



The BULLETIN

Quarterly news about Section 8 in Seattle • JUNE 2005 • For landlords and service providers

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More changes in Section 8?

SHA Commissioners to consider proposals to reduce program costs



Dear housing provider,

As many of you know, SHA is reviewing policy options that will cut program expenses in order to serve more people. Right now SHA is using only 7,100 of its 7,860 vouchers, because of a series of funding cuts.

The math is pretty straightforward: our average monthly cost per voucher under current program rules is \$787, and our funding per voucher is \$714. While we have enough funding at this point to support all current voucher holders, we have nothing to offer the 2,700 families on the Section 8 voucher waiting list who have been waiting years for assistance.

The Board of Commissioners may act as early as June 20 on a series of proposals that would gradually reduce our program expenses by up to 10 percent, which will enable us to issue vouchers to new families. The

details of the proposals are on our website at www.seattlehousing.org.

Several of the proposals affect Section 8 landlords. Foremost among these is the proposal to reduce payment standards for one, two, three and four-bedroom units (see the website for details). Our intention is to coordinate this reduction with a reduction in our utility allowances (which many feel are too generous). This would help preserve subsidy available to pay rent. We have contracted with an energy consultant to review our utility allowances and make recommendations for revisions, and we hope to have the results by mid-June. The new allowances will be posted on our website as soon as they are official.

SHA's second policy proposal that will affect landlords is to establish minimum occupancy standards for families: 6 people for a 4-bedroom subsidy, 4 people for 3-bedroom subsidy, and 3 people for 2-bedroom subsidy. Single adults will be offered subsidy for a studio apartment.

The new payment standards and occupancy minimums, if adopted by the SHA commissioners, will go into

effect immediately for families who move from one unit to another using their voucher, and for all new families accepted to the program. Families who continue in their current units will have between 12 and 23 months' notice before they are affected (depending on the date of their annual eligibility review).

A tenant faced with a decrease in voucher payment standard or a downsize of bedroom subsidy will have three choices: move to a less expensive or smaller unit, pay the difference in rent if they can afford it, or ask their landlord to decrease the rent voluntarily, so that the tenant doesn't have to move.

Other housing authorities faced with funding cuts have reported that many landlords are willing to reduce rents rather than lose good tenants and face new vacancies. It's the landlord's choice, and obviously it is one we hope you will consider, if your tenant is affected.

Kathy Roseth

KATHY ROSETH
DIRECTOR OF RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS



Inspector's corner

Inspection time

Following the repair schedule saves time and money for all

The Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program regulations require the Seattle Housing Authority to certify that all subsidized units are safe and healthy places to live. Naturally, we believe every landlord shares this goal as well. Throughout the inspection process, we try to work with you to ensure that the standards are met so that we can continue to pay a subsidy for your tenant.

When does SHA perform inspections?

SHA inspects subsidized units every year. Usually the annual inspection falls sometime around the tenant's annual review, but the timing may not correspond exactly. Your tenant will receive an inspection appointment in the mail at least two weeks in advance, and you will also receive a copy of that letter. At that time, it's a good idea for you to visit the unit and check the items that the inspector will look at. You can find a list on the SHA Web site (www.seattlehousing.org) by clicking on "Section 8 Landlords" under the "Housing" heading, and then choosing "Inspections." You can also refer to the HUD pamphlet "A Good Place to Live" that was provided with your owner packet.

What if the unit fails?

If a housing unit fails its annual inspection, whether the failure is due to routine maintenance reasons or the actions of the tenant, we will write

up a report informing you and the tenant of what should be repaired. There is a 30-day time frame for the repairs to be made or else we must suspend (or "abate") the subsidy payments.

If a unit fails the annual inspection, we will schedule a re-inspection within 20 days of the first inspection to make sure the repairs are complete. The required repairs are often simple and not time-consuming, and we are often able to pass the unit at the re-inspection.

Sometimes, however, the inspector finds that the repairs are not complete when he or she returns for the scheduled re-inspection. Of course, this is frustrating for everyone, as well as costly, because it requires another notice to be sent and another inspection to be scheduled.

The second scheduled re-inspection generally takes place within 10 days of the previous inspection. If the unit still does not pass and the inspection process is pushed beyond 30 days, SHA must begin abating the subsidy payments for the unit. To prevent this, please confirm that the repairs are complete before the re-inspection.

