



# The BULLETIN

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

**1** Business partners: working with Section 8 can be a satisfying effort for attentive landlords

**2** A good landlord makes a good business: little steps that go a long way to success

**3** Leases and laws: resources for Section 8 requirements and legal regulations

## More than an investment Business-like landlording yields higher returns



Dear housing provider,

The Section 8 program works with over 2,600 Seattle landlords, ranging from large professional property management firms to brand new landlords of single rental houses. We know that some owners who purchase small rentals as investments are caught off-guard by how much work is involved – normally *investments* don't call you up in the middle of the night because the heat went out, or the neighbors are having a noisy fight.

In our experience, the owners who approach landlording as a *business* rather than as an investment, are more successful financially and endure less aggravation. They take the time to learn landlord-tenant and Fair Housing laws, which define the rights and obligations of all parties. They do fair, non-discriminatory background checks on their tenants so they don't take on risks

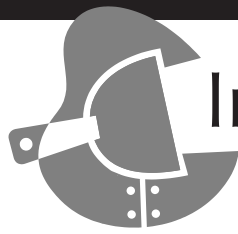
they are not prepared to manage. They spend time going over the lease and house rules with new tenants so that their expectations are unmistakable. They are quick to make repairs. They maintain courteous, businesslike communication with their tenants even when there are problems, and they use the process outlined in landlord-tenant law when the time comes to enforce their leases. As a result they have fewer problem tenants, lower turnover (less vacancy loss), and when there's a dispute, they tend to win.

Business-like landlords have a similar meticulous approach to the Section 8 program. One of our biggest landlord customers manages over 400 units in Seattle, including quite a number of units occupied by voucher holders. She's downloaded our Administrative Plan from our website (<http://www.seattlehousing.org>) and put it in a notebook, which she consults regularly. She knows that's where we explain our policies, and she knows we are obliged to follow them. She reads our letters and notices carefully. When she sees us taking actions that seem inconsistent with our policies, or which don't make sense (it happens), she lets us

know. Often conversations with her result in change on our side – we realize we have to explain something better or actually modify what we're doing. She is a change agent for improving our customer service to all landlords.

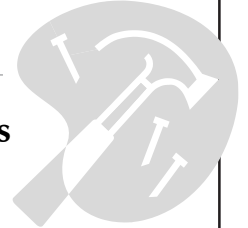
Of course, not every landlord has to carry around a three-ring notebook with our Administrative Plan in it. We don't recommend it as light reading. But we do recommend that all landlords read our Housing Assistance Payment Contract very carefully, as well as the Tenancy Lease Addendum, and all our letters and notices. If we're not making ourselves clear or you think we're being unreasonable, tell us, and we'll respond. Some things we can improve, some things we both just have to live with. But the most satisfying business relationships come from a clear understanding of mutual obligations and clear communication, and this is what we strive for with every owner who meets us half-way.

KATHY ROSETH  
PORCHLIGHT DIRECTOR



# Inspectors corner

## *Taking care of business*

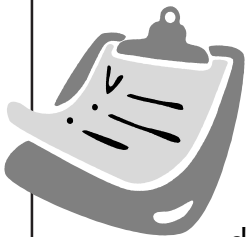


Being a landlord is a business. As with any business venture, the owner's decisions will determine its success and profitability. The decision to play an active role in maintaining your properties throughout the year, not just at yearly inspection time, will pay off in the long run.

Each year, Seattle Housing Authority inspects units to ensure that they comply with the safety and health standards required by the Section 8 program. We generally schedule the annual inspection to occur four to eight weeks before the lease renewal date. Although we do not require owners to attend the Annual Inspection, we encourage you to take an active role in the inspection process.

Many owners choose to schedule a yearly visit to their units just prior to SHA's inspection to determine if any repairs are needed and complete them. However, we encourage owners to be proactive and to look after their units throughout the year, not just at inspection time. Regularly maintained properties are usually the most successful in passing the inspection.

If you are not sure what to look for, you can find a list of the Housing Quality Standards (HQS) requirements on our Web site at [www.seattlehousing.org](http://www.seattlehousing.org). Under the "Housing" menu, click on "Section 8 landlords" and then choose "Inspections" from the "Housing Choice Voucher Program" menu on the left.



### **Please Remember!**

After inspection, it is the owner's responsibility to correct deficiencies in a timely manner.

Section 8 changed its procedures last May in order to tighten up compliance timelines, with the result that subsidy payments are abated (stopped) very quickly after the correction period has passed. More than ever, owners must pay close attention to the deadlines given in our notices, or they will lose money.

