
HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE

MANUAL OF OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Admission and Occupancy – Eligibility and Tenant Selection & Placement

SCOPE: These policies and procedures shall apply to all Seattle Senior Housing Program units managed by the Seattle Housing Authority, unless specifically noted.

POLICY: Pursuant to City of Seattle Ordinance 110124 and SHA Resolution 2439, the Seattle Senior Housing Program (SSHP) will qualify persons as eligible, who meet the definition of “Low-Income Elderly and Handicapped” in the Housing Cooperation Agreement between the City of Seattle and the Seattle Housing Authority. All interested persons will be screened for eligibility and suitability in accordance with sound management practices. All eligible and suitable applicants will be approved and placed on an appropriate waitlist for placement.

It is the policy of the Seattle Housing Authority to provide equal opportunity in the provision of housing for low-income persons. No qualified person applying for housing assistance, or resident of the Housing Authority, is to be discriminated against because of race, color, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, age, veteran status, or disability. In circumstances where an otherwise qualified applicant or resident requires an accommodation, the Housing Authority will review the request in accordance with Manual Section L17.1-2, to determine if such accommodation is reasonable and within the scope of SSHP.

IMPLEMENTATION POLICY:

A. Eligibility

1. Eligibility for housing in the Seattle Senior Housing Program shall be limited to households whose sole member or head of household or spouse is:
 - a. at least 62 years of age, OR
 - b. a person with a physical or mental disability. Physical or mental disability shall mean a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities
 - c. No member of the household may be under 18 years old. Members of the household above eighteen years old who work outside the home and are not elderly or disabled, are not eligible for continued occupancy should the eligible head of household vacate.

2. Ravenna School - Eligibility for housing shall be limited to households whose sole member or head of household or spouse is:
 - a. at least 55 years of age,
 - b. not a full-time student, AND
 - c. for at least 8 units, a person with a physical or mental disability. “Physical or mental disability” shall mean a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

3. SSHP will require applicants to furnish verification of legal identity for all family members, to include picture identification.

B. Income Limits

1. Eligibility for admission to SSHP shall be:
 - a. limited to families whose gross annual income does not exceed 80% of the median income for the Seattle-Everett SMSA, adjusted for family size;
 - b. based on the income limits as set by action of the Housing Authority's Board of Commissioners (see Exhibit 1);
2. The income limits may be amended to limits in excess of 80% of the median income to reflect changing economic or social conditions as long as the general purpose of Ordinance 110124 to provide additional housing for persons who are low-income elderly or disabled is being accomplished; and as long as the change is made in accordance with the Washington State Housing Authorities Law (RCW 35.82), subject to approval by the City as provided for in the Housing Cooperation Agreement.

NOTE: Once income eligibility for admission has been established and occupancy has begun, there shall be no income limits for continued occupancy.

3. Income Limits for Ravenna School

Eligibility for admission to Ravenna School shall be:

- a. Limited to households whose gross annual income does not exceed 60% of the area median income adjusted for family size, for the Seattle-Everett SMSA as published by HUD at the time of initial tenancy.
- b. For at least 29 units, limited to families whose gross annual income does not exceed 45% of the area median income as adjusted for family size, for the Seattle-Everett SMSA as published by HUD at the time of initial tenancy.

4. Definition of Income

- a. Gross Annual Income shall be defined as income from all sources to the head of household, spouse and any other members of the household which is anticipated to be received during a twelve-month period. Income sources shall include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - 1) The gross amount of wages (including overtime), salaries, and other compensation for personal services such as commissions, fees, tips and bonuses.
 - 2) Net income from operation of a business or profession (expenditures for business expansion or amortization of capital indebtedness shall not be deducted to determine net income from a business).
 - 3) Interest, dividends, and net income of any kind from real or personal property (or any other income-generating asset). When the total asset value is in excess of \$5,000, the actual income from such assets or the current passbook savings rate as determined by HUD, whichever is greater shall be used as the asset income.
 - 4) The full amount received from (lifetime) annuities, periodic payments from insurance policies, retirement income, pensions, periodic benefits for disability or death, and other

similar types of periodic receipts. (If annuity is not for lifetime, then the interest or dividend earned on the annuity shall be used).

