
HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE

MANUAL OF OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Admission – Waiting List

SCOPE:

This Section shall apply to all applicants of public housing programs and Section 8 New Construction administered by the Seattle Housing Authority.

POLICY:

It is the policy of SHA to ensure that all applicants who express an interest in housing assistance are given an equal opportunity to apply, and are treated in a fair and consistent manner. SHA shall accept an application even if an informal discussion reveals the applicant may not be eligible. Applicants shall not be discouraged from applying or be rejected out of hand, based on “apparent ineligibility.” [HUD Handbook 7465.1]

A. Waiting Lists.

To provide residential choice to all applicants of public housing with respect to building, development, or neighborhood; avoid forcing the most disadvantaged to take the least desirable placements; and reduce unit turnover due to resident dissatisfaction with assigned housing, SHA shall maintain two types of waiting lists for new applicants to public housing buildings for all bedroom sizes (SHA Board Resolution 4558, Applicant Choice Policy, dated June 19, 2000 and approved by HUD and Resolution 4845, dated October 16, 2006 and approved by HUD):

1. Site-Specific Waiting lists
2. Next Available Unit/Expedited Processing Waiting list

B. Preferences.

Applicants shall receive a local preference if one of the following applies (SHA Board Resolution 4680, dated December 16, 2002):

1. Household's current gross income is at or below 30% of area median income; OR
2. Household's gross income for the 12-month period prior to the eligibility determination was at or below 30 percent of area median income; OR
3. Applicant is homeless (as defined below); OR
4. Applicant was homeless sometime during the 12-month period prior to the eligibility determination; OR
5. Applicant is a current resident of SHA's public housing program¹; OR
6. if the applicant is referred by a qualified provider, a *Ranking Preference* shall be given (see Section B.5. below). OR

¹ Board Resolution 4909 date September 15, 2008

Revised to add a new local preference. Updated language to clarify wait list cancellation and reinstatement.

7. if the applicant is an existing, eligible tenant of a property purchased by SHA for public housing (Resolution 4769, dated 2/22/2005).

Preferences do not guarantee admission. Rather, they establish the order of placement on the waiting list and in which SHA shall consider applicants for housing. New or revised local preferences require a change by Board resolution and are adopted as part of SHA's Moving to New Ways Plan. Preferences shall be consistent with all laws relating to Civil Rights and HUD's Affirmative Fair Housing objectives.

In the event of a declared national disaster, the Executive Director is authorized to adopt and implement procedures that provide a housing preference for disaster victims that supersedes the preferences described above. Such procedures shall be adopted in consultation with the Board, but shall not require the Board's approval.

C. Opening and Closing of Waiting lists

At this time SHA public housing waiting lists are continually open. SHA may elect at any time to close any waiting list, by resolution of the SHA Board of Commissioners or by delegation of the decision through board resolution to the SHA Executive Director.

For public housing units subject to partnership agreements, regulatory agreements and/or financial agreements, that have been incorporated into a management plan approved by HUD and / or SHA, the policies set forth in those documents shall take precedence over this Section.

IMPLEMENTING POLICY:

A. Waiting Lists

1. Site Specific Waiting List.

This offers a waiting list for each SHA public housing community. Applicants may select up to two site-specific lists.

Smoke-Free Building

Applicants may select the site-specific waiting list for a smoke-free building if they agree that any household members, guests or visitors agree to not smoke in the unit or on any part of the property and grounds at any time.

Elderly Only Designated Buildings

From time to time SHA may designate an LIPH property as an *elderly only property*, by action of the SHA Board of Commissioners, subject to approval by HUD.

- a. An applicant must generally qualify as an *elderly household* (head or spouse age 62 or older) to be considered for placement at SHA's elderly only designated properties. However, SHA may at its option open placements in elderly only properties to *near elderly households* (head or spouse age 50 to 61), if there are insufficient elderly household applicants to fill available vacancies in a timely manner.

2. Expedited Waiting List.

This offers a waiting list for applicants referred from a qualified provider, who claim a local preference. Qualified providers are subject to the terms of a Qualified Provider Referral

Agreement. Applicants will be required to select up to two site specific locations at the point of approval.

