



The BULLETIN

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

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Section 8 update

From us to you, with new vouchers in hand



Dear housing provider,

Thanks largely to many of our Section 8 program staffers' working on Saturdays, hundreds of households on the SHA waiting list for subsidized rental housing are being moved quickly into the Seattle rental market with subsidy vouchers in hand. If you have any vacancies, I'm sure you'll soon be hearing from them.

Five hundred heads of households from the waiting list of 4,000 were invited to our PorchLight offices for a presentation on Saturday, October 28, that introduced and explained the program. Of those 500, 243 showed up. PorchLight housing specialists and supervisors made sure that all who attended were told what they need to do next to establish their eligibility for a voucher.

Another 250 heads of household were invited to a similar event held Saturday, November 4. Of those invited, 122 showed up.

My colleague Barbara Strayer, Section 8 manager, summed up the situation pretty well in a recent interview.

"Our goal is to serve as many people as possible as quickly as we can," she said. "We're hoping to give as many voucher-holders as possible a head start in the increasingly tight Seattle rental market, and we're hoping that

many families will find housing in time to celebrate the holidays in a place of their own."

Section 8 voucher-holders are given 60 days from the day their voucher is issued to find a rental unit. One 60-day extension may be granted if the voucher-holder cannot find and rent a suitable affordable unit in 60 days.

SHA created its current waiting list of 4,000 households by lottery last spring. As of the beginning of December, just over 1,300 heads of household have been called in off this waiting list.

AS I'VE NOTED BEFORE, many of you already use our free weekly listing service for rental units. Units of all sizes are in pretty constant demand, especially as we're adding to the number of Section 8 people who are just receiving their first vouchers. Again, I urge you to list your units with us as soon as they come vacant—and to recommend this service to your landlord and property-management colleagues. (It's easy to list your vacancies: just call **206-239-1663** or go to **www.seattlehousing.org** and click on "Section 8 landlords" under the "Housing" menu.)

I HOPE YOU KNOW that I always appreciate hearing your concerns and suggestions. 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



Keeping clear of Fair Housing issues

Resident Bobbie Lane recently told management that he intends to "transition" from male to female. Now he's shaving his legs, wearing dresses and makeup, and talking in a high voice. When a few other residents express concerns about Lane, what actions should management take?

As a transsexual, this person is protected against discrimination. State and local fair housing laws cover sexual orientation, defined as including heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, and gender identity. "Gender identity" means having or being perceived as having a gender identity different from that traditionally associated with the sex assigned to that person at birth. Protection associated with gender identity includes self-image, appearance, behavior, or expression. Management should not take action towards Lane merely because of membership in a protected class. Other residents will likely become accustomed to Lane's appearance after a while. Unless Lane violates a tenancy rule, the apartment management should take no action.

Jack has people of various races on his maintenance staff. A resident in the complex has requested repair work but has asked Jack not to send "a black repairman." What should Jack do?

If Jack were to honor the resident's request, he would be engaging in employment discrimination against his African American employees by limiting their work responsibilities because of their race. Federal and local civil rights laws prohibit this type of action.

Jack should tell the resident that work orders are completed by the first available maintenance person capable of doing the job, and that an employee's race is not a factor in assigning work orders. Jack should process the repair request normally, and have it completed by whichever employee would normally handle it. If that employee is an African American and the resident refuses the employee entry, Jack should be sure to document the situation fully. The resident always has the option not to be present while the repair is taking place.

When African American applicant James Arndt saw a promising rental, he left several phone messages, but never got a call back. When James asked his white friend Joseph to call, the manager immediately called Joseph back and invited him to view the available unit. Was this discriminatory?

James suspected that he was the victim of discrimination because his voice "sounded black" and he was

never called back, while his friend Joseph, who "sounded white," got a return call. This may be a situation in which the housing provider made a rental decision based on the applicant's perceived race after hearing his or her voice.

"Linguistic profiling" is the term for using speech characteristics or dialect to identify a speaker's race or religion or social class. An African American linguistics professor at Stanford named John Baugh experienced this. When he called using his "educated professional" voice, he was told that the rental was available; but landlords who met him in person said the unit was already rented. Baugh's research showed that people can usually determine race just by hearing a caller's voice.

