

What is overhousing?

A household is considered overhoused when the number of bedrooms (unit size) is more than recommended for the current household.

NSPHA uses the National Occupancy Standards as a guide for a suitable unit size (number of bedrooms) for each household.

Here are two examples:

1. A couple is living in a three bedroom unit. Based on the guidelines, a suitable unit size is a one bedroom unit. As their unit is larger than the recommended size, they would be considered overhoused.
2. A parent and two children are living in a three bedroom unit. Based on the guidelines, a suitable unit size is a three bedroom unit. As their unit is what the guidelines recommend, they would not be considered overhoused.

NSPHA's Overhousing Policy

Every year, tenants update NSPHA on their household income and who is living in their home. This helps NSPHA work with tenants to ensure we are effectively matching affordable housing to those in need.

When reviewing this information, we identify households that are overhoused and work directly with tenants to find a right sized unit where possible and appropriate.

The Overhousing Process

When overhousing is identified, there are a lot of factors that go into assessing options for the tenants impacted.

We recognize the impact of historic forced displacement on African Nova Scotians and Indigenous communities. Households affected by historic displacement will decide whether moving is right for them.

We also recognize the importance of community to our tenants' wellbeing. This is why, when assessing housing options during this process, tenants choose the locations where they would like to live – either in their community or elsewhere. Tenants are not required to leave their communities as part of this process.

This process takes time. NSPHA works collaboratively with tenants to find suitable units within their preferred location. Based on the tenants' chosen locations, NSPHA will present an initial housing offer. If declined, we will find an alternative unit and make a final offer. Tenants will never be asked to move before a suitable unit is available. When a tenant accepts an offer, NSPHA staff will help with moving arrangements and cover moving expenses.



Will I need to move?

If you are overhoused (living in a unit with more bedrooms than recommended for your household size), we will contact you to begin a collaborative discussion about moving to an appropriately sized unit.

I have been forcibly moved in the past. Am I being forced to move again?

We recognize the impact of forced displacement on African Nova Scotians and Indigenous communities. Households affected by historic displacement, such as residential school survivors and previous residents of Africville, will decide whether moving is right for them.

How does moving work?

We will work closely with you to ensure you are offered a unit in your preferred community that meets your needs according to your household size. NSPHA will provide support to help you with the moving process and cover moving costs.

What if I don't like the housing offered?

When a unit is available, NSPHA will make you an offer from your selections. If you have changed your mind and wish to refuse the offer, we will continue the search. We will make a second, final offer when another unit is available in your preferred community.

Why address overhousing now?

NSPHA is proud to provide homes to over 17,500 Nova Scotians. The demand for public housing is greater than ever before, and more families are struggling to find housing that is affordable and meets their needs.

Over 2,700 families are waiting for public housing. NSPHA has a limited supply of larger units that meet the needs of families. By addressing overhousing, we can continue to provide affordable housing to our current tenants and make space for families on the waitlist.

NSPHA continues to work with Phoenix Youth and Community Centre, the African Nova Scotian Justice Institute, African Nova Scotian Affairs, Office of L'nu Affairs, the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism, and Dalhousie Legal Aid to ensure that our policies are empathetic and reflective of the needs of all tenants.

We are grateful for their contributions so far and look forward to continuing to work with them.