

## Chapter 4

### APPLICATIONS, WAITING LIST AND TENANT SELECTION

#### INTRODUCTION

When a family wishes to receive assistance under the HCV program, the family must submit an application that provides the PHA with the information needed to determine the family's eligibility. HUD requires the PHA to place all families that apply for assistance on a waiting list. When HCV assistance becomes available, the PHA must select families from the waiting list in accordance with HUD requirements and PHA policies as stated in the administrative plan and the annual plan.

The PHA is required to adopt clear policies and procedures for accepting applications, placing families on the waiting list, and selecting families from the waiting list, and must follow these policies and procedures consistently. The actual order in which families are selected from the waiting list can be affected if a family has certain characteristics designated by HUD or the PHA that justify their selection. Examples of this are the selection of families for income targeting and the selection of families that qualify for targeted funding.

HUD regulations require that all families have an equal opportunity to apply for and receive housing assistance, and that the PHA affirmatively further fair housing goals in the administration of the program [24 CFR 982.53, HCV GB p. 4-1]. Adherence to the selection policies described in this chapter ensures that the PHA will be in compliance with all relevant fair housing requirements, as described in Chapter 2.

This chapter describes HUD and PHA policies for taking applications, managing the waiting list, and selecting families for HCV assistance. The policies outlined in this chapter are organized into three sections, as follows:

Part I: The Application Process. This part provides an overview of the application process and discusses how applicants can obtain and submit applications. It also specifies how the PHA will handle the applications it receives.

Part II: Managing the Waiting List. This part presents the policies that govern how the PHA's waiting list is structured, when it is opened and closed, and how the public is notified of the opportunity to apply for assistance. It also discusses the process the PHA will use to keep the waiting list current.

Part III: Selection for HCV Assistance. This part describes the policies that guide the PHA in selecting families for HCV assistance as such assistance becomes available. It also specifies how in-person interviews will be used to ensure that the PHA has the information needed to make a final eligibility determination.

## **PART I: THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

### **4-I.A. OVERVIEW**

This part describes the PHA policies for making applications available, accepting applications, making preliminary determinations of eligibility, and the placement of applicants on the waiting list. This part also describes the PHA's obligation to ensure the accessibility of the application process to elderly persons, people with disabilities, and people with limited English proficiency (LEP).

### **4-I.B. APPLYING FOR ASSISTANCE [HCV GB, pp. 4-11 – 4-16, Notice PIH 2009-36]**

Any family that wishes to receive HCV assistance must apply for admission to the program. HUD permits the PHA to determine the format and content of HCV applications, as well as how such applications will be made available to interested families and how applications will be accepted by the PHA. The PHA must include Form HUD-92006, Supplement to Application for Federally Assisted Housing, as part of the PHA's application.

#### PHA Policy

Depending upon the length of time that applicants may need to wait to receive assistance, the PHA may use a one- or two-step application process.

A one-step process will be used when it is expected that a family will be selected from the waiting list within 60 days of the date of application. At application, the family must provide all of the information necessary to establish family eligibility and level of assistance.

A two-step process will be used when it is expected that a family will not be selected from the waiting list for at least 60 days from the date of application. Under the two-step application process, the PHA initially will require families to provide only the information needed to make an initial assessment of the family's eligibility, and to determine the family's placement on the waiting list. The family will be required to provide all of the information necessary to establish family eligibility and level of assistance when the family is selected from the waiting list.

Families may submit applications using the PHA's online software portal. Families may also request a paper preapplication.

Completed paper applications must be returned to the PHA by mail, electronically, by fax, or submitted in person during normal business hours. Applications must be complete in order to be accepted by the PHA for processing. The PHA will notify the family if an application is incomplete and will request any additional information required. If information needed to validate the application (e.g. waiting list selection, contact information, etc.) isn't provided, the application will not be processed.

