

Chapter 2

APPLYING FOR ADMISSION

INTRODUCTION

The policy of IHA 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 Chapter describes the policies and procedures for completing an initial application for assistance, placement and denial of placement on the waiting list, and limitations on who may apply. The primary purpose of the intake function is to gather information about the family, but IHA 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 individual site-based waiting lists in accordance with this Policy.

A. HOW TO APPLY

Families who wish to apply for any of IHA's programs must complete a written on-line pre-application form when the application process is open. Pre-applications will be made available in an accessible format upon request from a person with a disability. Persons with disabilities who require a reasonable accommodation in completing an application may call the IHA to make special arrangements. The TTY telephone number is 711 and all communications with the hearing impaired will go through this service.

Pre-applications are taken on-line only at the Independence Housing Authority, via www.independenceha.org with a link to apply for all waiting lists that are open.

The application process will involve a multi-phase.

The IHA ensures that verification of all HUD, State, local, and IHA eligibility factors as pursuant to the program are current and in order to determine the family's eligibility for an offer of a suitable unit.

B. APPLICATION PROCEDURES

IHA will utilize a pre-application form. The pre-application will be taken on-line or if a reasonable accommodation is required, through other methods, whenever the Waiting List is open.

Applications may be mailed for the purpose of reasonable accommodations or assistance with the online application can be scheduled as a reasonable accommodation.

Translation of the application is available upon request for non-English speaking applicants.

At a minimum, the application will contain questions designed to obtain the following information:

- Names of head of household, spouse/co-head
- Names of all members and age of all members
- Number of family members (used to estimate bedroom size needed)
- Street address, phone numbers, and email addresses, if applicable
- Mailing address (If PO Box or other permanent address)
- Annual income
- Source(s) of income received by household members
- Information regarding request for reasonable accommodation or for accessible unit
- Social Security Numbers
- Birth Certificates or Other Supporting Materials
- Picture ID- if applicable
- Race/ethnicity
- Arrests/Convictions for Drug Related or Violent Criminal Activity
- Lifetime Sex Offender Status
- Manufacture of Methamphetamine
- If any family member has received an Earned Income Disallowance
- Emergency contact person and address and phone number
- Questions regarding previous participation in HUD programs

Applicants will be asked to fill out the following documents when selected for final eligibility determination or full application:

A Personal Declaration Form prior to the interview

Sign Release of Information Forms including authorization form for criminal background checks of all adult household members, and consent for verification of immigration status;

Participate in an interview with an IHA representative during which the applicant will be required to furnish complete and accurate information as requested by the interview. The Applicant will complete the entire application form and will sign and certify that information is complete and accurate.

Duplicate applications, including applications from a segment of an applicant household, will not be accepted and removed from the software system.

Applications will require an interview and information on the application will be verified prior to admission. Final eligibility will be determined when the full application process is completed and all information is verified when selected from the pre-application waiting list.

Applicants are required to inform IHA in writing of changes in family composition, income, and address. In writing means email, fax, drop box or in person. Applicants are also required to respond to requests from IHA to update information on their application, or to determine their continued interest in assistance. IHA is now offering an Applicant Portal via IHA's housing software vendor so that the applicants can create a login and update their own changes to their application.

Corrections, updates, or changes on applications will be documented. Obsolete information on paper forms of applications shall be lined through and documented as to its obsolescence, initialized and dated by the employee making such changes, or by the applicant, if such change is made by the applicant him/herself. By no means will there be white out used on any documents of an application. All changes are required to be in writing until said time that the Applicant Portal is obtained and offered to self-update by the applicant themselves.

Failure to provide information or to respond to mailings will result in the applicant being removed from the waiting list.

C. PREFERENCES DEFINED

At this time, preferences and their associated scores will be recognized by IHA per site waiting lists.

The following preferences and scores associated to Pleasant Height's site are:

1) Elderly – 30 points; 2) Disabled – 20 points; 3) Homeless – 15 points; 4) Veteran – 10 points; and 5) Emergency/Displaced by Natural Disaster – 5 points. All preferences will be verified prior to admission.

The following preferences and scores associated to Hocker Height's site are:

1) Homeless – 15 points; 2) Veteran – 10 points; 3) Emergency/Displaced by Natural Disaster – 5 points. All preferences will be verified prior to admission.

The following preferences and scores associated to Southview Manor's site are:

1) Elderly – 30 points; 2) Disabled – 20 points; 3) Homeless – 15 points; 4) Veteran – 10 points; 5) Emergency/Displaced by Natural Disaster – 5 points. All preferences will be verified prior to admission.

Elderly

Elderly is the Head, Co-head or Spouse that are over the age of 62.

Disabled

Disabled is the Head, Co-head or Spouse that is disabled under the Social Security Act.

