

**Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
2004 Assisted Housing Survey**

March 2005

Prepared by



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I. INTRODUCTION

The Assisted Housing Survey was developed at the request of members of the Regional Housing Choice Voucher Directors Committee. Data collected through the survey, and from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Resident Characteristic Reports, have been compiled in this report and present an overall picture of the Housing Choice Voucher Program in the metropolitan Washington region. This report is not intended as an analysis of the Assisted Housing Survey data, but is simply a presentation of regional program activity.

The Assisted Housing Survey was distributed to eleven housing agencies in the metropolitan Washington area. This report contains information collected from four housing agencies in suburban Maryland (Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County, Frederick County's Department of Housing and Community Services, Prince George's County Housing Authority, and Rockville Housing Enterprises), six agencies in Virginia (Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Arlington County Department of Human Services, Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development*, Loudoun County Housing Services, City of Manassas Department of Social Services, and the Prince William County Office of Housing and Community Development), and the District of Columbia Housing Authority.

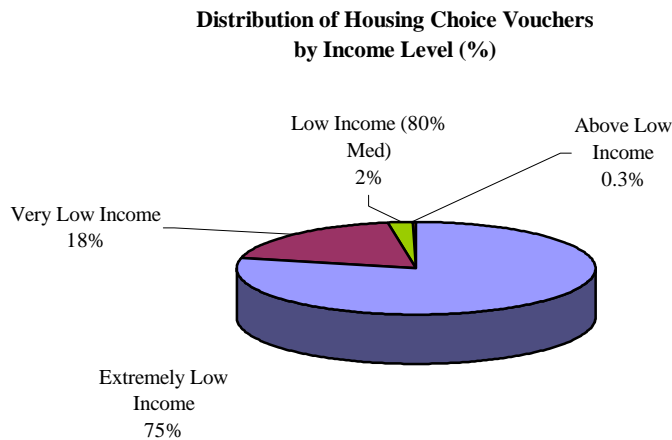
Unless otherwise noted, all information contained within this report is current as of June 30, 2004 and represents Housing Choice Voucher program activity for fiscal year 2004.

** Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development manages the Housing Choice Voucher program for the cities of Fairfax, Falls Church and Herndon.*

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The following data was collected from the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Resident Characteristics Report (RCR)¹. The RCR summarizes demographic and income information about households receiving federal housing assistance. A sampling of this data is presented below. Unless otherwise indicated, information is current as of September 30, 2004, and represents the period June 1, 2003, through September 30, 2004.

Distribution of Housing Choice Vouchers by Income Level



Distribution by Annual Income as of September 30, 2004

Jurisdiction	Distribution by Annual Avg Income (%)			
	Extremely Low Income (<30% Med)	Very Low Income (50% Med)	Low Income (80% Med)	Above Low Income
Alexandria	75%	20%	3%	1%
Arlington County	77%	20%	2%	0%
District of Columbia	77%	12%	1%	0%
Fairfax County	74%	20%	2%	0%
Frederick County*	77%	15%	1%	0%
Loudoun County	73%	21%	2%	0%
Manassas**				
Montgomery County	73%	19%	2%	0%
Prince George's County	74%	18%	2%	0%
Prince William County	75%	22%	2%	1%
Rockville	70%	15%	2%	1%
Total	75%	18%	2%	0.3%

* Data is current as of November 30, 2004.

** The Virginia Housing Development Authority oversees the City of Manassas Housing Choice Voucher Program; separate RCR data is not available for the City of Manassas.

Housing Choice Voucher Programs primarily provide housing assistance for extremely low-income households. Overall, 75 percent of voucher recipients have household incomes below 30 percent of area median family income (AMI), which is \$85,400² for the Metropolitan Washington region. The remaining vouchers are distributed among moderate-income households, with 18 percent of vouchers assisting very low-income households (50 percent of AMI), and two percent helping low-income families (80 percent of AMI). Less than one percent of the total number of vouchers has been issued to households earning more than 80 percent of AMI. Voucher distribution rates among individual jurisdictions reflect regional averages, with the majority of housing choice vouchers assisting extremely low-income and very low-income households.

Average Annual Income of Housing Choice Voucher Recipients

Average annual household incomes for Housing Choice Voucher recipients range from \$11,277 in the District of Columbia to \$16,541 in Prince William County. Overall, the average annual household income for voucher recipients in the Metropolitan Washington area is \$14,338, approximately 16.8 percent of AMI.

