

commencing after the effective date of this notice. AAFs are distinct from, and do not apply to the same properties as, Operating Cost Adjustment Factors (OCAFs). OCAFs are annual factors used to adjust rents for project-based rental assistance contracts issued under Section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 and renewed under section 515 or section 524 of the Multifamily Assisted Housing Reform and Affordability Act of 1997 (MAHRA). A separate **Federal Register** Notice, to be published at a later date, will be used in the calculation of the calendar year (CY) 2018 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) renewal funding for public housing agencies (PHAs).

DATES: Applicable November 8, 2017.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Contact Becky Primeaux, Director, Management and Operations Division, Office of Housing Voucher Programs, Office of Public and Indian Housing, 202-708-1380, for questions relating to the Project-Based Certificate and Moderate Rehabilitation programs (not the Single Room Occupancy program); Norman A. Suchar, Director, Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs, Office of Community Planning and Development, 202-402-5015, for questions regarding the Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Moderate Rehabilitation program; Katherine Nzive, Director, OAMPO Program Administration Office, Office of Multifamily Housing, 202-402-3440, for questions relating to all other Section 8 programs; and Marie Lihn, Economist, Economic and Market Analysis Division, Office of Policy Development and Research, 202-402-5866, for technical information regarding the development of the schedules for specific areas or the methods used for calculating the AAFs. The mailing address for these individuals is: Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street SW., Washington, DC 20410. Hearing- or speech-impaired persons may contact the Federal Information Relay Service at 800-877-8339 (TTY). (Other than the "800" TTY number, the above-listed telephone numbers are not toll free.)

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Tables showing AAFs will be available electronically from the HUD data information page at <http://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/aaf.html>.

I. Applying AAFs to Various Section 8 Programs

AAFs established by this Notice are used to adjust contract rents for units assisted in certain Section 8 housing

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

[Docket No. FR-6059-N-01]

Section 8 Housing Assistance Payments Program—Annual Adjustment Factors, Fiscal Year 2018

AGENCY: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research, HUD.

ACTION: Notice of Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Annual Adjustment Factors (AAFs).

SUMMARY: The United States Housing Act of 1937 requires that certain assistance contracts signed by owners participating in the Department's Section 8 housing assistance payment programs provide annual adjustments to monthly rentals for units covered by the contracts. This notice announces FY 2018 AAFs for adjustment of contract rents on the anniversary of those assistance contracts. The factors are based on a formula using residential rent and utility cost changes from the most recent annual Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index (CPI) survey. Beginning with the FY 2014 AAFs and continuing with these FY 2018 AAFs, the Puerto Rico CPI is used in place of the South Region CPI for all areas in Puerto Rico. These factors are applied at the anniversary of Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contracts for which rents are to be adjusted using the AAF for those calendar months

assistance payment programs during the initial (*i.e.*, pre-renewal) term of the HAP contract and for all units in the Project-Based Certificate program. There are three categories of Section 8 programs that use the AAFs:

Category 1: The Section 8 New Construction, Substantial Rehabilitation, and Moderate Rehabilitation programs;

Category 2: The Section 8 Loan Management (LM) and Property Disposition (PD) programs; and

Category 3: The Section 8 Project-Based Certificate (PBC) program.

Each Section 8 program category uses the AAFs differently. The specific application of the AAFs is determined by the law, the HAP contract, and appropriate program regulations or requirements.

AAFs are not used in the following cases:

Renewal Rents. AAFs are not used to determine renewal rents after expiration of the original Section 8 HAP contract (either for projects where the Section 8 HAP contract is renewed under a restructuring plan adopted under 24 CFR part 401; or renewed without restructuring under 24 CFR part 402), except in the Project-Based Certificate program (Category 3). In general, renewal rents are established in accordance with the statutory provision in the Multifamily Assisted Housing Reform and Affordability Act of 1997 (MAHRA), as amended, under which the HAP is renewed. After renewal, annual rent adjustments will be provided in accordance with MAHRA.

Budget-based Rents. AAFs are not used for budget-based rent adjustments. For projects receiving Section 8 subsidies under the LM program (24 CFR part 886, subpart A) and for projects receiving Section 8 subsidies under the PD program (24 CFR part 886, subpart C), contract rents are adjusted, at HUD's option, either by applying the AAFs or by budget-based adjustments in accordance with 24 CFR 886.112(b) and 24 CFR 886.312(b). Budget-based adjustments are used for most Section 8/202 projects.

Housing Choice Voucher Program. AAFs are not used to adjust rents in the Tenant-Based or the Project-Based Voucher programs.

II. Adjustment Procedures

This section of the notice provides a broad description of procedures for adjusting the contract rent. Technical details and requirements are described in HUD notices H 2002-10 (Section 8 New Construction and Substantial Rehabilitation, Loan Management, and Property Disposition) and PIH 97-57

(Moderate Rehabilitation and Project-Based Certificates). Because of statutory and structural distinctions among the various Section 8 programs, there are separate rent adjustment procedures for the three program categories:

Category 1: Section 8 New Construction, Substantial Rehabilitation, and Moderate Rehabilitation Programs

In the Section 8 New Construction and Substantial Rehabilitation programs, the published AAF factor is applied to the pre-adjustment contract rent. In the Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation program (both the regular program and the single room occupancy program) the published AAF is applied to the pre-adjustment base rent.