3. Change from one waiting list to another.

Applicants may change their waiting list selection at any time. For the purpose of determining the household's date of application on the waiting list, the date of their revised waiting list application shall be the date Admissions receives the applicant's written request to change waiting lists.

Where applicants are forced by policy, procedures, or management decision to switch to a different wait list (or bedroom size), applicants will retain the same application date.

4. Removing Applicants from the Waiting List

SHA shall remove applicants from waiting lists when: an applicant has been housed by SHA; the applicant requests their name be removed; the application is withdrawn or rejected; the applicant refuses an offer of housing without good cause; or fails to respond to monthly check-in requirement; or cancelled for failure to complete any part of the application process; or there is a non-response event such as a purge, mail returned, or failed attempt to contact by SHA staff. (24 CFR 960.206)

5. Waiting lists for partnership units operated by other organizations

SHA from time to time enters into agreements with other housing organizations to provide public housing operating subsidy to partnership units owned or managed by the housing organization. The terms and conditions of the public housing operating subsidy are defined by a Regulatory and Operating Agreement executed by SHA and the organization, in which the organization commits to offering the subsidized units to applicants eligible for SHA's LIPH program, among other things.

To support efficient leasing of non-profit-owned or -managed units assisted by public housing subsidy from SHA, SHA may enter into a *Partnership Unit Site-Based Waiting list Agreement*, **SHA-1277** with housing organizations managing public housing partnership units, which shall permit the organization to create and maintain its own site-based waiting list for the public housing-subsidized units.

- a. The *Partnership Unit Site-Based Waiting list Agreement* may include the following provisions:
 1. The organization shall maintain an auditable waiting list for the partnership units, which SHA and/or HUD may review at any time;
 2. The organization shall engage in affirmative marketing of its partnership units, including outreach to minority communities and people with disabilities, and shall provide a written copy of its affirmative marketing policies to SHA for approval;
 3. The organization shall have written policies for tenant selection and placement in the partnership units, which shall comply with federal, state and local fair housing statutes and ordinances and insure that no applicant for the partnership units shall be discriminated against on the basis of being a member of any protected class;
 4. The organization shall have written policies for responding to applicants and residents with disabilities, including providing reasonable accommodations to

applicants and residents upon request, consistent with applicable Section 504 legislation.

5. The organization shall determine applicant eligibility for partnership units using SHA-provided criteria;
6. The organization shall offer partnership units exclusively to applicants with initial anticipated gross income at or below 30% of area median income for the Seattle-Everett PMSA, as established annually by HUD and adjusted for household size;
7. The organization shall apply its own screening and suitability policies for applicants of the partnership units, according to written policies approved by SHA;
8. Other provisions determined by SHA to be necessary to ensure fair public access to the public housing-subsidized partnership units and safeguard the rights of applicants.

B. Local Preferences

SHA shall encourage income mixing and deconcentration of poverty in its public housing communities through a variety of means including its rent policies (which provide incentives for households to increase earned income), community and supportive services, and the revitalization of several public housing communities into mixed income communities. SHA's preference policies are not designed to promote income mixing and/or deconcentration; rather, they are designed to help SHA accurately and expediently identify those applicants with the most urgent housing needs, who could therefore most likely benefit from the housing services that SHA provides.

Applicants must qualify for the preference claimed as of the day of interview. If the applicant cannot produce proof of a preference they shall be returned to the waitlist with a "no preference" status. Applicants who fail to qualify for preference shall be returned to the waitlist with a "no preference" status and must wait six months from the date of interview to self-declare preference again.

1. Income preference

SHA shall consider the applications of all households who claim a local preference based on having a gross income at or below 30% of area median income, currently or for the 12 month period prior to the eligibility determination, before considering the applications of any higher income households.

"30% of area median income" is determined annually by HUD for the Seattle-Everett metropolitan statistical area and is adjusted for household size.

For purposes of determining whether a household can claim a local preference, SHA shall use household *gross income* without calculating deductions or exclusions used to determine tenant rent, and without calculating imputed income from assets and shall base the determination on anticipated income for the following 12 months.

