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ISSUE #28



Salem Housing Authority PROGRAM MANAGEMENT REPORT





OUR MISSION

Salem Housing Authority's mission is to assist low- and moderate-income families to achieve self-sufficiency through stable housing, economic opportunity, community investment, and coordination with social service providers.

Established in 1969 under provisions of Oregon state law, Salem Housing Authority serves approximately 9,000 Salem area residents within Salem/Keizer's Urban Growth Boundary with safe and affordable rental housing.

Salem Housing Authority is committed to building a stronger community through public housing, housing choice vouchers, affordable housing, and supportive services. We serve families, individuals, people with disabilities, and senior citizens.

On December 13, 2025, the Salem Housing Authority had the honor of participating in the annual Shop with a Cop event. This initiative, organized by *Believe in Your Community*, aims to strengthen relationships between local law enforcement and the community while providing valuable experiences for families and children.

This marked our second year of successfully implementing an innovative process for the Shop with a Cop events. This initiative led to substantial cost savings and improved efficiency. We transitioned to a fully paperless system for registration and check-ins, streamlining operations and improving communication among participants. This allowed us to manage resources and coordinate logistics effectively, ultimately creating a more impactful and organized experience for the children and police officers involved.

SHOP WITH A COP

There were over 700 kids who participated in this years event, and over 100 volunteers.





SHOP WITH A COP



Housing Authorities Warn of "Year of Scarcity" Amid Federal Uncertainty

Salem, Ore. — January 14, 2026

On January 14, Jessica Blakely addressed Oregon's Senate Interim Committee on Housing and Development to provide an update on the state's housing authorities and the mounting challenges they are facing under shifting federal guidance and funding constraints.

Blakely began by underscoring the central role housing authorities play in Oregon's affordable housing system. Oregon's 22 housing authorities collectively serve all 36 counties and represent the largest providers of affordable housing in the state. Their primary mission is to ensure that low-income Oregonians have access to safe, stable, and affordable homes.

Contrary to common public perception, Jessica clarified that housing authorities do not receive their core funding from Oregon Housing and Community Services. Instead, the majority of their funding comes directly from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD supports Public Housing, the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program—commonly known as Section 8—and related initiatives such as Family Self-Sufficiency programs and special purpose vouchers, including VASH (for veterans), Foster Youth Independence vouchers, and Family Unification vouchers.

Conflicting Federal Guidance Creates Operational Confusion

Blakely described a growing climate of uncertainty stemming from recent and sometimes contradictory directives from HUD.

One particularly concerning example, she said, is a notice instructing housing authorities to reconsider a decade's worth of applicant screening policies and begin using arrest records in eligibility determinations. This guidance conflicts with existing Oregon state law and does not reflect any changes to the Federal Code of Regulations.

"As a result, we are holding steady with our current policies until we receive clearer direction," Blakely said. "But this kind of back-and-forth is incredibly disruptive."

She also pointed to a revival of elements of the 1996 "one-strike" policy as another source of confusion, noting that it clashes with local administrative plans that require public input and formal review before changes can be made.

Meanwhile, HUD has been working with housing authorities to transition Emergency Housing Vouchers into the standard Section 8 program. Salem Housing Authority, for example, currently has 26 households left to convert as part of this process.

Operating on 2023 Dollars in 2026

A major theme of Jessica's testimony was funding instability. Because of Continuing Resolutions passed by Congress, Oregon housing authorities are still operating on 2023 funding levels while facing 2026 expenses. Rising costs and increased demand for housing assistance have not been matched with updated budgets.

Even administrative fees—typically set at 10% of grant funding—are prorated by HUD. Since 2023, housing authorities have been receiving only about 90% of those fees, and advocacy groups anticipate that figure could drop to between 76 and 85 percent.

"That directly impacts our ability to staff our agencies," Blakely stated.

As a result, many housing authorities across Oregon have been forced to reduce their workforce. Salem Housing Authority, where Blakely oversees the budget, has cut its staff from 72 to 64 full-time employees this year.