#### **4-I.C. ACCESSIBILITY OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

##### **Elderly and Disabled Populations [24 CFR 8 and HCV GB, pp. 4-11 – 4-13]**

The PHA must take steps to ensure that the application process is accessible to people who might have difficulty complying with the standard PHA application process. This could include people with disabilities, certain elderly individuals, as well as persons with limited English proficiency (LEP). The PHA must provide reasonable accommodation to the needs of individuals with disabilities. The application-taking facility and the application process must be fully accessible, or the PHA must provide an alternate approach that provides full access to the application process. Chapter 2 provides a full discussion of the PHA's policies related to providing reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities.

##### **Limited English Proficiency**

PHAs are required to take reasonable steps to ensure equal access to their programs and activities by persons with limited English proficiency [24 CFR 1]. Chapter 2 provides a full discussion on the PHA's policies related to ensuring access to people with limited English proficiency (LEP).

#### **4-I.D. PLACEMENT ON THE WAITING LIST**

The PHA must review each complete application received and make a preliminary assessment of the family's eligibility. The PHA must accept applications from families for whom the list is open unless there is good cause for not accepting the application (such as denial of assistance) for the grounds stated in the regulations [24 CFR 982.206(b)(2)]. Where the family is determined to be ineligible, the PHA must notify the family in writing [24 CFR 982.201(f)]. Where the family is not determined to be ineligible, the family will be placed on a waiting list of applicants.

No applicant has a right or entitlement to be listed on the waiting list, or to any particular position on the waiting list [24 CFR 982.202(c)].

#### **Ineligible for Placement on the Waiting List**

##### PHA Policy

If the PHA can determine from the information provided that a family is ineligible, the family will not be placed on the waiting list. Where a family is determined to be ineligible, the PHA will send written notification of the ineligibility determination within 10 business days of receiving a complete application. The notice will specify the reasons for ineligibility and will inform the family of their right to request an informal review and explain the process for doing so (see Chapter 16).

#### **Eligible for Placement on the Waiting List**

##### PHA Policy

Preapplications accepted via a software portal will receive an automatic reply notifying placement on the waiting list. Applicants that submit a paper preapplication will receive a written confirmation within 30 calendar days of the PHA's receipt of the complete preapplication.

Placement on the waiting list does not indicate that the family is, in fact, eligible for assistance. A final determination of eligibility will be made when the family is selected from the waiting list.

Applicants will be placed on the waiting list according to any preference(s) for which they qualify, and the date and time their complete application is received by the PHA.

## **PART II: MANAGING THE WAITING LIST**

### **4-II.A. OVERVIEW**

The PHA must have policies regarding various aspects of organizing and managing the waiting list of applicant families. This includes opening the list to new applicants, closing the list to new applicants, notifying the public of waiting list openings and closings, updating waiting list information, purging the list of families that are no longer interested in or eligible for assistance, as well as conducting outreach to ensure a sufficient number of applicants.

In addition, HUD imposes requirements on how a PHA may structure its waiting list and how families must be treated if they apply for assistance from a PHA that administers more than one assisted housing program.

### **4-II.B. ORGANIZATION OF THE WAITING LIST [24 CFR 982.204 and 205]**

The PHA's HCV waiting list must be organized in such a manner to allow the PHA to accurately identify and select families for assistance in the proper order, according to the admissions policies described in this plan.

The waiting list must contain the following information for each applicant listed:

- Applicant name;
- Family unit size;
- Date and time of application;
- Qualification for any local preference;
- Racial or ethnic designation of the head of household.

HUD requires the PHA to maintain a single waiting list for the HCV program unless it serves more than one county or municipality. Such PHAs are permitted, but not required, to maintain a separate waiting list for each county or municipality served.

#### PHA Policy

The PHA will maintain a single waiting list for the HCV program which includes any Special Purpose Vouchers. The PHA will maintain separate waiting lists for each individual PBV property.

HUD directs that a family that applies for assistance from the HCV program must be offered the opportunity to be placed on the waiting list for any public housing, project-based voucher or moderate rehabilitation program the PHA operates if 1) the other programs' waiting lists are open, and 2) the family is qualified for the other programs.

HUD permits, but does not require, that PHAs maintain a single merged waiting list for their public housing, Section 8, and other subsidized housing programs.

