



The BULLETIN

News about the SHA Housing Choice Voucher program

MARCH 2009

Published quarterly for landlords and service providers

1 Vouchers and the economy; a successful program on Fair Housing laws

2 Two workshops announced; correcting abatement timeline

3 Fair Housing laws and caregivers: questions & answers

4 *Inspector's Corner:* Inspecting furnaces, part 1: Flues

Voucher program update

Vouchers provide a safety net for tenants and owners alike



Dear housing provider,

ALL INDICATIONS ARE that the Seattle rental market will be greatly affected by the current economic downturn.

The changes in the current market are resulting in condo conversions reverting to rental property, and fewer people having the money to pay the premium for rents in the city by reason of loss of employment or reductions in their hours.

One stabilizing factor in the Seattle market is our Housing Choice Voucher program (Section 8). With the help of federal money, families who have vouchers can continue to pay rent even if their hours are reduced or they lose a job. We are always adding families to the program, and so there are always families looking for quality housing who have the ability to pay.

Our Voucher Payment Standards (a cap on the amount we can subsidize) went up in 2008, and vacancies with rents near the market median are affordable to many families with a voucher. (In some cases, we may ask you to lower your rents in order to allow a family to move in. You don't have to do so, of course, but getting a unit leased now might make better economic sense than holding out for a higher rent later.)

If you or your colleagues have vacancies in Seattle, please use our free listing service. (We only advertise Seattle properties.) You can list your vacancies on the Web at www.seattlehousing.org (click on Rental Listings), by faxing a listing request to us at **206-239-1770**, or by calling our voicemail listing line at **206-239-1663**.

* * *

SHA'S HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER program hosted a presentation by the Seattle Office of Civil Rights (SOCR) at our February Landlord Workshop. J.T. Delich and Chenelle Love, veteran civil rights analysts at SOCR, provided attendees an overview of Fair Housing laws that cover rental property in Seattle.

Our presenters discussed who is obligated to follow these laws, what kinds of action are covered by the laws, and what happens when someone files a complaint. They said that the Fair Housing laws are designed to ensure that people not be discriminated against during any point during the rental cycle, from application to move-out.

They also described best practices for landlords to follow to avoid legal liability for harm to tenants. Keeping detailed records of all tenancies, copies of ads, and time- and date-stamping applications were recommended to make sure that housing providers can demonstrate a basis for their action, whether denying an applicant or issuing a lease compliance notice.

Also discussed was the fact that the owner of the property as well as any property managers and employees are responsible for complying with Fair Housing laws. Many tenants may perceive that they are being discriminated against because of verbal or other cues that the owner/manager isn't aware of. Having clear policies about how you run your business, including staff training, our presenters said, helps make sure that you are complying with all applicable laws.

AS ALWAYS, if you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call me. I thank you once again for participating in the Housing Choice Voucher program. We couldn't do it without you!

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

Landlord *Tuesday workshops*

Tuesday March 17, 2009

The Housing Choice Voucher program: An overview

- How the Voucher program works & why it might be a good fit for your rental units
- What to do when a voucher-holder wants to lease a unit*
- How much rent can you charge?
- The Voucher Payment Standards*
- Lease renewal & enforcement: How SHA can assist you

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

Tuesday April 21, 2009

KCHSP: King County Housing Stability Project

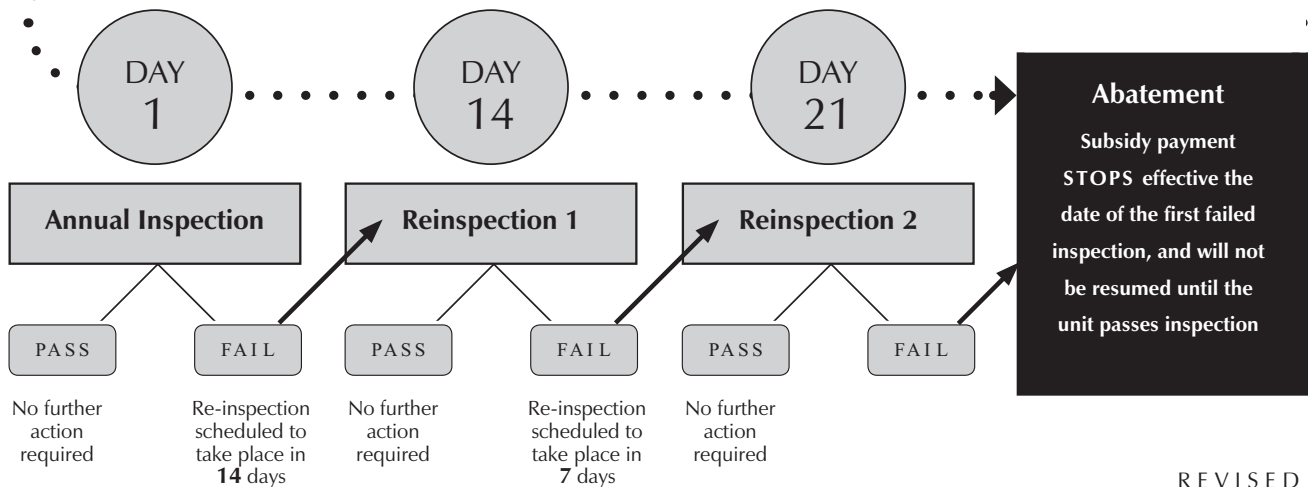
- Come learn about this Solid Ground program, which assists tenants and homeowners who are in danger of eviction or foreclosure, on the one hand, and helps individuals and families who are homeless (or who are being forced to move) secure permanent housing, on the other.