New Cost-Cutting Directives Raise Red Flags

Blakely also highlighted a recent Public and Indian Housing Notice (PIH 2025-28), which instructs housing authorities to begin cutting costs. In practical terms, this means limiting or halting the issuance of new housing vouchers—even for agencies that are not in financial shortfall.

"Salem Housing Authority is not in shortfall, yet we've still been told to stop issuing vouchers," Blakely said. "When I hear that, it signals that a broader budget reduction may be coming."

She warned that this creates serious bottlenecks in the housing system, particularly for people trying to move from transitional housing into permanent housing, with ripple effects across the entire housing continuum.

Uncertainty Around H.R.1 (aka *The One Big Beautiful Bill*) and Future Voucher Limits

Blakely noted that staff and residents are also concerned about potential impacts from H.R.1 and whether similar restrictions could be applied to voucher programs in the future. She outlined several cost-saving measures HUD is currently encouraging or requiring, including:

- Increasing minimum rents, which would disproportionately impact people with zero income
- Adjusting eligibility criteria
- Conducting more rigorous "rent reasonableness" testing rather than relying on payment standards
- Limiting or halting new project-based voucher contracts for affordable housing developments
- Potentially lowering payment standards, which could strain relationships with landlords and reduce housing options for voucher holders
- Revising bedroom authorization policies, which could affect family housing stability

These changes, Jessica advised, are labor-intensive and require additional staff time at a moment when agencies are already cutting positions.

Communication Breakdown with HUD

Blakely expressed frustration with the lack of clarity and support from HUD in implementing these changes. New directives often arrive via email, she said, and when housing authorities seek guidance, there is frequently no one available to provide meaningful answers. When officials do respond, they often rely on pre-written talking points rather than offering practical assistance. Compounding the problem, HUD recently overhauled its website, removing many resources that housing authorities relied on for policy guidance and technical assistance.

Looking Ahead: A Year of Scarcity

Blakely concluded on a sobering note. After consulting with the Nation Association of Housing Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), she said it is unlikely that Congress will reach a firm budget decision by January 30, 2026. What advocacy groups do agree on is this: 2026 is shaping up to be a "year of scarcity" for the Housing Choice Voucher program. "For now, all we can do is plan with uncertainty," Blakely said, "and hope that clearer direction—and adequate funding—will come sooner rather than later."





Customer Service

CUSTOMER SERVICE

In 2025, our Front Desk Staff worked diligently to deliver outstanding customer service to participants, applicants, and employees. Here's a snapshot of what they accomplished:

Most Common Questions:

Front Desk	Total
Documents Processed	7,690
Clients Assisted	7,690
Voicemail - returned	3,604
Phone Support	1,013

- Open Waiting List Application
- Wait List Status Check
- Change of Address and/or Household Information
- SHA Housing Types
- Housing Resources
- Rental Assistance

The team also assisted the public with applications for various housing options, including:

- Parkway East and West (2 and 3-bedroom units)
- Mahonia Crossings (1-bedroom units)
- Salem Housing Preservation 4% (2 and 4-bedroom units)
- Yaquina Hall (1-bedroom Project-Based units)

This team also processed over 2,000 responses to purged letters.

Our front desk team is committed to delivering exceptional support, and clients often express appreciation for the excellent service they receive.

SECTION 8

Voucher Lease Up

As of December 31st, 2025, the following Salem Housing Authority Vouchers were under lease:

Section 8 Voucher	Total Allotment	Total Leased	Housing Assistance Payments
Housing Choice Vouchers	2,819	2,671	\$2,666,448
Family Unification Program (FUP)	119	101	\$120,719
Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH)	138	117	\$99,821
Mainstream Vouchers	192	135	\$130,634
Emergency Housing Vouchers	34	24	\$23,924

3,302

Total
Allotment

3,048

Total Leased

\$3,041,546

Housing Assistance
Payments

Housing Assistance Payments (also called "HAP") are made monthly directly to property owners on behalf of leased Voucher participants.

