



The BULLETIN

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

1 Section 8 policies go into affect: Some tenants may experience higher housing costs

2 Policy FAQ: How your tenants may be affected by recent changes.

3 Save energy, save money: Improve your property with grants and rebates from the City of Seattle.

Section 8 policy changes go into effect Lower program costs mean reduced subsidy for some tenants



Dear housing provider,

Seattle Housing Authority has been through numerous changes these last six months. Despite federal funding cuts, SHA's recently adopted policy changes will enable us to continue assisting all of our current participants, and to use every voucher available for clients on the waitlist.

In order to achieve this goal, SHA has decreased occupancy standards, reduced payment standards for three unit sizes, and implemented a new policy to adjust the amount of subsidy for families as soon as they experience substantial increases in their income.

SHA has also hired a consultant to review our current utility allowances using local consumption data. We expect that allowances for some energy types will be reduced, which may lower the amount of subsidy for some households.

All of these policy changes will enable SHA to assist more families.

In some cases, however, current tenants will have to pay more out-of-pocket for their housing costs even if their unit's rent does not change. This may prove to be burdensome for some families, and may cause tenants to look for less-expensive housing.

In an effort to keep good tenants, some landlords may consider offsetting the changes by lowering the rent or including utility costs in the rent. Landlords can also take advantage of free or low-cost resources available to help reduce energy bills for low-income tenants. These conservation programs are subsidized by the City of Seattle and can help create energy-efficient units at a significant savings. See page 3 for details on these opportunities.

As always, SHA's Owner Liaison Sven Koehler is available by phone or e-mail at 206-239-1672 and skoehler@seattlehousing.org to direct you to resources available throughout the city, or help with your questions or concerns.

BARBARA STRAYER
INTERIM DIRECTOR OF
RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Transitions in leadership

Seattle Housing Authority congratulates former Director of Rental Assistance Programs Kathy Roseth on her recent transition to deputy director at Plymouth Housing Group.

In her four and a half year tenure at SHA, Kathy brought huge benefit to Seattle Housing Authority, from her extraordinary leadership of PorchLight and the Section 8 program.

Currently, the Section 8 program is in the capable hands of Barbara Strayer, who has accepted the role as interim director of rental assistance programs, until a permanent replacement is hired. Barbara worked closely with Kathy as the Section 8 manager for the past four years and has 20 years experience in the housing industry.



Working together

Policy Q & A

What to expect from the recent changes at SHA

As you probably know by now, the Section 8 program has undergone several policy changes. For the most part, these changes won't directly affect how landlords do business with SHA. Some may have a significant impact on your tenants, however.

SHA adopted new occupancy standards:

What are the new minimum occupancy standards?

Tenants must have a certain number of people in their household to qualify for a specific unit size. For example, households must have four people to get a three-bedroom subsidy level.

Will my tenants have to move?

No, current participants are not required to move. In fact, they have an incentive *not* to move because they will be "grandfathered" into the new policy with their current subsidy level. If they do move, they may receive a reduced subsidy.

Will tenants live in overcrowded conditions in my unit?

No, SHA's occupancy guidelines are well below the city's standards for overcrowding.

Can I rent to a household even if the voucher is for fewer bedrooms than my unit?

Yes, household are allowed to rent units with more bedrooms than listed on their voucher as long as the rent and utilities are within their approved budget.

What happens if more family members move in?

Under the new rules, households won't automatically receive an increase in subsidy for a larger unit size. SHA will not a new voucher until the household exceeds Housing Quality Standards of two people per sleeping room. This should increase stability in Section 8 tenancies by reducing moves based on fluctuations in subsidy levels.

SHA lowered payment standards for one, two and three-bedroom vouchers:

What are voucher payment standards (VPS)?

The voucher payment standards are used by SHA to calculate the maximum amount of subsidy that a family could receive for rent and tenant-paid utilities. The amount that the tenant can afford to pay and what SHA will pay is different for every household.

Do I have to lower my rent?

You do not have to lower your rent. The change will not affect *existing* tenancies until after November 2006, at the tenant's annual review. At that time, you can choose to lower your rent if your tenant has to pay more and considers moving.

Does the VPS equal the rent I can charge for my unit?

No, it determines the **tenant's** subsidy. You should base your rent on the market rate for your unit.

Will every household with a one, two or three-bedroom unit be affected?

No. Families who are renting higher-priced units or single-family dwellings, which are the most expensive type of housing, will be most affected.

How will the new VPS affect future rentals?

For new rentals, there may be fewer families that can afford your unit. When a family wants to rent a new unit, SHA may ask owners if they are willing to lower rent or include utilities, in order to fit a voucher holder's budget. Owners have the choice to say no, of course.

SHA will decrease subsidy when tenants receive a significant increase in income:

What happens if SHA decreases my tenant's subsidy?

If a household's income increases significantly, the tenant will be expected to pay a larger portion of the rent. The amount of your HAP check will be less, and the tenant's portion will be more, but they will add up to the same rent amount. Both you and the tenant will receive a notice in the mail in advance with the new amounts.