### **Tips for a successful business**

- **Know and understand your legal rights and obligations.**

Take the time to learn the city, state and federal laws. Knowing your legal rights and obligations *before* you encounter problems can help you prevent them. (See page 3 for a list of resources where you can get information on the laws.)

- **Maintain a good working relationship with your tenants.**

You have trusted your tenants to protect your investment. If you are responsive and show your tenants respect, they may be more likely to treat their units with the same respect.

- **Monitor the condition of your properties.**

It's nice when tenants tell you about a problem right away, but don't rely only on their phone calls to determine when you need repairs. There may be problems brewing that are not obvious to your tenants, but could save you money if you detect them early. Occasionally drive by and observe the condition of the structure and yard. Prepare the lease with provisions that allow you to inspect the property with proper notice to the tenants. While checking on your properties, be sure to keep courtesy to your tenants and applicable laws in mind.

- **Respond promptly to requests from tenants for repairs.**

Your quick actions may reduce the damage to the structure and reduce the repair costs as a result. Your tenants will appreciate it, and may be more likely to inform you of future issues in a timely manner.

- **Read the information provided to you by Section 8 and Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspection Programs.**

The Summary of Deficiencies letter we send to owners after an HQS inspection often also includes a "Pass with Comments" section. This will give you a heads-up for what could be considered a deficiency in the future if left un-corrected.

## *News you can use*

# Section 8 Lease Requirements

A lease is a written agreement between an owner and a tenant that establishes the conditions for occupancy of a rental unit. The lease should be in writing, signed by both the owner and the tenant, and comply with state and local law. You should use the same lease for voucher holders as for other tenants in the property.

The Section 8 Department will review your lease to make sure it is consistent with the information you provided on the initial Request for Tenancy Approval. We are also required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to make sure the lease contains certain required items.



### The lease must include:

- The names of the owner and the tenant
- The address of the unit rented
- The term of the lease (the specific period of time covered by the lease – both the initial term and any provisions for renewal)
- The amount of *total* monthly rent due to owner (from SHA and the tenant combined)
- Which utilities are paid for by the tenant, and which appliances are supplied by the tenant
- Which utilities are paid for by the owner, and which appliances are supplied by the owner
- Lead-based paint warning statement and disclosure
- A provision that drug-related criminal activity is grounds to terminate tenancy
- The HUD-prescribed Tenancy Addendum (HUD Form 52641)

### SHA will issue a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract when:

- The unit has been inspected and determined to meet Housing Quality Standards (HQS)
- The lease is approved and signed by the landlord and tenant. The start date of the Contract is the same as the start date for the lease.

## *Additional Resources*

Get answers about laws, regulations, landlord best practices and more

**City of Seattle Department of Planning and Development:** Online information and resources, including landlord-tenant information in 9 languages.  
[http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/dclu/publications/Landlord\\_Tenant/LandlordTenant.asp](http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/dclu/publications/Landlord_Tenant/LandlordTenant.asp)

To get individual assistance, call the Property Owner & Tenant Assistance staff at 206-386-9733 or 206-684-7979

**Washington State Office of the Attorney General:** Easy-to-read information on landlord-tenant law categorized topic. Information available in English, Russian and Spanish.  
<http://www.atg.wa.gov/consumer/lt/index.shtml>

You can also access the information via phone from the *ConsumerLine Information Service* at (206) 464-6811 or 1-(800) 692-5082. Choose option one for recorded topics. Topic numbers 600 to 614 relate to landlord-tenant law.

**U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):** Information for landlords participating in the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program.  
<http://www.hud.gov/groups/landlords.cfm>

**HUD Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity:**  
<http://www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/index.cfm>

**Seattle Housing Authority landlord workshops:** Bring your questions or issues about currently subsidized leases, or just come to learn more about participating in the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program.

Held every third Tuesday from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm at PorchLight Housing Center  
 907 NW Ballard Way, Suite 200  
 Seattle, WA 98107

RSVP or information: 209-239-1672

*Next workshop dates:*

December 21  
 January 18  
 February 15



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

Pre-sorted  
 Standard  
 US Postage Paid  
 Seattle, WA  
 Permit 1294



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**

Tenant based: 206-239-1636  
 Tenant based: 206-239-1619  
 Mod. rehab./project-based: 206-239-1649

**NEW MOVE-IN TEAM**

Status of tenancy approvals: 206-239-1674  
 Report ownership changes: 206-239-1623  
 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

## 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](http://www.seattlehousing.org) (click on "Housing," then "PorchLight").

## Did you know...

...that SHA's Impact Property Services provides lead-based paint abatement 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 206-716-1310, ext.10, 13 and 15.



...that you can find support for owners on our Web site? Visit us at [www.seattlehousing.org](http://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.