



The Bulletin

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

www.seattlehousing.org

The Bulletin
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June 2010

Voucher program update

Direct Deposit's time has come

SEATTLE HOUSING AUTHORITY recently began the process of converting our handling of monthly Housing Assistance Payment checks to you, our landlords. While we pride ourselves on mailing these out like clockwork, we're excited about this new initiative, which will allow us to deposit these funds directly into your bank account.

So far, more than 100 landlords have completed the paperwork, and their HAP payments are now deposited directly. These same landlords receive the remittance advice about their HAP check via U.S. mail.

We hope eventually to go paperless to the greatest extent possible, with all landlords receiving HAPs by direct deposit and with payment advices (and *Bulletins*—this publication) sent electronically. We're planning on a gradual transition, and are working our way through the list of landlords alphabetically.

This move to direct deposit is fueled by our desire both to provide better and faster service to you and to reduce our costs. We want as much of our assistance money as possible to be used for program purposes, not for administration.

Using direct deposit is also safer than receiving a hard copy check. Checks can be lost in the mail or stolen from a mailbox, and it takes time and effort to replace them. We will continue to provide documentation of how much was deposited and for which tenants, separately from the transfer of the money.

Some landlords have inquired about the security of our processes, wanting to know how we are safe-

guarding their account information. Here are a couple of questions we've been asked several times, and our answers.

Q :: What safeguards are in place to prevent Seattle Housing Authority employees from taking money from a landlord's account?

Access to landlords' bank account information is limited to a very few carefully screened agency employees. The information is stored in a database behind several electronic firewalls designed specifically to prevent unauthorized access by staff or others. Backing up this protection are state-of-the-art network and computer controls.

Q :: You're asking landlords to fax their bank account information to a fax machine at Seattle Housing. What safeguards are in place to prevent Seattle Housing employees from copying those faxes?

Bank account information is faxed to one machine in the private work-area of a trusted employee who is authorized to add information to the direct-deposit database. As soon as the information we need has been entered into the database and verified, the fax is stored in a secure location. The machine is checked at the end of every day to make sure that all faxes have been removed.

So far all those who signed up for the service tell us that they're receiving Housing Assistance Payments in a timely manner.

We believe that direct deposit is the safest, most efficient way to provide your monthly payment. We hope that you'll agree, and that you'll return the authorization form when you get it in the mail.

* * *

I THANK YOU ONCE AGAIN for all you do on behalf of our participants, and for the many good observations and suggestions you send our way. Certainly we couldn't do our work without your assistance and cooperation.

Regards,

Lisa K. Cipollone-Wolters



Lisa Cipollone-Wolters

DIRECTOR OF HOUSING ADVOCACY
& RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
206.239.1523

In this issue

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EPA issues tough new lead paint rule

Effective April of this year, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a new rule concerning lead-based paint. The new Renovation, Repair and Painting rule applies to anyone who “disturbs” painted surfaces in buildings built before 1978 where lead may be present. Such disturbances can create lead dust and chip hazards that can be harmful to a building’s occupants, children and adults alike, and to the individuals performing the work.

The new rule requires that persons performing renovation work or repairs must successfully have completed the EPA’s Certified Renovator training and must have an EPA Certified Renovation Firm certification. Obtaining this certification requires an application to EPA and the payment of a fee.

Persons performing repairs and maintenance must follow the Lead Safe Housing Rule (LSHR) when disturbing more than two square feet of any interior room or space, 10 percent of the total surface area of an interior or exterior component with a small surface area (such as windowsill and casings and other trim), and 20 square feet or more of the exterior paint of buildings built before 1978.

Landlords are responsible for ensuring that all lead-safe work practices are followed. This includes occupant protection, work site preparation, proper treatment methods, clearance clean, clearance exam and notification to occupants of lead hazard reduction activities and the results of clearance and/or lead testing. A copy of a Department of Housing and Urban Development pamphlet, “*Renovate right: Important lead hazard information for families, child care providers and schools*,” must be given to the tenant before work begins. The pamphlet may be downloaded and printed from this HUD Web address:

www.hud.gov/offices/lead/library/outreach/RenovateRight_Eng.pdf

Moreover, the landlord must have the tenant sign a pre-renovation disclosure form and provide a copy of the signed form to Seattle Housing Authority.

When work has been completed, HUD requires a clearance exam, and the landlord must provide a copy of the clearance report to Seattle Housing Authority.

New EPA rule significantly tightens, extends rules on ‘disturbing’ surfaces that bear lead-based paint.

Seattle Housing recommends a lead-based paint (LBP) inspections. These are surface-by-surface investigations to determine whether LBP is present and, if it is, where. HUD does not allow the use of test kits to determine if lead-based paint is present. Only a certified lead-based paint inspector or risk assessor may perform this inspection.

For more information, visit

www.epa.gov/lead/pubs/renovation

or call the National Lead Information Center (NLIC) at 1-800-424-5323.

To learn more about these changes, please contact New Move-In Supervisor Judy Huertas at 206-239-1621 or via an e-mail to JHuertas@seattlehousing.org, or HazMat Manager Lorrie Harris at 206-772-2548 or via e-mail to LHarris@seattlehousing.org.

Landlord Workshops

*are usually given at the Porchlight Building,
907 NW Ballard Way, Suite 200, from May through
November (although not in July this year)*



NEXT FREE WORKSHOP

Tuesday, June 15, 2010

5:30 p.m. until 7:00 p.m.

