



The BULLETIN

Quarterly news about Section 8 in Seattle SEPTEMBER 2007 For landlords and service providers

1 New operating budget likely to strengthen Section 8 program across the board

2 Speakers advise landlords to be alert, clear, and quick to follow up

3 Is a Segway ever a needed personal transportation device?

4 The Six-Inch Rule: Be safe with baseboard and wall heaters

Section 8 update

Subsidy likely to increase next fiscal year



Dear housing provider,

Thanks for fulfilling your side of the on-going partnership we share to house our city's low-income residents. Together we are providing rental housing to 8,000 families in Seattle, which represents 97 percent of our inventory of vouchers and is close to an all-time high. We appreciate your commitment to the program and your willingness to put up with the occasional hassles of bureaucracy in order to participate.

Seattle Housing is in the final stages of drafting our operating budget for 2008. We will host a public hearing on the proposed budget at 3:30 p.m. on Monday, September 17 at our Central Office (120 Sixth Ave. N). We expect that the SHA Board of Commissioners will pass a final budget in mid-October.

Because of renewed commitment in Congress to low-income housing since the last election, we are seeing a modest increase in subsidy for the first time in some years. We expect to see the Housing Choice Voucher budget increase by \$4 million, which will allow us to issue our entire inventory of vouchers and serve up to 300 additional families. SHA staff will be working to maximize the number of vouchers leased out over the next year in order to reach this goal.

In addition, we will be reviewing occupancy standards in this program with the intent of allowing families to qualify for larger units (for example,

providing a single person a subsidy for a one-bedroom unit rather than the current studio). Occupancy standards in nearby counties are currently more generous than ours, which is resulting in some participants moving out of Seattle.

We will also continue to monitor the housing market carefully so that the amount of rent that a voucher will cover continues to match rising rents in the area.

Finally, I wanted to let you know that we are planning to open our Section 8 waiting list at some point during 2008. We have not yet decided exactly when, but we will keep you posted. If you have tenants who might qualify for a voucher, you may want to pass this news along.

Landlord training at PorchLight a success

On p. 2 you'll find a summary of the daylong seminar Seattle Neighborhood Group presented here at PorchLight in July. We hope to cosponsor another such seminar next year. Are there topics you'd like to see addressed? If so, please let us know. Similarly, if there are topics you'd like our Owner Liaison, Mike Jung, to address at our regular Tuesday evening workshops—the next one is on September 18—please let Mike know. His telephone number is 206-239-1672, and his e-mail address is mjung@seattlehousing.org.

AS I HOPE YOU KNOW, 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-WALTERS
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING ADVOCACY
AND RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
206-239-1523

Training for landlords

PorchLight hosts daylong landlord workshop on protecting investments, preventing crime

On July 25, at its PorchLight office in Ballard, the Seattle Housing Authority hosted a workshop for landlords who have Section 8 tenants.

Seattle Neighborhood Group's **Lois Grammon-Simpson** organized and led off the all-day event, which was attended by 17 landlords. The workshop's purpose, she said, was to give landlords the knowledge they need to protect investment property from tenant-caused damage and from problems that can escalate to police involvement.

Ron Oldham, former SHA deputy director and Seattle landlord, discussed crafting a business plan for investment property, the importance of carefully screening tenants, writing a good lease, and, most importantly, "DWYSYWD: Do What You Said You Would Do." As a property owner, he said, "if you have a tenant who is causing problems or failing to pay rent, prompt action in compliance with the law and your lease is imperative to regaining control and preventing more serious problems down the line."

Kelly McKinney of SNG presented information about Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)—that is, design that clearly delineates public from private areas to prevent people who don't belong on your property from feeling comfortable hanging out and possibly engaging in illegal or undesirable activity.

SHA's Owner Liaison **Mike Jung** spoke about the relationship between the lease a landlord signs with a tenant and the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract he or she signs with a housing authority. For its part, he said, "SHA can back you up when you enforce your lease, but we are not going to enforce it for you." Tenants who are evicted for cause can have their Section 8 subsidy ended, Jung pointed out, but SHA can only do this when documentation is provided. He said that "the possibility of having their subsidy ended gives tenants a strong incentive to work with their landlord to avoid problems."

