

Chapter 6

AGENCY-BASED VOUCHER PROGRAM

[Move To Work Agreement Dated January 13, 1999: Statement of Authorizations, Section VI.A.6.]

SHA may allocate a portion of its Housing Choice Vouchers to qualified local non-profit organizations and divisions of local government that serve very low-income and homeless families.

A. Percentage Allocation

SHA may issue vouchers to eligible families through the Agency-Based Voucher Program until the program utilizes the percentage of the total Housing Choice Voucher portfolio indicated in Chapter 3.

B. Goals and Rationale for the Agency-Based Voucher Program

The Agency-Based Voucher Program has two main goals:

1. To increase the success of disabled individuals, and families with language or cultural barriers, in finding and maintaining housing when using a voucher; and
2. To provide a transition to permanent housing for homeless households living in time-limited emergency and transitional housing.

C. Annual Review of Agency-Based Voucher Program

SHA shall review its portfolio of available vouchers each year to:

1. Establish priorities for the Agency-Based Voucher Program for the upcoming year; and
2. Determine the number of vouchers to be issued through the Agency-Based Voucher Program.

SHA shall design an appropriate allocation process consistent with the annually established priorities and total number of vouchers available for the Agency-Based Voucher Program that year.

SHA shall notify the community of its annual priorities and allocation method and give stakeholders an opportunity to comment on the allocation priorities and distribution plan, before implementing the Agency-Based Voucher Program for the upcoming year.

Notification will be provided by email and/or regular mail notice to the following:

1. City of Seattle Department of Human Services;

2. City of Seattle Office of Housing;
3. King County Department of Community and Human Services;
4. Human Services Coalition;
5. Housing Development Consortium of King County;
6. Distressed Communities Coalition;
7. Minority Executive Directors Coalition;
8. King County Coalition for the Homeless; and
9. All current and past applicants to the Agency-Based Voucher Program.

D. Qualified Agencies

Agencies qualified to participate in the Agency-Based Voucher Program must be either:

1. A 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation with a mission to provide housing and/or services to very low-income or homeless families and individuals; or
2. A division of city or county government mandated to provide direct service to very low-income or homeless families and individuals.

E. Agency Services Agreement

All participating agencies must execute an Agency Services Agreement with SHA, in which the agency commits to providing specific services to their clients receiving vouchers.

The agency must establish a rational, fair, and auditable selection process for participating clients, related to the goals of the Agency-Based Voucher Program, which does not discriminate against any applicant on the basis of membership in a protected class, and which does not violate any SHA conflict of interest policy. The agency must agree to periodic audits by SHA of its selection process.

In addition, SHA may require the agency to provide any of the following services, as a condition of participation in the Agency-Based Voucher Program:

1. Identifying eligible applicants among their clients who meet the criteria for first priority consideration under SHA's admissions preferences policies;
2. Assisting the clients in completing their applications and assembling supporting documents;
3. Providing third-party verification of income, household size, and other family characteristics;
4. Communicating with clients about the status of their applications, should additional information be required;
5. Attending SHA briefings with clients (i.e., application workshops, issuance briefings, signature briefings);
6. Assisting clients in finding suitable housing within their clients' affordability limits, in the neighborhoods of the client's choice, and negotiating with landlords;

7. Assisting clients in sustaining their housing situation after moving in, by providing case management or other services that will address housing-related issues;
8. Assisting clients in understanding the family obligations under the Housing Choice Voucher Program; and
9. Such services as may be necessary for clients to find and sustain suitable housing within their affordability limits.

F. Documenting Allocations of Vouchers

The Director of PorchLight or his/her designee shall maintain a chronological record of each allocation of agency vouchers, which shall include:

1. Copies of announcements of voucher availability;
2. Scoring instruments and other written evaluation tools used to determine whether an agency is qualified to participate in the program, which shall specifically include any reasons for rejection;
3. A list of agencies awarded vouchers, and the number awarded each agency; and
4. Samples of standard correspondence related to the voucher allocation process (e.g., award announcement, contract cover letter).