



The Bulletin

News about the SHA Housing Choice Voucher program · Published quarterly for landlords & service providers

www.seattlehousing.org

Voucher program update

Limits mandate suspension of issuing new vouchers

BECAUSE WE'RE AT THE UPPER LIMIT of the number of Housing Choice vouchers we're authorized to issue, as of August 6, Seattle Housing Authority has suspended the issuance of new vouchers. We hope to resume issuing vouchers in mid-2010.

I want to assure you, as owners and valued partners, that this step will affect neither your current leases nor the arrangements you make with tenants who renew their leases. We are not dealing with funding short-falls. Rather, we are balancing very closely the funds available for subsidies and the number and cost of the vouchers we issue.

Part of what necessitated the suspension is the effect, on our voucher-holders, of these tough economic times.

Attrition rates have been uncharacteristically low. Many voucher-holding household members who in better economic times might have gotten jobs (or better jobs) and then moved to unsubsidized housing have had no success in finding employment and have stayed put. Family budgets have been under pressure as people have been laid off or had their hours cut.

At the same time, our voucher payment standards—the amounts of subsidy we pay—have gone up. This has meant that we have provided greater subsidies as rents in the Seattle area have continued to rise.

To the extent possible, we intend to keep subsidy rates unchanged. (Other housing authorities, facing similar circumstances, have had to lower their subsidy rates or even remove families from the Section 8 program altogether.)

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To balance the limits of our budgeted authority and the number and cost of the vouchers we issue, we've suspended the issuance of new vouchers **1**

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If you have concerns or questions about this suspension and what it may mean for you and your tenants, please don't hesitate to let me know.



Lisa K. Cipollone-Wolters
Lisa Cipollone-Wolters

DIRECTOR OF HOUSING ADVOCACY
& RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
206.239.1523

Eye on legislation

'SEVRA' would ease inspections requirements

Important federal legislation we're keeping our eye on is HR 3584, the Section 8 Voucher Reform Act (SEVRA), which was introduced in the House of Representatives in July. The bill deals with many administrative matters concerning the Housing Choice Voucher program, among them requirements concerning inspections of housing units.

Under the bill, federal housing quality standards (HQS) would continue to apply, but requirements regarding initial inspections would change in three significant ways.

First, housing authorities would be given the discretion to make initial subsidy payments to owners even when a unit did not pass its initial inspection so long as the failure resulted from "non-life-threatening conditions." Defects would have to be corrected within 30 days of initial occupancy for the owner to receive continuous payments.

Second, housing authorities would be allowed to let a family occupy a unit in advance of inspection if in the previous 12 months the property had been determined to meet housing quality and safety standards.

And third, inspections would be required every two years rather than annually.

We'll keep you posted on the progress of this bill and on its provisions. It needs to clear the House and then the Senate, and will almost surely be changed along the way to the President's desk for signing.

Returning to Porchlight: An informative daylong workshop

'Keep illegal activity out of your rental property'


Seattle Neighborhood Group and Seattle Housing Authority invite you to this workshop especially for landlords with Section 8 tenants

Tuesday, September 15

8:00 AM UNTIL 4:30 PM
PORCHLIGHT COMMUNITY ROOM
907 NW BALLARD WAY, SUITE 200

Protect your investment by learning proven techniques and strategies of the Seattle Landlord Training Program to –

- Screen applicants effectively, fairly and legally
- Create strong rental agreements and enhance your ability to prevent illegal activity
- Identify and resolve problems before they escalate
- Prevent illegal activity, including drugs
- Help build a strong community with residents
- Avoid situations that lead to expensive evictions

 **\$25 FEE**

includes manual, handouts and lunch


Pre-registration required:
to register, go to

www.sngi.org/landlord.html
or call **206.323.9666**

For more information, contact Mike Jung
206.239.1672

or mjung@seattlehousing.org

Workshop presenters: National Association of Housing & Redevelopment director Ron Oldham; SPD narcotics detective Gary Kinner; attorney Chris Benis; Seattle Neighborhood Group's Lois Grammon-Simpson, Kelly McKinney & Mary Williams; and Seattle Housing Authority Section 8 owner liaison Mike Jung

 **Following the workshop, a special presentation about the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) program**

Stay after the all-day training, or stop by afterward, to talk with Veterans Affairs caseworkers who help homeless vets find housing with Section 8 subsidies. These men and women need our help as they ease back into civilian life. Come find out whether your property may be suitable to house these veterans.

