

Section 8 scammers cheat people seeking housing

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by

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If you're looking for Section 8 housing assistance, here's something you need to know: scammers have made websites that look like registration sites for Section 8 waiting list lotteries. If you pay a fee or give your personal information, the scammers will take it. And you still won't be on a real Section 8 waiting list. In fact, there is no fee to register for a Section 8 waiting list.

If you search online for the Section 8 voucher waiting list, the top search results often are bogus sites. The sites look very real: their names may say "Section 8," and they might show an Equal Housing Opportunity logo. They ask for fees and your personal information, like your Social Security number, but they won't do anything for you. The scammers will keep your money and disappear. They also may give your personal information to identity thieves.

Here's the **real** way things work: The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s [Section 8 program](#) gives funding to local government housing authorities. The local authorities issue housing choice vouchers to help people find housing in privately-owned rental units. To get on the waiting list for a voucher, find your [local housing authority](#) and call or email them. Ask how to sign up for the Section 8 waiting list lottery in your area. As I said, there is no fee to register.

In another twist, some fake sites list Section 8 properties that supposedly are available. They promise you can rent one, if you pay the first month's rent via [wire transfer](#) or a prepaid card. The properties might exist, but the ads are fakes placed by scammers. If you pay, you just lose your money.

People have lost money and personal information to scammers – but they've also lost the chance to be in the actual lottery. Most people don't realize they've been scammed until after the waiting list is closed.

Keep these tips in mind to avoid a Section 8 lottery scam:

- Contact your [local housing authority](#) to find out how to register for the Section 8 waiting list lottery. You'll find their email and phone number on the HUD site. Follow their instructions to sign up.
- Housing authorities **do not** charge fees, and they won't reach out to you by phone or email to suggest that you join a waiting list. A housing authority also will never ask you to [wire money](#) or pay with a prepaid card. Those are sure signs of a scam.
- Treat your Social Security number and other personal information (say, credit card numbers), like cash. Don't give them out on a website you find through a search.
- Have you seen this kind of scam? [File a complaint with the FTC](#) and [HUD](#). Some people have gotten help from the [Better Business Bureau](#), so you also can file a complaint there.

