

Chapter 7

SUBSIDY STANDARDS: BEDROOM SIZE OF VOUCHER

[24 CFR 982.54(d) (9)]

HUD guidelines require that housing authorities establish subsidy standards for the determination of family unit size, and that such standards provide for a minimum commitment of subsidy while avoiding overcrowding.

This Chapter explains the subsidy standards that will be used to determine the voucher size (number of bedrooms subsidized) for various size families when they are issued an SHA voucher, as well as SHA's procedures when a family's size changes, or a family selects a unit size that is different from the voucher.

A. Determining Voucher Size [24 CFR 982.402]

SHA's subsidy standards for determining voucher size shall be applied in a manner consistent with Fair Housing requirements and guidelines.

For subsidy standards, an adult is a person 18 years old or older.

All standards in this section relate to the number of bedrooms on the voucher (level of subsidy), not the family's actual living arrangements.

The unit size on the voucher is determined by the family composition, regardless of the unit size rented.

SHA assigns 1 bedroom to 2 people within the following guidelines, and further imposes minimum occupancy standards outlined below.

1. Persons of different generations, persons of the opposite sex (other than spouses or co-heads), and unrelated adults (except for same-sex domestic partners) may have a separate bedroom, within the limitations of the minimum occupancy standards outlined below.
2. Foster children will be considered in determining unit size upon third-party verification of placement in the family. Families with foster children are subject to the same minimum occupancy standards as families without foster children. A family may not be able to accept a foster care placement if the foster agency requires the child to have its own bedroom and, as a result, the family would exceed the minimum occupancy standards described below.
3. An approved live-in aide will be provided a separate bedroom. No additional bedrooms are provided for the attendant's family. A maximum of one bedroom per family will be allocated for live-in aides, even if the family has more than one aide;
4. A single pregnant woman with no other family members must be treated as a two-person family;

5. Single person families shall be allocated a studio voucher.
6. Students who attend a school more than 50 miles away from the subsidized unit are not considered a member of the household. Full-time students who attend a school within 50 miles of the subsidized unit but live away from the unit more than half the year are not included in household size for the purpose of determining subsidy levels.*

GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING VOUCHER SIZE

<u>Voucher Size</u>	<u>Persons in Household</u>	
	Minimum Number	Maximum Number
0 Bedroom	1	2
1 Bedroom	1	4
2 Bedrooms	2	6
3 Bedrooms	3	8
4 Bedrooms	4	10
5 Bedrooms	6	12
6 Bedrooms	8	14

B. Exceptions to Voucher Size Standards [24 CFR 982.403(a) & (b)]

Accommodation for a Person with Disabilities

SHA will grant an exception to voucher size standards as an accommodation for persons with disabilities, if subsidy for an additional bedroom is shown to be needed. Such requests must be made in writing. Both the disability and the reasons for the additional bedroom related to the disability must be verified by a doctor or other medical professional or a licensed social service professional.

SHA Error

If SHA errs in the bedroom size designation, the family will be issued a voucher of the appropriate size at the next annual review or update.

Other Exceptions

SHA may grant exceptions from the subsidy standards only if the family makes a written request for a larger voucher size that provides compelling reasons to prove that an exception is necessary. The need for an exception shall be supported by documentation from relevant qualified professionals (e.g., licensed medical or social service professionals, court or law enforcement officials). Before granting subsidy for additional bedrooms, SHA must find that an exception is necessary based upon the information provided by the family.

* Clarification added July 2009

Minimum Occupancy Standards Observed

When additional bedrooms have been allocated to a family for a larger voucher size, minimum occupancy standards must still be met (see chart above). An accommodation request for an exception to the minimum occupancy standards will be forwarded to a supervisor, who will review and respond to the request.†

Additions to Household: family must notify SHA (SHA approval not required)

The family must inform SHA regarding new family member(s) within 10 days of the addition of the new member, for increases due to birth, adoption, or court-awarded custody. SHA's approval is not required for additions to the household that result from marriage or domestic partnership, provided the landlord approves the addition. However, this prospective adult addition must have an acceptable background check, cannot owe money to any PHA, must have acceptable previous program compliance history, and the verified income of the modified household, including the additional person, must be such that the household continues to qualify for a voucher. The new adult added to the household must meet criminal history standards.

SHA does not need to approve such additions and will increase the voucher size if applicable.

Other Additions to Household (SHA approval required)

All other household additions require SHA approval. Adults may be added to a household if they have an acceptable criminal background, acceptable previous program compliance history, do not owe a PHA money, and are approved by the landlord. SHA may limit the number of additions to a household if it believes that the number of requests are excessive.

If such addition is approved, SHA will increase the voucher size if applicable.

Under-housed and Over-housed Families

Families are required to notify SHA of all increases or decreases in household size within 10 days of the date of the increase or decrease.

If a unit does not meet Housing Quality Standards (HQS) cited below due to an increase in family size (making the unit too small), SHA will issue a new voucher of the appropriate size.

If a family becomes over-housed as the result of a decrease in household size, such that it no longer meets the minimum occupancy standards outlined above, SHA will reduce its subsidy to the appropriate voucher size at the latter of the family's next annual review/update or after fulfilling the initial lease term following the reduction in household size.

† Clarification added September 2009

SHA may make an exception as an accommodation for a person with a disability or for a family that has a member with a disability.

C. Unit Size Selected if Different from Voucher [24 CFR 982.402(c)]

The family that selects a dwelling unit of a different size than that listed on the voucher shall be subject to the following:

1. Subsidy Limitation: The payment standard for a family shall be the lower of:
 - a) The payment standard for the number of bedrooms allowed based on family size and composition, according to the guidelines noted above; or
 - b) The payment standard amount for the actual number of bedrooms for the unit rented by the family.
2. Utility Estimate: The utility estimate used to calculate the gross rent is based on the lower of the family's voucher size, or the unit size.

D. Implementing New Minimum Occupancy Standards, August 2005‡

In June 2005 SHA adopted the minimum occupancy standards outlined in Section A above. The new occupancy standards are effective as of July 1, 2005 for all new admissions to the program and all new port-ins.

The new occupancy standards shall apply to all families continuing on the program who submit requests to Move with Continued Assistance after August 1, 2005.

Families continuing on the program in their existing unit may maintain their current subsidy levels. The minimum occupancy standards will apply to them if they move to a new unit.

‡ Added July 2005 per Resolution 4784, passed by the Seattle Housing Authority Board of Commissioners on June 20, 2005