SECTION 8

Update on the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program

Successes and Challenges in December

Overview

In December, the HCV program made notable progress in enhancing housing stability for households at different stages of the voucher process, from determining eligibility to signing leases. Program staff showcased strong collaboration, responsiveness, and productivity, despite ongoing challenges related to landlords and administrative tasks that demanded significant time and coordination from the team.

Program Successes

Stabilizing Housing for Vulnerable Individuals

A significant achievement this month was the successful housing placement of an elderly applicant who had been living in her car. Through coordinated efforts, we were able to secure safe and stable housing for her. This reinforces the essential role the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program plays in preventing homelessness among highly vulnerable individuals.

Team Productivity and Pipeline Advancement

As a team, HCV staff completed 43 initial/applicant appointments during December. Each completed appointment represents a household moving closer to receiving a voucher and the opportunity to secure stable housing. In addition, 43 move-ins were successfully completed during the month.

Increased Application Processing and Leasing Activity

One Housing Specialist processed six new applications, resulting in six households actively shopping for suitable units with housing assistance.

Rapid Response to Urgent Placement Needs

An example of exceptional collaboration occurred when a Housing Specialist received an urgent Project-Based Voucher (PBV) placement assignment at 11:00 a.m. Through immediate coordination with property management, the client, and HCV staff, the client was fully leased by 4:30 p.m. the same day. This outcome highlights the program's ability to respond quickly and effectively to urgent housing needs.

SECTION 8

Progress Toward a Paperless Program

December marked the start of the program's transition toward a paperless system—a significant operational initiative aimed at improving efficiency, document tracking, and long-term sustainability. While this is a large undertaking, the program's goal is to be fully paperless by the end of 2026, with all client files being converted to electronic processing and storage. Initial steps taken this month establish a strong foundation for future improvements.

Program Exits

During December, seventeen families exited the HCV program, either through voluntary terminations or terminations related to violations of program rules. These exits are monitored to ensure program integrity while allowing resources to be reallocated to households actively seeking and maintaining compliance with program requirements.

Program Challenges

Landlord Rent and Ledger Discrepancies

Resolving rent and tenant ledger discrepancies for HCV participants continued to be a significant challenge in December. Staff spent considerable time working with landlords to correct errors and provide education on HCV program requirements.

Delays in Receiving Leases for Initial Move-Ins

Delays in obtaining executed lease agreements from landlords remain an ongoing concern. The program has a 60-day window from the move-in date to secure a signed Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract, which requires a copy of the lease. Late receipt of leases increases administrative pressure and the risk of missed deadlines. Obtaining required documentation often requires repeated follow-up by HCV staff, limiting capacity for other program activities. This challenge underscores the need for improved landlord responsiveness and more streamlined documentation processes.

Looking Ahead

The program will continue to strengthen landlord engagement, improve documentation timelines, and advance the transition to a paperless system. Combined with continued staff collaboration and high productivity, these efforts will support efficient program operations and improved housing outcomes for participating families.



Special Programs Team December, 31, 2025

Special Programs has distinct teams that come together to serve our community: Resident Services, a Landlord Navigator, Housing Specialists, and Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinators.

Special Program Vouchers	Total Allotment	Total Leased
Mainstream Vouchers (MS)	192	142
Emergency Housing Vouchers	34	29
Project Based Voucher (PBV)	*294	246

****Project-Based Vouchers (PBVs) awarded include those that have not yet been contracted.***

There are various projects currently in active leasing, along with multiple awards that have been granted but are not yet included in our total leasing count.

Family Self Sufficiency (FSS)

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

In December, FSS had a client graduate who received a check for over \$11,000. Upon completing the program, this client shared their thoughts:

"One way I would compare my life is in shades of color. When I first started in the program, I viewed my life as blunt, gray, blurry, and washed out. To me, this meant that my future plans didn't seem worthwhile to consider. I believed I had to fulfill my responsibilities out of obligation.

Now I see my life in bright, vivid colors. The shapes and hues are focused and clear, making my future plans seem possible, attainable, and even enjoyable to consider. I now believe that responsibilities are a gift, a blessing. Working hard and connecting with positive programs and a resilient community offers greater rewards than just a paycheck that only covers the bills."