2. Current SHA Resident preference

A current SHA resident who desires to relocate to another SHA property, but who does not qualify to do so under SHA's Transfer policy, may apply to the regular LIPH waitlists and receive preference.

3. Homelessness preference

Homelessness is defined as being in a current state or sometime during the 12 month period prior to the eligibility determination, of lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and having a primary residence that is one of the following:

- a. A supervised publicly- or privately-operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations, including transitional housing programs;
- b. A public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

Persons who are clients of a case-management program serving the homeless are also considered to meet the homeless-based preference.

The definition of homelessness does not include time spent imprisoned.

4. Property Acquisition preference

To minimize displacement of existing tenants of properties purchased by SHA for public housing, existing tenants shall be given a local preference for occupancy of units in the property in which they reside when ownership transfers to SHA, and shall not be placed on a waiting list in order to be considered for housing assistance. Existing tenants who are income-eligible and do not have criminal histories that would make them ineligible for public housing shall be permitted to remain in residence as public housing tenants, subject to requirements of the public housing lease. Existing tenants who have criminal histories that make them ineligible to receive public housing assistance shall be given 90 days notice to move when SHA assumes ownership of the property. Existing tenants whose incomes are over 80 percent of the area median income or who are otherwise ineligible for public housing shall be permitted to remain in residence for no more than one year at market rent.

5. Ranking preference: referral by qualified providers

To support households' movement through the continuum of affordable housing in Seattle, by facilitating the transition to public housing units for households ready to move from more highly supported environments, in order free up services for people who need them, SHA shall give a *ranking preference* to applicants who can claim a local preference as defined above, who are referred by *qualified providers* subject to the terms listed below. Applicants with a ranking preference shall have the benefit of an expedited application process, as described below.

a. Qualified Providers

A *qualified provider* meets all of the following criteria:

1. Is a nonprofit tax-exempt 501(c)3 corporation or a division of local government;
2. Has as part of its mission providing services to very low income and homeless households in the greater Seattle area;
3. Offers one or more of the following services to its clients, residents, or program participants:
 - a. Time-limited shelter or transitional housing program(s) for homeless individuals or families;
 - b. Service-enriched permanent housing programs for very low-income and homeless households;

- i. The term, "service-enriched permanent housing programs," refers to programs that:
 1. provide conventional rental units with no time limits for residency; and
 2. provide supportive services in addition to regular property management services designed to assist formerly homeless or very low income or disabled residents in maintaining their housing and increasing their self-sufficiency (e.g., mental health or chemical addiction counseling, job counseling or training and referral, etc.).
- c. On-going case-management services to very low income persons with disabilities; or
- d. Case-management for homeless households to assist them in securing and stabilizing in permanent housing, including follow-up case management services for a period of at least six months following placement in housing.

b. Qualified provider referral agreement, SHA-1276

A qualified provider shall agree to perform the following:

1. Identify clients wishing to lease in public housing, and select them to participate in the agency referral process in a fair and reasonable way which does not discriminate against households or individuals on the basis of any protected class;
2. Provide clients with information prepared by SHA about all of SHA's housing programs, eligibility and suitability requirements, and the rights and obligations of applicants and tenants, so that clients are fully informed of their housing options;
3. Make a preliminary determination, based on information provided by SHA, of clients' likely eligibility and suitability for public housing, and ability to claim a local preference;
4. Assist clients in completing the SHA full application for admission to LIPH, including documentation of income, assets, current employment or progress in school, disability, housing history, and other attributes relevant to eligibility and suitability for LIPH;
5. Provide a professional reference and/or a positive housing reference for clients based on the agency's direct experience; assure the clients' likely ability to live with the level of independence required for residents of public housing;
6. If necessary and appropriate to build a case for clients' suitability under SHA policy, execute a *Commitment of Social Services Agreement* (described in Section L10.3-1) for each client, committing to provide on-going support to the client after a lease is executed;
7. Communicate pro-actively with designated SHA staff regarding the completeness of each client's application; assist SHA staff in communicating with the client as necessary; and
8. Upon the client's admission to LIPH, assist the client in the leasing process as needed.