Under fair housing laws, it is illegal to take an applicant's race into account when making rental decisions. In a situation like Mr. Arndt's, a fair housing agency might conduct a phone "test" in which black- and white-sounding testers would call the housing provider to see if they were treated the same way as James and Joseph. If so, this would be strong evidence of discrimination.

Remember, fair housing laws also prohibit housing providers from representing that any dwelling is not available for viewing, sale or rental when it **is** in fact available.

— COURTESY KING COUNTY OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS

Landlord *workshops*

No workshops in
December or January

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

Check our Web site for information about
the February, 2007 workshop:

www.seattlehousing.org and click on
"Section 8 landlords" under
"housing"

Questions? Ideas for workshops?

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



Working together

Important information about the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

IN JANUARY OF THIS YEAR, President Bush signed a bill passed by Congress that reauthorized the federal Violence Against Women Act, which Congress originally passed in 1994. In reauthorizing the Act, Congress provided new protections for Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8) participants. Those protections are explained below.

NO TERMINATION AND NO EVICTION OF A VICTIM JUST FOR BEING A VICTIM

The definition of “domestic violence” was expanded to include dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. The Act requires public housing authorities to create new screening, admissions, eviction and termination procedures for Section 8 participants. Under the Act, public housing authorities may not deny or terminate Section 8 program benefits to otherwise qualified applicants or participants who have been victims of domestic violence, if an incident or threatened incident of domestic violence caused them to lose their qualified status. Similarly, Section 8 program participants may not be evicted by an owner based upon an incident or incidents of actual or threatened domestic violence.

To protect domestic violence victims from eviction, the Housing Authority may authorize removal of an abuser from the subsidized household. For example, if a couple has jointly leased an apartment and one person commits an act of domestic violence on the other, the person who committed the violence may be evicted or otherwise excluded from the property and the other person may stay.

OTHER PROTECTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

The Act also prohibits housing authorities from denying “portable voucher assistance” to a participant who violated a previous Section 8 lease by moving out without giving proper notice due to well founded fears of domestic violence.

The Act does not provide victims of domestic violence a “safe harbor” from lease or program violation that are unrelated to domestic violence.

SHA will require applicants and participants who claim to be victims of domestic violence to provide an official certification that they are indeed victims of domestic violence. Forms and instructions will be provided applicants and participants for this purpose.

NOTICE

In the near future we will send letters to Section 8 tenants explaining their rights under the Act.

*Please direct any questions about VAWA to James Fearn, SHA's General Counsel, at
206-615-3570 or jfearn@seattlehousing.org.*



Inspector's corner: Lead-based paint waivers available now

WINTER is still around the corner but rainy, cold weather is already upon us, making exterior painting difficult. One of the items that often causes an annual inspection to fail is peeling, chipping paint on the exterior of a unit. Owners of dwellings on the Section 8 program that were built before 1978 and that house families with children under the age of 6 are at risk of failing their annual inspections because of this deficiency.

However, as in years past, we are again offering a waiver so the painting can be completed once the weather improves. The requirements are as follows:

- The extension applies to exterior paint stabilization only. The portion of work that **cannot be delayed** includes

removing all deteriorated paint from surfaces and ground. A reinspection will be scheduled for approximately 30 days after the annual inspection to check for the completion of all other deficiencies and the removal of loose, chipping paint.

- The waiver includes both "less and greater than de minimis" deficiencies as stated in the deficiency letter. Paint stabilization requirement techniques must be addressed per the written guidelines received with the reinspection notice.

A second reinspection will be scheduled after May 31, 2007, when all paint stabilization must be completed.

To apply for a waiver the owner or representative must call the originating inspector. His or her name and number may be found at the top of the Summary of Deficiencies document.



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

Reinspections 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

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, February through November, 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 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 information and resources.

...that the City of Seattle provides free information about property owner rights and city ordinances? Call 206-684-7979 for more information.