be reached or if another alternative would be allowable. Additional resources on breaking leases can be found [here](#).

Q. I would like to move-out of my apartment and have a friend takeover the lease. Is this possible?

A. At the option of the property, an MFTE/IZ/MHA unit may be relet by voiding the original lease (releasing the original tenant from their obligations) and signing a lease with a new tenant. The new tenant may only sign a lease after a full income certification is conducted and the household is determined to be eligible for the program. Please note that subleasing in any form is not allowed by the program and is typically prohibited in most lease terms.

V. UNIT TRANSFERS

Q. Can I transfer to another MFTE/IZ/MHA unit in my building?

A. If the property allows the transfer, this is acceptable. If the unit being transferred to is restricted at the same %AMI, the transfer may occur with no additional income certification required. However, if the tenant intends to transfer to a unit with a lower or higher %AMI, a new income certification must be performed. An ineligibility determination means the tenant cannot transfer to the unit with a lower %AMI restriction. Questions about transfers should be directed to the property.

Q. I am currently an income eligible occupant of an MFTE/IZ/MHA unit. Can I transfer to a MFTE/IZ/MHA unit in another building and remain eligible?

A. This situation is not a “transfer” but is instead treated as a move-out of the current building and a move-in at the new building. Because of this, it requires a new income certification. If the

tenant is determined to be ineligible, they would not be able to rent the unit. This is true even if both properties are managed by the same company or are under the same ownership.

VI. SUBLEASING

Q. I would like to sublease my unit for the summer. Is subleasing allowed by the programs?

A. Subleasing is never allowed by the programs and is usually prohibited in the terms of the lease. Subleasing includes making the unit available for AirBnB or similar services regardless of the length of time. Only the income eligible occupants listed in the lease may reside in the unit. Subleasing a unit in any form can be grounds for immediate removal of the MFTE/IZ/MHA rent restriction.

VII. INCOME CERTIFICATION

Q. How long does the income certification take? Is there anything I can do to speed up the process?

A. The Office of Housing requests that properties participating in the MFTE, IZ and MHA programs make best efforts to complete the income certification process within two weeks of an applicant's submission of a complete and signed Income Declaration (ID). **This does not guarantee that the income certification will be complete within two weeks** as there may be valid reasons why a certification is taking longer than anticipated- a property may be engaged in the initial preleasing of units, additional documentation is deemed necessary, or an employer may not be providing the needed documentation to the property. There are, however, steps you can take to assist the process:

- 1.) Once the ID form is complete, the property will request income and asset documentation for each income source. Provide the requested documentation in full.
- 2.) Once you have submitted the complete documentation, request an approximate date that the property anticipates having the certification complete. Check back in with your property contact on that date.
- 3.) If you disclosed employment income, your employer will be contacted directly by the property with an Employment Verification Form. You can also let your employer know to expect the form and that your housing situation is dependent on its completion.
- 4.) If the property has not responded to your inquiries and two weeks have elapsed since you submitted the REA, it is recommended you make a written attempt for a status update on your income eligibility status. If you do not receive a response in one full business day, please contact the Office of Housing.

Q. I need to get out of my apartment in the next week. Can the Office of Housing expedite my income certification?

A. Properties are responsible for conducting the income certification process and it must be completed to program standards for all households. The Office of Housing requests that

properties make best efforts to complete certifications within two weeks of receiving a complete Income Declaration (ID) and believes that is a reasonable timeframe. For this reason, we do not require a property to accommodate individual situations and the property is not allowed to offer exceptions to quickly lease a unit. This includes signing a lease and conducting the income certification after the fact. The MFTE/IZ/MHA income and rent restricted units should not be construed as emergency housing.