A family's decision to apply for, receive, or refuse other housing assistance must not affect the family's placement on the HCV waiting list, or any preferences for which the family may qualify.

## **4-II.C. OPENING AND CLOSING THE WAITING LIST [24 CFR 982.206]**

### **Closing the Waiting List**

A PHA is permitted to close the waiting list if it has an adequate pool of families to use its available HCV assistance. Alternatively, the PHA may elect to continue to accept applications only from certain categories of families that meet particular preferences or funding criteria.

#### PHA Policy

If the PHA determines that the existing waiting list contains an adequate pool for use of available program funding, the PHA may stop accepting new applications, or may accept only applications meeting criteria adopted by the PHA. When the waiting list is closed, the PHA will continue to accept applications for the following programs:

- Graduates of HOSWWA's HOME Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) program
- Non-Elderly, Disabled (NED) Category 2 referrals
- Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) referrals
- Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) referrals
- Active FYI participants that have reached the maximum term of FYI assistance
- Stability Voucher referrals
- Mainstream Voucher referrals
- Families referred by DCYF for reunification according to an interagency agreement
- Phoenix House residents that have successfully completed and graduated from the Phoenix House case management program
- Currently assisted HOSWWA EHV families whose assistance is at risk of termination due to lack of program funding
- Referrals from a designated agency in response to a crisis, disaster, or emergent community need, at the discretion of the CEO and in consultation with the Board Chair reporting back to the Board

### **Reopening the Waiting List**

If the waiting list has been closed, it cannot be reopened until the PHA publishes a notice in local newspapers of general circulation, minority media, and other suitable media outlets. The notice must comply with HUD fair housing requirements and must specify who may apply, and where and when applications will be received.

#### PHA Policy

The PHA will announce the reopening of the waiting list at least 10 business days prior to the date applications will first be accepted. If the list is only being reopened for certain categories of families, this information will be contained in the notice.

The PHA will give public notice by publishing the information in suitable media outlets where appropriate, such as:

***The (Longview) Daily News***

***www.hoswwa.org***

***Lewis County Chronicle***

***Wahkiakum County Eagle***

***Chinook Observer***

***(Clark Co) Columbian***

#### **4-II.D. FAMILY OUTREACH [HCV GB, pp. 4-2 to 4-4]**

The PHA must conduct outreach as necessary to ensure that the PHA has a sufficient number of applicants on the waiting list to use the HCV resources it has been allotted.

Because HUD requires the PHA to admit a specified percentage of extremely low-income families to the program (see Chapter 4, Part III), the PHA may need to conduct special outreach to ensure that an adequate number of such families apply for assistance [HCV GB, p. 4-20 to 4-21].

PHA outreach efforts must comply with fair housing requirements. This includes:

- Analyzing the housing market area and the populations currently being served to identify underserved populations
- Ensuring that outreach efforts are targeted to media outlets that reach eligible populations that are underrepresented in the program
- Avoiding outreach efforts that prefer or exclude people who are members of a protected class

PHA outreach efforts must be designed to inform qualified families about the availability of assistance under the program. These efforts may include, as needed, any of the following activities:

- Submitting press releases to local newspapers, including minority newspapers
- Developing informational materials and flyers to distribute to other agencies
- Providing application forms to other public and private agencies that serve the low income population
- Developing partnerships with other organizations that serve similar populations, including agencies that provide services for persons with disabilities

##### PHA Policy

The PHA will monitor the characteristics of the population being served and the characteristics of the population as a whole in the PHA's jurisdiction. Targeted outreach efforts will be undertaken if a comparison suggests that certain populations are being underserved.

#### **4-II.E. REPORTING CHANGES IN FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES**

##### PHA Policy

While the family is on the waiting list, the family must immediately inform the PHA of changes in contact information, including current residence, mailing address, and phone number. The changes must be submitted in writing or submitted using the online portal.

#### **4-II.F. UPDATING THE WAITING LIST [24 CFR 982.204]**

HUD requires the PHA to establish policies to use when removing applicant names from the waiting list.