Average Annual Income as of September 30, 2004

Jurisdiction	Avg. Annual Income (\$)
Alexandria	\$14,527
Arlington County	\$14,945
District of Columbia	\$11,277
Fairfax County	\$15,637
Frederick County*	\$13,566
Loudoun County	\$15,494
Manassas**	
Montgomery County	\$14,438
Prince George's County	\$14,390
Prince William County	\$16,451
Rockville	\$12,656
Total	\$14,338

Average Total Tenant Payments

Average total tenant payments range from a low of \$261 in the District of Columbia to \$363 in Prince William County for an overall average monthly payment of \$321. This amount is 26.8 percent of the average annual household income of voucher recipients cited above.

Average Monthly Total Tenant Payment as of September 30, 2004

Jurisdiction	Avg. Monthly Total Tenant Payment (\$)
Alexandria	\$346
Arlington County	\$347
District of Columbia	\$261
Fairfax County	\$355
Frederick County*	\$307
Loudoun County	\$345
Manassas**	
Montgomery County	\$332
Prince George's County	\$275
Prince William County	\$363
Rockville	\$280
Total	\$321

* Data is current as of November 30, 2004.

** The Virginia Housing Development Authority oversees the City of Manassas Housing Choice Voucher Program; separate RCR data is not available for the City of Manassas.

Race and Ethnicity of Housing Choice Voucher Program Participants

Head of Household Race & Ethnicity (% of Voucher Recipients) as of September 30, 2004

Jurisdiction	Head of Household Race (%)				Head of Household Ethnicity (%)	
	White	African/ American	Asian	Other	Hispanic	Non- Hispanic
Alexandria	19%	78%	2%	0%	10%	90%
Arlington County	36%	51%	11%	2%	20%	80%
District of Columbia	3%	97%	0%	0%	2%	98%
Fairfax County	42%	46%	12%	0%	6%	94%
Frederick County*	60%	39%	0%	0%	2%	98%
Loudoun County	51%	46%	3%	0%	7%	93%
Manassas**						
Montgomery County	29%	64%	7%	1%	12%	88%
Prince George's County	3%	96%	0%	0%	1%	85%
Prince William County	28%	70%	9%	2%	6%	94%
Rockville	32%	61%	6%	1%	11%	89%
Total	30%	65%	4%	1%	8%	91%

African-American households account for 65 percent of voucher program participants, followed by White households (30 percent). The remaining housing choice vouchers (five percent) are distributed among Asian families in the region. Voucher distribution by ethnicity shows that the majority of vouchers (91 percent) are issued to non-Hispanic families with the remaining vouchers (8 percent) being assigned to Hispanic households.

Average Size of Housing Choice Voucher Program Households

Average Household Size as of September 30, 2004

Jurisdiction	Avg. Household Size
Alexandria	2.3
Arlington County	2.2
District of Columbia	2.7
Fairfax County	2.8
Frederick County*	2.4
Loudoun County	2.5
Manassas**	
Montgomery County	2.6
Prince George's County	2.7
Prince William County	3.0
Rockville	3.0
Total	2.6

The average size of Housing Choice Voucher program households is 2.6 persons. Average household size by jurisdiction ranges from 2.2 persons in Arlington to 3 persons per unit in the City of Rockville and Prince William County.

* Data is current as of November 30, 2004.

** The Virginia Housing Development Authority oversees the City of Manassas Housing Choice Voucher Program; separate RCR data is not available for the City of Manassas.

Distribution by Bedroom Size

Distribution of Housing Choice Vouchers by Bedroom Size as of September 30, 2004

Jurisdiction	Distribution by Number of Bedrooms (%)					
	0	1	2	3	4	5+
Alexandria	0%	38%	40%	21%	1%	0%
Arlington County	1%	43%	35%	18%	3%	0%
District of Columbia	1%	24%	37%	27%	8%	2%
Fairfax County	1%	24%	33%	32%	9%	2%
Frederick County*	1%	29%	33%	33%	4%	0%
Loudoun County	0%	17%	46%	31%	6%	1%
Manassas**						
Montgomery County	1%	26%	36%	31%	6%	1%
Prince George's County	0%	12%	29%	34%	9%	1%
Prince William County***						
Rockville	5%	17%	25%	39%	10%	4%
Total	1%	26%	35%	30%	6%	1%

Sixty-five percent of Housing Choice Voucher program households reside in two- and three-bedroom units. Another 26 percent occupy one-bedroom units. Only seven percent of area voucher recipients live in larger, four- and five-bedroom units.

* Data is current as of November 30, 2004.

