



The BULLETIN

Quarterly news about Section 8 in Seattle • JUNE 2004 • For landlords and service providers

1 PorchLight Director Kathy Roseth on the future of the Section 8 Program in Seattle.

2 Summer is paint maintenance time – find out how to care for your investment.

3 Read why a one-year lease isn't always just a lease that lasts for one year.

Grim future for the voucher program?



The Seattle Housing Authority's voucher program is affected by some of the new rules and not by others, but faces the same generally grim future. The Bush Administration's 2005 budget proposes to cut \$1.6 billion from the voucher program, which translates into a cut of about 250,000 vouchers nationwide, and a loss of several thousand vouchers in King County. Families will lose their assistance, and landlords will probably lose their assisted tenants because they will not be able to pay the rent.

In the near term, SHA will be taking steps to contain program costs as much as possible. We will do everything we can to continue meeting our obligations to owners and assisted families. But there is no question that the program is changing, and we ask your patience and understanding as we go through the changes. Our partnership with owners is critical to the success of the program and the wellbeing of our mutual customers – the families who depend on vouchers to secure decent housing.

KATHY ROSETH
PORCHLIGHT DIRECTOR

Dear housing provider,

For the first time in its 30-year history, the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program has fallen on hard times. Headlines in daily papers across the country announce funding shortfalls, cancellation of vouchers, and across-the-board reductions in payments to owners, as housing authorities struggle to adjust to new HUD funding formulas and avoid issuing more vouchers than their funds will support.

We will do everything we can to continue meeting our obligations to owners and assisted families. But there is no question that the Section 8 program is changing.

An important announcement for landlords

SHA will no longer send anniversary letters

Dear housing provider,

Effective immediately, SHA will no longer be sending out HAP anniversary letters as it has in the past. Landlords requesting contract rent increases should forward a copy of the letter they serve to the tenant 60 days before the effective date, to owner liaison Sven Koehler (telephone: 206-239-1672; fax: 206-239-1770).

All requests will be reviewed for rent reasonableness and negotiated as needed to ensure that requested rents are in line with current market rents.

If you have any questions about these changes, please contact the New Move in Supervisor, Sarah Van Cleve, at 206-239-1625.

Message from SHA's new Executive Director



Tom Tierney

As the new Executive Director here at Seattle Housing Authority, I have met many staff members and residents. Unfortunately, I haven't had the opportunity to meet many of our Section 8 landlords yet, but I look forward to doing just that as time allows. I am already well aware that our partnership with you is one of the cornerstones to providing affordable housing for low-income households. We value your participation in this program beyond measure, and will continue to look for ways to make it easier and more convenient for you to work with us.

Thank you for your support and participation in this program. I want to assure you that our Section 8 Program, and our partnership with you, will remain a priority for me as we face the challenges that the future holds.

TOM TIERNEY, SHA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

P-Patch community gardens: A great community resource

Do your tenants want a garden but don't have the space to start one? Let them know about the P-Patch Community Garden Program! P-Patches are places where people who don't have access to garden space can come and grow organic fruit, vegetables and flowers. Community gardens also help build community, increase public open space, promote environmental stewardship, reduce crime, provide recreation and produce delicious and nutritious food.

The City Of Seattle's P-Patch Program is open to any resident of Seattle. It provides community garden space for residents of 51 Seattle neighborhoods with over 1,600 plots serving more than 4,500 urban gardeners. There are programs to serve low-income, disabled, youth and non-English speaking populations.

A "gardenship fund" can help cover the cost of plot fees for those who qualify. We also offer on-call interpreter services in many languages, including Vietnamese, Spanish, Somali, Tigrigna and Amharic. To sign up for a P-Patch garden plot, call us at 206-684-0264 or visit our Web site at www.cityofseattle.net/neighborhoods/ppatch/.

A regular column from the Seattle Housing Authority's inspection staff

Inspectors corner

Summer is paint maintenance time

Summer is coming, and as the rainy weather gives way to sunshine, property owners can once again check the paint on their units. For landlords working with the Section 8 Program, two issues are most important: the presence of lead-based paint and paint deterioration.

