

Camp Fire Couple Ready to Move Out of State After Struggling To Find Section 8 Housing

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SACRAMENTO (CBS13) — Thousands displaced by the Camp Fire are looking for permanent housing in the Butte County area or really anywhere they can, given the state's housing shortage.

But the process is even harder for the hundreds in the Section 8 voucher program there. Butte County serves more than 1,800 Section 8 households and 318 of those in the program lost their homes to the Camp Fire.

According to the Housing Authority of Butte County, of the 318 Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher households displaced by the Camp Fire, half have found homes, 82 have left the program, and 76 are still searching.

The problem is now they will have to reapply for a voucher since they didn't find housing by the July 29th deadline, which could mean waiting for another three to six months.

The 50% of households who didn't find a place have been informed of the opening of the Section 8 waitlist. It opened July 22 and will close Aug 5. It requires an eligibility interview.

CBS13 caught up with one couple who found a place with just hours to spare.

"I've tried to find housing and take care of the family as best I can and we've hit roadblock after roadblock after roadblock," said David Crane.

David and Elissa Crane lost their apartment in the Camp Fire last November and have been staying at a Roseville hotel ever since, trying to find housing using a Section 8 voucher for themselves and their disabled adult son. The Cranes are their son's caregivers.

"Either the lists are closed or you are on a list with 100 or so people," said his wife Elissa Crane.

The Cranes have even gone out of state looking for places accepting Section 8 vouchers. They looked at more than 10 places from Oregon to Louisiana.

"With a Section 8 voucher you can actually transport it to any other housing authority and basically, all you have to do is transfer it prior to the voucher expiring," said David Crane.

They were at their wit's end as their son's housing voucher was set to expire July 29, then some good news came in just a few days before the deadline. An apartment in Fort Worth, Texas became available.

"We weren't neglectful, but we didn't hear until 4:30 p.m. our time Wednesday night that we were able to even get the apartment," said Elissa Crane said.

With just hours to lock it in, the Cranes claimed paperwork wasn't being processed on the Butte County end. So they called CBS 13's Rachel Wulff and she made a few calls to cut through the red tape.

"You are a lifesaver. Without you, I really don't think we would have succeeded," said Elissa Crane.

Unfortunately, given the lack of housing in the Golden State, many like the Cranes aren't succeeding with finding housing.

Elissa Crane and her husband are grateful they found a place. They are packing their bags, ready to move on and move out Monday. She has this message of encouragement for those still looking: "I just want people to fight... don't give up."