** The Virginia Housing Development Authority oversees the City of Manassas Housing Choice Voucher Program; separate RCR data is not available for the City of Manassas.

*** Data not available

II. 2003 ASSISTED HOUSING SURVEY DATA

The following section contains information collected from local housing agencies via the 2004 Assisted Housing Survey³. The data reflect Housing Choice Voucher program activity for the period July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2004. The survey was distributed to eleven housing agencies in the Metropolitan Washington area. Survey questions were designed to collect general information about local Housing Choice Voucher programs (such as the number of authorized vouchers, waiting list lengths, and program success rates) that may be of interest to Housing Choice Voucher program directors and others interested in assisted housing programs. Following is a summary of survey responses.

Number of Housing Choice Vouchers Authorized versus the Number Leased

Number of Housing Choice Vouchers Authorized as of June 2004

Jurisdiction	Total Vouchers Authorized	# Proj.-Based	# Tenant-Based
Alexandria	*	*	*
Arlington County	1,439	40	1,399
District of Columbia	10,871	1,031	9,840
Fairfax County	3,146	18	3,128
Frederick County	265	2	263
Loudoun County	763	1	762
Manassas	*	*	*
Montgomery County	5,662	0	5,662
Prince George's County	4,552	104	4,448
Prince William County	1,907	0	1,907
Rockville	409	0	409
Total	29,014	1,196	27,818

Number of Housing Choice Vouchers Leased as of June 2004

Jurisdiction	Total Leased	# Proj.-Based Leased	# Tenant-Based Leased
Alexandria	*	*	*
Arlington County	1,380	40	1,340
District of Columbia	10,097	325	9,772
Fairfax County	3,146	18	3,128
Frederick County	278	2	276
Loudoun County	354	1	353
Manassas	*	*	*
Montgomery County	5,338	0	5,338
Prince George's County	4,384	99	4,285
Prince William County	1,903	0	1,903
Rockville	367	0	367
Total	27,248	485	26,763

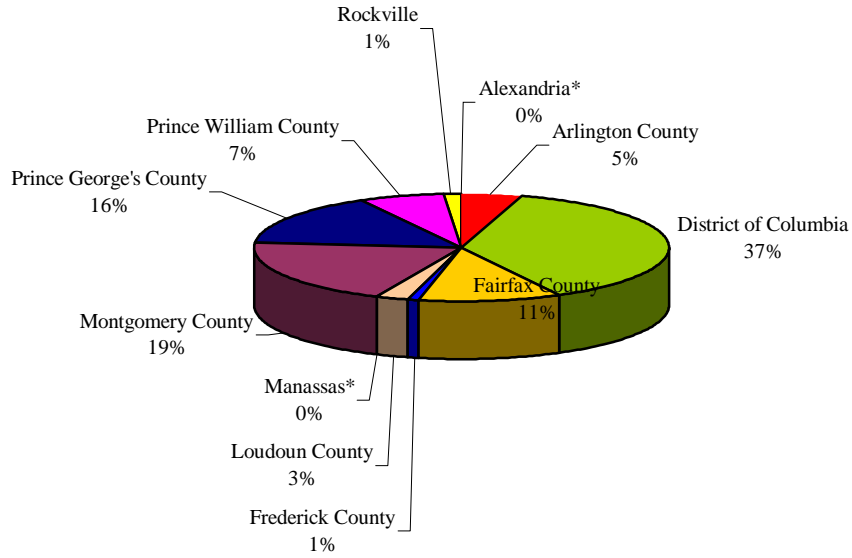
* Information not available.

Between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004, the Department of Housing and Urban Development authorized a total of 29,014 housing choice vouchers for use by local jurisdictions. Tenant-based vouchers accounted for 95.9 percent (27,818) of the total number of vouchers authorized, with the remaining 4.1 percent (1,196) designated for project-based assistance.

By June 30, 2004, a total of 27,248 (or 93.9 percent of total authorized) housing choice vouchers had been leased. Of the total number of tenant-based vouchers authorized for use during this period, 26,763 (96.2 percent) had been leased. Slightly over forty percent (40.5 percent or 485) of the project-based vouchers authorized for use were leased during this period.

The chart on the following page shows the distribution of authorized vouchers among local jurisdictions.