Homeless

A Head of Household or family who have been declared homeless or living in substandard housing based upon the definitions met for either Homeless Family or Substandard Housing. An individual or family has to meet the definition of homeless without any fault of their own, such as causing a fire or failing to pay rent and evicted, as examples. This will be verified by a letter from a Non-Profit Agency or Shelter assisting said HOH or Family with temporary housing or letter from City, County or organization that can show the current dwelling of the HOH or Family is living in substandard housing and has to leave the premises due to the property being condemned.

Veteran

An applicant's head, spouse or co-head was discharged under honorable conditions from the U.S. Military. An applicant's head, spouse or co-head has served in a branch of the United States armed forces 180 days of regular active duty service and a last discharge or release under honorable conditions. Such member does not need to have any wartime service; or 90 days of active duty service, one (1) day of which is during "wartime", and a last discharge or release under honorable conditions.

Emergency/Displaced by Natural Disaster

The IHA shall grant preferences to families of federally declared disasters who are public housing residents from another jurisdiction and other eligible disaster-affected families who are income eligible. These persons will receive preferences over other waiting list placeholders. This preference will remain in place until the emergency no longer exists. The displacement cannot be at fault by the person or family requesting the preference.

Other Provisions for Preferences

The qualification for preference must exist at the time the preference is verified regardless of the length of time an applicant has been on the Waiting List. The preference is based on current status of the family at the time of admission.

IHA will have individual scores for each preference per site base waiting list. Therefore, a family either has a preference or a family does not have a preference. All families with a preference will be housed before families that do not have a preference, except when the criteria are for filling accessible units.

Notwithstanding, all the above preferences, families who are elderly, disabled will be offered housing before other single persons.

Buildings Designed for the Elderly and Disabled

Preference will be given to elderly and disabled families for buildings or units that are specifically designed for the elderly or disabled. If there are no elderly or disabled families on the list, preference will be assigned per those buildings/properties to accommodate the elderly and disabled first.

Accessible Units (PIH 2010-26)

Qualified families will be offered an accessible unit, upon request by the family, when an accessible unit is available. Due to the limited number of accessible units, IHA will offer vacant accessible units with features for person with disabilities as follows:

- First, to a current occupant of another unit of the same development who requires the accessible features of the vacant, accessible unit and is occupying a unit not having the features;
- If there is no current resident in the same development that requires the accessible features of the vacant unit, then it will be offered to a resident with disabilities residing in another development under IHA's control, who has a disability that requires the special features of the vacant accessible unit;

- If there is no current resident who requires the accessible features of the vacant, accessible unit, then the vacant accessible unit will be offered to an eligible qualified applicant with disabilities on the waiting list who can benefit from the accessible features of the available, vacant, accessible unit; .
- If there is not an eligible qualified resident or applicant with disabilities, needing the features of the vacant available unit on the waiting list who wishes to reside in the available accessible unit, then it will be offered to an applicant on the waiting list who does not need the accessible features of the unit. See 24 CFR 8.27. However, the IHA will require the applicant to execute the IHA public housing lease that requires to the resident to relocate to a vacant non-accessible unit within thirty (30) days of notice by the IHA that there is an eligible applicant or existing resident with disabilities who requires the accessible features of the unit. IHA will pay for the cost of transfer in this case.

Requirement to Attend Interview

IHA utilizes the 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 about the application and verification process, as well as to advise the family of other IHA services or programs that may be available.

All adults (18 and older) must attend the interview and sign the housing application.

It is the applicant's responsibility to reschedule the interview if s/he misses the appointment. If an applicant fails to appear for a scheduled appointment, IHA will automatically schedule a second appointment. If the applicant fails to appear or contact IHA for the second appointment, IHA will automatically schedule a third appointment. If the applicant fails to appear or contact IHA for the third appointment, then the application will be deemed ineligible and a letter sent out to the applicant explaining their rights for an informal review with a specific timeline. If the ineligibility letter comes back as Returned Mail with a Forwarding Address, then a new letter with the correct address will be mailed again with a new set of days to request an Informal Hearing.

Reasonable accommodations will be made for persons with a disability who requires an advocate or accessible offices. A designee will be allowed to provide some information, but only with permission of the person with a disability.

If an applicant 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 hearing. (See Chapter on Complaints, Grievances and Appeals)

All adult members must sign form HUD-9886, "Release of Information"; the declarations and consents related to citizenship/immigration status; and any other documents required by IHA.

Applicants will be required to sign specific verification forms for information that are not covered by the HUD-9886. Failure to do so will be cause for ineligibility of the application for failure to provide necessary certifications and release as required by IHA. All adults will be further required to sign all local IHA release forms.

Information provided by the applicant will be verified, including information related to family composition, income, allowances and deductions, assets, eligible immigration status, full time student status and other factors related to preferences, eligibility and rent calculation.

If IHA determines at or after the interview that additional information or document(s) are needed, IHA will request the document(s) or information in writing. The family will be given ten (10) business days to supply the information; however, extensions may be given for extenuating circumstances such as information that must be obtained from out of state.

If the information is not supplied in this time period, IHA will provide the family a notification of ineligibility for assistance. (See Chapter on Complaints, Grievances and Appeals.)

