

Chapter 4 ESTABLISHING PREFERENCES AND MAINTAINING A WAITING LIST

[24 CFR Part 5, Subpart D; 982.54(d)(1); 982.204, 982.205, 982.206, 982.207]

INTRODUCTION

It is the Housing Authority's objective to ensure that families are selected from waiting lists for admissions in accordance with the policies in this Administrative Plan.

This Chapter explains the local preferences which the Housing Authority has adopted to meet local housing needs, defines the eligibility criteria for the preferences and explains the Housing Authority's system of applying them. An applicant does not need to be eligible for local preferences in order to be eligible for assistance.

By maintaining an accurate waiting list, the Housing Authority will be able to perform the activities which ensure that an adequate pool of qualified applicants will be available so that program funds are used in a timely manner.

A. WAITING LISTS [24 CFR 982.204]

Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) and Mainstream Voucher Programs

The Housing Authority uses a single waiting list for admission to its HCV and Mainstream Voucher tenant-based assistance programs. The Housing Authority may opt to accept only the number of applicants who may be expected to be reached within one year in accordance with the policies outlined within this Chapter. Applicants who will be placed on the waitlist will be selected by random lottery. All applicants will be notified of their waitlist status within a reasonable time after waitlist close in accordance with the policies included in Chapter 3.

Except for Special Admissions, defined below, applicants will be selected from the Housing Authority waiting list in accordance with HCV policies and preferences outlined in this chapter.

Emergency Housing Voucher Program

The Housing Authority uses a single waiting list for admission to its Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) waitlist. All applicants admitted to the EHV waitlist must be referred by the Sonoma County Coordinated Entry System. The Housing Authority may opt to accept only the number referred who may be expected to be reached within a three month period.

Eligibility for the Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program is limited to individuals and families who are (1) homeless¹; (2) at risk of homelessness²; (3) fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or human trafficking; or recently homeless and for whom providing rental assistance will prevent the family's homelessness or having high risk of housing instability. [PIH 2021-15 (HA)]

Applicant Information for Waitlist

The Housing Authority will maintain information that permits proper selection from the waiting lists.

The waiting lists include, but are not limited to, collecting and maintaining the following information for each applicant listed:

Applicant Name

Family Unit Size (number of bedrooms family qualifies for under Housing Authority subsidy standards)

Randomly assigned applicant identification number

Qualification for any preferences administered locally

Racial or ethnic designation of the head of household

B. SPECIAL ADMISSIONS [24 CFR 982.54(d)(e), 982.203]

If HUD awards the Housing Authority program funding that is targeted for specific families, the Housing Authority will admit these families under a Special Admission procedure.

Special Admissions families will be admitted outside of the regular waiting list process. They do not have to qualify for any preferences, nor are they required to be on the program waiting list.

The Housing Authority maintains separate records of these admissions.

Applicants who are admitted under Special Admissions, rather than from the waiting list, are identified by codes in the automated system.

If HUD awards a Housing Authority program funding that is targeted for families living in specified units, the Housing Authority must use the assistance for the families living in

¹ The meaning of "homeless" is as such term is defined in section 103(a) of the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302(a)), which is codified in HUD's Continuum of Care Program regulations at 24CFR 578.3

² The meaning of "at risk of homelessness" is as such term is defined in section 401(1) of the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11360(1)), which is codified in HUD's Continuum of Care Program regulations at 24CFR 578.3

these units under a Special Admission procedure.

The following are examples of types of program funding that may be designated by HUD for families living in a specified unit:

A family displaced because of demolition or disposition of a public or Indian housing project;

A family residing in a multifamily rental housing project when HUD sells, forecloses or demolishes the project;

For housing covered by the Low Income Housing Preservation and Resident Home-ownership Act of 1990; and

A family residing in a project covered by a project-based Section 8 HAP contract at or near the end of the HAP contract term.

C. TARGETED FUNDING [24 CFR 982.204(e)]

When HUD awards special funding for certain family types, families who qualify are placed on the regular waiting list. When a specific type of funding becomes available, the waiting list is searched for the first available family meeting the targeted funding criteria.

D. HCV LOCAL PREFERENCES [24 CFR 982.207]

In addition to a randomly assigned applicant number, the Housing Authority has preferences used to select families from the wait list when families eligible for such preferences are present on the waitlist. Each preference will receive an allocation of points so that the computer software can accurately determine the placement of families on the wait list. The applicant's cumulative points will determine the preference status and how it affects applicant position on the wait list.

