

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 placed in the proper order on the waiting list and selected from the waiting list 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.

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 LIST [24 CFR 982.204]

The Housing Authority uses a single waiting list for admission to its HCV tenant-based assistance program.

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

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

The waiting list includes the following information for each applicant listed:

Applicant Name

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

Date and time of application

Qualification for any local preference

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 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. LOCAL PREFERENCES [24 CFR 982.207]

1. The Housing Authority uses the following Local Preference system:

a. The first preference is granted to applicants who reside or work in the jurisdiction of the Sonoma County Housing Authority, or with agency-Sonoma County Coordinated Entry verification, applicants who are homeless or in a transitional housing program anywhere within Sonoma County. This preference will not have the purpose or effect of delaying or otherwise denying admission to the program based on the race, color, ethnic origin, gender, religion, disability, or age of any member of an applicant family.

b. A second preference is granted to applicants within the following groups:

- 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.

- Income eligible families whose rental assistance is being terminated due to insufficient of other rental assistance programs funded through the Sonoma County Continuum of Care.

c. A ~~second~~third additional preference is granted to applicants with household members in the following groups:

- Veterans or surviving spouses of veterans,
- Persons with disabilities,
- Seniors, and
- Families with minor children.

This ~~second~~third preference is non-cumulative, meaning only one preference is granted for an applicant household that may have members in more than one group. For example, a household with senior and Veteran members will receive only one preference. The ~~second~~third preference is weighted equally for all groups listed above.

All applications with the same amount of preferences or no preference are then ranked by date and time of receipt of a completed preliminary application.

2. SUPER PREFERENCE. Subject to the availability of Annual Contributions Contract authorized voucher units, Thirty-six (36) Housing Choice Vouchers per year may be made available for families engaged in homeless assistance programs and/or initiatives within the County of Sonoma. These vouchers will be issued based on referrals from the Sonoma County Coordinated Entry Program from agencies that have adopted a Housing First model of homeless services programs. The families referred under this program will be granted a “super” preference on the Housing Authority Waiting List. Super Preference applicants must meet Housing Authority income and other eligibility requirements.

3. Based on the availability of HCV funding, the Housing Authority recognizes the following separate local jurisdiction preference.

- Income eligible families displaced as a result of a federal or state declared disaster.
- Income eligible families displaced as a result of insufficient funding for other rental assistance programs administered by the Housing Authority.
- Income eligible families whose rental assistance is being terminated due to insufficient of other rental assistance programs funded through the Sonoma County Continuum of Care.
- Income eligible families whose dwelling was within the jurisdiction of the Housing Authority at the time of application, but is no longer due to annexation.

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 preliminary application. When the family is selected from the waiting list for the final determination of eligibility, the preference 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 without the Local Preference and given an opportunity for a meeting 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.

F. DISASTER RECOVERY

When a Federal or State disaster declaration is made in any area of Sonoma County, the Sonoma County Housing Authority may, according to the specific needs resulting from each disaster, make Housing Choice vouchers available to respond to disaster needs.

When the Housing Authority invokes this disaster recovery policy, the Housing Authority may utilize any available new or turnover assistance to assist families displaced by the disaster.

Any Disaster Program Vouchers or any existing Housing Choice Vouchers may be distributed in accordance with the following requirements:

1. During the term of the Federal or State disaster declaration, income-eligible families already on the Housing Authority waiting list who were displaced as a result of the disaster, AND have a household member who meets one of the preferences outlined in Section D1c of this Chapter, will be given first "super" preference in the selection process according to the date and time of the initial application. Other families displaced by the disaster, but who are not on the waiting list, will be able to apply to the waiting list and be given the same "super" preference. For purposes of this program, displacement is defined as a person whose housing situation was lost by the physical effects of the declared disaster.

2. To be considered eligible for displace status, verification of an applicant's displacement status **must** be provided by an agency or individual capable of rendering an official decision (for example, FEMA, codes officer, building/permits

officer, etc.). This process must establish that the applicant's housing situation was lost by the physical effects of the declared disaster. The Housing Authority may consider documentation from a non-profit organization in situations the Housing Authority deems appropriate.

3. A complete determination of participant eligibility must be made by the Housing Authority in conjunction with the displacement assessment.

F.G. 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.