

Proposed Revisions to
HOC's Administrative Plan for the Housing Choice Voucher Program

Please note: Existing language is in **BLACK** and proposed changes are in **RED**.

Chapter 3

APPLYING FOR ADMISSION

[24 CFR 982.204]

INTRODUCTION

~~It is t~~The policy of the ~~PHA-Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County (HOC)~~ ~~is~~ to ensure that all families who express an interest in housing assistance are given an equal opportunity to apply, and are treated in a fair and consistent manner. This ~~c~~Chapter describes the policies and procedures for completing an initial application for assistance, placement and denial of placement on the waiting list, and any limitations on who may apply. The primary purpose of the intake function is to gather information about the family, but ~~the PHAHOC~~ will also utilize this process to provide information to the family so that an accurate and timely decision of eligibility can be made. Applicants will be placed on the waiting list in accordance with this Plan.

A. OVERVIEW OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The initial waiting list application is referred to herein as the pre-application. The purpose of pre-application taking is to permit ~~the PHA-HOC~~ to gather basic information about applicant households and determine placement on the waiting list regarding any preferences. The pre-application will contain questions designed to obtain only pertinent program information.

Families who wish to apply for any ~~one~~ of ~~the PHAHOC's~~ programs must create an electronic waiting list profile and complete an electronic ~~or written pre-waiting list pre-application form~~ when the pre-application taking process is open on HOC's Housing Path website at www.HOCHousingPath.com. Accessibility assistance is available for waiting list applicants with limited English proficiency, disabilities, or other accessibility concerns ~~Applications will be made available in an accessible format upon request from a person with a disability.~~

An applicant may apply for ~~the an HOC~~ program prior to age 18, however, he or she would not be eligible to receive assistance as head of household until age 18 or otherwise legally able to execute a contract.

Other than for brief periods of time for system maintenance, HOC's electronic waiting list is open indefinitely. When the waiting list is open, any family that submits an electronic pre-application to be placed on the waiting list for Section 8 rental assistance, the Housing Choice Voucher and other HOC programs will be ~~given the opportunity to complete an application, at~~

~~the time of final determination of eligibility added to the Housing Path waiting list in order of the date and time which they applied.~~

- ~~• The "initial" application for assistance is referred to as a pre-application. This phase results in the family's eligibility for processing including eligibility for a random selection process such as a lottery. The PHA may use other methods to place families on the waiting list, but the PHA intends to use the lottery selection process as its main method of selecting applicants from a pool of families that submit pre-applications in response to a public notice that the waiting list is open.~~
- ~~• The PHA will evaluate the balance of unselected names remaining on the waiting list twelve (12) months after the opening of the waiting list to determine if the waiting list should be purged and re-opened. If the PHA decides to purge the waiting list, families will be notified that they have not been selected to be placed on the waiting list. These families will be notified that they are eligible to submit another pre-application when the waiting list is opened in the future.~~
- ~~• The pre-application will be dated and referred to the PHA's admissions office where it will be maintained until such time as it is needed for processing.~~

The next phase is the "final determination of eligibility" (referred to as the full application). The full application takes place when the family is ~~randomly selected~~ called up from the waiting list to receive assistance. At this time ~~the PHA/HOC~~ ensures that verification of all HUD and ~~PHA HOC~~ eligibility factors, including any preferences, is/are current and correct in order to determine the family's eligibility for the issuance of a voucher subsidy.

~~The PHA/HOC offers both tenant-based and project-based voucher assistance. The assistance to a tenant-based voucher (TBV) is tied to the customer. The assistance to a project-based voucher (PBV) is tied to the unit. For PBVs, HOC The PHA is entering into a contract with an owner with/for units at one or multiple various sites or locations to so as to secure an inventory of project-based units. If a family/customer wishes to apply for the project-based voucher program, the family must complete a written application when the project-based wait list is open follow the same Housing Path waiting list sign-up as described above.~~

- ~~• The contract owner may purge the project based wait list to maintain a level of applicants that can be served within a 12-18 month period.~~
- ~~• The project based wait list will remain open in order to fill vacant units in a timely manner.~~

B. OPENING/CLOSING OF APPLICATION TAKING [24 CFR 982.206, 982.54(d)(1)]

~~The PHA will utilize the following procedures for~~ **Opening the waiting list:**

~~Other than for brief periods of time for system maintenance, HOC's electronic waiting list – Housing Path – is open indefinitely.~~

~~At least annually, the PHA will determine whether or not to open its waiting lists.~~

~~When the PHA opens the waiting list, the PHA will advertise through public notice in general circulation newspapers, minority publications, and other media including the HOC website.~~

~~In addition, the following organizations will be notified of the opening of the waiting list: the Montgomery County Council and the County Executive, the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, the Montgomery County Service Centers and Regional Libraries and local non-profit agencies.~~

~~The notice will contain:~~

~~The dates, times, and the locations where families may apply.~~

~~The programs for which applications will be taken.~~

~~A brief description of the program.~~

~~A statement that public housing residents or participants in other PHA programs must submit a separate application if they want to apply for Section 8.~~