When verifying preferences, the Housing Authority reserves the right to verify the authenticity of any document it deems to be questionable or contains a discrepancy.

The Housing Authority has adopted the following preference system:

~~a. In-Place Preference. During times when overall program lease-up is below 95%, a limited preference will may be granted to families who are considered to be living in place. This preference applies to those who have been living in a unit within the jurisdiction of the Sonoma County Housing Authority for at least three months and the property manager certifies that he/she is willing to accept the HCV Program if the applicant is approved. This preference will may be granted to a up to 15% of all names pulled from the waitlist at each pull during times of low lease-up. Required documentation will include a letter from the property manager certifying that he/she will accept the voucher, a copy of applicant's lease in an appropriate size dwelling for the family listed in the housing application,~~

~~and copies of utility bills for a 3 (three) month period verifying residency in the unit. Should a voucher be issued using this preference and the voucher is unable to be utilized in the “in place” unit, the voucher will be rescinded and the applicant returned to the waiting list. (Rev 2019/2022)~~

~~b.a.~~ In-Place Homeless Prevention Super Preference. Subject to the availability of Annual Contributions Contract authorized voucher units, an absolute preference for Housing Choice Vouchers will be made available for in-place occupants when the unit they are residing in is subject to the loss of affordability restrictions or a subsidy tied to a specific facility or unit and the loss of the restriction or subsidy places the occupant at imminent risk or high-risk of losing stable housing and/or becoming homeless. In order for an applicant to be eligible for this super preference, they must be meet all eligibility requirements of the Housing Authority. In order to implement this preference, the Housing Authority must receive notification from a local municipality or partner agency of the Sonoma County Community Development Commission (“Commission”). All notifications are subject to Commission determination that the loss of stable housing and/or homelessness for in-place resident(s) is eminent.

This preference will also apply to in-place, income eligible households whose rental assistance is being terminated due to insufficient funding or term expiration of other rental assistance programs administered by the Housing Authority or whose rental assistance is being terminated due to insufficient funding of other rental assistance programs funded through the Sonoma County Continuum of Care.

~~e.b.~~ Other Preference. Preference points will be granted to applicants with household members in the following groups. Preference points are cumulative.

- Seniors (1)
- Persons with disabilities (1)
- Persons with disabilities who are transitioning out of a mental health care institution or other segregated settings or at serious risk of institutionalization. (1)

~~d.c.~~ Homeless Preference. To promote ending homelessness, and subject to the availability of Annual Contributions Contract authorized voucher units, thirty-six (36)the Housing Authority may allocate up to 20% of its annual turn-over -Housing Choice Vouchers per calendar year may be made available for households families who have successfully engaged in homeless assistance programs and/or initiatives within the County participated in a transitional housing, interim housing or an

emergency shelter program within the County of Sonoma and or homeless-services initiatives within the County of Sonoma. Households/Families who are referred must have a VI score of 10 or less and they must be able to maintain independent housing without intensive with minimal supportive services of Sonoma. These vouchers will be issued based on referrals from the Sonoma County Coordinated Entry Program/Sonoma County supportive service providers participating in the Sonoma County Continuum of Care who have entered a Memorandum of Understanding with the Sonoma County Housing Authority. The referring supportive services provider is expected to provide housing navigation assistance and one year of housing stabilization services for those referred through this program. Eligible households/families referred through this program will be granted an absolute preference on the Housing Authority Waiting List. Referred applicants must meet Housing Authority income and other eligibility requirements and be drawn from the waitlist. (Revised 2023)

e.d. Move On Allocation. Subject to the availability of Annual Contributions Contract authorized voucher units/Contingent upon funding, the Housing Authority will allocate up to 20% of its annual turn-over program vouchers per year to serve households eligible for this limited preference. This preference is referral based and is intended for formerly homeless individuals/families/households who have successfully participated in a Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) program (see Glossary for definition) within Sonoma County, and have been determined by the supportive services provider to be ready to move into housing without attached supportive services. Issuing these households tenant-based vouchers will create vacancies in PSH programs thereby allowing additional homeless families/households in need of services to be housed. Applicants referred for this program must be drawn from the waitlist and will be given an absolute preference. Referred applicants must meet Housing Authority income and other eligibility requirements and be drawn from the waitlist. At its discretion, the Housing Authority will annually evaluate whether to renew this preference. Referrals will be taken from an approved PHA third party who have verified Permanent Supportive Housing units.