Distribution of Authorized Housing Choice Vouchers (% of Total)



* Information not available

Program Success Rates

Success Rates as of June 30, 2004

Jurisdiction	Total Issued July 1, 2002-June 30, 2003	Total Leased July 1, 2002-June 30, 2003	Success Rate
Alexandria	*	*	*
Arlington County	87	43	49.4%
District of Columbia	1,204	1,070	88.9%
Fairfax County	365	311	85.2%
Frederick County	15	14	93.3%
Loudoun County	168	165	98.2%
Manassas	*	*	*
Montgomery County	45	10	22.2%
Prince George's County	158	503	318.4%
Prince William County	221	218	98.6%
Rockville	108	61	56.5%
Region	2,371	2,395	101.0%

* Information not available.

Between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004, local jurisdictions issued 2,371 vouchers. During the same period, 2,395 vouchers were leased for an overall success rate of 101.0 percent. The success rate was lowest in Montgomery County where less than one fourth (22.2 percent) of issued vouchers were actually leased. Prince George's County leased more than 100 percent of their vouchers during this period. (Success rates greater than 100 percent occur when vouchers issued at the end of the previous 12 -month period are leased after the new fiscal year begins.)

Housing Choice Voucher Program Waiting Lists

Housing Choice Voucher Waiting Lists as of June 2004

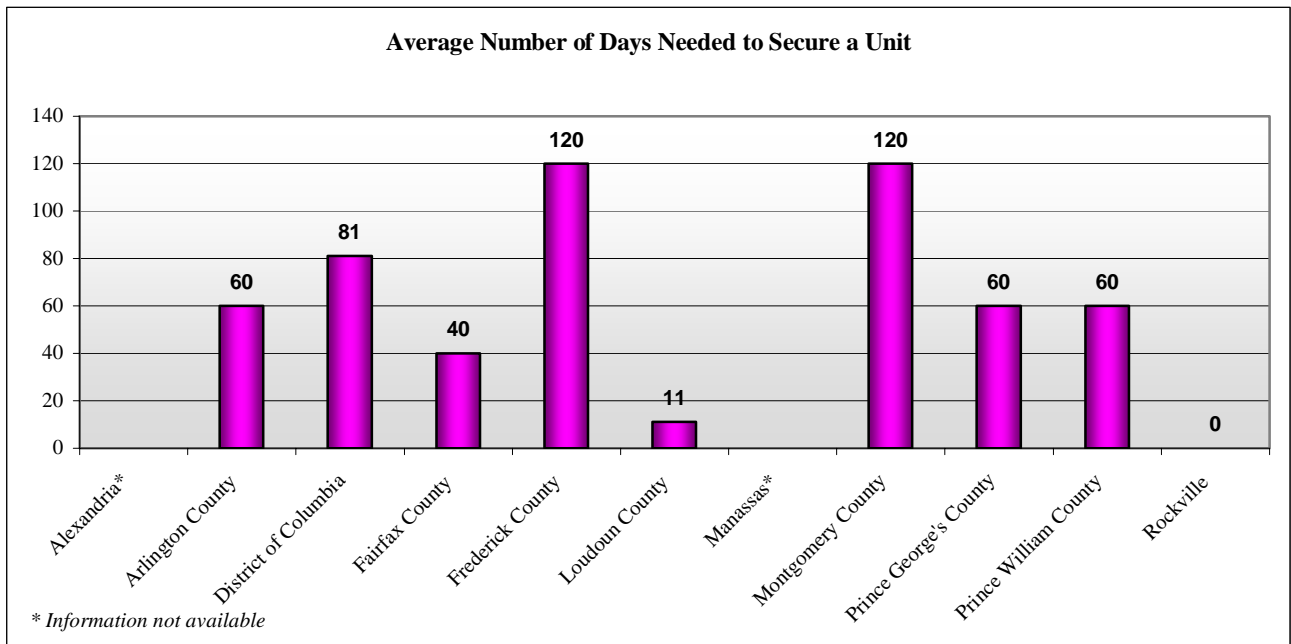
Jurisdiction	# Apps Waiting List	Avg. Wait (days)
Alexandria	*	*
Arlington County	5,400	1,095
District of Columbia	40,488	2,190
Fairfax County	6,503	1,278
Frederick County	170	1,095
Loudoun County	1,193	548
Manassas	*	*
Montgomery County	10,000	+
Prince George's County	2,374	730
Prince William County	2,709	1,095
Rockville	558	1,460
Region	69,395	949

* Information not available.

+ Montgomery County's waiting list is currently closed and they have ceased issuing new vouchers to clients on the waiting list.

