

Chapter 4

APPLICATIONS, WAITING LIST AND TENANT SELECTION

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INTRODUCTION

When a family wishes to receive assistance under the HCV program, the family must submit an application that provides the GRHC with the information needed to determine the family's eligibility. HUD requires the GRHC to place all families that apply for assistance on a waiting list. When HCV assistance becomes available, the GRHC will select families from the waiting list in accordance with HUD requirements and GRHC policies as stated in the administrative plan and the annual plan.

The GRHC is required to adopt clear policies and procedures for accepting applications, placing families on the waiting list, and selecting families from the waiting list, and must follow these policies and procedures consistently. The actual order in which families are selected from the waiting list can be affected if a family has certain characteristics designated by HUD or the GRHC that justify their selection. Examples of this are the selection of families for income targeting and the selection of families that qualify for targeted funding.

HUD regulations require that all families have an equal opportunity to apply for and receive housing assistance, and that the GRHC affirmatively further fair housing goals in the administration of the program [24 CFR 982.53, HCV GB p. 4-1]. Adherence to the selection policies described in this chapter ensures that the GRHC will be in compliance with all relevant fair housing requirements, as described in Chapter 2.

This chapter describes HUD and GRHC policies for taking applications, managing the waiting list and selecting families for HCV assistance. The policies outlined in this chapter are organized into three sections, as follows:

Part I: The Application Process. This part provides an overview of the application process, and discusses how applicants can obtain and submit applications. It also specifies how the GRHC will handle the applications it receives.

Part II: Managing the Waiting List. This part presents the policies that govern how the GRHC's waiting list is structured, when it is opened and closed, and how the public is notified of the opportunity to apply for assistance. It also discusses the process the GRHC will use to keep the waiting list current.

Part III: Selection for HCV Assistance. This part describes the policies that guide the GRHC in selecting families for HCV assistance as such assistance becomes available. It also specifies how in-person interviews will be used to ensure that the GRHC has the information needed to make a final eligibility determination.

PART I: THE APPLICATION PROCESS

4-I.A. OVERVIEW

This part describes the GRHC policies for making applications available, accepting applications making preliminary determinations of eligibility, and the placement of applicants on the waiting list. This part also describes the GRHC's obligation to ensure the accessibility of the application process to elderly persons, people with disabilities, and people with limited English proficiency (LEP).

4-I.B. APPLYING FOR ASSISTANCE [HCV GB, pp. 4-11 – 4-16, Notice PIH 2009-36]

Any family that wishes to receive HCV assistance must apply for admission to the program. The GRHC will include Form HUD-92006, Supplement to Application for Federally Assisted Housing, as part of the GRHC's application.

Depending upon the length of time that applicants may need to wait to receive assistance, GRHC may use a one- or two-step application process.

A one-step process will be used when it is expected that a family will be selected from the waiting list within 60 calendar days of the date of application. At application, the family must provide all the information necessary to establish family eligibility and level of assistance.

A two-step process will be used when it is expected that a family will not be selected from the waiting list for at least 60 calendar days from the date of application. Under the two-step application process, GRHC initially will require families to provide only the information needed to make an initial assessment of the family's eligibility, and to determine the family's placement on the waiting list. The family will be required to provide all of the information necessary to establish family eligibility and level of assistance when the family is selected from the waiting list.

Families may submit application on-line, via GRHC's web-based Applicant Portal. As a reasonable accommodation to applicants with disability, GRHC will accept applications via telephone or in person during normal business hours. Project Based and RAD projects are addressed in Chapter(s) 17 and 18.

Applications must be complete in order to be accepted by GRHC for processing. If an application is incomplete, GRHC will notify the family of the additional information required.

4-I.C. ACCESSIBILITY OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Elderly and Disabled Populations [24 CFR 8 and HCV GB, pp. 4-11 – 4-13]

The GRHC will take steps to ensure that the application process is accessible to those people who might have difficulty complying with the normal, standard GRHC application process. This could include people with disabilities, certain elderly individuals, as well as persons with limited English proficiency (LEP). The GRHC will provide reasonable accommodation to the needs of individuals with disabilities. The application-taking facility and the application process must be fully accessible, or the GRHC will provide an alternate approach that provides full access to the application process. Chapter 2 provides a full discussion of the GRHC's policies related to providing reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities.