For Category 1 programs, the Table 1 AAF factor is applied before determining comparability (rent reasonableness). Comparability applies if the pre-adjustment gross rent (pre-adjustment contract rent plus any allowance for tenant-paid utilities) is above the published Fair Market Rent (FMR).

If the comparable rent level (plus any initial difference) is lower than the contract rent as adjusted by application of the Table 1 AAF, the comparable rent level (plus any initial difference) will be the new contract rent. However, the pre-adjustment contract rent will not be decreased by application of comparability.

In all other cases (*i.e.*, unless the contract rent is reduced by comparability):

- Table 1 AAF is used for a unit occupied by a new family since the last annual contract anniversary.
- Table 2 AAF is used for a unit occupied by the same family as at the time of the last annual contract anniversary.

Category 2: Section 8 Loan Management Program (24 CFR Part 886, Subpart A) and Property Disposition Program (24 CFR Part 886, Subpart C)

Category 2 programs are not currently subject to comparability. Comparability will again apply if HUD establishes regulations for conducting comparability studies under 42 U.S.C. 1437f(c)(2)(C).

The applicable AAF is determined as follows:

- Table 1 AAF is used for a unit occupied by a new family since the last annual contract anniversary.
- Table 2 AAF is used for a unit occupied by the same family as at the time of the last annual contract anniversary.

Category 3: Section 8 Project-Based Certificate Program

Under the PBC program, the PHA and owner must have executed an Agreement to enter a HAP contract before January 16, 2001. The aggregate total term of the PBC HAP contract (the initial and any renewal terms) may not exceed 15 years. Therefore, most PBC HAP contracts have expired (or have been renewed as a project-based voucher contract in accordance with 24 CFR 983.10(b)(1)(ii)). In the case of a PBC HAP contract that is still in effect, the following procedures are used to adjust contract rent:

- Table 2 AAF is always used. The Table 1 AAF is not used.
- Table 2 AAF is always applied before determining comparability (rent reasonableness).
- Comparability always applies. If the comparable rent level is lower than the rent to owner (contract rent) as adjusted by application of the Table 2 AAF, the comparable rent level will be the new rent to owner.
- The new rent to owner will not be reduced below the contract rent on the effective date of the HAP contract.

III. When To Use Reduced AAFs (From AAF Table 2)

In accordance with Section 8(c)(2)(A) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f(c)(2)(A)), the AAF is reduced by 0.01:

- For all tenancies assisted in the Section 8 Project-Based Certificate program.
 - In other Section 8 programs, for a unit occupied by the same family at the time of the last annual rent adjustment (and where the rent is not reduced by application of comparability (rent reasonableness)).
- The law provides that:

Except for assistance under the certificate program, for any unit occupied by the same family at the time of the last annual rental adjustment, where the assistance contract provides for the adjustment of the maximum monthly rent by applying an annual adjustment factor and where the rent for a unit is otherwise eligible for an adjustment based on the full amount of the factor, 0.01 shall be subtracted from the amount of the factor, except that the factor shall not be reduced to less than 1.0. In the case of assistance under the certificate program, 0.01 shall be subtracted from the amount of the annual adjustment factor (except that the factor shall not be reduced to less than 1.0), and the adjusted rent shall not exceed the rent for a comparable unassisted unit of similar quality, type and age in the market area. 42 U.S.C. 1437f(c)(2)(A).

Legislative history for this statutory provision states that "the rationale [for lower AAFs for non-turnover units is]

that operating costs are less if tenant turnover is less . . .” (see Department of Veteran Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations for 1995, Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations 103d Cong., 2d Sess. 591 (1994)). The Congressional Record also states the following:

Because the cost to owners of turnover-related vacancies, maintenance, and marketing are lower for long-term stable tenants, these tenants are typically charged less than recent movers in the unassisted market. Since HUD pays the full amount of any rent increases for assisted tenants in section 8 projects and under the Certificate program, HUD should expect to benefit from this ‘tenure discount.’ Turnover is lower in assisted properties than in the unassisted market, so the effect of the current inconsistency with market-based rent increases is exacerbated. (140 Cong. Rec. 8659, 8693 (1994)).

To implement the law, HUD publishes two separate AAF Tables, Table 1 and Table 2. The difference between Table 1 and Table 2 is that each AAF in Table 2 is 0.01 less than the corresponding AAF in Table 1. Where an AAF in Table 1 would otherwise be less than 1.0, it is set at 1.0, as required by statute; the corresponding AAF in Table 2 will also be set at 1.0, as required by statute.

IV. How To Find the AAF

AAF Table 1 and Table 2 are posted on the HUD User Web site at <http://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/aaf.html>. There are two columns in each AAF table. The first column is used to adjust contract rent for rental units where the highest cost utility is included in the contract rent, *i.e.*, where the owner pays for the highest cost utility. The second column is used where the highest cost utility is not included in the contract rent, *i.e.*, where the tenant pays for the highest cost utility.