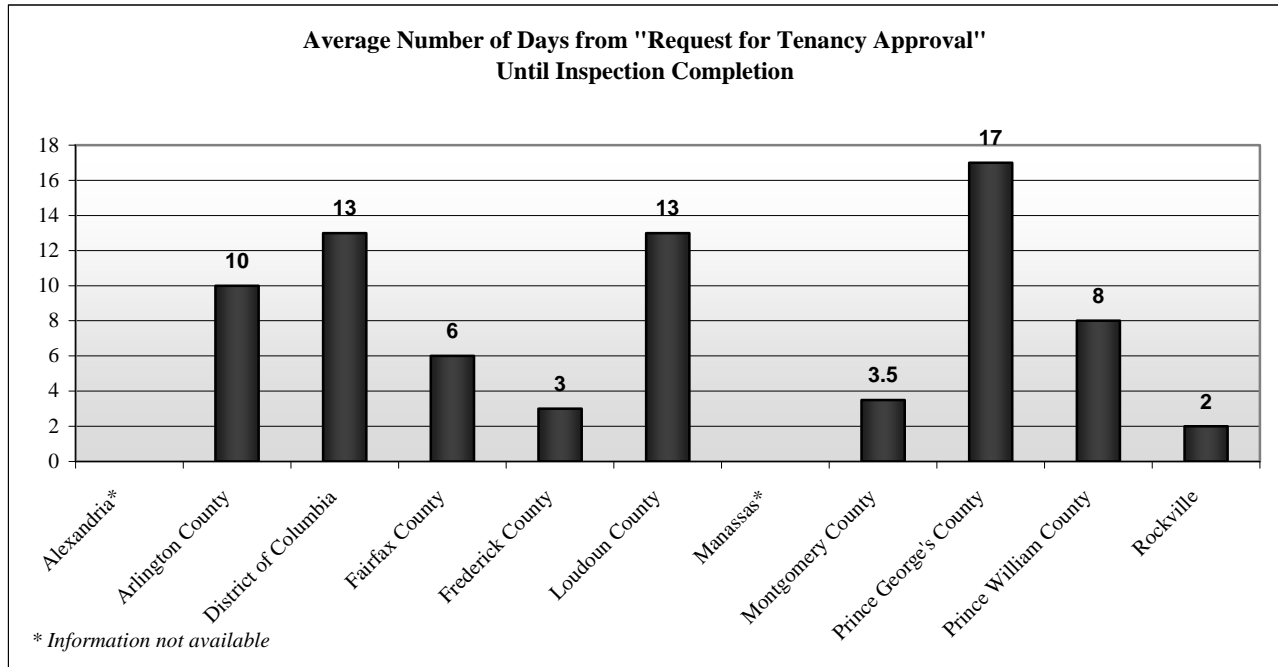
As of June 30, 2004, local jurisdictions reported a total of 69,395 applicants waiting to receive housing choice voucher assistance. The District of Columbia has the highest number of applicants waiting for assistance (40,488) followed by Montgomery County (10,000) and Fairfax County (6,530). Overall, applicants must wait an average of 949 days (approximately 32 months or 2.6 years) until a housing choice voucher is issued. The District of Columbia has the longest waiting period (2,190 days or approximately six years), while the wait is shortest in Loudoun County (548 days or 18 months). Loudoun County annually purges its waiting list, closing the file on many families due to lack of contact information. Many of these families later reapply, causing an artificially short average wait period).

Securing a Unit



Once a voucher is received, local housing choice voucher clients need an average of 61.3 days to locate an appropriate unit. The unit search is longest for families in Frederick and Montgomery counties (120 days) and shortest in Loudoun County (11 days).

Unit Inspections



Local housing agencies complete unit inspections within 8 days (average) from the receipt of Request for Tenancy Approval. Frederick County completes inspections within three days of Request for Tenancy Approval, while the number of days until inspection for Prince George’s County equals 17.

Housing Search Assistance

Housing search assistance is available for housing choice voucher clients in most jurisdictions. Available property listings are the most common form of assistance offered.