D. PROCESSING APPLICATIONS

At the time of application, the following items will be verified to determine qualification for admission:

- Preference(s) verification
- Family composition and type (elderly/non-elderly), inclusive of family status, familial/marital status when needed for Head or spouse definition, or for inclusion in the household of a minor who is not yet born to or adopted by the assisted family, or legal guardianship, or right to custody, including temporary right to custody.
- Annual Income* inclusive of tips and meals, including income that is expressly excluded by regulation where the IHA is required verify.
- Assets and Asset Income*
- Deductions from Annual Income including but not limited to full-time student status, including students who are 18 or over, childcare expenses for children under 13 where such expenses allow an adult family member to be employed or to further his/her education or seek employment, total medical expenses of all family members in households whose Head or spouse is elderly or disabled, disability assistance expenses to include only those costs associated with attendant care or auxiliary apparatus which allow an adult family member to be employed, disability for determination of allowance or deductions.

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- Social Security Numbers (SSN) of all eligible family members when they have a SSN Certification. Members that do not declare eligibility will be required to execute a document that member does not have Social Security Number.
 - Non-economic selection criteria used in applicant screening, inclusive of criminal history report, past landlord reports, credit reports, rent payment history.
 - Citizenship or eligible immigration status, including date and place of birth.
 - Criminal background checks on all members over 18 years of age.

***If needed,** in the event that the family appears to be eligible for income that is not reported to be received (i.e. TANF, unemployment compensation, child support, etc.), the absence of such income will be verified. Family members will not be required to contact the local SSA office for verification that they do not receive SS benefits. EIV will be further reviewed.

Timeliness of Verifications

All verifications will be obtained prior to initial lease date to ensure that current and accurate data is being used in calculating rents and eligibility.

Certification by the appropriate staff member will be made when verification of all necessary items for each application is completed.

Verifications for the public housing program must be dated within sixty (60) days from the date of the interview and not exceed one hundred twenty (120) days in age, prior to admission to the unit. The family will be questioned prior to admission in regard to any change in status. If changes are reported, they will be verified to determine their effect on eligibility, preference rating (if any), rent, and unit size required.

The applicant file shall contain documentation of all verifications.

Systems of Verification

Upfront Income Verification (UIV): The verification of income at admission or before or during a family reexamination, through an independent source that systematically and uniformly maintains income information in computerized form for a large number of individuals. HUD's **Enterprise Income Verification System (EIV)** is considered to be this method.

To assure that the data upon which determinations of eligibility, preference status (if any), rent to be paid, and size of dwelling unit required are based on full, true, and complete information to the best of staff's ability, the data on each applicant shall be verified and consist of the following types and systems of verification:

IHA will consult the EIV system on all applicants. The EIV will be used to determine if the applicant is in the HUD system, determine if they are being assisted by other programs in the HUD data-base, and determine if they were previously being assisted by another PHA.

IHA shall use the streamlined verification system allowed by HUD. The income verification process is as follows:

- Tenant reports income and provides current documents
- IHA consults EIV system, and prints income details report.
- If additional information is not needed, the IHA uses the current tenant-provided documents to calculate anticipated annual income
- 3rd party verification is only required if:
 - The tenant disputes the EIV data
 - Additional information is required as determined by the IHA, such as
 - Effective dates of employment
 - Pay rate, number of hours worked, pay frequency for new jobs
 - Confirmation of changes in circumstances (reduced hours, reduces rates of pay, etc.)
 - The IHA will use current tenant-provided documents or most current information to calculate anticipated annual income

If third party verification is not received directly from the source, IHA staff will document the file as to why third-party verification was impossible to obtain and another method was used (such as reviewing documents families provide.)

The IHA will not delay the processing of an application beyond ten (10) business days because a third-party information provider does not return the verification in a timely manner and may rely on alternative forms of verification as allowed by HUD.

For applicants, verifications used to determine adjusted income may not be more than sixty (60) **days** old at the time of the original lease. For residents, they are valid for one hundred twenty (**120**) **days** from date of receipt. All tenant supplied documents supplied should be dated within the last sixty (60) days of the interview or reexamination. Pay stubs should be at least the last two current and consecutive pay stubs.

Regardless of these timeframes, Criminal History Reports will be useable as a valid verification for no longer than one hundred twenty (**120**) calendar days.

E. FINAL DETERMINATION AND NOTIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY

After the verification process is completed, *Application Specialist, Deputy Executive Director and/or Executive Director* will make a final determination of eligibility. No other staff will move forward with this process. This decision is based upon information provided by the family, the verification completed by IHA, and the tenant suitability determination (see Chapter on Eligibility for Admission).

Because HUD can make changes in rules or regulations and family circumstances may have changed during the review process that affect an applicant's eligibility, it is necessary to make final eligibility determination.

The household is not actually eligible for a unit offer until this final determination has been made, even though they may have been listed on the waiting list.