The applicable AAF is selected as follows:

- Determine whether Table 1 or Table 2 is applicable. In Table 1 or Table 2, locate the AAF for the geographic area where the contract unit is located.
- Determine whether the highest cost utility is or is not included in contract rent for the contract unit.
- If highest cost utility is included, select the AAF from the column for “Highest Cost Utility Included.” If highest cost utility is not included, select the AAF from the column for “Highest Cost Utility Excluded.”

V. Methodology

AAFs are rent inflation factors. Two types of rent inflation factors are calculated for AAFs: Gross rent factors and shelter rent factors. The gross rent factor accounts for inflation in the cost of both the rent of the residence and the utilities used by the unit; the shelter rent factor accounts for the inflation in the rent of the residence, but does not reflect any change in the cost of utilities. The gross rent inflation factor is designated as “Highest Cost Utility Included” and the shelter rent inflation factor is designated as “Highest Cost Utility Excluded.”

AAFs are calculated using CPI data on “rent of primary residence” and “fuels and utilities.”¹ The CPI inflation index for rent of primary residence measures the inflation of all surveyed units regardless of whether utilities are included in the rent of the unit or not. In other words, it measures the inflation of the “contract rent” which includes units with all utilities included in the rent, units with some utilities included in the rent, and units with no utilities included in the rent. In producing a gross rent inflation factor and a shelter rent inflation factor, HUD decomposes the contract rent CPI inflation factor into parts to represent the gross rent change and the shelter rent change. This is done by applying data from the Consumer Expenditure Survey (CEX) on the percentage of renters who pay for heat (a proxy for the percentage of renters who pay shelter rent) and also American Community Survey (ACS) data on the ratio of utilities to rents. For Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rico Community Survey (PRCS) is used to determine the ratio of utilities to rents, resulting in different AAFs for some metropolitan areas in Puerto Rico.²

Survey Data Used To Produce AAFs

The rent and fuel and utilities inflation factors for large metropolitan areas and Census regions are based on changes in the rent of primary residence and fuels and utilities CPI indices from 2015 to 2016. The CEX data used to decompose the contract rent inflation factor into gross rent and shelter rent inflation factors come from a special tabulation of 2016 CEX survey data produced for HUD. The utility-to-rent ratio used to produce AAFs comes from 2015 ACS median rent and utility costs.

¹ CPI indexes CUUSA103SEHA and CUSR0000SAH2 respectively.

² The formulas used to produce these factors can be found in the Annual Adjustment Factors overview and in the FMR documentation at www.HUDUSER.gov.

Geographic Areas

AAFs are produced for all Class A CPI cities (CPI cities with a population of 1.5 million or more) and for the four Census Regions. They are applied to Core-Based Statistical Areas (CBSAs) where more than 75 percent of the population of the CBSA is covered by the CPI city-survey. The AAF that is based on that CPI survey is applied to the whole CBSA and to any HUD-defined metropolitan area, called the “HUD Metro FMR Area” (HMFA), within that CBSA. If the CBSA is not covered by a CPI city-survey, the CBSA uses the relevant regional CPI factor. All non-metropolitan counties use regional CPI factors, except for those that are in CPI cities, but have been dropped from metropolitan area by OMB definitions (Lenawee County, MI; Ashtabula County, OH; Henderson County, TX; King George County, VA; Island County, WA). For areas assigned the Census Region CPI factor, both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas receive the same factor.

Each metropolitan area that uses a local CPI update factor is listed alphabetically in the tables and each HMFA is listed alphabetically within its respective CBSA. Each AAF applies to a specific geographic area and to units of all bedroom sizes. AAFs are provided:

- For separate metropolitan areas, including HMFAs and counties that are currently designated as non-metropolitan, but are part of the metropolitan area defined in the local CPI survey.
- For the four Census Regions (to be used for those metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas that are not covered by a CPI city-survey).

AAFs use the same OMB metropolitan area definitions, as revised by HUD, that are used for the FY 2018 FMRs.

Area Definitions

To make certain that they are using the correct AAFs, users should refer to the Area Definitions Table section at <http://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/aaf.html>. The Area Definitions Table lists CPI areas in alphabetical order by state, and the associated Census region is shown next to each state name. Areas whose AAFs are determined by local CPI surveys are listed first. All metropolitan areas with local CPI surveys have separate AAF schedules and are shown with their corresponding county definitions or as metropolitan counties. In the six New England states, the listings are for counties or parts of counties as defined by towns or cities. The remaining

counties use the CPI for the Census Region and are not separately listed in the Area Definitions Table at <http://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/aaf.html>.

Puerto Rico uses its own AAFs calculated from the Puerto Rico CPI as adjusted by the PRCS, the Virgin Islands uses the South Region AAFs and the Pacific Islands uses the West Region AAFs. All areas in Hawaii use the AAFs listed next to "Hawaii" in the Tables which are based on the CPI survey for the Honolulu metropolitan area. The Pacific Islands use the West Region AAFs.

Dated: November 1, 2017.

Todd M. Richardson,

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