Limited English Proficiency

The GRHC is required to take reasonable steps to ensure equal access to their programs and activities by persons with limited English proficiency [24 CFR 1]. Chapter 2 provides a full discussion on the GRHC's policies related to ensuring access to people with limited English proficiency (LEP).

4-I.D. PLACEMENT ON THE WAITING LIST

The GRHC will review each complete application received and make a preliminary assessment of the family's eligibility. The GRHC will accept applications from families for whom the list is open unless there is good cause for not accepting the application (such as denial of assistance) for the grounds stated in the regulations [24 CFR 982.206(b)(2)]. Where the family is determined to be ineligible, the GRHC will notify the family in writing [24 CFR 982.201(f)]. Where the family is determined to be eligible, the family will be placed on a waiting list of applicants. No applicant has a right or entitlement to be listed on the waiting list, or to any particular position on the waiting list [24 CFR 982.202(c)].

Ineligible for Placement on the Waiting List

If the GRHC can determine from the information provided that a family is ineligible, the family will not be placed on the waiting list. Where a family is determined to be ineligible, the GRHC will send written notification of the ineligibility determination within 15 calendar days of receiving a complete application. The notice will specify the reasons for ineligibility and will inform the family of its right to request an informal review and explain the process for doing so (see Chapter 16).

Eligible for Placement on the Waiting List

The GRHC will send written notification of the preliminary eligibility determination within 15 calendar days of receiving a complete application.

Placement on the waiting list does not indicate that the family is, in fact, eligible for assistance. A final determination of eligibility will be made when the family is selected from the waiting list.

Applicants will be placed on the waiting list according to any preference(s) for which they qualify, and the date and time their complete application is received by GRHC.

PART II: MANAGING THE WAITING LIST

4-II.A. OVERVIEW

The GRHC has policies regarding various aspects of organizing and managing the waiting list of applicant families. This includes opening the list to new applicants, closing the list to new applicants, notifying the public of waiting list openings and closings, updating waiting list information, purging the list of families that are no longer interested in or eligible for assistance, as well as conducting outreach to ensure a sufficient number of applicants.

4-II.B. ORGANIZATION OF THE WAITING LIST [24 CFR 982.204 and 205]

The GRHC's HCV waiting list must be organized in such a manner to allow the GRHC to accurately identify and select families for assistance in the proper order, according to the admissions policies described in this plan.

The waiting list must contain the following information for each applicant listed:

- Applicant name;
- Family unit size;
- Date and time of application;
- Qualification for any local preference;
- Racial or ethnic designation of the head of household.

HUD requires the GRHC to maintain a single waiting list for the HCV program unless it serves more than one county or municipality. The GRHC will not merge the HCV waiting list with the waiting list for any other program the GRHC operates.

HUD directs that a family that applies for assistance from the HCV program may apply to be placed on the waiting list for any public housing, project-based voucher or moderate rehabilitation program the GRHC operates if 1) the other programs' waiting lists are open, and 2) the family is qualified for the other programs.

A family's decision to apply for, receive, or refuse other housing assistance must not affect the family's placement on the HCV waiting list, or any preferences for which the family may qualify. If a family is housed in a PBV unit, the family will be removed from the HCV waiting list due to the choice mobility option offered to PBV unit residents, see chapter 17 for more information.

4-II.C. OPENING AND CLOSING THE WAITING LIST [24 CFR 982.206]

Closing the Waiting List

GRHC will close the waiting list when the estimated waiting period for housing assistance for applicants on the list reaches 24 months for the most current applicants. Where the PHA has particular preferences or funding criteria that require a specific category of family, GRHC may elect to continue to accept applications from these applicants while closing the waiting list to others.

Reopening the Waiting List

GRHC will announce the reopening of the waiting list at least 15 calendar days prior to the date applications will first be accepted. If the list is only being reopened for certain categories of families, this information will be contained in the notice.