SNG's **Mary Williams** stressed the importance of building community among renters. She recommended making sure that your renters know about their neighborhood's National Night Out and other community-based crime prevention events.

Detective Gary Kinner from the Seattle Police Department narcotics unit let participants know what to watch out for when they suspect tenants may be engaged in drug-related criminal behavior. He noted the importance of being proactive when dealing with problems. "If the police serve more than one drug warrant on your property," he said, "it will be boarded

up by the city and abated for at least a year," and the owner will not be able to rent it out during that period.

Finally, **Chris Benis**, legal counsel to the Rental Housing Association of Puget Sound and himself a landlord, hammered home the importance of doing thorough background checks, entering into solid leases, and documenting problems in writing. "If your tenant is causing problems but there's nothing in the lease that prevents them from doing what they're doing, you will have a hard time getting them to change their behavior," Benis said. "If your lease is solid and your rules are clear and you enforce them, you'll be able to evict a problem tenant or get them to comply."

SNG will conduct a similar workshop on October 17. You'll find place, time, date and registration information on their website, www.sngi.org; or contact Lois at 206-323-3159. SHA and SNG are planning to present another workshop for Section 8 landlords next year. Stay tuned to the Bulletin for updates.

Landlord

Tuesday workshops

Every third Tuesday,
February through November,
from 5:30 until 7:00 p.m.

Check our website for information
about the workshops: go to
www.seattlehousing.org
and click on "Section 8 landlords" under
"Housing"

Tuesday, September 18 Screening & lease enforcement issues for Section 8 tenants

Topics:

- Avoid problems by screening prospective tenants
- What to do if there are problems with your tenant
- What are the "Participant Obligations," and how does SHA enforce them?

from 5:30 until 7:00 p.m. at the

Seattle Housing Authority

PorchLight Community Room

907 NW Ballard Way, Suite 200 :: Seattle WA 98107

Questions? Ideas for workshops?

Contact Mike Jung, Owner Liaison, at

mjung@seattlehousing.org

or 206-239-1672

Keeping clear of Fair Housing issues

Mr. Clark, who has arthritis, uses a two-wheeled Segway to get around. When he applies for a rental, manager Maxwell tells him that management permits wheelchairs but not these personal transportation devices. Is this discrimination?

While it is not a wheelchair, the Segway is a mobility device that can assist people with walking limitations. Maxwell must permit its use in the same way that she'd allow a wheelchair, a cane or a walker.

Clarice and Karen, who are domestic partners, are concerned about their neighbor, Jeb, who calls them derogatory names and shouts such things as, "Dykes move out!" from his balcony. They report this to the manager, who talks with Jeb, but his behavior continues. What should the manager do?

Sexual orientation is a Fair Housing-protected class in Washington state and the City of Seattle. Clarice and Karen have a right to enjoy their housing without being subjected to such harassment.

Responding to tenant-on-tenant harassment is sometimes a difficult and sensitive issue. For this reason, it is helpful to have a written anti-harassment policy that addresses such behavior. This policy should make it quite clear that harassment will be met with progressive action, up to and including eviction.

You can find a sample anti-harassment policy online at www.metrokc.gov/dias/ocre/tt.pdf or ask for a copy by contacting King County Office of Civil Rights at **206-296-7592**.

Managers should take immediate action to stop harassment based on protected class. When a resident complains about harassment, a manager should conduct a thorough investigation, keep in contact with the complaining resident, and, if the investigation reveals harassment, take appropriate steps to stop such harassment. Finally, the manager should monitor for retaliation against any person involved in the filing or investigation of a complaint of discriminatory harassment or intimidation.

Jerene, a long-term resident, asks manager Vacaro not to rent the empty apartment above her to a family because they would be too noisy. What should Vacaro do?

Vacaro can explain to Jerene that, under Fair Housing laws, he cannot choose residents based on their protected class, such as familial status. Vacaro may want to offer her the option to move upstairs or to an end apartment, where she may experience less noise from other residents.

Mr. Alexander, who has difficulty walking, depends upon a motorized scooter for mobility. His apartment community has a policy prohibiting the use of motorized vehicles anywhere on the premises. Is it reasonable to permit Mr. Alexander to use his scooter?

It would be a reasonable accommodation for the community management to make an exception to its policy to permit Mr. Alexander to use his motorized scooter on the premises for mobility purposes. Management may not condition his use of the scooter on payment of a fee or deposit or on a requirement that he obtain liability insurance relating to the use of the scooter.

