Mi Casa

Tenant Handbook
Tenant Information

Welcome to Mi Casa!

Mi Casa is a concept that was born out of an attempt to bridge the need for affordable housing in our area.

We hope that the next few pages in this manual will be helpful to you in identifying and becoming acquainted with the concept and operation of our group and of these apartments. The format of this manual is based on what we thought would be some of the most commonly asked questions and their answers. Please fell free to ask us for any additional information that you would like to know.

What is Mi Casa?

Mi Casa is a non-profit, tax exempt organization with the purpose of providing affordable housing. It was created by a small group of people in the Puyallup Valley area concerned with families in our community who are in need of affordable housing. This initial group of volunteers, a very small group indeed, had been meeting for scripture studies for three years when they decided it was important to act on what they had learned from reading the scriptures.

After getting information from many sources, the group discovered that they could be instrumental in raising funds and managing resources for housing projects which could be affordable to primarily single-parent families with limited income. The idea of becoming "Mi Casa" was driven by the belief that families have a right to stay in their communities and not be uprooted from their support groups and sources of income because of the cost of housing.

How is Mi Casa Organized?

Mi Casa is a non-profit corporation composed of a Board of Directors and support committees. The Board sets policies and insures that the organization is managed to those policies. One of the board's main functions is to procure funding to continue the mission of providing affordable housing in the Pierce County area. The Board of Directors has hired a property manager who, as a representative of Mi Casa, will handle the day-to-day operations of managing each housing unit.

So, what is the purpose of Mi Casa?

As stated, Mi Casa exists to provide affordable housing to people with low or very low incomes.
How do you find out what "low income" is?

The federal and local government agencies provide guidelines as to what level of income is considered "low" or "very low". When tenants apply for housing, their income is evaluated against these guidelines.

Housing is affordable when the cost of rent, along with utilities, does not exceed more than 30% of a families’ income.

So, do you mean that Mi Casa is like "housing projects"?

One major difference is that Mi Casa does not locate their housing units in one area. Mi Casa acquires housing units in different parts of the community through grants and funding from many sources including private contributions. With this type of funding, Mi Casa is able to keep rents at a low level as compared to other housing in the neighborhood. The housing Mi Casa offers must be safe and conform to comparable standards in the neighborhood.

"Safe" Mi Casa housing does not imply safety from the normal consequences of living in a society where accidents and crime occur and Mi Casa tenants are expected to maintain standards of safety which do not jeopardize their own or the safety of the other tenants.

Does anybody get to be a tenant of Mi Casa (regardless of income)?

No. Only qualified tenants will be allowed to rent Mi Casa units. Eligibility and suitability will be determined based on conformance with federal, state and local income guidelines.

Then, how do you select tenants to occupy the Mi Casa apartment units?

There is a screening process whereby an applicant’s income and eligibility is analyzed on an individual basis. Applicants normally come from word of mouth referrals and referrals from local service agencies. Incomes must not exceed the established maximum amount that qualifies as "low" or "very low". The prospective tenants must also meet criteria for suitability which implies good track records as renters who have demonstrated the ability to maintain the physical integrity of their living space. The prospective tenant will also be screened for credit rating as it is essential to the survival of Mi Casa that all tenants be able to consistently pay monthly rental fees.

Do Mi Casa tenants live here permanently?

Tenants may remain in Mi Casa housing as long as they meet the income requirements and abide by their rental agreements.

Mi Casa tenants are required to report income every year. If there is a change in income that affects eligibility and places the family above low income standards, it is their responsibility to find new housing suited to their new level of income. The tenants will be allowed to remain in Mi Casa housing for up to six (6) months after exceeding the income guidelines as they transition to new housing. If additional time is required, Mi
Casa may elect to negotiate a transition period during which the tenant must find new housing.

Mi Casa answers to agencies which provide the funding to acquire housing units and is required to furnish income reporting for all tenants to continue to qualify for the monies received.

**Are there any other services available to Mi Casa tenants other than housing?**

Mi Casa management knows that the tenants sometimes have other needs which are related to their financial situation. Although Mi Casa does not directly provide any services other than housing, Mi Casa will seek to offer information to its tenants concerning services that are available to them in the community. Mi Casa will attempt to keep the information current, but is limited in its ability to maintain and distribute such information. Mi Casa encourages tenants to inquire about services that might be needed.

**What do Mi Casa tenants do when there is a problem in their apartments? Who should they contact?**

Mi Casa’s property manager will respond to tenants’ questions and problems regarding their units and will oversee the repair and replacement of defective equipment. Any problems should be reported immediately.

**Who should a Mi Casa tenant contact in case of an emergency?**

All tenants should contact the property manager in the event of a problem with the apartments. In case of emergency, please contact the appropriate emergency services agency (fire, police, etc.).

*We appreciate having you as a tenant. We trust you will treat the property with the same level of care and concern that we have in meeting your needs. If you have further questions, please contact your property manager. He will endeavor to answer or direct you toward an appropriate solution.*