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**

HQS Inspections Timeline

Note: The actual number of days from Annual Inspection to Reinspection or Abatement may vary because of weekends and holidays and the inspectors' schedules.



REVISED

CORRECTION In the June 2008 Bulletin, we provided incorrect information about how much time an owner has to make repairs flagged during a Housing Quality Standards inspection.

The chart in that Bulletin indicated that a reinspection would follow a failed inspection within 20 days; this is not correct. The reinspection follows in 14 days.

Similarly, a second reinspection will follow within 21 days and not, as indicated on the earlier chart, 30 days.

The corrected chart is printed above.

Also, we failed to make it clear that an abatement (stopping of payment) is retroactive to the day the unit failed its first inspection. We regret the errors. —Ed.

PLEASE NOTE

AN INDIVIDUAL outside of Seattle Housing Authority has filed a public disclosure request asking for the names, addresses and e-mail addresses of all persons receiving this publication. Under the law, Seattle Housing is required to comply with this request. This individual is required to sign a

pledge not to use these names and addresses for commercial purposes. If you desire additional information about this individual or this request, you may file a public disclosure request by calling Nancy Sundt at **206-615-3580** or e-mailing her at **nsundt@seattlehousing.org**.

Keeping clear of Fair Housing issues

Live-in caretakers and Fair Housing law

Can rental management require caregivers for disabled tenants to be screened like applicants?

Live-in caregivers can be required to undergo some screening—screening for appropriate areas. For example, a caregiver could reasonably be screened for criminal history, but not for ability to pay or credit history, since the caregiver is not responsible for paying the rent—he or she is not a lessee.

Management should permit a resident who has an immediate need for a caregiver to hire whom he or she wishes, and then, following the hiring, screen the caregiver. If a criminal background check turns up information indicating a record on the caregiver's part, the tenant may wish to hire another caregiver, and in any case the owner is within his or her rights to forbid the caregiver residency.

Should management screen caregivers who don't actually live in the unit?

Unless management conducts screenings of everyone who works for all tenants, it is not appropriate to screen non-live-in caregivers, people such as baby-sitters and house cleaners and physical therapists. To screen such people is to risk ruling out people with disabilities more often than those who are not disabled, and this could prompt a complaint of discrimination.

Still, if management does check the records of all individuals who are regularly employed by tenants (such as cleaning services), it can indeed screen a non-live-in caregiver for criminal history.

What if a caregiver refuses screening? Housing providers can deny residency to anyone who refuses to be screened.

If a screening turns up the fact that a live-in caregiver has a criminal record, can management deny him or her housing or make him or her move out? Although state and federal discrimination laws don't address this question, if management checks the criminal record of applicants, they likely can check for criminal records for live-in caregivers, and deny them occupancy with the disabled resident. (On learning of a caregiver's criminal background, the disabled resident, of course, may terminate the caregiver's employment in any case.)

'...the resident is responsible for the caregiver's behavior while on the premises. If the resident knows or has reason to know that the caregiver is engaging in wrongdoing, the resident has an obligation to do something about it.'

What if a live-in caregiver turns out to be engaged in criminal activity or causes problems for other tenants in the building? Remember that the resident is responsible for the caregiver's behavior while on the premises. If the resident knows or has reason to know that the caregiver is engaging in wrongdoing, the resident has an obligation to do something about it. If the resident does not, management can take action against the resident.

Should live-in caregivers be listed on the lease as an occupant or as a lessee? The resident with a disability is the person responsible for the financial aspects of the lease, not the caregiver. If the housing provider wished to include the caregiver on the lease, it would be as an occupant and not a lessee.