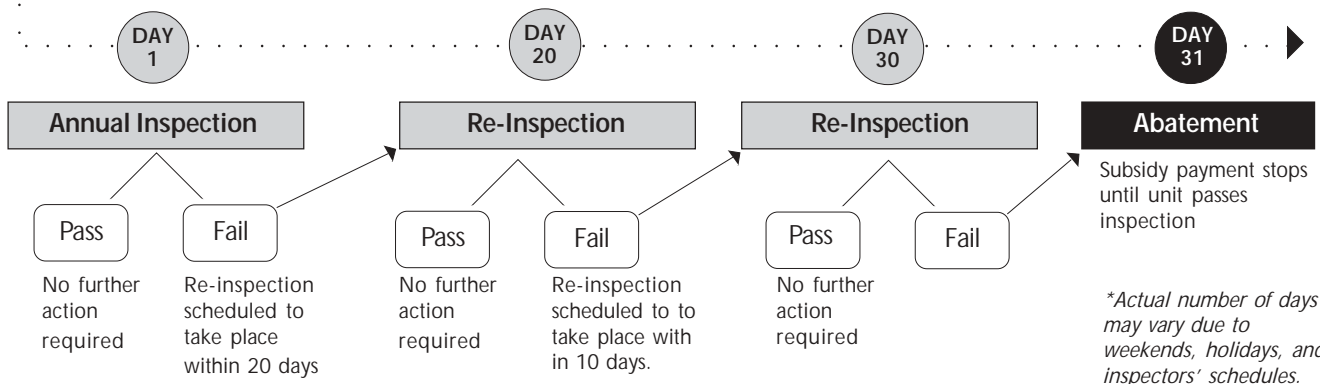
What if I need longer to make difficult repairs?

If you know in advance that the repairs will take longer than the 20-day repair period, please request more time *before* the date of the scheduled re-inspection. Depending on the circumstances, we may be able to reschedule and offer you a few more days to complete the repair.

While making repairs to the unit, you may

...continued on page 2

► Inspection Timeline*





Working together

Your questions answered

Section 8 landlord workshops at a convenient evening time

Join us every third Tuesday from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. for SHA's monthly landlord workshop. The sessions are hosted by Sven Koehler, SHA's expert at helping landlords work most effectively with the Section 8 program.

Workshops usually begin with a quick overview of the program, landlord and participant obligations, and frequently asked questions. The remainder of the session is tailored to the specific needs and questions of the landlords present, and covers a wide variety of common issues. Workshops are open to new and veteran landlords alike! ●

Upcoming sessions

Tuesday June 21, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday July 19, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, August 16, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

All workshops are held at PorchLight Housing Center, 907 NW Ballard Way #200 in Seattle.

For information, please contact Sven Koehler at 206-239-1672, or skoehler@seattlehousing.org

*Inspection time...*continued from page 2

discover a deeper problem that requires additional work. In these situations, SHA will usually grant more time as long as you call us to discuss the situation, so that we may document and approve the extension.

Extensions are limited and determined on a case-by-case basis; it is rare to receive an additional 30 days past the original re-inspection date. Extensions beyond 30 days may only be granted for exterior work which must be delayed due to inclement weather.

The HQS Inspector or Supervisor will determine a time frame for requested extensions after discussing the scope of the repair. At that point, we'll schedule an inspection to occur after that agreed upon date.

If you believe you have grounds for an extension, you can call the Inspector whose name and number is listed at the top of the Summary of Deficiencies. You may also call the HQS Supervisor at 206-239-1621.

What happens if I miss the 30-day deadline and I don't receive an extension?

Unless otherwise arranged, all repairs need to be complete within 30 days of the *first* inspection. If the unit has failed re-inspections and has not passed by the 30 day deadline, SHA will abate the unit, which means the subsidy payment will stop until the repairs are complete. Owners will *not* recover lost subsidy from SHA and in some cases may even owe SHA subsidy that has already been paid on a unit that has failed multiple inspections.

We are here to assist you and are happy to work with you to bring your unit back into compliance with Housing Quality Standards in a timely manner. The landlord, the tenant and SHA all share the same goal of preventing an interruption of subsidy payments, and working together can help ensure an efficient, cost-effective and hassle-free inspection process. ●

new!

Tenants get reminder calls for inspections

SHA recently implemented an automated phone system that will call tenants two days before their inspection appointments to remind them.

The system will try three different times during the day to reach a person or an answering machine.

We hope this new system will cut down on missed appointments, saving time and money that could be used to subsidize other households.

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

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

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").

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, extension 13.



...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.

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

206-239-1621	INSPECTION SUPERVISOR	Deborah McCaslin
206-239-1689	INSPECTORS	Bruce Brines Bill Francis Paul Gimmi Nancy Jones Sue Nigg
206-239-1616	INSPECTION SUPERVISOR	Barbara Strayer
206-239-1639	INSPECTION SUPERVISOR	OWNER LIAISON
206-239-1646	INSPECTION SUPERVISOR	Sven Koehler
206-239-1669	INSPECTION SUPERVISOR	ISSUANCE TEAM
206-770-6729	INSPECTION SUPERVISOR	206-239-1592
206-239-1654	INSPECTION SUPERVISOR	206-239-1760
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