f.e. Housing Access and Reentry Pilot Program. Subject to the availability of Annual Contributions Contract authorized voucher units, up to five (5) Housing Choice Vouchers may be made available per calendar year for persons exiting incarceration, who are actively engaged in supportive services, and who have a high potential of becoming homeless. The Housing Authority may consider adopting policies that allows individuals

~~formerly incarcerated to live with their families in assisted housing, while receiving supportive services. An Individuals individual referred through this program~~ who would otherwise be ineligible for ~~assisted housing assistance must have been. All referrals made through this program must come from~~ referred to the Housing Authority by an approved partnering agency/~~ies~~ who ~~has~~ have entered into an agreement with the Sonoma County Probation Department or other law enforcement agency to provide supportive services to persons exiting incarceration. Referred applicants may be considered for housing based on adjusted policy criteria associated with the program's suitability standards, to exclude any period of time from the date of the offense or release from incarceration as indicated in Section 15.A. ~~This reentry pilot program proposes to allow approximately 45 individuals to participate in the Housing Choice Voucher program as a newly admitted household (See Section 4.3) over a three year period ending December 31, 2022, at which time the Housing Authority will evaluate the program and the program may convert from a pilot to an on-going preference or be terminated based upon outcomes recorded.~~ There is no proposed cap on the number of individuals allowed to join a Housing Authority assisted household for the purpose of reunifying other family member households. All persons considered under this ~~pilot~~ program are subject to an Informal Review per the procedures outlined in Section 19.B. At its discretion, the Housing Authority will annually evaluate whether to renew this ~~Pilot~~ Program. Applicants for this Pilot Reentry Program must be drawn from the waitlist and will be given an absolute preference. Referred applicants must meet Housing Authority income requirements and be drawn from the waitlist.

Exceptions to the suitability standards would not be extended to the following HUD required denials [24 CFR 960.204] to the following individuals:

- Persons convicted of manufacturing or producing methamphetamine on the premises of federally assisted housing;
- Any person subject to a life time registration requirement under a state sex offender registration program.

f. Limited Preference for Households Experiencing Chronic Homelessness. Subject to the availability of Annual Contributions Contract authorized voucher units, the Housing Authority may allocate up to 10% of its annual turn-over program vouchers per year to serve households eligible for this limited preference. These vouchers are targeted for households experiencing homelessness. In order to receive this preference applicants must be referred from Coordinated Entry (CE) via a Housing First model of homeless services. Any applicants for these vouchers must be provided with housing search assistance and on-going case management before

and placement and for one year after placement. Documentation of an applicant's chronic homeless status must be provided for consideration for this limited preference. This preference will be available even when the waiting list is closed to other applicants. Eligibility, including background checks, will be confirmed for all members of the household pursuant to this Administrative Plan

E. INITIAL DETERMINATION OF LOCAL PREFERENCE QUALIFICATION [24 CFR 5.415]

At the time of application, an applicant's entitlement to a Local Preference may be made on the following basis:

An applicant's certification that they qualify for a preference will be accepted without verification at the time of preliminary application. When the family is selected from the waiting list for the final determination of eligibility, any preference claimed will be verified.

If the preference verification indicates that an applicant does not qualify for the preference, the applicant will be returned to the waiting list in their original waitlist position without the addition of a preference. Applicant will be given an opportunity for an informal review to discuss the preference.

Change in Circumstances

Changes in an applicant's circumstances while on the waiting list may affect the family's entitlement to a preference. Applicants are required to notify the Housing Authority in writing when their circumstances change.

Preference Denial

[24 CFR 982.207]

If upon verification SCHA determines that the family does not qualify for the preference(s) claimed, the family will not receive the preference and will be placed back on the waitlist to the waitlist position they would have been assigned without the preference; unless the family was selected during the final draw, in which case the waitlist application may be cancelled. The family will be notified in writing and advised of the family's right to request an informal review. For additional information refer to Chapter 19.

F. INCOME TARGETING

In accordance with the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998, each fiscal year the Housing Authority will reserve a minimum of seventy-five percent of its HCV new admissions for extremely low-income families. -The Housing Authority will admit families who qualify under the Extremely Low Income limit to meet the income targeting

requirement, regardless of preference.

If the family's verified annual income, at final eligibility determination, does not fall under the Extremely Low Income limit and the family was selected for income targeting purposes, the family will be returned to the waiting list.

The Housing Authority's income targeting requirement does not apply to low-income families continuously assisted as provided for under the 1937 Housing Act.

The Housing Authority is also exempted from this requirement where the Housing Authority is providing assistance to low-income or moderate income families entitled to preservation assistance under the tenant-based program as a result of a mortgage prepayment or opt-out.