LEAD-BASED PAINT

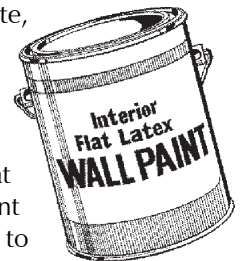
Unless there is documentation to the contrary, any property constructed prior to 1978 is assumed to have lead-based paint. This is important, because if your unit has lead-based paint and the tenants include pregnant women or children under age 6, then you must have the lead-based paint removed.

DETERIORATED PAINT

Deterioration of painted surfaces can occur through normal wear-and-tear, so routine maintenance is the most effective way to protect your tenants and your investment throughout the year. Property owners should regularly monitor paint conditions and repair deteriorated areas before inspections. If the amount of deteriorated paint is minimal, the owner is allowed to fix the problem. If you do so, please remember:

- While working, assume that the paint contains lead and protect yourself by using safe work practices. For example, remove paint with a "wet scrape" or a damp cloth.

- When you're done repairing the site, be sure to properly dispose of all paint chips and debris.
- Do not use open flame burning or torching, machine sanding or grinding, abrasive blasting or sandblasting, heat guns operating above 110 degrees, paint stripping, dry sanding or dry scraping to remove paint.



If the amount of the deteriorated paint is great, or if you know your property contains lead-based paint, have qualified professionals do the work. There are standards in place to ensure that the work is done safely, reliably and effectively.

Tenants can help with routine paint maintenance. Share these simple tips with them:

- Clean floors, window frames, window sills and other surfaces weekly. Use a mop, sponge or paper towel with warm water and a general all-purpose cleaner or a cleaner made specifically for lead.
- Keep the areas where your children play as dust-free and clean as possible.
- Read the EPA Pamphlet "Protect your family from lead in your home."
- Don't allow children to chew on painted surfaces like window sills and wall trim.

For more useful information on lead-based paint, see the HUD Web site www.hud.gov/lea.

Working together

When is a 12-month lease not a year long?

Everyone knows that on a calendar, 12 months equal one year. We also know that there are usually 365 days in a year. But believe it or not, in the world of rental agreements, leases and contracts, the definition of "12 months" can actually be less than 12 full months, and the duration of a year could be as short as 333 days!

When you enter into a rental agreement with a Section 8 voucher holder, we ask you to sign a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract. The HAP contract calls for an initial lease term of no more than 12 months. In other words, leases can be less than 12 months long, but must not exceed 12 months. A 12-month or shorter lease term is required so that the lease is enforceable under Seattle's landlord-tenant laws.

The definition of a 12-month term, however, can be somewhat tricky. In fact, mistakes in setting the lease term are the most common hold-up in processing new contracts. But once you understand the definition, figuring the term of a 12-month lease is easy. *As a general rule, a full 12-month term begins the day the lease is put into effect, and ends the next year on the last day of the month before the month in which the lease began.* Let's look closely at this definition, and consider examples.

HOW TO CALCULATE A ONE-YEAR LEASE TERM

It is simple enough to figure the beginning and end of a 12-month term if the lease starts on the first day of the month. For example, if the start date is June 1, 2004, the end of the one-year term is May 31, 2005. The lease is put into effect in the month of June, and runs until the end of the preceding month (May) of the next year. This lease runs a full 12 months.

The source of confusion is when the lease goes into effect after the first day of the month. But the term should still follow the definition above. For example, if a

The definition of a 12-month term can be somewhat tricky.

tenant moves into the unit in the middle of the month, and the lease starts on June 15, 2004, then the lease still runs until the end of the month preceding it (again, May) of the next year. So, in this case a 12-month lease term would run from June 15, 2004 to May 31, 2005. In this case, the 12-month term actually has a duration of only 340 days, but it still qualifies as a 12-month term.

A COMMON MISTAKE

The most common mistake is to end the lease on the same day it starts one year later, such as starting June 15, 2004 and ending June 15, 2005. This would be a lease term that is longer than a year, 366 days, so it does not fit the definition of a 12-month lease, and its terms are not enforceable under Seattle landlord-tenant laws. Even if the lease was written to end on June 14, 2005, it would not fit the definition, since it does not end in the month preceding the month it went into effect.