##### **Purging the Waiting List**

The decision to withdraw an applicant family that includes a person with disabilities from the waiting list is subject to reasonable accommodation. If the applicant did not respond to a PHA request for information or updates, and the PHA determines that the family did not respond because of the family member's disability, the PHA must reinstate the applicant family to their former position on the waiting list [24 CFR 982.204(c)(2)].

##### PHA Policy

The waiting list will be updated as needed to ensure that all applicants and applicant information are current and timely.

To update the waiting list, the PHA will send an update request to each family on the waiting list to determine whether the family continues to be interested in, and to qualify for, the program. This update request may be sent by mail, email, and/or portal notification. The notification will specify a deadline by which the family must respond and will state that failure to respond will result in the applicant's name being removed from the waiting list.

The update request will specify the mode of response. Responses returned by mail should be postmarked or received by the PHA not later than 15 business days from the date of the PHA letter.

If the family fails to respond by the specified deadline, the family will be removed from all HCV and PBV waiting lists without further notice.

If the notice is returned by the post office with no forwarding address, the applicant will be removed from all HCV and PBV waiting lists without further notice.

If the notice is returned by the post office with a forwarding address, the notice will be re-sent to the address indicated. The family will have 15 business days to respond from the date the letter was re-sent.

If a family is removed from the waiting list for failure to respond, the PHA may reinstate the family if it is determined that the lack of response was due to PHA error, or to circumstances beyond the family's control, as a result of a family member's disability, or as a direct result of status as a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking, including an adverse factor resulting from such abuse.

## Removal from the Waiting List

### PHA Policy

If the PHA determines at any point that a family on a waiting list is not eligible for assistance, (see Chapter 3), the family will be removed from the waiting list.

If a family is removed from the waiting list because the PHA has determined the family is not eligible for assistance, a notice will be sent to the family by mail, email, and/or portal notification. The notice will state the reasons the family was removed from the waiting list and will inform the family how to request an informal review regarding the PHA's decision (see Chapter 16) [24 CFR 982.201(f)].

## **PART III: SELECTION FOR HCV ASSISTANCE**

### **4-III.A. OVERVIEW**

As vouchers become available, families on the waiting list must be selected for assistance in accordance with the policies described in this part.

The order in which families are selected from the waiting list depends on the selection method chosen by the PHA and is impacted in part by any selection preferences for which the family qualifies. The availability of targeted funding also may affect the order in which families are selected from the waiting list.

The PHA must maintain a clear record of all information required to verify that the family is selected from the waiting list according to the PHA's selection policies [24 CFR 982.204(b) and 982.207(e)].

### **4-III.B. SELECTION AND HCV FUNDING SOURCES**

#### **Special Admissions [24 CFR 982.203]**

HUD may award funding for specifically-named families living in specified types of units (e.g., a family that is displaced by demolition of public housing; a non-purchasing family residing in a HOPE 1 or 2 projects). In these cases, the PHA may admit such families whether or not they are on the waiting list, and, if they are on the waiting list, without considering the family's position on the waiting list. These families are considered non-waiting list selections. The PHA must maintain records showing that such families were admitted with special program funding.

#### **Targeted Funding [24 CFR 982.204(e)]**

HUD may award a PHA funding for a specified category of families on the waiting list. The PHA must use this funding only to assist the families within the specified category. In order to assist families within a targeted funding category, the PHA may skip families that do not qualify within the targeted funding category. Within this category of families, the order in which such families are assisted is determined according to the policies provided in Section 4-III.C.

#### PHA Policy

The PHA administers the following types of targeted funding:

***Non-Elderly Disabled Category 1 (NED1)***

***Non-Elderly Disabled Category 2 (NED2)***

***Veteran Affairs Supported Housing (VASH)***

***Mainstream Vouchers (MS/NED)***

***Foster Youth to Independence (FYI)***

See Chapter 19 for a complete description of the procedures governing these Special Purpose Vouchers.

## **Regular HCV Funding**

Regular HCV funding may be used to assist any eligible family on the waiting list. Families are selected from the waiting list according to the policies provided in Section 4-III.C.