What happens if a disabled resident moves out and the caregiver refuses to move? In some such cases, a caregiver may wish to remain as a resident, so

management can request that the caregiver submit a rental application and meet tenancy qualifications.

If the caregiver refuses to move or to apply for tenancy, the housing provider may follow the state landlord-tenant act process for eviction as necessary.

Are live-in caregivers included in Seattle Housing Authority's occupancy maximums? Yes. Occupancy is determined by the number of people living in the rental unit.

Should disability caregivers sign a Live-In Caregiver Agreement? It is probably a good idea for both the caregiver and the person being cared for to sign such an agreement, which among other things might set out the caregiver's duties, hours, and pay. (The agreement could also specify whom the caregiver should contact in emergencies.) However, any such agreement would be between the tenant and the caregiver, and not of concern to you.

—Courtesy King County Office of Civil Rights

Inspector's corner

The importance of inspecting furnaces, part 1 : Flues

ALTHOUGH SEATTLE HOUSING requires an inspection only every other year, it is a good idea to have your rentals' flues and furnaces inspected by a certified professional every year. (Our inspectors look on the furnace itself for a dated service sticker or a copy of the service invoice.)

A properly functioning oil or gas furnace with a well-designed chimney and venting system produces little soot to clean. But furnace flues, like other chimney systems, need an annual inspection for other safety reasons. Gas, in particular, burns so efficiently, under proper conditions, that the primary byproducts of its combustion are fumes and moisture, both of which are of major concern to the property owner.

The higher the efficiency rating of the furnace, the more important it is that the chimney and venting system be properly designed and installed. Mixed with moisture condensation from gas is a high level of chlorides that can rapidly cause deterioration of a masonry chimney.

Newer furnaces require installation with an approved chimney liner system when connection is made to a masonry furnace. This is because chlorides can cause spalling, or flaking of the brick or tile liners in the chimney. Eventually these little flakes not only compromise the thickness of the chimney flue

wall, they also can accumulate and cause a blockage within the chimney. When a blockage occurs, dangerous carbon monoxide fumes can enter the house and threaten your tenants' safety.

Every furnace's flue should also be checked for bird and animal nests, which can cause blockages that also may prevent the ability of gas exhausts to properly exit to the atmosphere.

All furnace flue inspections, oil and gas both, and gas and oil water heater flues as well, should be done during the warm months when the furnace is not operating, as the furnace must be turned off during the inspection process. Gas and oil water heater flues need to be inspected annually as well.

THE DANGERS OF CARBON MONOXIDE

Carbon monoxide is an invisible gas produced by burning fuels (wood, gas, oil, kerosene). You cannot smell or taste carbon monoxide. It can cause illness or even death within minutes to people exposed to high levels. Elderly people, babies and those with chronic medical conditions (diabetes, anemia, heart or respiratory conditions) are most susceptible. Symptoms of exposure include shortness of breath, headache, dizziness, nausea, disorientation, and suddenly feeling sleepy.

Next issue: Inspecting furnaces, part 2



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 Housing Choice Voucher program issue, call 206-239-1728 and press '0'

TO LIST AVAILABLE UNITS

Call 206-239-1663 or go to www.seattlehousing.org and click on "Rental Listings" under the "Landlords" menu

OWNER INFORMATION

NOTE: Changes must be submitted in writing
Fax 206-239-1770, attention Mike Jung.
Questions? Call Mike at 206-239-1672

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM

MANAGER Barbara Strayer 206-239-1620

OWNER LIAISON

Mike Jung 206-239-1672

OCCUPANCY SUPERVISORS

Tenant-based—
"Aa" through "Lara" 206-239-1619
"Larb" through "Zz" 206-239-1636
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
New move-in inspections—
"Aa" through "Lara" 206-239-1676
"Larb" through "Zz" 206-239-1635
Judy Huertas, HQS supervisor 206-239-1621

HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS 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
Lora Wait-Hoy 206-721-1457, ext. 11

What is PorchLight?

PorchLight Housing Center is a division of the Seattle Housing Authority, the city's largest provider of low-income and affordable housing. PorchLight staff manage the Housing Choice Voucher program and applications for public housing.

Did you know...

...that owners can find support on our website? Visit www.seattlehousing.org today and click on "Landlords" for helpful information and resources.

...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 can provide both EPA-certified lead-based paint risk assessors and EPA-certified lead-safe workers, including painters and carpenters. Call Impact Property Services at **206-722-2548**.

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