Housing Search Assistance

Alexandria	Arlington County	District of Columbia
*	Weekly listing of available units List of affordable units Landlord listings/Apartment referrals Phone calls to landlords Security deposit assistance In-house human services assistance	Housing Mobility Counseling

Fairfax County	Frederick County	Loudoun County
Listing of available units	Rental listings	List of available units and properties

Manassas	Montgomery County	Prince George's County
*	In-house social services County assistance programs Security deposit loan assistance program	Landlord unit availability report

Prince William County	Rockville
Landlord referrals	Landlord listing Apartment directory

* Information not available

Foreign Language Interpretation

Foreign Language Assistance

Jurisdiction	Interpreters	Materials
Alexandria	*	*
Arlington County	Spanish; Arabic; Laotian; others as needed; AT&T language line utilized	Spanish, Vietnamese
District of Columbia	Arabic, Armenian, Cambodian, Cantonese, French, German, Hindi, Hmong, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Vietnamese	Spanish
Fairfax County	Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, Farsi	Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, Farsi
Frederick County	Various	N/A
Loudoun County	Spanish	Spanish
Manassas	*	*
Montgomery County	Spanish; Russian; Korean	Spanish
Prince George's County	Any requested	Spanish
Prince William County	Any requested	Spanish
Rockville	Spanish	

* Information not available

Most jurisdictions provide foreign language interpretation services for program participants. Spanish is the language most often provided but other languages, such as Russian, Korean, Farsi, Vietnamese and Laotian are readily available. Several housing agencies also translate written program materials into foreign languages.

Barriers to Housing Choice Voucher Client Success

Barriers to Client Success

Barrier	# of Housing Agencies Identifying Barrier
Credit/Rental History	9
Source of Income	3
Security Deposit	5
Payment Standard Low	4
Lack of Large Units	1
Tenant Payment Low	3

Local housing agencies have identified several barriers to successful leasing by housing choice voucher clients. Poor credit and/or rental histories is considered the biggest obstacle to voucher client success. Client difficulties in obtaining security deposit funds are seen as the second biggest obstacle to obtaining housing. Jurisdictions also note that source of income discrimination by local landlords, low voucher payment standards and low tenant payments are problems voucher clients experience in their search for a rental unit.

Effects of FY 2005 Housing Choice Voucher Program Changes

In April 2004, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced funding changes for the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) retroactive to January 1, 2004. Historically, funding for the program was based on the reimbursement of actual costs per voucher leased. With the new changes, however, HUD fixed the funding available to a per unit cost based on an agency's average per unit cost for the three month period from May to July, 2003, and adjusted by an inflation factor. HUD also reduced the amount of administrative fees allotted each housing agency and the recently released 2005 Fair Market Rents are lower for the region. As a result of these changes, local Public Housing Agencies (PHA) are struggling to provide program assistance with funding deficits. The following table lists the actions taken by local PHAs to help contain program costs. Refer to the table on the following page for jurisdiction-specific actions.

Cost-Containment Actions by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Action
Alexandria	*
Arlington County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower payment standard to 100% of 0-, 1- & 4-BR FMR; to 103% of 2-BR FMR; and to 108% of 3-BR FMR • May not issues vouchers in future • Negotiating with landlords at lower payment standards
District of Columbia	<p><i>Instituted:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limiting rent increases not to exceed HUD's annual adjustment factor • Execution of all HAP contracts transferring participating families from one unit to another to commence on the 1st of each month • Set payment standards to 100% of Fair Market Rents <p><i>Proposed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set minimum rent at \$50 • Portability to higher cost areas only if vouchers are absorbed • Process interim recertifications when household income exceeds \$199.99 • Process biannual recertifications • Conduct biannual inspections for high quality properties • Allow landlord/tenant self certifications of repairs • Establish occupancy standards set at maximum permissible
Fairfax County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowered payments standards • Increased minimum rent • Change in term policy to pick up increases in tenant income • Consideration of additional strategies (absorbing low HAP clients)
Frederick County	*
Loudoun County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payments standard set at 100% of Fair Market Rent • Not reissuing vouchers • Submitted HUD appeals for AAF/PUC and Capital Projects reserves • Analysing budget impacts and will submit a HUD budget revision
Manassas	*
Montgomery County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowered payment standards to 100% of FMR • Increased minimum rent to \$50 • Perform interims for increases in household income • Stopped rent increases • May change the voucher standard/subsidy standard
Prince George's County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All move-ins effective to first of month • Mmay reinstate minimum rent & suspend rent increases to landlords
Prince William County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased minimum rent to \$50 • Educating new owners at briefings • Pre-inspections of properties regarding upgrades prior to annual recertifications in order to negotiate rent increases
Rockville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absorbing portable low HAP clients. • Raised minimum rent to \$50. • Lowered payment standards from 110% to 105% of FMR.

* Information not available.

¹ Housing agencies submit information electronically to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). RCR reports can be created and viewed from HUD's website at www.hud.gov. Information is updated regularly, but inaccuracies may occur.

² Median family income for the Washington DC MSA, effective February 20, 2003.

³ Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, 2004.