### **4-III.C. SELECTION METHOD**

PHAs must describe the method for selecting applicant families from the waiting list, including the system of admission preferences that the PHA will use [24 CFR 982.202(d)].

#### **Local Preferences [24 CFR 982.207; HCV p. 4-16]**

PHAs are permitted to establish local preferences, and to give priority to serving families that meet those criteria. HUD specifically authorizes and places restrictions on certain types of local preferences. HUD also permits the PHA to establish other local preferences at its discretion. Any local preferences established must be consistent with the PHA plan and the consolidated plan and must be based on local housing needs and priorities that can be documented by generally accepted data sources.

##### PHA Policy

The PHA will use the following local preferences:

1. The PHA will provide an admission preference for HOSWWA's currently assisted EHV families whose assistance is at risk of termination due to lack of program funding.
2. The PHA will provide an admission preference for families referred for participation in the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Special Purpose Voucher as described in Chapter 19.
3. The PHA will provide an admission preference to FYI participants that have reached the maximum term of FYI assistance.
4. The PHA will provide an admission preference for families eligible for participation in the Non-Elderly Disabled (NED) Category 1 Special Purpose Voucher program whose head of household, spouse, or cohead is non-elderly (under age 62) and disabled as described in Chapter 19.
5. The PHA will provide an admission preference for eligible families referred by a state Medicaid or health agency for participation in the Non-Elderly Disabled (NED) Category 2 Special Purpose Voucher program as described in Chapter 19.
6. The PHA will provide an admission preference for Mainstream Voucher targeted funding for families that include a non-elderly person with disabilities.
7. The PHA will provide 10 HCV to families referred by DCYF (a division of DSHS) for reunification according to an interagency agreement.
8. The PHA will give preference to households participating in agency-managed Tenant Based Rental Assistance programs that are receiving case management from partner agencies.

9. The PHA will give preference to applicant families whose head of household, spouse, or co-head is 75 years of age or older. The PHA will provide an admission preference for applicants referred from a designated agency in response to a crisis, disaster, or emergent community need, at the discretion of the CEO, in consultation with the Board Chair reporting back to the board.
10. The PHA will give priority to applicants presently residing in the Phoenix House that have successfully completed and graduated from Phoenix House's case management program. Phoenix House is a special housing unit for low-income parents exiting a drug treatment program. Phoenix House is not an HCV, PBV, or HUD-funded property.
11. The PHA will give preference to families referred by the Emergency Support Shelter for Stability Vouchers.

### **Income Targeting Requirement [24 CFR 982.201(b)(2)]**

HUD requires that extremely low-income (ELI) families make up at least 75 percent of the families admitted to the HCV program during the PHA's fiscal year. ELI families are those with annual incomes at or below the federal poverty level or 30 percent of the area median income, whichever number is higher. To ensure this requirement is met, a PHA may skip non-ELI families on the waiting list in order to select an ELI family.

Low-income families admitted to the program that are "continuously assisted" under the 1937 Housing Act [24 CFR 982.4(b)], as well as low-income or moderate-income families admitted to the program that are displaced as a result of the prepayment of the mortgage or voluntary termination of an insurance contract on eligible low-income housing, are not counted for income targeting purposes [24 CFR 982.201(b)(2)(v)].

#### **PHA Policy**

The PHA will monitor progress in meeting the income targeting requirement throughout the fiscal year. Extremely low-income families will be selected ahead of other eligible families on an as-needed basis to ensure the income targeting requirement is met.

### **Order of Selection**

The PHA system of preferences may select families based on local preferences according to the date and time of application or by a random selection process (lottery) [24 CFR 982.207(c)]. If a PHA does not have enough funding to assist the family at the top of the waiting list, it is not permitted to skip down the waiting list to a family that it can afford to subsidize when there are not sufficient funds to subsidize the family at the top of the waiting list [24 CFR 982.204(d) and (e)].