'Create strong rental agreements and enhance your ability to prevent illegal activity.'

Free Landlord Workshops

EVERY THIRD TUESDAY,
FEBRUARY THROUGH NOVEMBER,
FROM 5:30 UNTIL 7:00 P.M. IN THE
PORCHLIGHT COMMUNITY ROOM

Tuesday, October 20

'Screening and lease enforcement issues for Section 8 landlords'

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?

What's the relationship between the lease
and the HAP Contract?

Tuesday, November 17

'The Housing Choice Voucher program: An overview'

How the Voucher program works
and 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 and enforcement:

How Seattle Housing Authority can assist you

Questions? Ideas for workshops?

Contact Mike Jung, Owner Liaison, at

mjung@seattlehousing.org

or **206.239.1672**

‘It is illegal to refuse to rent or sell to a family because they have children.’

Keeping clear of Fair Housing laws

Q :: We know that the federal Fair Housing law covers race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability and family status. Aren't there more groups of people who are covered by Seattle's Fair Housing laws? Yes. Here is a list of the additional “protected classes” covered by City of Seattle ordinance and state laws: Marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, participation in the Section 8 Program, political ideology, and veteran/military status

Q :: What is “family status”? Families with children are a protected class under Fair Housing laws, which refer to this group as “familial status” or “parental status.” Families with children include:

- Households that have one or more children under the age of 18;
- A parent, step-parent, adoptive parent, guardian, foster parent or custodian of a minor child; and
- A pregnant woman or someone in the process of acquiring legal custody of a child.

Under Fair Housing laws, it is illegal to refuse to rent or sell to a family because they have children. These laws also make it illegal to subject families with children to different terms and conditions of tenancy, harsher rules, or restrictions on the use of common areas.

Q :: What is “sexual orientation”? Sexual orientation is a protected class under Seattle's Fair Housing ordinance, which defines sexual orientation as actual or perceived male or female heterosexuality, bisexuality, or homosexuality. The ordinance includes gender expression/identity under this protected class.

Q :: What is “gender identity”? Gender identity is a protected class under City of Seattle Fair Housing ordinances, which define gender identity as a person's *identity, expression, or physical characteristics*, whether or not traditionally associated with one's biological sex or one's sex at birth. This includes men, women, transvestites, and those who identify as transsexual or transgendered, and includes a person's mannerisms and dress.

Gender identity is one's internal sense of oneself as male or female. Some people go through a medical or social process to transition from one gender to another (male to female or female to male). A person's

gender identity does not determine a person's sexual orientation. Transgender people can be heterosexual, bisexual, or gay/lesbian.

Transgender is an umbrella term used to describe people whose gender identity (sense of themselves as male or female) or gender expression differs from that usually associated with their birth sex. Transsexuals often seek medical interventions, such as hormones and surgery, to make their bodies as congruent as possible with their real gender. The process of transitioning from one gender to the other is called sex reassignment or gender reassignment.

Some people *cross-dress*. Cross-dressers include men and women of all sexual orientations, including people who are heterosexual. (Historically, some people used the term “transvestite,” a term now considered by many people to be offensive.) Cross-dressers generally have an identity that matches their birth sex.

Q :: What is included in “veteran/military status”? An honorably discharged veteran or an active or reserve member in any branch of the armed forces of the United States, including the National Guard, Coast Guard, and Armed Forces reserves. Seattle ordinance prohibits discrimination on the basis of veteran or military status only when a discharge has been honorable. (There are four types of military discharges other than honorable: general, undesirable, bad conduct, and dishonorable.)