Porchlight Community Room

907 NW Ballard Way, Suite 200

The Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program: An overview

- How the Voucher program works, and why it may 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 Standard
- Lease renewal and enforcement issues: How Seattle Housing can assist you
- Your questions answered

*To learn more, contact Mike Jung,
owner liaison, at 206-239-1672 or
MJung@seattlehousing.org.*

Familial status protections apply to all children under 18.
Don't single out a certain age group such as teens.

Keeping clear of Fair Housing laws

Q :: Is it OK to refer families with kids to a building I own near a playground and to reserve another, quieter building for residents without children?

No. This type of segregation is called “steering” and it is illegal. If a housing provider were to designate certain buildings as “non-family” housing, a family might be denied a place to live until a rental became available in the “family” building. All applicants should be shown all available rentals at the community. Let the applicants decide where they would like to live.

If a current resident asks that a nearby apartment not be rented to a household with children because they might be too noisy, explain that your rental decisions cannot take into account any protected class, such as potential renters’ familial status.

Q :: Can we discourage a family with kids from renting if our second-floor apartments have unsafe balconies and no window screens?

No. Safety concerns are not a valid reason to deny housing to families with children. If an unsafe condition exists on the property, consider making it safe for all residents; this will avoid general liability for injuries. If that is not feasible, point out safety concerns to every applicant—not just families with children.

Also, HUD guidance states that it is a violation of the Fair Housing Act for a housing provider to deny a family the opportunity to live in a dwelling that has not undergone lead hazard control. (See story opposite.)

Q :: A family that has three young children saw an ad for an apartment with a rent of \$960 a month. The rental agent says the base rent is \$960 for a household of three, plus \$100 for each additional person. Is this discriminatory?

Because the policy can lead to their under representation, a policy of charging more rent for larger households can have a disparate impact on families with children. A housing provider should set rent rates based on a reasonable occupancy standard (two people per bedroom is usually acceptable). If the rent includes utility costs, the housing provider can charge for the actual cost of such expenses. However, an arbitrary fee of \$100 (or any amount) per extra occupant tends to discriminate against families with children.

Q :: Our building rules state, “Children may not run in the hallways” and “Children are not allowed to play in the yard after 7:00 p.m.” Does this comply with Fair Housing laws?

Rules that apply only to children are not permitted under Fair Housing laws. Housing providers must make sure their policies are applicable to *all* residents. For example, residents are responsible for making sure that items from their apartments are not left in common areas where they might create a hazard for others. (It would be discriminatory to single out “children’s toys” as not being allowed in common areas.)

Curfews or restrictions on the hours children may be outside their apartments are not allowed under Fair Housing laws. Policies outlining quiet hours and limiting noise (which should be incorporated into the building or community’s rules and regulations) must be applicable to all residents.

Q :: We’ve had problems with teenagers causing property damage. Can we refuse to rent to families with teens or charge them a higher damage deposit?

No. Familial status protections apply to all children under the age of 18. Don’t single out a certain age group such as teens. Under Fair Housing laws, this would be age discrimination as well. Making a generalization based on the actions of some residents (in this case, teenagers) and creating a blanket rule based on that generalization would likely violate Fair Housing laws.

Q :: With regard to “classes” of potential tenants, can you give a brief summary of what Seattle landlords are not permitted to do?

In advertising and showing a unit to someone, Seattle landlords may not...

- Refuse to rent a unit to someone on the grounds that he or she holds a Housing Choice (Section 8) voucher
- Refuse to negotiate for housing with a potential renter on the basis of his or her class
- Make housing unavailable to any class of renters
- Deny a dwelling to any class of renters
- Set different terms, conditions or privileges for rental of a dwelling for different potential renters
- Provide different housing services or facilities to one class over another.

—COURTESY KING COUNTY
OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS



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 'Malerba' 239.1619
'Mal' 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

Detecting the 'silent killer' in the home

As we all know from prior articles in the *Bulletin*, all oil and gas furnaces need to be serviced at least every two years. Annually is better. If the furnace has a filter, it should be serviced at the beginning of the heating season, and then monthly or as often as the manufacturer recommends, for peak performance.

For houses and apartments that are heated with gas or oil, I recommend installing dual smoke/carbon monoxide detectors, which provide the best protection for the inhabitants. The presence of a working fireplace provides all the more reason to consider installing a dual smoke / CO detector.

A carbon monoxide detector is a device that detects the presence of carbon monoxide gas (CO) in order to guard against carbon monoxide poisoning. CO is a colorless and odorless compound produced by incomplete combustion. (It is virtually undetectable without special instruments, and is often referred to as the "silent killer.")

Elevated levels of CO can be dangerous to humans depending on the amount of the gas present and the duration of exposure. Smaller concentrations can be harmful over longer periods of time. Larger concentrations can harm in very short periods of time.

CO detectors are designed to measure CO levels over time and to sound an alarm before dangerous levels of the gas accumulate in an environment, giving people adequate warning to safely ventilate the area or evacuate. Some system-connected CO detectors, like some smoke detectors, are designed to send a signal to a monitoring service that can dispatch emergency services if necessary.

Dual smoke / CO detectors are widely available. However, CO detectors do not serve as smoke detectors, and vice-versa. The smoke-detecting part of such devices alerts residents to smoke generated by flaming or smoldering fires, and the CO-detector part loudly warns residents of a dangerous buildup of carbon monoxide

In the home, common sources of CO include open flames, space heaters, water heaters, blocked chimneys, and running a car inside an adjacent garage, carport or parking space.

— PAUL GIMMI