What is considered a "significant" income increase?

Right now, SHA will decrease subsidy for tenants who receive an increase of \$100 a month or more. However, tenants are still obligated by the program rules to report all changes in income, even ones less than \$100.

For more information, go to www.seattlehousing.org, and click on "policy changes."

Learn more

at the September 20
Landlord Workshop
See page 4 for details



News you can use

Conserve energy, save money

Grants and incentives for property owners

Would you like help to lower utility bills for you and your tenants? The City of Seattle provides grants and free consultation to rental property owners to improve the energy efficiency of buildings.

Due to federal budget cuts, Seattle Housing Authority will reduce many tenants' subsidies for rent, and will likely reduce allowances for utilities, which will result in a larger monthly tenant payment. Now more than ever, installing free or low-cost energy efficiency measures is a great way to keep costs down for you and your tenants.

Seattle City Light provides financial incentives for buildings with tenants of any income level, while **Seattle Office of Housing (OH)** provides higher levels of assistance for properties where 50 percent or more of the residents are low-income.

Learn more

at the October 18
Landlord Workshop
See page 4 for details



Seattle Office of Housing (OH) provides **HomeWise** weatherization grants to rental property owners for housing where at least 50 percent of the tenants are low-income. **Typical grant amounts range from \$2,000 to \$4,000 per apartment.** Common energy efficiency improvements include:

- Attic, wall or floor insulation
- Infiltration repair
- Lighting retrofit
- Furnace, water heater or refrigerator replacement
- Exhaust fan and ventilation upgrades

Grants cover the full cost of many of these measures, with a partial owner contribution required for certain improvements such as window or refrigerator replacement.

OH energy conservation experts help you through the process with no administrative charge. They perform an energy audit, recommend a scope of work and can help select a contractor. Owners of multifamily buildings with five or more units must sign an affordable housing covenant agreement of three to ten years. In exchange, the conservation improvements lower utility costs and increase property value. Owners of buildings with four or less units can receive the same benefits without signing a covenant agreement.

Seattle Office of HOUSING

HOMEWISE PROGRAM

PHONE:
(206) 684-0244

E-MAIL:
Seattle.Housing@seattle.gov

WEB:
www.seattle.gov/housing

Seattle City Light

Seattle City Light provides two programs to help owners of multifamily buildings with five or more units. There are **no income requirements** for either the landlords or their tenants for these programs, so these programs are best suited to buildings occupied by primarily market-rate tenants. The programs include:

- LIGHTING — The **Multifamily Common Area Lighting Program** provides up to a 70 percent rebate for upgrading your common area lighting to efficient types. Use any licensed installer. Free lighting survey, bid review, technical assistance and quality control.
- WEATHERIZATION — The **Multifamily Weatherization Program** provides excellent discounts on efficient windows, insulation and common area lighting. Free lighting survey, bid review, technical assistance and quality control. Electric heat required for new windows.

Seattle City Light

CONSERVATION HELP LINE

PHONE
(206) 684-3800

E-MAIL
rescons.scl@seattle.gov

WEB
www.seattle.gov/light/conserve

Landlord workshops

... every third Tuesday

**5:30 to 6:30 PM
at PorchLight**

907 NW Ballard Way
Suite 200
Seattle, WA 98107

(cross street is Leary Way in Ballard)

Directions at www.seattlehousing.org
Questions? Call Sven at 206-239-1672

September 20: Recent Changes in Section 8

Do you have questions about how new policies affect you or your tenants? Still unclear about what the changes mean? Join us for an overview and discussion of how Section 8 is changing and what it means for property owners and low-income families in Seattle.

October 18: Utilities and conservation incentives for owners

How do utility costs fit into tenants' subsidy amounts? How can you minimize the burden for tenants, while maximizing your financial return?

November 15: Intro to Section 8

Are you new to the program or want a refresher? This is a step-by-step presentation on how to lease to voucher holders, with plenty of time for Q & A.



Phone: 206-239-1500 | Fax: 206-239-1770
E-mail: porchlight.info@seattlehousing.org | Web: www.seattlehousing.org

GENERAL QUESTIONS

To speak with a customer service agent about any Section 8-related issue or concern: Call 206-239-1728 and press 0.

TO LIST AVAILABLE UNITS

Call 206-239-1663 or go to www.seattlehousing.org and click on "Section 8 landlords" under the "Housing" menu.

INTERIM DIRECTOR

Barbara Strayer 206-239-1620

OWNER LIAISON

Sven Koehler 206-239-1672

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: 206-239-1676
Report ownership changes: 206-239-1655
Fax: 206-239-1760

ISSUANCE TEAM

206-239-1592

INSPECTIONS

Initial/annual inspections: 206-239-1645
Re-inspections: 206-239-1576
Inspections supervisor 206-239-1621

INSPECTORS

Bruce Brines 206-239-1689
Bill Francis 206-770-6735
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 206-770-6729
Mike Yost 206-239-1654

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 it. We are committed to high quality customer service to clients, participating landlords and 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") or come to our landlord workshops, every third Tuesday of the month at 5:30 pm at 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.