The FSS program was awarded an additional \$20,000 from the Community Planning and Development Department through the *Marion County Prosperity Grant*. This grant focuses on supporting our clients in achieving their small business dreams. The funds can be used for various small business needs, including educational classes, licensing fees, permits, operational costs, and other approved expenses.

Additionally, the team held another FSS Mixer, a community gathering for FSS clients. During this event, clients participated in a roundtable where they shared information and resources with one another while decorating cookies. One client, who works for Salem Free Clinics, and another client from DevNW were able to share valuable insights with the group.

Landlord Navigator Success Story

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

"One of the most impactful success stories I encountered this month involved a client who was experiencing homelessness. This individual had faced a series of unfortunate circumstances that led to repeated denials for housing, which drove them to a point of deep discouragement and despair. After enduring these challenges for an extended period, they were on the verge of giving up hope altogether.

Recognizing the gravity of their situation, my team and I engaged in persistent advocacy and collaboration on their behalf. We reached out to various local landlords and housing programs, exploring every possible avenue. Eventually, our efforts paid off when we connected with a compassionate landlord who was willing to offer this client a second chance at a stable home.

Now, this individual is successfully housed and has started to rebuild their life. They expressed heartfelt gratitude for the unwavering support extended by Salem Housing, acknowledging that the assistance they received played a crucial role in their journey. Experiences like this serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of our work and reinforce my commitment to helping those in need. It is moments like these that remind me why I value my role in this field and the difference we can make in people's lives."



PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

In December, staff worked through a long-standing vacancy at Sequoia Crossings, a third-floor Project-Based Voucher (PBV) unit in a building without elevator access. Although the unit was ready for occupancy, it had been vacant for several months because Coordinated Entry (CE) referrals consistently included applicants who were unable to accept a third-floor walk-up due to mobility limitations. Each referral cycle required full intake and paperwork processing before the mobility barrier was identified, which led to repeated delays and no successful lease-up.

To address this issue, SHA requested approval from the Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance (MWVHA) to use an alternate coordinated entry approach for this specific unit. MWVHA approved the request, acknowledging that this approach would better support timely lease-up while case conferencing is being reestablished.

A key improvement in this process was adding a disclosure and acknowledgement form that clearly stated the unit was on the third floor with no elevator. Applicants referred through this method were able to acknowledge in advance that they understood and wanted to be referred for a third-floor apartment with no elevator. This simple step helped ensure referrals were appropriate and avoided late-stage withdrawals after paperwork and screening had already started.

Using this approach, staff coordinated with shelter and agency partners to identify a qualified individual who met CE requirements and was able and willing to navigate stairs. The results were immediate. Within a week, the applicant completed eligibility interviews and all required paperwork through coordination between the voucher team, property staff, and supportive services. The applicant arranged transportation to complete appointments and shared that he appreciated the seamless process for completing his eligibility paperwork with the voucher team and property management on the same day.

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

The unit was shown and leased within days, and the resident moved in two days before Christmas. Around the same time, he had just started a new job at Walmart in Woodburn and was approved to transfer to the Lancaster location, further supporting housing stability. He expressed appreciation and amazement at how quickly the housing opportunity came together right before the holidays.

This experience showed how a targeted alternate CE process, combined with clear upfront communication and strong collaboration across teams, can quickly resolve hard-to-fill vacancies. The PBV team and property management staff all noted how effective the coordination was, and this model will be used to improve the referral process from shelter to lease-up in the future.

The Sequoia Crossings lease-up highlights the importance of flexibility within the Coordinated Entry system, particularly for hard-to-place units, and supports SHA's commitment to reducing vacancies and moving people into stable housing as quickly as possible.



SUMMARY

Summary

Salem Housing Authority is fully committed to strengthening our community through public housing, housing choice vouchers, affordable housing, and supportive services. We are here to support families, individuals, people with disabilities, and senior citizens.

We invite you to share your voice!

Your insights in our Program Management Report Survey will empower us to enhance the information you receive.

<https://forms.office.com/g/TQCckDSerz>