SHA agrees to perform the following:

1. Designate a SHA staff to respond to designated Qualified Provider staff and referred applicants;
2. Train designated Qualified Provider staff in the details of SHA's housing programs and application process;
3. Enter referred applications on a separate Expedited Processing Waiting List;
4. Consider referred applications in the order received relative to other referred applications submitted by the Qualified Providers under the terms of Qualified Provider Referral Agreements;
5. Waive mandatory in-person application workshop and interview requirements, but provide in-person, telephone or email information to referred applicants and designated Qualified Provider staff as needed regarding the progress of the referred application;
6. Inform designated Qualified Provider staff prior to canceling an application for non-response, and provide five additional business days for the applicant to provide requested information or documentation after contacting Agency staff, before canceling an application for non-response; and
7. Upon approval of the application, refer the application to an available unit on a regular rotation with other waiting lists, consistent with SHA's tenant selection and placement policies.

Applicants who do not meet eligibility and/or suitability requirements will be declined for the expedited program and placed on the regular wait list with the sequence date of the original qualified application unless they are already on the regular wait list with an earlier date.

SHA reserves the right to refuse to accept referrals from providers which have previously failed to meet their obligations as described herein.

6. **Claiming a preference while on waiting list**

An applicant, who initially applies without claiming a local preference, may at any time while on the waiting list claim a preference upon notifying SHA of the changed circumstances. SHA shall change the status of the applicant to give the local preference. The date of the application for the purpose of establishing processing order shall remain the initial date of the applicant's housing application.

C. SHA live-in employees

SHA live-in employees (e.g., resident managers or others who are provided housing as a condition of SHA employment) may apply for LIPH as applicants at any time, in anticipation of the time when they separate in good standing from SHA employment and need affordable housing.

SHA shall give a preference to the applications of live-in employees and allow their applications to "ride at the top" of a site-specific waiting list until such time as they separate from SHA employment.

D. Waiting list purge /Monthly Check-in Requirement

SHA shall require all applicants on the waiting list who have not yet been contacted for an interview, and all applicants who have been drawn from the waiting list but not yet leased, to confirm monthly his or her continued interest in remaining on the waiting list(s). The monthly confirmation shall be done by telephone, SHA's website or other means that may be implemented over time with access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A 1-800 number and telephone voice recordings in several different languages shall be provided to ensure equal access to the monthly confirmation systems. Applicants who fail to confirm his or her continued interest within a given month, will be removed from all active waiting list(s).

In addition, SHA may conduct a waiting list update from time to time by mailing a notice to all applicants on the waiting list who have not yet been contacted for an interview. The notice shall ask the applicant for written or telephone confirmation within 30 business days of his or her continued interest in remaining on the waiting list(s) being updated. Applicants who fail to respond within the specified time period will be removed from the waiting list(s) being updated.

SHA shall provide a 6 month grace period for applicants who fail to complete monthly check-in requirements or respond to wait list update requests, during which they can be reinstated to their original application date.

E. Opening and closing of waiting lists

At this time SHA public housing waiting lists are continually open. SHA may elect at any time to close any waiting list, by resolution of the SHA Board of Commissioners or by delegation of the decision through board resolution to the SHA Executive Director.

1. Closing the Waiting list

SHA will announce the closing of the waiting list by public notice in a newspaper of general circulation such as Real Change Newspaper, by notice in its publication of record, the Daily Journal of Commerce, and by notice in various newspapers serving minority communities such as The Facts, The Asian Weekly, the Chinese Post, and other publications. SHA will also notify housing and service providers in the Seattle area, including public housing authorities serving adjacent jurisdictions (King County Housing Authority, Snohomish County Housing Authority, Renton Housing Authority) and agencies serving individuals with disabilities.

SHA will give at least 30 business days' notice prior to closing the list.

Upon request from a person with a disability, additional time not to exceed sixty (60) days may be given as an accommodation for submission of an application after the closing deadline. This accommodation shall be offered upon suitable third party documentation of its necessity and of its relationship to the presence of a disability as defined by applicable law.

2. Opening the Waiting list

SHA will announce the re-opening of the waiting list by public notice in newspapers of general circulation; by notice in SHA's publication of record and in various newspapers serving minority communities. SHA will also notify housing and service providers in the Seattle area.