- 5) Payments in lieu of earnings, such as unemployment and disability compensation, social security benefits, workmen's compensation and severance pay.
 - 6) Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS - "Welfare") assistance payments (to also include the full amount of payments in addition to standard grant amounts for the purpose of allowing a recipient to purchase meals from a restaurant or other prepared food facility).
 - 7) Periodic and determinable allowances, such as alimony and regular contributions or gifts, including amounts received from any persons not residing in the dwelling. (see section on Sponsor Agreement)
 - 8) Subsistence allowances or receipts in connection with education or training such as educational stipends or scholarships.
 - 9) Regular withdrawal of assets to meet monthly living expenses.
- b. Exempt income. The following types of temporary, sporadic or non-recurring income shall NOT be counted for the purpose of determining Gross Annual income:
- 1) Amounts received specifically for, or as a reimbursement of, the cost of illness, medical care, home health care, or chore services.
 - 2) Income of a Live-In-Aide.
 - 3) Casual or irregular gifts.
 - 4) Lump sum additions to family assets, such as, but not necessarily limited to, inheritances, insurance payments, including payments under health and accident insurance and worker's compensation, capital gains, and settlements for personal or property losses.
 - 5) Payments in kind such as meals or food are not regarded as compensation.
 - 6) The value of food stamps received for the purchase of food.
- NOTE: While a household's current gross annual income is a valuable guide to determining anticipated income, circumstances which may affect the household's income over the course of the year should also be taken into consideration.

c. Sponsor Agreements

SSHP may allow relatives of an applicant to execute a sponsor agreement, which commit the sponsor to provide on-going financial support to the applicant in order to meet the income requirements of the program. Sponsor shall be subject to providing verification of his/her income if the commitment is greater than \$100 a month or \$1200 a year and a credit check.

A sponsor agreement must include the sponsor's statement of commitment to provide on-going financial support; and must be signed, dated and notarized by the sponsor;

Qualifications of Sponsors

To be eligible to execute a sponsor agreement on behalf of an applicant, an individual must:

- a. be at least 25 years old;
- b. be employed full-time or have retired from full-time employment;
- c. be financially capable of fulfilling obligations of the sponsor agreement, with an income three times greater than the amount of financial commitment.; and
- d. be closely connected to the applicant. The sponsor must *either* :
 - (1). be a close relative (parent, former guardian, grandparent, child, grandchild, or sibling of the applicant); *or*
 - (2). have a demonstrated involvement with the applicant (at least 5 years) that supports a claim of obligation for the applicant's welfare.

C. Social Security Number

Eligibility for Seattle Senior Housing Program requires that each applicant shall provide a legitimate Social Security number for each and every member of the household. Documentation includes providing a valid Social Security card or documentation from the Social Security Administration Office. If a number has not been assigned, the applicant must certify that they do not have a Social Security number(s).

D. Suitability

1. Screening for Suitability

In addition to being eligible, applicants for Seattle Senior Housing Program properties must be determined to be suitable, which is defined as:

- a. the ability to pay rent in accordance with Seattle Senior Housing Program's policies and lease provisions; Applicant must have an annual income to rent ratio that does NOT exceed 40%, as a result of applying the SSHP Rent policy.
- b. the ability to maintain a rental unit and its premises in accordance with the Seattle Senior Housing Program's policies and lease provisions and generally accepted standards of cleanliness and housekeeping;
- c. the ability to live harmoniously with other residents and neighbors and maintain conduct which is not likely to: a) interfere with other residents and neighbors in such a way as to materially diminish their enjoyment of the premises by adversely affecting their health, safety, or welfare, or b) affect adversely the physical environment of the community, or c) adversely affect the health, safety, or welfare of Seattle Senior Housing Program staff or agents of the Housing Authority, or employees of the City, or service providers; and
- d. the ability to refrain from or engage in criminal activity including illegal drug-related activity either on or off Housing Authority premises; and
- e. the ability to comply with necessary and reasonable rules and program requirements of Seattle Senior Housing Program and the Housing Authority;

SHA shall screen all applicants for suitability for the housing that is available. The assessment is made on the basis of current and past behavior. An applicant may not be excluded from participation in the Housing Authority's programs simply because of characteristics or behavior

of a group or class of which the applicant may be a member. See SHA-769(A), SSHP Suitability Criteria.

If the screening process includes use of private screening services, applicants will be required to pay the costs of the screening service.

