

Chapter 10

VOUCHER BRIEFINGS/VOUCHER TERMS

[24 CFR 982.301, 982.302]

SHA will conduct a mandatory briefing at the time it issues a voucher to a new participant family, to ensure that the family knows how the program works. The briefing will provide a broad description of owner and family responsibilities, SHA procedures, and information on how to lease a unit. The family will also receive a briefing packet which provides more detailed information about the program, including the benefits of moving outside areas of poverty and minority concentration. This chapter describes how briefings will be conducted, the information that will be provided to families, and the policies for extensions and suspensions of vouchers.

It also addresses new voucher issuances when family composition changes.

A. Briefing Types and Required Attendance [24 CFR 982.301]

Initial Applicant Briefing

A full briefing, as required by HUD, will be conducted for applicant families at the time their vouchers are issued. Families may attend group briefings and then meet individually with SHA staff who will issue their voucher and provide further detailed information about the program as necessary.

Briefings will be conducted in English.

SHA will not issue a voucher to a family unless the household representative has attended a briefing and signed the voucher.

Missing Scheduled Briefings

Applicants who provide prior notice of inability to attend a briefing will automatically be scheduled for the next available briefing.

Applicants who fail to attend two scheduled briefings, without prior notification and approval by SHA, may be denied admission based on failure to supply information needed for certification. The briefing format for families who have family members with disabilities may be modified upon request by the family. This includes conducting one-on-one briefings on site or outside the office. Such families may, however, be required to complete a formal written request for an accommodation of the disability.

Content of Briefings [24 CFR 982.301(a)]

The briefing shall include information on the following subjects:

1. A description of how the voucher program works;
2. Family and owner responsibilities;
3. Where the family may lease a unit, including renting a dwelling unit inside or outside SHA's jurisdiction;
4. An explanation of how portability works;
5. The advantages of moving to an area that does not have a high concentration of low income families; and
6. Any local obligations of a Welfare to Work (WtW) family and an explanation that failure to meet these obligations is grounds for denial or termination of assistance.

Briefing Packet [24 CFR 982.301(b)]

The family shall be provided a briefing packet which will include the following information required by 24 CFR 982.301(b), including the following:

1. The term of the voucher, and SHA policy on any extensions or suspensions of the term. If SHA allows extensions, the packet must explain how the family can request an extension;
2. How SHA determines the amount of the Housing Assistance Payment for a family, including:
 - a) How SHA determines the payment standard for a family; and
 - b) How SHA determines the Total Tenant Payment for a family.
3. How SHA determines the maximum rent for an assisted unit;
4. Where the family may lease a unit. For a family that qualifies to lease a unit outside SHA jurisdiction under portability procedures, the information packet must include an explanation of how portability works;
5. The HUD-required Tenancy Addendum that must be included in the lease;
6. The form that the family uses to request SHA approval of the assisted tenancy, and an explanation of how to request such approval;
7. A statement of SHA policy on providing information about a family to prospective owners;
8. SHA subsidy standards, including when SHA will consider granting exceptions to the standards;
9. The HUD brochure on how to select a unit;
10. Information on federal, state and local equal opportunity laws, and a copy of the housing discrimination complaint form;
11. A list of landlords or other parties known to SHA who may be willing to lease a unit to the family, or help the family find a unit, including information on the availability of accessible units for people with disabilities;
12. Family obligations under the program; and
13. SHA informal hearing procedures. This information must describe when SHA is required to give a participant family the opportunity for an informal hearing, and how to request a hearing.

Move Briefing

A move briefing will be held for participants who will be reissued a voucher to move, and have given notice of intent to vacate to their landlord. This briefing shall include incoming and outgoing portable families. It may be conducted in a group format or through a personal interview.

B. Assistance to Families Who Claim Discrimination

SHA will give participants a copy of HUD Form 903 to file a complaint and/or refer them to the Seattle Office for Civil Rights.

C. Term of Voucher: Expiration, Suspension, Extensions [24 CFR 982.303, 982.54(d)(11)]

During the briefing session, each household will be issued a voucher, which represents a contractual agreement between SHA and the family, specifying the rights and responsibilities of each party. It does not constitute admission to the program, which occurs when the lease and contract become effective.

Expirations

The voucher is valid for a period of at least 60 calendar days from the date of issuance. The family must have a Request for Tenancy and Lease submitted on their behalf by a landlord within the 60-day period, unless an extension has been granted by SHA.

If the voucher expires, and is not extended by SHA prior to the date of expiration, the family will be denied assistance.

The family will not be entitled to a review or hearing when a voucher expires.

If the family is currently assisted, and has been issued a voucher to move, they may remain as a participant in their unit for as long as there is an assisted lease/contract in effect.

Suspensions

When a Request for Approval of Tenancy is received, the voucher is suspended – i.e., the number of days required to process the request is not included in the 60-day term of the voucher.

Extensions

A family may request an extension of the voucher term. All requests for extensions must be submitted in writing prior to the expiration date of the voucher.

Unless approved by the Section 8 Manager, no more than two extensions of 30 days or less will be granted. The Section 8 Manager may extend the term of the voucher beyond the total of 120 days (initial 60-day term plus two 30-day extensions), if an additional extension is necessary to make the program accessible to a family member with a disability. The extension shall be for a specific period of time reasonably required for the accommodation.

Extensions beyond 60 days may also be granted, at the discretion of the Section 8 Manager, for extenuating circumstances such as extended hospitalization (i.e., more than 15 days) or death of an immediate family member. Verification of extenuating circumstances will be required.

An extension may also be granted, at the discretion of the Section 8 Manager, if the family is prevented from finding a unit due to disability accessibility requirements or the number of bedrooms (five or more) required. The search record is not part of the required verification. Verification of a disability and its impact on the housing search shall be required.