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CHAPTER 2: APPLICATIONS

2-1. TAKING APPLICATIONS

a. POLICY

- (1) Before a PHA can put a family on the waiting list or admit a family as a tenant, it must obtain a written application which includes all the information the PHA needs to determine whether the family can be admitted, what kind of unit it will need, what priority it will have for admission, and what rent it will pay.
- (2) Unless the waiting list is closed, a PHA must accept an application from a person or family which wants to apply, even if an informal discussion indicates that the applicant may not be eligible.
- (3) The application must be dated, time-stamped, and referred to a central tenant selection and assignment office for processing.
- (4) All applications must be processed to the extent necessary to determine whether the applicant is eligible.
- (5) If the PHA has general occupancy projects constructed prior to 1978, the PHA must notify applicants with children under age seven of the dangers of lead-based paint poisoning and whether blood lead level screening is available for those children. If blood lead level screening is available, the applicant must be advised to notify the PHA if any of the applicant's children under seven who are tested has an elevated blood lead level.
- (6) Prior to taking applications and during periods when application taking is suspended, PHAs may maintain a list of names, addresses, and telephone numbers of persons who are interested in admission and apparently eligible. The PHA should make it clear that this does not constitute an application and does not determine the date and time for purposes of position on the waiting list. (See paragraph 2-3 for a discussion on closing and reopening waiting lists.)

b. DISCUSSION

- (1) HUD does not provide PHAs with a standard

application form. The PHA may develop its own form or other method of organizing the information, or use a form or method that another PHA or entity has developed.

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- (2) The application may be filled out by the applicant or by the interviewer. In either case, skillful interviewing by the PHA can often provide information which the PHA needs but the applicant might fail to report.
- (3) PHAs would usually need to collect the following information:
  - (a) The names of all persons who would be living in the unit, their sex, date of birth, and relationship;
  - (b) The applicant's address and a telephone number;
  - (c) Family characteristics (e.g., veteran) or circumstances (e.g., living in substandard housing) which would qualify for tenant selection preferences;
  - (d) Information about previous landlords and anyone else the PHA would want to contact to determine the applicant's suitability for admission;
  - (e) An estimate of the family's anticipated income for the next twelve months and the sources of that income;
  - (f) The names of employers, banks, and any other information the PHA would need to verify the applicant's income and deductions, and to verify the family composition; and
  - (g) The names and telephone numbers of persons to contact in an emergency. This would be especially important for elderly and handicapped applicants.
- (4) In conjunction with taking the application, the PHA should request whatever documentation it will need (e.g., birth certificates, tax returns) to verify the information the applicant has provided. The PHA may want to make copies of the documents or notations about their content.
- (5) In addition to obtaining information from the

applicant, the PHA should describe the public housing program and its requirements and provide specific information on the distribution of units by number of bedrooms. The PHA should also answer any questions the applicant might have.

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- (6) The PHA should inform applicants about other housing assistance programs the PHA operates (e.g., Section 8 Existing) and, if a family is interested, advise them how to apply.
- (7) The PHA should, where possible, provide materials for sight-impaired and hearing-impaired persons.
- (8) PHAs may take applications at more than one location as long as the processing occurs at one place.
  - (a) A PHA serving a large jurisdiction may want to take applications in outlying areas on specific days.
  - (b) PHAs may make special arrangements to take the applications of persons who are unable to come to the PHA offices, such as handicapped or disabled persons.
- (9) PHAs which maintain a list of names, addresses, and telephone numbers of interested persons during periods when application taking is suspended should:
  - (a) Either put everyone who is interested on the list or have clear and objective criteria for refusing to do so; and
  - (b) Establish procedures for notifying those on the list that they may apply once application taking is resumed. Everyone on the list should be notified simultaneously.
- (10) PHAs should be careful to avoid discouraging families from applying for public housing or rejecting applicants out of hand based on their "apparent ineligibility."

c. REFERENCES

Annual Contributions Contract, Section 208

Federal civil rights laws listed in paragraph 1-3(c)

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24 CFR 1.6

24 CFR 100

24 CFR 107.30

24 CFR 960

24 CFR 965, Subpart H (51 FR 5677)

2-2. APPLICANT AND PHA CERTIFICATION

Requirements for applicant certification to the PHA and PHA certification to HUD are in Chapter 3 of HUD Handbook 7465.3, The Public and Indian Housing Occupancy Reporting Handbook.