The notice will contain:

- a. The dates, times, and the locations where families may apply;
- b. The programs/buildings/waiting lists re-opening;

- c. Information on eligibility criteria and local preferences;
- d. How to submit an application;
- e. Limitations, if any, on who may apply;
- f. SHA's address and telephone number.

The notices will be made in an accessible format upon request by a person with disabilities, as a reasonable accommodation.

F. Pre-application

To indicate interest in receiving housing assistance, all members of the general public must submit a completed pre-application form to the Housing Authority. While SHA shall make every effort to review the completeness of pre-applications prior to accepting them from prospective applicants, the applicant is responsible for the accuracy and completeness of the pre-application.

SHA shall not be responsible for failure to contact households for housing opportunities for which they may be qualified, if the applicant does not correctly indicate the applicant's interest, eligibility, or priority for those programs, or does not provide adequate identification or contact information on the pre-application.

The purpose of the pre-application is to collect the necessary data from interested households to establish general waiting lists for various SHA programs.

The pre-application shall gather enough information about the applicant household to enable SHA to identify and contact the household for any housing opportunity that becomes available in the programs for which they have expressed an interest and for which they may qualify, in the order of priority consideration established by SHA preference. The pre-application will also include data elements required by HUD regulations as described in Exhibit A.

SHA shall retain the written pre-application (or its electronic image) on the same records retention schedule accorded full applications for SHA housing programs, regardless of whether the household subsequently submits a full application.

Pre-applications received from applicants whose housing application has been recently denied may be placed on the waiting list at any time but shall receive an application date that is six months from the date of denial by SHA to allow sufficient time for the applicant to address the reasons for denial of their previous application and minimize the administrative burden of re-processing an application too soon after denial.

G. Cancellation and Reinstatement of applications for non-response/non-performance

1. Cancellation for non-response/non-performance

Applicants are required to inform SHA in writing of all changes in address. This requirement remains in effect from the time the applicant submits a pre-application to SHA for housing assistance to the date of referral.

Any mailing to an applicant on a waiting list which requires a response will state that failure to respond within 30 calendar days from the date on the mailed notice will result in the applicant's name being removed from all active waiting list. If the applicant does not respond within the

prescribed time period, the applicant will be cancelled off all active waiting lists without further notice for *non-response*.

If a letter to an applicant is returned by the post office, the applicant will be removed from all waiting list(s) without further notice, and the envelope and letter will be retained by Admission, for SHA's records.

Applicants who fail to appear at a scheduled eligibility interview and fail to reschedule a second interview within 30 calendar days of the date of the initial eligibility interview shall have all active waiting lists cancelled for *non-performance*.

Applicants who reschedule their interview but fail to appear at their second scheduled eligibility interview shall have all active waiting lists cancelled without further notice for *non-performance*.

2. Reinstatement within 30 days with cause

All files canceled for non-response or non-performance may be re-instated within 30 days following the *date of non-response or non-performance*, as defined below upon verbal or written request.

After 30 days, applicants may appeal in writing (via postal mail or email) for reinstatement. Appeals cannot be made by telephone or any other means. Mailed written appeals must be addressed to the Admission Manager.

Applicants must show reasonable justification for non-performance, together with the request for reinstatement.

Examples of reasonable justification may include but are not necessarily limited to personal or family sickness, hospitalization, or other emergency, or an event beyond the applicant's control preventing mail delivery. The lack of transportation will not be considered reasonable justification where public transportation is available and accessible.

Events of non-performance which are eligible for 30-day reinstatement include:

- a failure to keep current address
- b failure to keep second appointment
- c failure to respond to invitation to interview
- d failure to respond to inquiry, directive, or request for information, e.g. wait list purge inquiries, SHA written requests for documentation, etc.
- e failure to pay debt to SHA, in accordance with SHA Manual L10.3-1.

To establish the date of non-response and non-performance, SHA will use the following:

- a Mail returned: The date stamped into PorchLight
- b No show for second appointment: Date of second appointment
- c Failure to respond: Date of deadline stated in the notification