GRHC will give public notice by publishing the relevant information in suitable media outlets including, but not limited to:

- *The Grand Rapids Press*
- *The Grand Rapids Times*
- *Website*

4-II.D. FAMILY OUTREACH [HCV GB, pp. 4-2 to 4-4]

The GRHC will conduct outreach as necessary to ensure that the GRHC has a sufficient number of applicants on the waiting list to use the HCV resources it has been allotted.

Because HUD requires the GRHC to admit a specified percentage of extremely low-income families to the program (see Chapter 4, Part III), the GRHC may need to conduct special outreach to ensure that an adequate number of such families apply for assistance [HCV GB, p. 4-20 to 4-21].

The GRHC outreach efforts will comply with fair housing requirements. This includes:

- Analyzing the housing market area and the populations currently being served to identify underserved populations
- Ensuring that outreach efforts are targeted to media outlets that reach eligible populations that are underrepresented in the program
- Avoiding outreach efforts that prefer or exclude people who are members of a protected class

The GRHC outreach efforts will be designed to inform qualified families about the availability of assistance under the program. These efforts may include, as needed, any of the following activities:

- Submitting press releases to local newspapers, including minority newspapers
- Developing informational materials and flyers to distribute to other agencies
- Providing application forms to other public and private agencies that serve the low income population
- Developing partnerships with other organizations that serve similar populations, including agencies that provide services for persons with disabilities

4-II.E. REPORTING CHANGES IN FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES

While the family is on the waiting list, the family must immediately inform GRHC of changes in contact information, including current residence, mailing address, and phone number. The changes must be submitted in writing or through the online applicant portal.

4-II.F. UPDATING THE WAITING LIST [24 CFR 982.204]

Purging the Waiting List

The decision to withdraw an applicant family that includes a person with disabilities from the waiting list is subject to reasonable accommodation. If the applicant did not respond to the GRHC request for information or updates, and the GRHC determines that the family did not respond because of the family member's disability, the GRHC will reinstate the applicant family to their former position on the waiting list [24 CFR 982.204(c)(2)].

The waiting list will be updated bi-annually to ensure that all applicants and applicant information is current and timely.

To update the waiting list, GRHC will send an update request via email and/or mail to each family on the waiting list to determine whether the family continues to be interested in, and to qualify for, the program. This update request will be sent to the last address that GRHC has on record for the family. The update request will provide a deadline by which the family must respond and will state that failure to respond will result in the applicant's name being removed from the waiting list.

The family's response must be in writing and may be delivered in person, by mail, by email, or by fax. Responses should be postmarked or received by GRHC no later than 21 calendar days from the date of the GRHC letter. If the family fails to respond within 21 calendar days, the family will be removed from the waiting list without further notice.

If the notice is returned by the post office with no forwarding address, the applicant will be removed from the waiting list without further notice. If the notice is returned by the post office with a forwarding address, the notice will be re-sent to the address indicated. The family will have 21 calendar days to respond from the date the letter was re-sent.

If a family is removed from the waiting list for failure to respond, GRHC may reinstate the family if it is determined that the lack of response was due to GRHC error, or to circumstances beyond the family's control.

Removal from the Waiting List

If at any time an applicant family is on the waiting list, GRHC determines that the family is not eligible for assistance (see Chapter 3), the family will be removed from the waiting list.

If a family is removed from the waiting list because GRHC has determined the family is not eligible for assistance, a notice will be sent to the family's address of record as well as to any alternate address provided on the initial application. The notice will state the reasons the family was removed from the waiting list and will inform the family how to request an informal review regarding the GRHC's decision (see Chapter 16) [24 CFR 982.201(f)].

PART III: SELECTION FOR HCV ASSISTANCE

4-III.A. OVERVIEW

As vouchers become available, families on the waiting list will be selected for assistance in accordance with the policies described in this part.

The GRHC will maintain a clear record of all information required to verify that the family is selected from the waiting list according to the GRHC's selection policies [24 CFR 982.204(b) and 982.207(e)].