2-3. MAINTAINING A WELL-BALANCED APPLICATION POOL

a. POLICY

(1) PHAs must:

- (a) attempt to get a sufficient number and variety of applicants to fill all vacancies as they arise;
- (b) attempt to get a broad social and economic mixture of eligible applicants;
- (c) not seek more applicants than can be served within a reasonable period of time; and
- (d) develop procedures to identify those applicants who would no longer qualify or are no longer interested in being admitted to public housing.

(2) PHAs can accomplish these objectives through:

- (a) outreach to get additional applicants;
- (b) closing the waiting list to new applicants;  
and
- (c) updating the waiting list to remove the names of those who are no longer interested or no longer qualify.

- (3) PHAs should target their outreach efforts toward getting applicants from the desired segment of the lower income population. Examples:
  - (a) Relatively higher income families if required to achieve a broad range of income;
  - (b) Handicapped persons needing accessible units to fill available units of that type;
  - (c) Minority or non-minority families if needed to overcome the effects of prior discrimination or other conditions which resulted in limiting participation.

A PHA should avoid outreach methods which would likely result in receiving applicants from large numbers of persons it could not serve.

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- (4) PHAs which have too many applicants may close the waiting list:
  - (a) completely;
  - (b) during certain times of the year; or
  - (c) by type of project or by size and type of dwelling unit
- (5) PHAs may not close a waiting list based on whether or not the applicant would qualify for a particular selection preference (e.g., accept applications only from those who are involuntarily displaced). PHAs may not close a waiting list by income range (e.g., accept applications only from those in the highest range).
- (6) PHAs may not close a waiting list if it would have a discriminatory effect inconsistent with applicable civil rights laws.
- (7) PHAs may not close a waiting list unless they publicly announce any decision to suspend or restrict taking applications. PHAs may not reopen the list unless they publicly announce when they are going to resume taking applications. It is not sufficient simply to notify those people who showed an interest in applying during the period the list was closed.

- (8) PHAs should update their waiting lists periodically so that they can select tenants more efficiently.
- (9) PHAs must document the reason any applicant's name was removed from the waiting list.

b. DISCUSSION

- (1) PHAs are encouraged to diversify their application pool by conducting outreach to segments of the eligible population which have not previously been served by the public housing program. This could involve taking steps to get applications from people who might be least likely to apply because of race, ethnicity, sex of household head, age, or source of income.
- (2) In conducting outreach, the PHA should consider what methods would be most effective within the constraints of its financial resources.

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- (a) The PHA might want to post notices in:
  - o places of employment
  - o unemployment offices
  - o welfare offices
  - o post offices
  - o grocery stores
  - o churches
  - o community halts
  - o buses or other public transportation
- (b) The PHA could consider advertising:
  - o on radio
  - o on television
  - o in newspapers
  - o in local publications

In some cases the PHA may be able to arrange for a public service announcement.

(c) The PHA should also think about contacting organizations involved with:

- o disabled and handicapped people
- o the elderly
- o students

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- o immigrants
- o homeless people
- o victims of domestic violence

In some communities, PHAs may be able to get help in conducting outreach from certain civil rights and ethnic organizations.

(d) The PHA might want to mention characteristics of the public housing program or of the PHA's projects which would help attract applicants. For example, that:

- o rent is affordable and includes utilities;
- o projects are conveniently located and have good security;
- o some projects allow pets;
- o some projects have day-care facilities and others offer community activities; or that
- o some dwelling units have accessibility features for those with physical handicaps.

(e) Some PHAs have found that conducting an open house is a good way to attract potential applicants, explain the program, and give people an opportunity to see the facilities that are available.

(3) Prior to closing the waiting list, PHAs should be sure there are sufficient applicants to fill expected vacancies for at least several months.

(4) PHAs may close their waiting lists by unit size

and type but not by a selection preference, including income range, because a selection preference would be just one factor affecting admission, and not the ultimate limiting factor that the size and type of unit would be.

- (5) To help the PHA update its waiting list, PHAs may require applicants to report, at particular intervals (for example, annually), whether they are still interested in being admitted to public housing.

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- (6) PHAs may require applicants awaiting admission to report any changes in family composition or circumstances and any significant changes in income or assets which would affect the family's eligibility, the type of project and size and type of unit needed, or the family's priority for admission.
- (7) PHAs should not remove an applicant's name from the waiting list unless:
  - (a) the applicant requests that the name be removed; or
  - (b) the applicant was clearly advised of a requirement to tell the PHA of its continued interest by a particular time and failed to do so; or
  - (c) the PHA has made reasonable efforts to contact the applicant to determine if there is continued interest but has been unsuccessful; or
  - (d) the PHA has notified the applicant of its intention to remove the applicant's name because the applicant no longer qualifies for public housing.

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