

The BULLETIN

Quarterly news about Section 8 in Seattle SEPTEMBER 2006 For landlords and service providers

1 SHA's inspectors are empowered to determine rents on the spot

2 Congress leaves town without passing HUD's FY2007 budget

3 New Voucher Payment Standards will not affect landlords' rent receipts

4 Inspector's Corner: If blanket you must, blanket safely

Section 8 update

Setting rents: Inspectors can help



Dear housing provider,

Perhaps you have received a call from SHA staff concerning the amount of rent you are asking for a given unit. All housing authorities are required to certify that the rent being charged to Section 8 families is not more than non-subsidized tenants pay—in a word, that the rent is reasonable. That certification is triggered by a landlord's submittal of a Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA).

In multifamily buildings, a fair rent is easy for you to document: You simply complete RTA Question No. 12 (the Owner's Certifications) and provide us the rent amounts for the most recently leased comparable units within the premises.

In determining fair rents for single-family homes or duplexes, we need to rely on market data. We may initially approve a rent amount based on comparing the RTA to data from Dupre + Scott Apartment Advisors (www.dsaa.com). However, it is up to the inspector who visits the unit to determine that the rent you're asking is reasonable based on the unit's condition and amenities.

By reason of their experience in the rental market, SHA's inspectors are all well qualified to determine rents. They've all seen thousands of apartments, and they know what to expect. Because it is up to them to sign off on the agreed-upon rent, please be prepared to

finalize the deal at the initial inspection. In most cases, they'll merely be agreeing with what you and our PorchLight staff will already have talked about.

SHA'S LOTTERY to create a new waiting list of 4,000 potential Section 8 tenants was successfully concluded in May. Nearly 6,000 households mailed in lottery sign-up forms. We've notified all 4,000 households, which were selected at random, of their position on the new waiting list. We're finishing up the last names on the old waiting list, which was frozen in July 2003. We expect to start interviewing people on the new list this month or early next.

MANY OF YOU already use our free weekly listing service for rental units. (It's easy to list your vacancies by calling **206-239-1663** or by going to www.seattlehousing.org and clicking on "Section 8 landlords" under the "Housing" menu.) Recently we've noticed a fall-off in the number of studios and one-bedroom units listed. Since these units are much in demand by many of our voucher-holders, I urge you to list such small units with us as soon as they come vacant—and to recommend this service to your landlord and property-management colleagues.

I ALWAYS APPRECIATE hearing your concerns and suggestions. As you know, we depend on your goodwill and support and we value our partnership. Please feel free to call me or write me at any time.



LISA CIPOLLONE-WOLTERS
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING ADVOCACY
AND RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
206-239-1523



News you can use

HUD FY2007 budget in limbo

Members of Congress slipped out of town in July without giving final passage to the budget for the Department of Housing and Urban Development which funds most of Seattle Housing Authority's programs. And recently, appropriations talks have been further complicated by the fact that rising utility costs are likely to cause increased shortfalls in current housing authority funding.

Section 8 funding increased

The Administration's 2007 HUD budget request proposes a \$502 million increase in funding for the Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8). This is in addition to a \$639 million increase for a similar program, Section 8 Project-Based rental assistance. Both houses of Congress have approved or enhanced this funding level, which will allow HUD to renew all existing rental housing assistance contracts. HUD estimates that combined, these two programs will help 3.4 million American families afford a decent home.

Although Section 8 funding fared well as the administration's budget for HUD moved through Congress, other HUD programs may be slated for deep cuts. The Administration proposed a \$118 million cut for Section 811 disabled housing (a 50% cut)—including a proposal Congress rejected last year to eliminate funding for construction of affordable rental units for disabled persons, a \$190 million cut for Section 202 elderly housing (a 26% cut), a \$736 million cut for Community Development Block Grants (a 20% cut), and a \$35 million cut for lead paint prevention and remediation (a 23% cut).

Congress is expected to deal with HUD's budget in a lame duck session after November's elections.

Section 8 assistance eased for college students with disabilities

On July 27, the President signed H.R. 5117, a bill that will allow college students with disabilities to continue to receive Section 8 rental assistance.

The bill was introduced by a member of Congress when she learned that a FY 2006 spending law aimed at preventing over-income scholarship students from receiving Section 8 benefits also prevented students with disabilities from receiving such help.

Landlord *workshops*

Every third Tuesday,
February through November,
from 5:30 until 7:00 pm

[no workshops in December or January]

at

PorchLight
907 NW Ballard Way
Suite 200

Cross street is Leary Way in Ballard
Directions at www.seattlehousing.org

Questions?

Contact Mike
Jung at
mjung@seattlehousing.org
or 206-239-1672

Upcoming sessions:

September 19, 2006 Rent Reasonable discussion

- How does PorchLight determine reasonable rents?
- How much can a tenant afford?
- What is the market rate?

For instructions on requesting an increase in rent, see:

www.seattlehousing.org/Housing/programs/section8/Rent_increase_info_0506.pdf

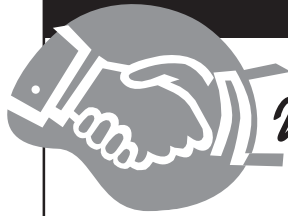
October 17 The new Voucher Payment Standards (VPS)

Effective November 1, 2006, families in leases predating August 1, 2005, will be converted to lower VPS (1-, 2- & 3-bedroom units only). See story opposite.