4-III.B. SELECTION AND HCV FUNDING SOURCES

Special Admissions [24 CFR 982.203]

HUD may award funding for specifically-named families living in specified types of units (e.g., a family that is displaced by demolition of public housing; a non-purchasing family residing in a HOPE 1 or 2 projects). In these cases, the GRHC will admit such families whether they are on the waiting list, and, if they are on the waiting list, without considering the family's position on the waiting list. These families are considered non-waiting list selections. The GRHC will maintain records showing that such families were admitted with special program funding.

Targeted Funding [24 CFR 982.204(e)]

HUD may award the GRHC funding for a specified category of families on the waiting list. The GRHC will use this funding only to assist the families within the specified category. In order to assist families within a targeted funding category, the GRHC will skip families that do not qualify within the targeted funding category. Within this category of families, the order in which such families are assisted is determined according to the policies provided in Section 4-III.C.

The GRHC administers the following types of targeted funding:

- Non-Elderly Disabled (NED)
- Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH)
- Mainstream
- Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV)
- Foster Youth to Independence (FYI)

Regular HCV Funding

Regular HCV funding may be used to assist any eligible family on the waiting list. Families are selected from the waiting list according to the policies provided in Section 4-III.C.

4-III.C. SELECTION METHOD

Local Preferences [24 CFR 982.207; HCV p. 4-16]

GRHC will use the following local preferences, in this order:

1. The GRHC will offer a preference to any family that has been terminated from its HCV program due to insufficient program funding.
2. The GRHC will offer a preference to residents that are being displaced by government action.

3. The GRHC will offer a preference to Hope Community’s Rapid Re-Housing Program (for homeless families) participants.
4. The GRHC will provide a preference to Homeless Households that are referred by the local Continuum of Care (CoC) limited to 25% of the annual attrition of the HCV program.
5. The GRHC will provide a preference for funding awarded by HUD within a specified category (mainstream and NED).
6. The GRHC will offer a preference to GRHC Project Based families who become eligible, and/or are in need of a barrier free unit(s).
7. The GRHC will offer a preference to residents that are in Kent County and Ottawa County, Michigan.
8. The GRHC will offer a preference to residents that are Veterans with honorable discharge status and/or a surviving spouse of a Veteran.
9. The GRHC will offer preference to participant households with more than one family member(s), selection will be based on date and time of application. For single person household(s), persons who are elderly, disabled or handicapped will be selected before other single person households.

Mainstream Vouchers

The GRHC will offer a preference to non-elderly persons with disabilities. The GRHC will maintain one waiting list for all tenant-based assistance, which includes Mainstream voucher assistance. When issuing a Mainstream Voucher, the GRHC will choose the Mainstream-eligible family from its tenant-based waiting list, first. When all Mainstream-eligible families are served from the GRHC main waiting list, the GRHC will accept referrals through established partnering service agencies that are identified by Memorandums of Understanding (MOU’s), who are seeking to house Mainstream-eligible families.

Income Targeting Requirement [24 CFR 982.201(b)(2)]

HUD requires that extremely low-income (ELI) families make up at least 75 percent of the families admitted to the HCV program during the GRHC’s fiscal year. ELI families are those with annual incomes at or below the federal poverty level or 30 percent of the area median income, whichever number is higher. To ensure this requirement is met, the GRHC may skip non-ELI families on the waiting list in order to select an ELI family. Low-income families admitted to the program that are “continuously assisted” under the 1937 Housing Act [24 CFR 982.4(b)], as well as low-income or moderate-income families admitted to the program that are displaced as a result of the prepayment of the mortgage or voluntary termination of an insurance

contract on eligible low-income housing, are not counted for income targeting purposes [24 CFR 982.201(b)(2)(v)].

GRHC MTW Flexibility

GRHC will monitor progress in meeting the income targeting requirement throughout the fiscal year. Very low-income (50% of AMI) families will be selected ahead of other eligible families on an as-needed basis to ensure the income targeting requirement is met.

Order of Selection

The GRHC system of preferences will select families based on local preferences or targeted funding according to the date and time of application or by a random selection process (lottery) [24 CFR 982.207(c)].

