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**HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE**  
**MANUAL OF OPERATIONS**

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**SUBJECT:** Admission –Tenant Selection

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**SCOPE:** This Section shall apply to all applicants of public housing and Section 8 New Construction housing programs administered by the Seattle Housing Authority, (SHA) except those subject to tax credit 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 apply to those units and programs.

**POLICY:**

It is the policy of SHA to ensure that there shall be no discrimination in the selection or assignment of applicants for any Seattle Housing Authority program on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age, veteran status, family status, handicap, or the presence of any sensory, mental or physical disability. 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 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):

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

For more information on SHA's waiting list Policy, see Manual Section L10.4-1 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 a current resident of SHA's public housing program<sup>1</sup>; OR
4. Applicant is homeless (as defined below); OR
5. Applicant was homeless sometime during the 12-month period prior to the eligibility determination; AND

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<sup>1</sup> SHA Board Resolution 4909, dated September 15, 2008.

Rev. 5-1-10 Revised language on the disclosure of social security number requirement and add the requirement for applicants to declare citizenship status at time of Admissions.

6. if the applicant is referred by a qualified provider, a *Ranking Preference* shall be given (see Section A.6. below). OR
7. if the applicant is an existing, eligible tenant of a property purchased by SHA for public housing (see Section B below).

Preferences shall be consistent with all laws relating to Civil Rights and HUD's Affirmative Fair Housing objectives. For more information on SHA's preferences, see Manual Section L10.2-1

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 list Progression**

Applicants are progressed from waiting lists in anticipation of vacancies. This shall be done through waiting list management and analysis, which provides for regular, continuing review of the number of applicants on waiting lists; the age of the waiting lists; historical turnover rates and current vacancies.

Admission staff analyzes the data of each individual waiting list. Where vacancies and vacancy history indicate that the anticipated number of approved / not leased files currently available for a site specific waiting list will be insufficient, a specified number of applicants to be pulled or "progressed" per waiting list are designated.

Applicants to be progressed from a waiting list are pulled in preference order according to date of application.

When a Uniform Federal Accessibility Standard (UFAS)-Accessible Unit becomes available the unit shall be offered in the following order; (1) to disabled residents in the building who require the accessible features of the vacant, accessible unit; (2) to other disabled SHA residents who require the accessible features of the vacant, accessible unit; (3) to disabled applicants on the waiting list for the building who require the accessible features of the vacant, accessible unit; and (4) to disabled applicants, from other public housing site specific waiting lists, who require the accessible features of the vacant, accessible unit. In each case, residents and applicants shall be selected in chronological order.

If no eligible, qualified applicants on the site specific waiting list require the accessible features of the UFAS-Accessible Unit, the unit may be offered to applicants who do not need the accessible features of the unit. If an applicant accepts a UFAS-Accessible unit, the applicant shall be required to relocate to a comparable non-accessible unit when an eligible, qualified applicant, or existing resident with disabilities, requires the accessible features of the unit. All applicants who accept UFAS-Accessible units shall be required to sign a lease addendum acknowledging their obligation to relocate within thirty (30) days of notice by SHA. The relocation shall be at SHA's expense. Staff shall refer to Manual Section L12.5-1.

For more information on SHA's ADA / 504 Accommodation Policies see Manual Section L17.

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Rev. 5-1-10 Revised language on the disclosure of social security number requirement and add the requirement for applicants to declare citizenship status at time of Admissions.

## **B. Eligibility Interview**

Applicants pulled from the waiting list for consideration will be invited to attend an eligibility interview. The interview is used as a way to provide information to the applicant about the application process, as well as to advise the applicant of other services or programs which may be available, or other SHA housing opportunities.

SHA staff shall, in conducting the eligibility interview, provide the applicant every opportunity to demonstrate eligibility and suitability for SHA housing programs, including actively suggesting and soliciting the documents and information that may provide the basis of a determination of suitability.

Reasonable accommodation will be made for persons with a disability who are unable to access SHA facilities for their eligibility interview due to their disability. For further details, refer to Manual Section L17.1-2. A designee will be allowed to participate in the interview process, but only with permission of the applicant.

The head of household is required to attend the interview, and provide certifications needed for all members of the applicant's household. For tax credit interviews, all adult members are required to attend.

At the eligibility interview, the applicant shall submit a complete, accurate, and truthful application for housing assistance including documents required to verify household income and family composition; landlord, and other references contact information is required to support a determination of eligibility and suitability. The applicant is expected to complete the application in his or her own handwriting, prior to the eligibility interview, unless assistance is needed or a request for accommodation is made by a person with a disability. Neither SHA nor its agent is responsible for failure of an applicant to submit a complete housing application or to provide complete and accurate information.