It is important to realize that these requirements do not prevent a landlord from signing a 12-month lease before the HAP contract is issued to you by PorchLight. We can accept a lease that is signed up to 60 days before the start of the HAP contract. However, we cannot pay a subsidy for the part of the lease that is in effect before the unit has passed inspection. The passed inspection date is the earliest date the HAP contract can go into effect. In such a case, the HAP contract follows the lease, and is up for renewal at the end of the original 12-month lease term.

Did you know?



Monthly landlord workshops now being held at PorchLight Housing Center

THIRD TUESDAY OF EVERY MONTH, 11 A.M. TO NOON, AT THE PORCHLIGHT HOUSING CENTER.

Join Seattle Housing Authority staff members for a free and informative workshop about how to participate in the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Topics covered will include: how to complete the Request for Tenancy

Approval form; how utility allowances are calculated; how we decide if rents are reasonable; how we decide if rents are affordable; how long it takes to get an inspection; and general information about leases and contracts. The workshops will be held on the third Tuesday of each month. Call 206-239-1674 to reserve a place in June.



PorchLight has reorganized and many of our telephone numbers have changed. Please refer to the list below to contact Section 8 staff members.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

To speak with a customer service agent about any Section 8-related issue or concern:
 1) Call 206-239-1500.
 2) Select option 1 from the main menu.
 3) Select option 0 from the Section 8 menu.

OCCUPANCY MANAGER

Barbara Strayer 206-239-1620

OCCUPANCY SUPERVISORS

Special/agency-based: 206-239-1636
 Mod. rehab./project-based: 206-239-1649
 All other programs: 206-239-1619

NEW MOVE-IN TEAM

Status of tenancy approvals: 206-239-1674
 Report ownership changes: 206-239-1635
 Fax: 206-239-1655
 206-239-1760

ISSUANCE TEAM

206-239-1592

OWNER LIAISON

Sven Koehler 206-239-1672

To list a unit with Section 8: 206-239-1663

Initial/annual inspections: 206-239-1645
 Re-inspections: 206-239-1576

INSPECTION SUPERVISOR

Deborah McCaslin 206-239-1621

INSPECTORS

Bruce Brines 206-239-1689
 Bill Francis 206-239-1631
 Paul Gimmi 206-239-1632
 Nancy Jones 206-239-1616
 Sue Nigg 206-239-1639
 Nancy Shutes 206-239-1646
 Jeff Small 206-239-1669
 Lora Wait-Hoy 206-239-1650
 Mike Yost 206-239-1654

PorchLight telephone: 206-239-1500 | PorchLight fax: 206-239-1770 | PorchLight e-mail: porchlight.info@seattlehousing.org

Did you know...that SHA's Impact Property Services provides lead-based paint services? Impact Property Services offers affordable, efficient service for your deteriorated paint problems. We have a high level of expertise from years of experience and respond quickly to service requests. We can provide both EPA certified lead-based paint risk assessors and EPA certified lead-safe workers, including painters and carpenters. Call us today at 206-932-4685 or 206-932-4243. ...that you can find support for owners on our Web site? Visit us at www.seattlehousing.org today and click on "Section 8 landlords" for helpful resources and information. ...that the City of Seattle provides free information about property owner rights and city ordinances? Call 206-684-7979 for more information.



Community services of the Seattle Housing Authority
 907 N.W. Ballard Way, Suite 200
 Seattle, WA 98107-4637

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What is PorchLight?
 The PorchLight Housing Center is a division of the Seattle Housing Authority, the city's largest provider of low-income and affordable housing. PorchLight manages the Section 8 Program and applications for public housing.

A focus on service
 Located in Seattle's Ballard neighborhood, PorchLight is a place where people seeking housing assistance can learn about and apply for opportunities at a convenient one-stop location. We provide the highest quality customer service to clients, participating owners and all of our partners in Seattle's affordable housing continuum.

Want to learn more?
 Call 206-239-1500 or visit us at www.seattlehousing.org (click on "Housing," then "PorchLight").