If the GRHC does not have enough funding to assist the family at the top of the waiting list, it is not permitted to skip down the waiting list to a family that it can afford to subsidize when there are not sufficient funds to subsidize the family at the top of the waiting list [24 CFR 982.204(d) and (e)].

Documentation will be maintained by the GRHC as to whether families on the list qualify for and are interested in targeted funding. If a higher placed family on the waiting list is not qualified or not interested in targeted funding, there will be a notation maintained so that the GRHC does not have to ask higher placed families each time targeted selections are made.

4-III.D. NOTIFICATION OF SELECTION [24 CFR 982.554(A)]

GRHC will notify the family via email and/or mail when it is selected from the waiting list. The notice will inform the family of the following:

- Date, time, and location of the scheduled application interview, including any procedures for rescheduling the interview
- Who is required to attend the interview
- All documents that must be provided at the interview, including information about what constitutes acceptable documentation

If a notification letter is returned to GRHC with no forwarding address, the family will be removed from the waiting list. A notice of denial (see Chapter 3) will be sent to the family's address of record, as well as to any known alternate address.

4-III.E. THE APPLICATION INTERVIEW

Families selected from the waiting list are required to participate in an eligibility interview. Being invited to attend an interview does not constitute admission to the program.

The head of household and the spouse/cohead will be strongly encouraged to attend the interview together. However, either the head of household or the spouse/cohead may attend the interview on behalf of the family. Verification of information pertaining to adult members of the household not present at the interview will not begin until signed release forms are returned to the GRHC.

The head of household or spouse/cohead must provide acceptable documentation of legal identity. (Chapter 7 provides a discussion of proper documentation of legal identity.) If the family representative does not provide the required documentation at the time of the interview, he or she will be required to provide it within 15 calendar days.

Pending disclosure and documentation of social security numbers, the PHA will allow the family to retain its place on the waiting list for 21 calendar days. If not all household members have disclosed their SSNs at the next time GRHC is issuing vouchers, the GRHC will issue a voucher to the next eligible applicant family on the waiting list.

The family must provide the information necessary to establish the family's eligibility and determine the appropriate level of assistance, and must complete required forms, provide required signatures, and submit required documentation. If any materials are missing, the GRHC will provide the family with a written list of items that must be submitted.

Any required documents or information that the family is unable to provide at the interview must be provided within 15 calendar days of the interview (Chapter 7 provides details about longer submission deadlines for particular items, including documentation of eligible noncitizen status). If the family is unable to obtain the information or materials within the required time frame, the family may request an extension. If the required documents and information are not provided within the required time frame (plus any extensions), the family will be sent a notice of denial (See Chapter 3).

An advocate, interpreter, or other assistant may assist the family with the application and the interview process.

Interviews will be conducted in English. For limited English proficient (LEP) applicants, the GRHC will provide translation services at the applicants request.

If the family is unable to attend a scheduled interview, the family should contact the GRHC in advance of the interview to schedule a new appointment. In all circumstances, if a family does not attend a scheduled interview, the GRHC will send another notification letter with a new interview appointment time. Applicants who fail to attend two scheduled interviews without GRHC approval will be denied assistance based on the family's failure to supply information needed to determine eligibility. A notice of denial will be issued in accordance with policies contained in Chapter 3.

4-III.F. COMPLETING THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The GRHC will verify all information provided by the family (see Chapter 7). Based on verified information, the GRHC will make a final determination of eligibility (see Chapter 3) and will confirm that the family qualified for any special admission, targeted funding admission, or selection preference that affected the order in which the family was selected from the waiting list.

If the GRHC determines that the family is ineligible, the GRHC will send written notification of the ineligibility determination within 15 calendar days of the determination. The notice will specify the reasons for ineligibility, and will inform the family of its right to request an informal review (Chapter 16).

If a family fails to qualify for any criteria that affected the order in which it was selected from the waiting list (e.g. targeted funding, extremely low-income), the family will be returned to its

original position on the waiting list. The GRHC will notify the family in writing that it has been returned to the waiting list, and will specify the reasons for it.

If the GRHC determines that the family is eligible to receive assistance, the GRHC will invite the family to attend a briefing in accordance with the policies in Chapter 5.