#### **PHA Policy**

Families will be selected from the waiting list based on the targeted funding or selection preference(s) for which they qualify, and in accordance with the PHA's hierarchy of preferences, if applicable. Within each targeted funding or preference category, families will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis

according to the date and time their complete application is received by the PHA. Documentation will be maintained by the PHA as to whether families on the list qualify for and are interested in targeted funding. If a family placed higher on the waiting list is not qualified or not interested in targeted funding, the PHA will make a notation so that the PHA does not have to ask those families each time targeted selections are made.

#### **4-III.D. NOTIFICATION OF SELECTION**

When a family has been selected from the waiting list, the PHA must notify the family [24 CFR 982.554(a)].

##### PHA Policy

The PHA will notify the family by mail, email, and/or portal notification when it is selected from the waiting list. The notice will advise the family to return eligibility documents including proof of legal identity and social security number, verification of income, assets, and eligible expenses.

If a notification letter is returned to the PHA with no forwarding address, the family will be removed from all HCV and PBV waiting lists. A notice of denial (see Chapter 3) will be sent to the family by mail, email, and/or portal notification.

Whenever possible, if a family has supplied the PHA with an email for electronic correspondence or is registered on the applicant portal, the PHA will send the family an automated email notification when the family is selected from the waiting list.

#### **4-III.E. THE APPLICATION INTERVIEW**

HUD recommends that the PHA obtain the information and documentation needed to make an eligibility determination through a face-to-face interview with a PHA representative [HCV GB, pg. 4-16]. Being invited to attend an interview does not constitute admission to the program.

Assistance cannot be provided to the family until all SSN documentation requirements are met. However, if the PHA determines that an applicant family is otherwise eligible to participate in the program, the family may retain its place on the waiting list for a period of time determined by the PHA [Notice PIH 2018-24].

Reasonable accommodation must be made for persons with disabilities who are unable to attend an interview due to their disability.

##### PHA Policy

Eligibility interviews are not generally conducted. Should an interview be required, it may be conducted in person with the head of household and other adult members or may be conducted by phone or via videocall or conference call. Documents for determining eligibility for any assistance may be provided on paper, or through the PHA's online applicant portal.

Pending disclosure and documentation of social security numbers, the PHA will allow the family to retain its place on the waiting list *not to exceed 180 days from*

*the initial offer, unless additional time is needed as an accommodation for a persons with disabilities.* If not all household members have disclosed their SSNs at the next time the PHA is issuing vouchers, the PHA will issue a voucher to the next eligible applicant family on the waiting list.

The family must provide the information necessary to establish the family's eligibility and determine the appropriate level of assistance, complete required forms, provide required signatures, and submit required documentation. If any materials are missing, the PHA will provide the family with a written list of items that must be submitted.

Any required documents or information that the family is unable to provide prior to a briefing appointment must be provided within 10 business days of the briefing appointment (Chapter 7 provides details about longer submission deadlines for particular items, including documentation of eligible noncitizen status). If the family is unable to obtain the information or materials within the required time frame, the family may request an extension. If the required documents and information are not provided within the required time frame (plus any extensions), the family will be sent a notice of denial (See Chapter 3).

An advocate, interpreter, or other assistant may assist the family with the application process.

#### **4-III.F. COMPLETING THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

The PHA must verify all information provided by the family (see Chapter 7). Based on verified information, the PHA must make a final determination of eligibility (see Chapter 3) and must confirm that the family qualified for any special admission, targeted funding admission, or selection preference that affected the order in which the family was selected from the waiting list.

##### **PHA Policy**

If the PHA determines that the family is ineligible, the PHA will send written notification of the ineligibility determination within 10 business days of the determination. The notice will specify the reasons for ineligibility and will inform the family of its right to request an informal review (Chapter 16).

If a family fails to qualify for any criteria that affected the order in which it was selected from the waiting list (e.g. targeted funding, extremely low-income), the family will be returned to its original position on the waiting list. The PHA will notify the family in writing that it has been returned to the waiting list and specify the reasons for it.

If the PHA determines that the family is eligible to receive assistance, the PHA will invite the family to attend a briefing in accordance with the policies in Chapter 5.