U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA RURAL HOUSING SERVICE PROGRAM: AN AVAILABLE OPTION FOR THE AFGHAN RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

- **What is USDA Rural Housing Service Program?**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides direct financial rental assistance for qualifying tenants under short-term (6-12 months) and long-term (12 months+) housing programs. USDA has determined that many Afghan arrivals, including those who are part of the Afghan Placement and Assistance Program (APA), may qualify for this program. Under the USDA program, rental assistance payments are made by the USDA on behalf of tenants to participating landlords, allowing tenants to pay no more than 30% of household income in rent at the USDA assisted properties. Program participation requirements include certification that a tenant's income is at or below 80% of the area median income, and successfully meeting landlord tenant selection criteria which may include a background check. *USDA will work with participating landlords to ensure that maximum flexibility is exercised while still meeting program requirements with respect to qualifying documentation participants will need to provide.*

- **Where is the program located?**

The USDA Rural Housing Service Program covers all 50 states, and four USDA regional offices manage the program. There are currently large numbers of long-term housing vacancies (300+) for both single-family homes and apartments in: AR (598), GA (468), IL (369), IN (523), LA (507), MI (362), MS (968), NY (318), OH (413), and TX (814). There are also many short-term vacancies available in CA (913), FL (308), WA (199). In total, approximately 12,000 housing units are available across the country. Even if your state does not appear in the previous list, there still may be many vacancies available for Afghan arrivals (*see accompanying documents for more information*).

- **How can I access this opportunity for our Afghan arrivals?**

Resettlement agencies and their affiliates, as well as state refugee coordinators may reach out the USDA POC listed below to access housing assistance. The POC will work to locate potential housing options and will reach out to landlords to provide matchmaking between Afghan arrivals and prospective landlords. As part of the USDA Rural Housing Service Program, in the past some landlords have also assisted tenants in connecting with local communities and community services.

Rural Housing Service Multifamily Housing POCs

If you are interested in assistance from the USDA Rural Housing Service Program, please contact the appropriate USDA POCs:

- Mike Resnik, michael.resnik@usda.gov 202-430-3114
- Julie Felhofer, julie.felhofer@usda.gov 715-524-8522 x125.

Both Mike and Julie have significant experience in the Multifamily program and will communicate as needed with Multifamily field staff, property owners, and management agents.

FAQs

What are section 515 properties?

USDA's Rural Housing Service administers the Section 515 Rural Rental Housing program. The properties in this program have housing units that can be rented to applicants at or below 80% of the area median income

Who can rent a property designated "elderly"?

A property designated "elderly" is set aside for residents 62 and over. Other family members could live in the unit if the head of household (or co-head of household) is 62 or older. These properties may be available to those under 62 with a waiver from USDA.

What about "unassisted" units?

"Unassisted" units do not receive USDA rental assistance. There is currently limited USDA funding that can be used to support new tenants at this time and some vacant Section 515 properties are unassisted and do not receive rental assistance. However, it's possible HUD Emergency Housing vouchers may be used to cover rent in these properties if owners allow. USDA can collaborate with HUD on working with local rural public housing authorities that have received these vouchers. There may be a rental assistance wait lists in many locations. Vacant units at both Assisted and Unassisted properties are equally available for rental applications from Afghan arrivals

How do section 514/516 (Farm Labor Housing) differ from section 515 properties?

Section 514/516 housing is designated as Farm Labor Housing (FLH). Tenants living in FLH properties are required to earn 65% of their income from employment in the agricultural industry. However, USDA can process "Diminished Need Waivers," when the demand for farm labor housing is reduced in certain markets. USDA would be able to process these waivers on a case-by-case basis, allowing Afghan arrivals to apply for FLH units without employment in the agricultural industry. **This is temporary, often seasonal, housing that could be available for up to 6-12 months**. The length of availability and type of housing (apartment vs. dorm) varies on a case-by-case basis.