Of course, Mr. Alexander must operate his scooter in a responsible manner that does not pose a safety risk for other people and does not cause property damage. If his scooter causes damage to his apartment or to the common areas, Management may charge him for the cost of repairing the damage or can deduct it from his security deposit.



The Segway: Must management permit a tenant to use this personal transportation device?

The property managers for Happy Valley Apartments want to market to people with disabilities. Is this lawful?

Yes. Housing providers may affirmatively market available apartments to people with disabilities. Advertising that a community or rental apartment is accessible is not only legal under the fair housing laws, it is encouraged. The Happy Valley managers may also want to advise all applicants and residents that they will provide reasonable accommodations upon request. They

could include a notice in the pre-printed application materials and in the resident rules that states their willingness to provide reasonable accommodations. Such notices reassure applicants and residents that their disability-related needs will be met.

Larry, who is disabled, and Alyssa, who is not, rent one-bedroom apartments in the same building on the same day. Larry is charged a \$300 damage deposit. Alyssa is charged \$200. Is this a problem?

If Larry and Alyssa rent two apartments with quite different rent and deposit rates, different damage deposits are justified. However, if management were to charge Larry a higher deposit just because he is disabled, that would be discriminatory. Fair Housing laws require that housing providers treat all applicants and residents similarly. They cannot set special conditions for some residents owing to their protected class, such as charging people with disabilities higher deposits than others.

—Courtesy King County Office of Civil Rights
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Inspector's corner

Fall fire safety

Fall is a good time to remind ourselves and our tenants that nothing flammable can be closer than six inches to the front and top of any electric baseboard or wall heater. (I define six inches as the distance from the back of the palm of the hand to the tip of the longest finger.) And it is a good idea to remind tenants of some of the things that can catch fire: drapes and curtains, blankets, mattresses, dressers, sofas and chairs, laundry baskets, and children's toys and toy boxes.

A few other recommendations:

- Keep all furniture, draperies, and other household objects at least six inches from in-wall fan heaters.
- Electric in-wall fan heaters and baseboard heaters should be cleaned a minimum of twice a year, in the fall prior to the onset of the heating season and again

in the spring after the heaters have been used for a season. Cleaning the heaters helps prevent the smell of burning dust.

- I strongly discourage the use of portable space heaters, but if one is used, it needs to be kept at least three feet away from all flammable materials, and it must be plugged directly into an outlet, not into an extension cord.

This is also a good time of year to remind ourselves and our tenants never to leave a candle unattended, and to check smoke detectors at least once a month.

—Paul Gimmi, Inspector

For additional electrical safety tips and information, visit the Electric Safety Foundation International web site at www.electrical-safety.org.



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

NOTE: 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—
"Aa" through "Lara" 206-239-1636
"Larb" through "Zz" 206-239-1619
Mod. Rehab. & Project-based 206-239-1649

NEW MOVE-IN TEAM

Status of tenancy approvals—
contracts and leases
"Aa" through "Lara" 206-239-1676
"Larb" through "Zz" 206-239-1635
New move-ins fax number 206-239-1760
New move-in team supervisor 206-239-1621

INSPECTIONS

Annual inspections & reinspections 206-239-1645
To reschedule inspections 206-239-1576
New move-in inspections—
"Aa" through "Lara" 206-239-1676
"Larb" through "Zz" 206-239-1635
Judy Huertas, HQS supervisor 206-239-1621

HQS INSPECTORS

Bill Francis 206-721-1457, ext. 10
Paul Gimmi 206-239-1632
Sue Nigg 206-239-1639
Jonathan Shibuya 206-239-1616
Jason Shirley 206-239-1646
Nancy Shutes 206-770-6880
Laura 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 206-239-1672 or visit us at www.seattlehousing.org (click on "Housing," then "PorchLight"), or come to our PorchLight landlord workshops every third Tuesday of the month, February through November, at 5:30 pm. (See p. 2.)

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 your deteriorated paint problems. We have a good deal of expertise and 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 Impact Property Services today at **206-716-1310**, extension 13.

...that you can find support for owners on our website? 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 owners' rights and city ordinances? Call **206-684-7979** for more information.