Q :: What is prohibited with regard to these and other protected classes? With regard to the rental of housing in the City of Seattle, no one may take any of the following actions based on the protected classes listed above:

- Refuse to rent housing;
- Refuse to negotiate for housing;
- Make housing unavailable;
- Deny a dwelling;
- Set different terms, conditions or privileges for the rental of a dwelling;
- Provide different housing services or facilities; or
- Falsely deny that housing is available for inspection or rental.



Housing Choice Voucher Program

Porchlight Building
907 NW Ballard Way, Suite 200
Seattle WA 98107-4637

Phone **206.239.1500**
Fax **206.239.1770**
E-mail porchlight.info@seattlehousing.org

www.seattlehousing.org

GENERAL QUESTIONS

To speak with a customer service agent about any Housing Choice Voucher program issue, call **239.1728** and press 'o'

TO LIST AVAILABLE UNITS

Call **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 239.1770, attention Mike Jung
Questions? Call Mike at 239.1672

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM MANAGER

Barbara Strayer 239.1620

OWNER LIAISON

Mike Jung 239.1672

OCCUPANCY SUPERVISORS

'Aa' through 'Lara' 239.1619
'Larb' through 'Zz' 239.1636
Mod Rehab & Project-based 239.1649

NEW MOVE-IN TEAM

Status of tenancy approvals—contracts and leases
'Aa' through 'Lara' 239.1676
'Larb' through 'Zz' 239.1635
New move-in team supervisor 239.1621
New move-ins fax number 239.1760

INSPECTIONS

Annual inspections & reinspections 239.1645
New move-in inspections—
'Aa' through 'Lara' 239.1676
'Larb' through "Zz" 239.1635
Judy Huertas, HQS supervisor 239.1621

HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS INSPECTORS

Bill Francis 721.1457, ext 10
Paul Gimmi 239.1632
Sue Nigg 239.1639
Jonathan Shibuya 239.1616
Jason Shirley 239.1646
Nancy Shutes 770.6880
Lora Wait-Hoy 721.1457, ext 11

Inspectors' corner

City DOT website rewards an owner's visit

FOR A SMALL INVESTMENT OF TIME, a Seattle property owner can get a pretty clear picture of what his or her responsibilities are with regard to maintaining rights-of-way next to their property, including the sidewalk and planting strips, driveways, "unopened" streets and alleys, and certain trees and shrubs. The place to start is the city's Department of Transportation website, www.seattle.gov/transportation/publicrow/htm.

Here are highlights of what you'll find there:

A PROPERTY OWNER'S RESPONSIBILITY

"Property owners...are responsible for maintaining part of the right-of-way next to their property, including the sidewalk and planting strip, or the roadway shoulder if unimproved [and] for maintaining unpaved alleys next to their property."

SIDEWALKS "Property owners are responsible for maintaining the sidewalks adjacent to their property. They must make sure snow and ice does not pose a hazard to pedestrians. They must also repair cracks and other damage."

STREET TREES "Street trees planted by the City will be maintained by the City. All other trees are to be maintained to approved arbocultural standards by the abutting property owner. In most cases, trees interfering with vehicle visibility must be trimmed by the property owner. All trees must be maintained to provide 8 feet of clearance above sidewalks and 14 feet above roadways....Property owners must trim or remove overhanging trees, plants, shrubs [etc.] which obstruct streets, alleys or sidewalks, or which are a fire hazard."

The Department's website provides telephone numbers for information about streets and traffic, permits for work on private property and on City streets, and on tree overgrowth. It gives the illegal dumping hotline number (684.7587) and provides links to many other city offices and to the city arborist, and to information about such things as planned construction activities neighborhood by neighborhood. It's well worth a visit:

www.seattle.gov/transportation/publicrow.htm.

—PAUL GIMMI