

December 6, 2011

Greetings Public Housing Authorities (PHAs),

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has partnered with *GreatSchools*, a national non-profit educational resource for parents, to provide their free web-based tool, www.GreatSchools.org, to parents who live in public housing or who receive Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance. This user-friendly website offers a database of more than 200,000 PreK-12 public, charter, magnet and private schools across the U.S., and includes information on how parents can choose the best school for their children. It also features about 2,000 articles and videos that provide information on how parents can help their children be successful in school with free materials such as subject-based worksheets, parent-teacher conference information, homework help tips, college preparation support, and answers to parenting questions.

To find a school, users simply type in a city, zip code, or mailing address and their child's grade level. From there, a listing of local schools will appear with a GreatSchools Rating, including school performance information, school description, and parents' comments, and other relevant information, such as school address and contact information. School data on the website comes from a variety of sources, such as the National Center for Education Statistics.

By providing parents access to school-related information we hope to: **(1)** enable parents to make informed educational choices for their children; **(2)** empower parents to become further involved in their children's education; and, **(3)** increase the number of HUD-assisted households with school-age children who have access to schools performing at or above the local average.

HUD is seeking your assistance in supporting this partnership by making the resources found on the GreatSchools website easily accessible to HUD-assisted parents, particularly HCV recipients. Information on the website can be useful to all families at any time, but this information can be especially useful when families are looking to move with a voucher. School differences vary by school district and can also vary by neighborhood, and Great Schools can help families choose a neighborhood or a better performing school in the neighborhood where they currently live. Providing this information when families first obtain a voucher or during their annual recertification will give parents and guardians timely access to details about schools, test scores and extracurricular activities where they live or choose to live.

We therefore strongly encourage all PHAs to provide printouts of the local school listings found on the website to all residents with a voucher. You can do this by taking the simple, easy step of visiting <http://www.greatschools.org/find-schools/>, typing in a city, zip code, or mailing address, then printing copies of the resulting list of schools to distribute to residents. Information can also be shared in resident newsletters, at resident meetings, your Neighborhood Networks Center or other computer lab, community centers, or through your local service providers.

We also ask that you include the GreatSchools URL, www.GreatSchools.org, on your PHA website as a valuable resource to parents and other community members visiting your site. Please contact your web administrator for information on adding the URL to your site.

To support your outreach efforts to make the GreatSchools web-based resources easily accessible to residents, we are attaching the following supplemental information:

- **A script for PHAs:** This one-pager (in English and Spanish) will help PHAs easily translate the features of the website to parents by highlighting the most helpful aspects of the website in simple, concise language.
- **GreatSchools fact sheet:** This two-page handout for parents (in English and Spanish) lists five easy steps to choosing a new school;
- **Top 10 tips for parents:** This one-page handout (in English and Spanish) lists the 10 most important ways parents can help their kids succeed in school;
- **School Chooser Workbook for parents:** This printable booklet (in English and Spanish) is a handy spot for parents to jot down their thoughts, questions, and answers when they are looking at schools for their kids. For any parent new to the process of choosing a school, this step-by-step guide helps demystify searching, applying, and enrolling in PreK-12 schools.

Please also share this information with your Resident Service Coordinators and local service providers.

For more information on the HUD-GreatSchools partnership, please refer to the HUD websites below and/or contact your local HUD Office of Public Housing. Together we can link housing assistance with educational opportunities!

www.hud.gov

http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/hope6/css/resources#3

Sincerely,

Sandra B. Henriquez
Assistant Secretary
Office of Public and Indian Housing
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development