



TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION 2010-10-27 (2)

DATE: October 27, 2010
TO: Board of Commissioners
FROM: Michael Mirra, Executive Director
RE: Amendment to THA Voucher Administrative Plan - Occupancy Subsidy Standards

Background

Staff proposes to revise the THA's Administrative Plan for the Housing Choice Voucher program. This revision would change the number of bedrooms that a tenant based voucher will pay for. This change will decrease the occupancy standard from, in general, one bedroom for each person in a household (other than a couple) to two people per bedroom. This is the change that we have been discussing with the Board for several months. I attach another copy of my June 23, 2010 memo to the Board. The Board heard further detail at its October 15th study session. The specific changes in the language of the Administrative Plan are attached.

Staff hosted held two well-attended public hearings about this proposal in which voucher holders and landlords offered comments. Staff also consulted with representatives of Voucher landlords and an attorney with Northwest Justice Project. We also received written comment. I attach a recap of those comments and THA's responses.

Here is a summary:

1. Reasons for Changing the Occupancy Standard

We propose this change for two key reasons:

First, the new standard will more accurately reflect the occupancy standards in the private market and it will encourage residents to become more self-sufficiency.

Second, the change will reduce the cost of the program. We need to do this for two reasons. (i) The savings will preserve our present level of service to THA's customers. The board will remember that we had a \$250,000 budget shortfall this year and project a \$750,000 budget shortfall for next year. This change by itself will cover this year's shortfall and save \$500,000 next year. Once it is fully implemented after three years it will save \$750,000 per year. With other policy changes that we are proposing to the Board as part of the MTW initiatives (discussed in the Resolution 2010-10-27(1)), THA will save enough money to cover those shortfalls. Otherwise, we will lose another 6-8 positions, on top of the 9 positions we lost this

current year with our 10% budget cut. (ii) Once all the changes take full effect over three years, the savings will allow us to increase the number of vouchers we issue.

2. Changes in Number of Bedrooms

In general, our present policy allowed one bedroom per person (couples get one bedroom). Our proposed policy will allow one bedroom per two persons, with exceptions for people whose disabilities require a separate bedroom.

Number of Persons in Household	Number of Bedrooms the Voucher Will Pay For Under Existing Policy	Number of Bedrooms the Voucher Will Pay For Under Proposed Policy
1	1	1
2	1-2	1
3	2-3	2
4	2-4	2
5	3-5	3
6	3-6	3

THA will allow exceptions as a reasonable accommodation to disabilities.

This change would not affect households in project-based voucher developments.

3. Affect on Households

- This change will affect about one-third of THA’s voucher households. The change will reduce the value of their voucher by an average of \$200 per month.
- Approximately 400 of those households will be single parents.
- Approximately 200 of those households will be households with children of the opposite sex.

4. Timing of Change

This change will take effect at the earlier of the following events:

- when the family moves to a new home
- the second annual recertification after November 1st.

This means that a family that remains in place will have at least one year and up to two years before the change affects the value of its voucher. The average time period for these families will be 18 months.

5. Household Choices

A family affected by this change will have three choices:

- stay in the same apartment or home and pay the extra from its own pocket.
- move to another place with the same number of bedrooms but at a lower rent
- move to another place with one fewer bedroom and pay the same amount that it used to pay

THA does not propose to tell a family what choice to make among these options or what sleeping arrangements to make if it must make do with one fewer bedroom. More than one person can share a bedroom. A family may use the living room for sleeping. These are choices common to families in the private rental market.

Recommendation

Approve Resolution 2010-10-27 (2) authorizing THA to amend Chapter 6 of the Administrative Plan as it relates to occupancy standards.



TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION 2010-10-27 (2)

WHEREAS, Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) provided housing services to Housing Choice Voucher and Public Housing participants who discontinued housing assistance with debt owing to THA.

WHEREAS, each individual included in this tenant account write off has been notified of their debt and given the opportunity to pay prior to this resolution.

Resolved by the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City Of Tacoma, Washington, that:

1. The Board authorizes THA staff to amend Chapter 6 of the Administrative Plan as indicated on the attachment adopting new occupancy standards for the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Approved: October 27, 2010



Dr. Arthur Banks, Chairman

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THA ADMINISTRATIVE PLAN FOR THE HOUSING VOUCHER PROGRAM

Below is the policy revision under consideration (Language that has been added to the policy is in blue. Language that will be removed is indicated by a ~~strike through~~):

Tacoma Housing Authority
Subsidy Standards
Section 8 Administrative Plan

6.0 Assignment of Bedroom Sizes (subsidy Standards)

TENANT BASED VOUCHERS

THA will issue a voucher for a particular bedroom size ~~B the bedroom size~~ is a factor in determining the family's level of assistance. The following guidelines will determine each family's unit size without overcrowding or over-housing for tenant-based voucher units:

Family Size	Voucher Size
1	1
2	1
3	2
4	2
5	3
6	3
7	4
8	4
9	5
10	5

In determining voucher size, THA will include the presence of children to be born to a pregnant woman, children who are in the process of being adopted, children whose custody is being obtained, children who are temporarily away at school or temporarily in foster-care.

The family unit size will be determined by THA in accordance with the above guidelines and will determine the maximum rent subsidy for the family; however, the family may select a unit that may be larger or smaller than the family unit size. If the family selects a smaller unit, the payment standard for the smaller size will be used to calculate the subsidy. However the unit must be large enough to accommodate no more than two people per living/sleeping room. If the family selects a larger size, the payment standard for the family unit size will determine the maximum subsidy.

Exceptions to these standards will be made in the following cases:

- Live-in aides will be allocated a separate bedroom.
- Single person families will be allocated one bedroom.
- Need for an additional bedroom for medical equipment
- A need for a separate bedroom for reasons related to a family member's disability, medical or health condition
- Certified foster care providers will be assigned enough bedrooms to remain in compliance with Washington State law.

The family must request any exception to the subsidy standards in writing. The request must explain the need or justification for a larger family unit size, and must include appropriate documentation. Requests

based on health-related reasons must be verified by a knowledgeable professional source, unless the disability and the disability-related request for accommodation is readily apparent or otherwise known.

In consideration of requests for exceptions to the subsidy standards, THA will consider whether using the living room as a sleeping room could accommodate the request.

PROJECT BASED VOUCHERS

The following guidelines will determine each family's unit size without overcrowding or over-housing for project-based voucher units and units purchased with a Section 8 (y) homeownership voucher prior to November 1, 2010:

Number of Bedrooms	Min. Number of Persons	Max. Number of Persons
0	1	1
1	1	2
2	2	4
3	3	6
4	4	8
5	5	10

These standards are based on the assumption that each bedroom will accommodate no more than two (2) persons. Two adults will share a bedroom unless related by blood.

In determining bedroom size, THA will include the presence of children to be born to a pregnant woman, children who are in the process of being adopted, children whose custody is being obtained, children who are temporarily away at school or temporarily in foster-care.

Bedroom size will also be determined using the following guidelines:

- A. Children of the same sex will share a bedroom.
- B. Children of the opposite sex will share a bedroom until the age of five. Children of the opposite sex will be assigned separate bedrooms.
- C. Adults and children will not be required to share a bedroom.
- D. Foster adults and children will not be required to share a bedroom with family members.
- E. Live-in aides will get a separate bedroom.

THA will grant exceptions to normal occupancy standards when a family requests a larger size than the guidelines allow and documents a medical reason why the larger size is necessary. Exceptions will be considered in accordance with the policy outlined above under tenant-based vouchers.