

## Open Choice Vouchers - Recommended Language

### Sec. 8-345. **Rental assistance for low-income families living in privately-owned rental housing.**

**Regulations. Hearing.** (a) The Commissioner of Housing shall implement and administer a program of rental assistance for low-income families living in privately-owned rental housing. For the purposes of this section, a low-income family is one whose income does not exceed fifty per cent of the median family income for the area of the state in which such family lives, as determined by the commissioner.

(b) Housing eligible for participation in the program shall comply with applicable state and local health, housing, building and safety codes.

(c) In addition to an element in which rental assistance certificates are made available to qualified tenants, to be used in eligible housing which such tenants are able to locate, the program may include a housing support element in which rental assistance for tenants is linked to participation by the property owner in other municipal, state or federal housing repair, rehabilitation or financing programs. The commissioner shall use rental assistance under this section so as to encourage the preservation of existing housing and the revitalization of neighborhoods or the creation of additional rental housing.

(d) The commissioner may designate a portion of the rental assistance available under the program for tenant-based and project-based supportive housing units. To the extent practicable rental assistance for supportive housing shall adhere to the requirements of the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program, 42 USC 1437f(o), relative to calculating the tenant's share of the rent to be paid.

(e) The commissioner shall administer the program under this section to promote housing choice for certificate holders and encourage racial and economic integration. The commissioner shall establish maximum rent levels for each municipality in a manner that promotes the use of the program in all municipalities. Any certificate issued pursuant to this section may be used for housing in any municipality in the state. The commissioner shall inform certificate holders that a certificate may be used in any municipality and, to the extent practicable, the commissioner shall assist certificate holders in finding housing in the municipality of their choice.

(f) Nothing in this section shall give any person a right to continued receipt of rental assistance at any time that the program is not funded.

(g) The commissioner shall adopt regulations in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54 to carry out the purposes of this section. The regulations shall establish maximum income eligibility guidelines for such rental assistance and criteria for determining the amount of rental assistance which shall be provided to eligible families.

(h) Any person aggrieved by a decision of the commissioner or the commissioner's agent pursuant to the program under this section shall have the right to a hearing in accordance with the provisions of section 8-37gg.

(i) The Department of Housing, in consultation with the Department of Education and with input from housing, civil rights, and education advocates, shall establish a pilot Open Choice Voucher program designating fifty Rental Assistance Program certificates for use by eligible families participating in the Open Choice school desegregation program, authorized

pursuant to CGS Sec. 10-266aa, in the Hartford region who would like to move to the town where their child attends school. The program shall begin in June of 2020 after a pre-implementation period extending from July 1, 2019 to May 30, 2020, to develop procedures for landlord recruitment, family recruitment, and housing search assistance and counseling. Twenty-five rental assistance certificates shall be made available during both the 2020-2021 school year and twenty-five additional rental assistance certificates shall be made available during the 2021-2022 school year. The Department of Housing shall submit an interim report to the standing committees of the General Assembly having jurisdiction over housing and over education on or before August 31, 2021, and a final report on or before August 31, 2022. Each report shall include, but not be limited to, an assessment of program utilization rates, demand for the program, and the racial, ethnic, household composition, and income demographics of the program participants and those on the waiting list. The final report shall include recommendations as to whether the program should be continued or expanded and, if so, what changes in the program should be made.