



CITY OF SALEM

585 Liberty St SE
Salem, OR 97301

Staff Report

File #: 20-363

Version: 1

Date: 9/28/2020

Item #: 3.3b.

TO: Chair and Housing Authority Commissioners

THROUGH: Steve Powers, Executive Director

FROM: Nicole Utz, Administrator

SUBJECT:

Revised Section 8 Administrative Plan

Ward(s): All Wards

Commissioners(s): All Commissioners

Neighborhood(s): Neighborhoods

Result Area(s): Welcoming and Livable Community

ISSUE:

Shall the Commission adopt Resolution No. 2267 approving the Revised Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan, effective October 1, 2020?

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt Resolution No. 2267 (Attachment 1) approving the Revised Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan modifying eligibility criteria, adding a method for the Housing Authority to accept applications from homeless and at-risk households with at least one non-elderly disabled adult, updating language and administrative references, and adopting current industry best practices.

SUMMARY:

The revised Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan includes the following updates:

- 1) Alignment of non-discrimination policies with protected classes defined in Oregon Revised Statutes and Salem Municipal Code;
- 2) Reduction of criminal background screening criteria that prohibits admission to persons subject to lifetime registration as a sex offender (HUD-required mandatory denial) and persons convicted of manufacture of methamphetamine, regardless of location and date of conviction;

- 3) Clarified that applications for local preference applicants will be accepted when the Housing Choice Voucher waiting list is closed, in limited numbers by preference type, including program transfers, victims of Domestic Violence, Graduates of Veterans Rental Assistance Program and Homeless Rental Assistance Program, and homeless/at-risk families that include at least one non-elderly disabled adult to target Mainstream Vouchers to vulnerable families;
- 4) Updated most previously in-person processes to be conducted by mail, telephone, and/or videoconferencing when appropriate;
- 5) Eliminated requirements for notarized signatures on self-certifications;
- 6) Updated inspection policies to include the acceptance of photos, video evidence, or completed work orders as evidence of completed repairs at SHA's discretion;
- 7) Simplified policies regarding additions of new adults to an assisted household;
- 8) Limit families to an offer of a repayment agreement only once during participation (any additional balance owed must be paid in full);
- 9) Updated Project-Based Voucher policies to match current Request for Proposal procedures and added descriptions, waiting list, and local preference information for Project-Based Voucher sites that have been added or are in development;
- 10) Updated plan language, references to the Code of Federal Regulations, and HUD notices and guidebooks to those currently in effect.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

The revisions to the Administrative Plan have been made to lower administrative burden, reduce eligibility screening time, clarify processes, and increase SHA's ability to serve vulnerable populations.

The reduction of criminal background screening criteria for the program will decrease the time it takes to determine eligibility of most applicants by 14-28 days. Current regulations require Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) to provide an appeal process when intending to deny assistance due to criminal background criteria that includes providing the applicant with a copy of the criminal background record and allowing ten business days for them to submit documentation to demonstrate that the record has been expunged, does not apply to them, was related to a disability or circumstances beyond their control (such as domestic violence), or that they have made changes in their life that mitigate the risk of the activity recurring. Most applicants are able to successfully appeal based on one of these factors.

Providing SHA with the ability to accept applications from homeless and at-risk households that are homeless or at-risk when the Housing Choice Voucher waiting list is closed will allow the Housing Authority to ensure that Mainstream Vouchers are targeted to these vulnerable households, as required by program rules, after the waiting list has been exhausted of current applicant families that

meet these criteria.

Allowing for eligibility screening and recertifications of income and eligibility to be conducted by mail, and informal reviews and hearings to be conducted by phone or videoconference, reduces administrative burden on the Housing Authority and ensure staff and community safety during a pandemic event.

Aligning policies with current governing rules and regulations, and simplifying and clarifying language throughout the plan, will ensure that SHA maintains consistency with HUD requirements and guidance and industry best practices.

The last revision to the Administrative Plan was effective September 2, 2019. The proposed revisions would be effective October 1, 2020 (Attachment 2).

BACKGROUND:

The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan establishes by policy the criteria under which families are eligible to receive a Housing Choice Voucher. Salem Housing Authority does not screen applicants for their suitability as potential tenants; landlords may still deny applicants based upon the screening criteria established for their properties.

Receipt of Mainstream Vouchers in 2019 require an update to the Administrative Plan to include application procedures for potentially eligible families.

Nicole Utz
Housing Administrator

Attachments:

1. Resolution No. 2267
2. Exhibit 1 to Resolution No. 2267