~~Limitations, if any, on who may apply.~~

~~The notices will be made in an accessible format if requested. They will provide potential applicants with information that includes the PHA address and telephone number, how to submit an application, information on eligibility requirements, and the availability of local preferences.~~

~~Upon request from a person with a disability, additional time may be given as an accommodation for submission of an application after the closing deadline. This accommodation is to allow persons with disabilities the opportunity to submit an application in cases when a social service organization provides inaccurate or untimely information about the closing date.~~

~~If~~ When the waiting list is open, ~~the PHA~~HOC will accept applications from all eligible families unless there is good cause for not accepting the application, such as denial of assistance because of action or inaction by members of the family for the grounds stated in the "Denial or Termination of Assistance" chapter of this Administrative Plan. [24 CFR 982.206(b)(2)]

Closing the Waiting List

~~Should HOC's waiting list ever need to close, tHOC~~The PHA will announce the closing of ~~the its waiting list~~ waiting list by public notice, which may be at the same time that the announcement is made to open the waiting list.

~~The open period shall be long enough to achieve a waiting list adequate to cover projected turnover and new allocations over the next 12 months. The PHA~~HOC will give at least 3 days'

notice prior to closing the waiting list. ~~When the period for accepting applications is over, the PHA will add the new applicants to the list by:~~

~~Separating the new applicants into groups based on preferences for the purposes of selection by conducting a lottery within each group.~~

Limitations on Who May Apply

When the waiting list is open:

Any family asking to be placed on the waiting list for ~~Section 8 rental assistance~~the Housing Choice Voucher or other HOC programs will be given the opportunity to complete a pre-application on the Housing Path website at www.HOCHousingPath.com. There are no limitations.

~~Depending upon the composition of the waiting list with regard to family types and preferences and to better serve the needs of the community, the PHA may only accept applications from any family claiming preference(s).~~

~~When the application is submitted to the PHA:~~

~~It establishes the family's date of application for selection by lottery.~~

C. "INITIAL" APPLICATION PROCEDURES [24 CFR 982.204(b)]

~~The PHA will utilize a HOC's pre-application form can be found only on the internet at www.HOCHousingPath.com. The information is to be filled out by the applicant whenever possible and returned to the PHA on line, or in the manner specified in the announcement that opens the waiting list.~~ To provide specific accommodations for persons with disabilities, ~~a HOC staff or another person may assist a waiting list applicant with~~ complete the information over the telephone creating their Housing Path profile and the electronic application. ~~It may also be mailed to the applicant that needs an accommodation and, if requested, it will be mailed in an accessible format.~~ Translations will also be provided to ~~non-English speaking applicants in Spanish~~ persons with limited English proficiency (LEP).

The purpose of the pre-application is to permit ~~the PHA~~HOC to preliminarily assess family eligibility or ineligibility for the ~~lottery~~ selection process. Duplicate applications will not be accepted.

Ineligible families will ~~not be placed on~~removed from the Housing Path waiting list.

Pre-applications will not require an interview. The information on the pre-application will not be verified until the applicant ~~has been~~is selected for final eligibility determination. Final eligibility will be determined when the full application process is completed and all information is verified.

D. APPLICANT STATUS WHILE ON THE WAITING LIST [CFR 982.204]

Applicants are required to inform ~~the PHA-HOC in writing~~ of any changes in address and/or income by updating their waiting list profile and application on the Housing Path website. Applicants are also required to respond to requests from ~~the PHAHOC~~ to update any other information on their application and to determine their interest in assistance.

If, after a review of the pre-application, the family is determined to be preliminarily eligible, they will be notified in writing, or in ~~an some other~~ accessible format upon request, as a reasonable accommodation for a disability-related need.

If the family is determined to be ineligible based on the information provided in their ~~ir pre-waiting list~~ application, ~~the PHAHOC~~ will notify the family in writing (or in ~~some other an~~ accessible format upon request, as a reasonable accommodation for a disability-related need), state the reason(s) for their ineligibility, and inform them of their right to an informal review. Persons with disabilities may request to have an advocate attend the informal review as a reasonable accommodation. See "Complaints and Appeals" chapter.

E. TIME OF SELECTION [24 CFR 982.204, 5.410]

When funding is available, families will be ~~randomly selected by lottery from the pool of applicants on the waiting list, regardless of family size according to the following preference order:~~

- Priority preferences
- Previously applied (eligible applicants from previous waiting lists)
- Date/Time Stamp

When there is insufficient funding available for the family selected for assistance, ~~the PHAHOC~~ will not admit any other applicant until funding is available for the first applicant.

When ~~project-based~~PBV units become available, families will be selected by date and time of their application's receipt on the ~~project-based~~ waiting list.

F. COMPLETION OF A FULL APPLICATION

All preferences claimed on the pre-application or while the family is on the waiting list will be verified after the family is selected from the waiting list.