Relevant information respecting the habits or practices to be considered may include, but is not limited to the following:

- a. An applicant's past performance in meeting financial obligations, especially rent. Admission shall be denied to applicants who currently owe rent or other amounts to the Seattle Housing Authority. Collection alternatives may be offered in lieu of denial if repayment is made prior to the determination of suitability.
- b. A past record of disturbing neighbors, destruction of property, or poor living or housekeeping habits which may adversely affect the health, safety or welfare of other residents.
- c. A history of criminal activity involving crimes of physical violence to persons or property, use or sale of illegal drugs, or other criminal acts which would indicate a high rental risk.
- d. Other information relating to the household's ability to successfully live in and maintain a unit.

It shall be the responsibility of each applicant to provide sufficient information to enable the Seattle Senior Housing Program to make an informed decision as to the applicant's suitability. Failure to do so or in the absence of reliable information that demonstrates the applicant can meet the suitability criteria may result in denial of the application.

Applicant's suitability for the Seattle Senior Housing Program shall be evaluated continuously through the admission process, up to and including the signing of the lease.

In accordance with the Violence Against Women Act of 2005, otherwise qualified, housing applicants shall not be denied housing because they have been victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking.

An applicant who is a victim of domestic violence may have an eviction or negative reference excused if based solely upon domestic violence.

Applicants will be required to certify their victim status.

Certifying Status as a Victim of Domestic Violence - The applicant may satisfy the certification requirement by providing SHA with documentation signed by an employee, agent, or volunteer of a victim service provider, an attorney, or a medical professional, from whom the victim has sought assistance in addressing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking or the effects of the abuse, in which the professional attests under penalty of perjury (28 U.S.C. 1746) to the professional's belief that the incident or incidents in question are bona fide incidents of abuse, and the victim of domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking has signed or attested to the

documentation; or by producing a Federal, State, tribal, territorial, or local police or court record. Definitions of "domestic violence," "dating violence," and "stalking" are provided in SHA's Manual Section L10.1-1 General Policies.

E. Refusal to Provide Verification

The applicant's file shall be denied if the applicant refuses to provide verification, fully disclose all information relevant to the eligibility and suitability determination or falsifies information for the purpose of obtaining housing with the Seattle Senior Housing Program.

F. Denial

Denial of an application shall be based upon failure to meet the Seattle Senior Housing Program eligibility and suitability screening criteria such as age, handicap/disability, income, landlord references, ability to pay rent, reasonable conduct, and the ability to comply with the terms of the lease and the ability to maintain a unit. Individual attributes and previous behavior which demonstrates that an applicant presents an unreasonable risk to the community or other residents, or in some other material way, fails to meet suitability criteria shall be cause for denial of admission into the Seattle Senior Housing Program.

Approved applicants may be denied admission for criminal activity by any member of the household which occurs between the date of the initial tenant screening and the date of leasing. Approved applicants may also 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; and if their statements or behavior during the admissions process indicate they will not be a suitable resident of Seattle Senior Housing Program based on the suitability criteria.

The applicant shall be given an opportunity to respond to a denial of his/her application, and to provide such further relevant information as may serve to substantiate the contesting of the decision.

G. Tenant Selection and Placement

1. Wait Lists

Seattle Senior Housing Program has a site-specific wait list for each of its 23 properties based on bedroom size. Each wait list shall be ordered by priority and date / time of application. Once approved, applicants shall be ordered by date / time of approval. Applicants have the option of signing up on one or two building wait lists.

Pre-applications received from applicants who recently refused an offer of housing without good cause, and is removed from the SSHP waiting list, may be placed on the waiting list at any time but shall receive an application date that is six months from the date of cancellation by SSHP.

If there has been a documented change in family composition or need for accommodation that requires a different unit size or location, the applicant shall be placed on the wait list of the appropriate bedroom size or building, and retain their place on the wait list.

Changing Wait Lists - Applicants may change their building preference(s) at any time but will receive the current date of change as their sequence date on the wait list(s). An applicant may be on no more than two building waitlists at any point in time. Refusal of an offer for a unit will result in the applicant being dropped from that building wait list only.

Approved applicants may change their building preference(s) at any time but will receive the current date of change as their sequence date on the wait list(s).

2. Removing Applicants from the Waiting List

SSHP shall remove applicants from the waiting lists when: the applicant requests their name be removed; the application is withdrawn or rejected; the applicant refuses an offer of housing without

good cause; the applicant fails to respond to monthly check-in requirement; the applicant fails to complete any part of the application process; there is a non-response event such as a purge, mail returned, or SSHP staff is unable to contact.

SSHP shall remove applicants from the LIPH and Bayview Tower waiting lists when: an applicant has been housed by SSHP.