All adult members of the household must sign the HUD Form 9886, *Authorization for the Release of Information*, as well as the application form and all supplemental forms required by SHA, including specific release of information forms for verification items not covered by HUD Form 9886. Failure to do so is cause for cancellation of the application for failure to provide necessary certifications and releases as required by SHA.

Every adult household member must sign a consent form to release criminal conviction records and to allow SHA to receive records and use them in accordance with HUD regulations and SHA policies.

Every household member must declare his or her citizenship status, and provide the required citizenship or immigration verification in accordance with Manual Section L12.8-2. A family who claims a local preference will be required to bring verification of their preference at the eligibility interview. If an applicant is not able to provide verification that they are entitled to the preference, the applicant shall be advised in writing their application will be returned to the waiting list with their original application date, without a preference. Applicants whose claim of preference cannot be supported will be given an opportunity to claim other preferences in accordance with SHA's policy.

The applicant must provide social security numbers and documentation for all household members. Household members who disclose their social security number but cannot provide documentation, must sign a certification and provide documentation within 60 days. In the case of an individual at least 62 years of age, SHA may grant an extension for an additional 60 days for a total of 120 days.

The applicant's completed application shall be reviewed for household composition and bedroom assignment. Where household composition indicates that the applicant family has been drawn from the appropriate wait list by bedroom size, the application may proceed. Where household composition indicates that the applicant family requires a different bedroom assignment than the wait list they were drawn from, they will be moved to the new wait list with the same sequence date. If the age of the new wait list is older than the applicant's sequence date, then the interview must be cancelled and the applicant must be placed back on the wait list until their name is reached in proper turn.

If a follow-up request for information is made of the applicant, SHA's written notice requesting the additional information or documents shall include a notice that the requested information must be provided within 10 business days (two weeks) or the application will be cancelled without further notice. Neither SHA nor its agent is responsible for failure to establish contact with information sources provided by the applicant beyond a documented and reasonable good-faith effort.

SHA shall conduct an application background check that includes a criminal history and credit check for all applicants over age 18.

Credit information disclosed on a credit report shall be used to judge reasonableness of reported income and household composition. (See Manual Section L10.3-1 and L10.4-1 for Eligibility and Suitability details)

Failure of the applicant to complete the various elements of the application process will result in cancellation of the application. Applicants will always be informed in advance of the consequences of such failure; therefore no notice of cancellation for failure to complete the applications process will be given.

### **C. Secondary review**

Applicants who on first examination fail to achieve the number of suitability points required for admission, but who meet the standards for suitability based on criminal record outlined above, and have no other unacceptable negative indicators of suitability, may be referred for secondary review by supervisory staff prior to denial of admission.

The purpose of the secondary review is to allow factors to be taken into consideration that have not been identified in advance in SHA's policies, but that a reasonable person would agree indicate an individual's likely ability to live independently in SHA housing.

The supervisor(s) conducting the secondary review will provide written documentation of the objective basis of the decision to admit an applicant despite the applicant's failure to achieve the required suitability points specified herein.

**D. Denial of application: Right to submit additional information**

SHA will notify applicants in writing if their application is denied based on a determination that an applicant is not eligible or suitable for the housing requested. The notification will indicate the reasons for the denial, and shall inform the applicant of his or her right to:

1. Submit in writing further information or documentation supporting a claim of suitability or eligibility, within two weeks of the date of notification, *and/or*
2. Submit a written request for an informal hearing, within two weeks of the date of notification.

The notice of denial shall also inform the applicant of his or her right to request a reasonable accommodation based on a disability, with respect both to the process of providing additional information or scheduling an informal hearing.

SHA shall review any further information provided by the applicant in response to the notice of denial, and shall make a determination of eligibility and suitability taking the additional information into account. If SHA still makes a determination to deny the application, the application is referred on for an informal hearing.

**E. Notice and Right to Dispute Denial of Housing Application**

SHA shall provide an informal hearing for a denied applicant. Admissions shall send a formal notice of denial to an applicant who is denied for admission. The notice provides an opportunity to dispute the denial, and if denied due to criminal activity, to dispute the accuracy and relevance of the records. The staff person who made the original decision to deny may not conduct the hearing. The Housing Authority shall assign an Administrator from the Housing Operations Department or other independent hearing officer to conduct the hearing. The decision of the Administrator or independent hearing officer shall be the final administrative remedy to which the applicant is entitled. If no request for an informal hearing is received, the applicant's right to an informal hearing and any further administrative relief shall be deemed to be waived.