The qualification for preference must exist at the time the preference is claimed and at the time of verification, because claim of a preference determines placement on the waiting list.

Documentation to obtain the Plocal preference for living or working in the Montgomery Ceounty are as follows:

For verification for living in the County:

- Current lease in Montgomery County, including the name of applicant as a family or household member on the lease (if the lease does not have a list of the resident members, a letter from the landlord identifying the applicant as a resident will be necessary).

OR

- If a lease is not available, a letter from the landlord and a current utility bill in the applicant's name.

If the applicant is unable to provide at least one of the above documents, the following items may be accepted in their stead by PHA-HOC in-at its discretion:-

- If the applicant lives in a residence owned by a family member(s), a copy of the deed for the residence belonging to the family member(s) and a notarized statement from a family member who is a record owner of the residence stating the applicant resides there.
- For applicants who are homeless, a statement on letterhead from a government agency stating that the applicant is receiving Montgomery Ceounty services.
- Other documentation accepted by the PHAHOC in-at its discretion.

For verification of employment in the County:

- A current pay stub indicating that the location of the work site is in the-Montgomery Ceounty.
- A letter on letterhead from their employer stating that the applicant works in the Montgomery Ceounty or has approval to work in the Ceounty.
- Other documentation accepted by the PHAHOC in-at its discretion.

After the preference is verified, when the PHAHOC is ready to select applicants, applicants will beare required to complete a full application in his or her own handwriting without assistance, unless assistance is needed for, or a request for a reasonable accommodation is made by, a person with a disability.

The full application will be mailed to the applicant, in advance, to complete.

Additional household members other than those on the “pre-application” will not be approved with the exception of additions due to birth, adoption, court awarded custody, a spouse, significant other, or elderly relative as a reasonable accommodation in an effort order to improve the quality of life of the relative by meeting a disability-related need.

Requirement to Attend Interview

~~The PHAHOC utilizes-uses~~ the full application interview to discuss the family's circumstances in greater detail, to clarify information ~~that has been~~ provided by the family, and to ensure that the information is complete. The interview is also used as a vehicle to meet the informational needs of the family by providing information to them about the application and verification processes, as well as to advise the family of other PHA-HOC services or programs which may be available to them.

The head of household is required to attend the interview.

If the head of household cannot attend the interview, the spouse may attend to complete the application and certify for the family. The head of household, however, will be required to attend an interview within seven7 days to review the information and to certify by signature that all of the information is complete and accurate.

It is the applicant's responsibility to reschedule the interview if s/he misses the initial appointment. If the applicant ~~does not~~fails to reschedule or misses two scheduled meetings, ~~the PHAHOC~~ will reject the application.

Applicants who fail to appear and want to reschedule a missed appointment must make the request to reschedule no later than three3 days from the original appointment date. The request must be made to the staff person at HOC who scheduled the appointment.

Reasonable accommodations will be made for persons with ~~a-~~disabilities that requires an advocate or accessible offices. A ~~designated~~advocate will be allowed to participate in the interview process, but only with the written permission of the person with ~~a-~~the disability.

If an application is denied due to failure to attend the full application interview, the applicant will be notified in writing and offered an opportunity to request an informal review. (See "Complaints and Appeals" chapter.)

All adult household members must sign the HUD Form 9886, Release of Information, the application form, ~~and-~~ all supplemental forms required by ~~the PHAHOC~~, the declarations and consents related to citizenship/_immigration status, and any other documents required by ~~the PHAHOC~~. Applicants will be required to sign specific verification forms for information that is not covered by the HUD form 9886. Failure to do so will be cause for denial of the application for failure to provide necessary certifications and release as required by ~~the PHAHOC~~.

If ~~the PHAHOC~~ determines at, or after, the interview that additional information or document(s) are needed, ~~the PHAHOC~~ will request the document(s) or information in writing. The family will be given seven7 days to supply the requested information.

If the information is not supplied in this time period, ~~the PHAHOC~~ will provide the family a notification of denial for assistance. (See "Complaints and Appeals" chapter)

G. VERIFICATION [24 CFR 982.201(e)]

Information provided by the applicant will be verified, using the verification procedures in the "Verification Procedures" chapter. Family composition, income, allowances and deductions, assets, full-time student status, eligibility and rent calculation factors, and other pertinent information will be verified. Verifications may not be more than 60 days old at the time of issuance of the Voucher.

H. FINAL DETERMINATION AND NOTIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY

[24 CFR 982.201]

After the verification process is completed, ~~the PHAHOC~~ will make a final determination of eligibility. This decision is based upon the information provided by the family, the verification completed by ~~the PHAHOC~~, and the current eligibility criteria in effect. If the family is determined to be eligible, ~~the PHAHOC~~ will mail a notification of eligibility. A briefing will be scheduled for the issuance of a voucher and the family's orientation to the housing program.

Any changes in income or family composition may result in a delay in the issuance/_re-issuance of a voucher in order to process the new information.