



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why should I participate?

A: By participating in SNO Mass, we can help you meet your financial goals as a property owner and provide families with a place they are proud to call home. There are many benefits of participating:

- We have a ready pool of prospective tenants, so we can help you **fill your units efficiently**.
- You will benefit from a **reliable rental revenue stream**, as the Housing Choice Voucher will absorb any loss in your renters' incomes due to job loss or hourly work reduction. Monthly subsidy payments are made through direct deposit.
- You will receive **\$500** when you rent to a SNO Mass participant and an additional \$500 when you renew the lease or rent the unit to another SNO Mass tenant.
- By renting to a SNO Mass participant, you may also potentially receive a **higher rent subsidy** than what other local housing authorities offer (depending on the area).
- You **maintain control** over your own property management decisions. You screen and make your own decisions about applicant suitability, using the same criteria in accordance with Fair Housing laws as you would use to screen any other prospective tenant.
- You will have a **single point of contact** at our agency to help ensure a smooth, expedited lease-up process and to handle any inquiries after the tenant moves in.

Q: Is my property eligible for SNO Mass?

A: The SNO Mass program has identified "Opportunity Areas" throughout Massachusetts that offer high-quality schools, parks and open spaces, and other amenities that help children grow and thrive. These areas are determined at the census tract level. To see if your property is located in a SNO Mass Opportunity Area, you can enter the address of the property into our [Housing Locator Tool](#).

All styles of decent and safe housing located in SNO Mass Opportunity Areas are eligible, provided that the rent is reasonable for the type, size, condition, and location of the unit.

Q: What is the process for renting a unit through SNO Mass?

A: The process for renting a unit through SNO Mass is as follows:

- 1) The SNO Mass participant expresses interest in renting your unit, and the two of you agree to move forward with the application/lease-up process.
- 2) **Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA)**: The participant provides you with a Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) packet. You complete the packet and submit it to us.
- 3) **Inspection**: After receiving the RFTA, we will contact you within 1 business day to schedule an inspection, and we will complete the inspection within 3 business days. (If the RFTA indicates a future date of availability for inspection, we will complete the inspection within 3 business days)

of the date of availability.) All units occupied by families receiving Housing Choice Voucher assistance must meet HUD's Housing Quality Standards (HQS). Units must be vacant before they can be inspected.

- 4) **Rent Reasonableness:** We will determine rent reasonableness within 1 business day of the initial inspection of the unit. Units rented by families assisted under the HCV program must have rents that are reasonable in comparison to similar unassisted units in the market area.
- 5) **HAP Contract & Lease:** Once the unit has passed inspection and the rent has been determined to be reasonable, we will sign a Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) contract with you. You and the prospective tenant will sign a lease.

SNO Mass property owners have access to a streamlined lease-up process and a single point of contact at our agency to ensure that they do not encounter any costly delays.

Q: Who is responsible for the security deposit?

A: The tenant is responsible for paying the security deposit. SNO Mass participants have access to financial assistance that they can use to help cover all or part of their security deposit. The deposit amount must comply with Massachusetts law and may not exceed the deposit amount charged to unassisted tenants. If the SNO Mass tenant moves out, the security deposit (less any damages) should be returned to him/her.

Q: What are my responsibilities to the tenant?

A: Landlords participating in the SNO Mass program have all of the same responsibilities they would if the unit was rented to a private market tenant. Key responsibilities of landlords are:

- Screen* and select tenants for vacant units
- Enter into and enforce the lease between the landlord and the tenant
- Collect security deposits and rent
- Maintain the housing unit in accordance with Housing Quality Standards (HQS), making repairs as necessary
- Comply with the HAP Contract and all applicable federal, state and local laws and ordinances, including but not limited to Fair Housing laws

*Prior to moving into a unit, participants in the SNO Mass program complete a series of required counseling meetings during which they are asked about their housing history, income, credit, and other factors that may impact their housing search. Participants with potential barriers to finding or retaining a unit are referred to resources and services to help address these barriers. Participants also continue to receive counseling after they move into a unit. However, property owners participating in the SNO Mass program are still responsible for doing their own screening of prospective tenants.

Q: What should I do if there is an issue with a tenant?

A: As mentioned above, SNO Mass participants continue to receive counseling assistance even after they move. Our staff will continue checking in with participants for up to 2 years after they move in to ensure that they are settling into their new home and new neighborhood. If you encounter any issues related to a SNO Mass participant's tenancy (e.g., late rent, lease violations), please notify our staff and we will do our best to work with you and the tenant to resolve the issue.

Q: Can I request a rent increase?

A: Property owners may request a rent increase after 1 year (or the initial term of the lease). You must send us a written request, copied to the tenant, at least 60 days prior to the proposed date of the increase. The increased rent will still need to be deemed reasonable for the market area, and the unit must still be in compliance with HQS inspection requirements. As a SNO Mass property owner, you will have the one-on-one assistance of SNO Mass staff to ensure that the request process goes smoothly.