**F. Evaluation of suitability continues through leasing**

Applications shall be "*provisionally approved*" that meet the required suitability for the housing program for which they were considered. The provisional approval status shall be extended to the second waiting list choice within the same housing program, if applicable. The extended provisionally-approved status shall remain valid for up to six months. If the applicant's name does not rise to the top of the second waiting list for consideration within that six month timeframe, the approved status is void and the applicant will be subject to the full tenant screening process. The applicant's suitability for SHA housing programs shall be evaluated continuously through the admissions process, up to and including the signing of the lease.

Applicants that fail to meet the required suitability shall be denied for the housing program for which they were considered. The denial is not limited to the waiting list from which they were pulled.

Applicants may be denied for criminal activity by any member of the household which occurs between the date of the initial criminal background check and the date of leasing.

Applicants may be denied admission if information becomes available prior to leasing which, had it been known at the time of the initial suitability determination, would have resulted in a denial of the application.

Applicants may be denied housing if their statements or behavior during the tenant placement process indicate they will not be suitable residents of SHA housing, based on the criteria outlined in Manual Section L10.3-1.

## **G. Placement**

### **1. Occupancy Standard**

In general, the following occupancy standard shall serve as the guide in the selection of residents for admission: two persons per bedroom plus one, if one of the household members is one year old or younger. The minimum number of persons per bedroom is one. Households shall be assigned to the smallest unit suitable for their needs, within these guidelines. SHA will grant an exception to unit size standards upon request as an accommodation for persons with disabilities. Requests based on health-related reasons must be verified by a doctor, or medical or licensed social service professional. For more information on SHA's occupancy standard see Manual Section L12.1-1.

### **2. Internal transfers**

Current residents who have approved transfer requests shall have priority over approved applicants for available units. However, SHA shall ensure that a reasonable number of units in all SHA properties shall be available to applicants from the general waiting list on a regular basis. For more information on SHA's transfer policies, see Manual Section L12.5-1.

### **3. Referral**

For each successive vacancy that occurs in a community, SHA shall refer *provisionally-approved applications for the appropriate unit size* at the top of the appropriate waiting list.

Applicants approved under the Safety Net Assistance Program shall receive preference that places the applicant at the top of the approved site-specific waiting list, in accordance with section L11.5-1 of the Manual.

Where family composition changes after approval but prior to leasing and requires a different bedroom assignment, the approval will be revoked, and the family will be placed back on the new wait list in accordance with their sequence date, to wait their natural turn.

### **4. Referrals to Accessible units**

If there is not an eligible, qualified resident or approved applicant with disabilities who wishes to reside in an available UFAS-Accessible unit, then it may be offered to an applicant who does not need the accessible features of the unit. If the applicant accepts the UFAS-Accessible unit, the applicant will be required to sign a lease addendum indicating he or she will be required to relocate, at SHA's expense, to a non-accessible unit within thirty (30) days of notice by SHA when there is an eligible, qualified applicant or existing resident with disabilities who requires the accessibility features of the unit. For more information on SHA's ADA / 504 Accommodation Policies, see Manual Section L17.

5. Mixed finance communities

Because of the unique income restrictions and lease requirements, all vacancies in mixed finance communities will be filled from applicants on the site-specific waiting lists. To meet the tax credit requirement of completing an initial certification for all new tenants, current SHA tenants who apply for housing in mixed finance communities will be processed as new applicants in all cases.

6. Designated elderly preference/other special designation properties

In filling available units in elderly or other special designation properties, SHA shall use the same waiting list rotation described above, but shall offer placement only to the elderly household closest to the top of the waiting list, or, if the building is currently open to near elderly households, to the elderly *or* near elderly household closest to the top of the waiting list.

7. 50% limit on new public housing placements from Next Available Unit / Expedited Processing Waiting List.

SHA shall limit the placement of applicants from the Expedited Processing Waiting List to no more than 50% of available public housing units. If SHA determines placement has exceeded 50% it shall adjust the rotation of waiting lists to reduce the number of times applications at the top of the Expedited Processing waiting lists are referred to the next available vacant unit. Adjustments to the rotation shall be made according to the viability of all open waiting lists.

8. Offers

All provisionally-approved applicants shall be offered units within the following guidelines:

Applicants will be given the same opportunity to consider all available vacant units in the specific building or community at the time of the offer. They may reject offers for studio units without penalty, but if doing so, must be placed back on the bottom of the referred file wait list while waiting for another offer. Applicants may not reject any other units without demonstrating good cause.

A rejection of an offer outside of these guidelines shall cause the application to be cancelled from that wait list unless the applicant can show "good cause." Good Cause shall be limited to:

ADA / 504 accommodations. This will not cause the applicant's second site specific waiting list to be cancelled.

In accordance with IRS regulations, placement of full-time students is prohibited in units with tax credits and bond financing. SHA will skip over full-time student applicants on a waiting list until placement can be made in a non- tax credit property or non-bond financed unit.