3. Priorities.

The following are the priorities for selecting applicants from the waiting list for consideration:

- a. Elderly persons and persons with a disability who live within the limits of the City of Seattle.
- b. Elderly persons and persons with a disability who live outside the limits of the City of Seattle.

4. Applicants with a Disability less than 62 years old.

The Housing Cooperation Agreement between the City of Seattle and the Housing Authority establishes that persons with a disability shall be encouraged to apply for housing through this program. Approximately 10% of the total Seattle Senior Housing Program units excluding Heritage House, Keystone, Daybreak, and Ravenna School¹, will be available for applicants less than 62 years old who have a disability. Since all units are "accessible," no specific units shall be set aside for leasing by residents with a disability.

Applicants with a disability who are less than 62 years old will be accepted into SSHP housing when their occupancy is less than 9% of the total SSHP units and less than 15% for any specific building. Applicants with a disability who are less than 62 years old will not be accepted when their occupancy in SSHP housing exceeds 11% of the total SSHP units.

A good faith effort shall be made through affirmative marketing to notify the general public of the availability of Seattle Senior Housing Program housing units and to encourage persons with a disability to apply.

5. Income / Rent Range

To produce revenues which will be adequate to meet operating expenses and to establish reasonable reserves for replacement and improvements as may be required by the prudent operation of the Seattle Senior Housing Program, a cross section of incomes and rents must be represented in SSHP. Applicants will be selected from four income ranges representing a distribution of income levels in accordance with L15.2-2 of the Manual of Operations. This policy is intended to allow selection of residents from the waiting list based on income, whose rents will maintain the sustainable distribution of rents to support the goal of financial sustainability.

6. Applicants who are Rent Burdened

Applicants who are ineligible because their annual income to rent ratio exceeds 40% based on the lowest rent tier (i.e., rent burdened according to the SSHP Rent policy) shall be allowed to remain on the waiting list for six months. If a SSHP tenant-based Housing Choice Voucher becomes available in this sixth month period, such applicants may be re-considered for admission with the Housing Choice Voucher counted as income. After six months the Applicant's application shall be cancelled.

7. Update of Wait List

¹ Ravenna School must comply with the Limited Partnership Regulatory Agreement as it relates to the requirement for Special-Needs Housing Set-Aside for persons with Disabilities.

SSHP 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 the waiting list(s).

In addition, SSHP 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.

Applicants must respond to the letter within ten business days to express their continued interest or their application will be dropped from the wait list.

8. Reinstatement within 30 days with cause.

All files canceled for non-response or non-performance are subject to re-instatement up to 30 days following the *date of non-response or non-performance*, as defined below and with approval by the Senior Property Manager. This policy includes cancellations for non-response and non-performance at any point between pre-application and *offer of a unit*.

Applicants may appeal in writing for reinstatement. Appeals cannot be made by telephone or any other means.

Applicants must submit written evidence showing reasonable justification for non-performance, together with the request for reinstatement. Reinstatement will not be granted without clear evidence of reasonable justification.

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 interview 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, SSHP written requests for documentation, etc.

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

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

Applicants reinstated to the wait list will retain their original date of application on the wait list.

Applicants who are not approved or whose request for reinstatement is received after the 30-day timeframe, must re-apply.

9. Splitting of Households

Applicant households may be "split" to create two new households. The member split from the original application will be required to complete a pre-application for their household. From the

pre-application they will be placed on the wait list with the current date. The original applicant will retain their place on the wait list.

H. Occupancy Standard

No more than two persons may occupy a unit. Exceptions to this may be made for existing households when circumstances require.

I. Rights Not Created.

The policies in this section shall not create any rights that vest in any current SHA residents, or persons on SHA waiting lists, or potential applicants. The Housing Authority reserves the right to amend these policies from time to time as it sees fit. Further, the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Seattle may elect to designate any Seattle Senior Housing Program buildings as "for seniors only," for use as a congregate care or assisted living facility or for any other legitimate purpose as may be permitted by the Cooperation Agreement between SHA and the City of Seattle.

J. Fraud

Each household applying for admission shall provide a true and complete disclosure of all income and assets. Failure to do so shall constitute a violation of the application for the Seattle Senior Housing Program and of the lease, if occupancy has begun. The Housing Authority, upon learning of a misrepresentation of income and/or assets, shall recalculate rent based upon the correct income and assets and shall apply the correct rent retroactively. If the misrepresentation has been intentional, the application of the household shall be denied, or if occupancy has begun, the lease shall be terminated - in addition to a retroactive recalculation of rent.