- Why are the Voucher Payment Standards decreasing?
- Who will be affected by this change?
- How are tenants being notified?

November 21 Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) Orientation

- How to participate, how to advertise your vacancies
- Requests for Tenancy Approval—can the tenant afford your rental?
- The Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspection
- Introduction to the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract



Working together

New Voucher Payment Standards in place Change will not affect landlords' rental receipts

Rents paid under the Housing Choice Voucher program come from two sources: the tenant's contribution and the housing authority's. The proportion the Seattle Housing Authority pays is determined by our Voucher Payment Standards (VPS), which we change from time to time under HUD guidelines.

Beginning in August 2005, vouchers the Seattle Housing Authority issued to new-applicant and moving families were subject to new VPS for 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom vouchers. The VPS was lowered for these unit sizes to reflect the depressed rental market in place during most of 2004–2005 and to reduce SHA's cost per voucher. This allowed SHA to assist more families. Partly as a result of this change, we have been able to issue vouchers to more than 800 families over the past eight months. (All of these families live in units covered by the new VPS.)

Starting November 1, 2006, families who received rental assistance prior to August 1, 2005, will be brought under the new VPS on the annual review date. *This change will not affect the amount of rent you receive for your rental units.* We notified all affected families of the change in what they'll have to pay every month. The VPS changes are as follows:

BEDROOMS	OLD VPS	NEW VPS
1	\$ 781	\$ 762
2	989	917
3	1,374	1,293

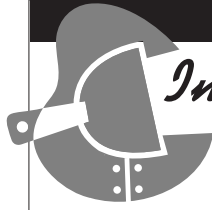
This change will reduce the amount of Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) for *some* families in 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom units. Families whose Gross Rent (rent + utility allowance for tenant - paid utilities) is below the new VPS will not be affected.

Example 1 The Jones family rents a 2-bedroom apartment for \$925 including w/s/g. Their Utility Allowance is \$80, making their Gross Rent \$1,005. SHA currently pays \$700 toward the rent, and the family pays \$225 rent + the light bill (\$80). Under the new VPS of \$917, SHA will pay only \$628, and the Jones family will have to pay \$297 + the light bill. The landlord's rent is unchanged.

Example 2 The Smith family rents a 2-bedroom apartment for \$750 including w/s/g. Their Utility Allowance (UA) is also \$80, making the Gross Rent \$830. SHA currently pays \$650 toward the rent, and the family pays \$100 in rent + the light bill (\$80). The 2-bedroom VPS was \$989, and is now dropping to \$917. However, since the Gross Rent of the Smith's apartment is below the new VPS, there will be *no change* in the HAP or in the family's portion. The landlord's rent is unchanged.

Every family whose rent portion will increase because of the new VPS will receive at least 30 days' written notice from SHA. We will send you a copy of that notice.

*We will be discussing the effects of this change at the **October 17, 2006, Landlord Workshop**; see opposite, below.*



Inspector's corner: Gas water heaters & insulating blankets

Insulation blankets for external use on gas water heaters are not necessary for newer units that meet or exceed the National Appliance Energy Conservation Act standards with respect to insulation and standby loss requirements. But if you have older gas water heaters and wish to insulate them, please follow these guidelines. Failure to do so can restrict the air flow required for proper combustion, resulting in fire, asphyxiation, serious personal injury or death.

- **Do not** apply insulation to the top of the water heater, as this will interfere with safe operation of the draft hood.
- **Do not** cover the outer door, thermostat or temperature and pressure relief valve.
- **Do not** allow insulation to come within 2" of the floor to prevent blockage of combustion air flow to the burner.
- **Do not** cover the instruction manual. Keep it on the side of the water heater or nearby for future reference.
- **Do** obtain new warning and instruction labels from the manufacturer for placement on the blanket directly over the existing labels.
- **Do** inspect the insulation blanket frequently to make certain it does not sag, thereby obstructing combustion air flow.

COURTESY STATE WATER HEATERS, WWW.STATEIND.COM



PorchLight

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

TO CHANGE OWNER INFORMATION

Changes must be submitted in writing
Fax 206-239-1770, attention Mike Jung
Questions? call Mike at 206-239-1672

SECTION 8 MANAGER

Barbara Strayer 206-239-1620

OWNER LIAISON

Mike Jung 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
New move-ins fax number 206-239-1760
Contracts and leases 206-239-1635
New Move-In Team supervisor 206-239-1621

INSPECTIONS

Annual inspections 206-239-1645
Re-inspections 206-239-1645
New move-in inspections 206-239-1676
Inspections supervisor 206-239-1621

INSPECTORS

Bill Francis 206-721-1457, ext. 10
Paul Gimmi 206-239-1632
Nancy Jones 206-239-1616
Sue Nigg 206-239-1639
Jason Shirley 206-239-1646
Nancy Shutes 206-770-6880
Lora Wait-Hoy 206-721-1457, ext. 11

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, February through November.

Did you know...

...that SHA's Impact Property Services provides lead-based paint abatement services? Impact Property Services offers affordable, efficient service to help solve for your deteriorated paint problems. We have a high level of expertise from years of experience, and we 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.