



TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION 2019-07-24 (4)

Date: July 24, 2019

To: THA Board of Commissioners

From: Michael Mirra
Executive Director

Re: Updating THA's Administrative Plan: College Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) Changes

THA's College Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) is a time-limited program for homeless or near-homeless college students. This resolution would approve some program changes to CHAP. The program changes do not apply to CHAP participants assisted through the Property Based Subsidy program.

Background and Summary Recommendations

Tacoma Housing Authority's (THA) College Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) helps homeless and near-homeless low-income students and their families pay rent on the private market. CHAP participants receive a Housing Opportunity Program (HOP) subsidy. The subsidy amount is fixed and the housing assistance payment is time-limited.

CHAP began in 2014 as a pilot program that provides housing assistance to homeless and near-homeless students at Tacoma Community College (TCC). In comparison to students of other colleges, TCC students are older, lower income, more likely to be parents, more likely to be working and more likely to be their family's first to attend college. A notable number of TCC students do not have stable housing.

The CHAP pilot housed 47 homeless TCC students and their children. The pilot's evaluation tracked their retention/graduation rates and grade point average and compared them to the homeless TCC students who did not fit in the pilot. The results after two years were very encouraging and impelled CHAP's expansion to up to 150 vouchers. Twenty-five of the 150 vouchers are set-aside for a program that is under development to serve students who are exiting corrections. THA expects the completion of a third party evaluation of CHAP in the fall of 2019.

THA and TCC have shared information about CHAP with Portland Community College, The Affordable Housing Alliance of Central Ohio, Seattle Housing Authority and several national publications. THA has received requests to consider expanding CHAP to additional Tacoma-area institutions such as Clover Park Technical College and University of Washington (UW) Tacoma.

In 2018, the CHAP program expanded to include housing assistance that is tied to a property. THA partners with property owners near the campuses of TCC and the University of Washington (UW) Tacoma to reserve apartments for homeless or near homeless students. THA pays down the rents to levels affordable to students. This property based rental assistance is tied to the unit, whereas the CHAP voucher assistance is tied to the student.

Today, THA's CHAP program provides or finances housing in three ways:

- THA provides rental assistance to help pay rent on the private rental market;
- THA provides apartments it purchased near campus;
- THA signs long term contracts with private developers near the campuses to reserve apartments for homeless or near homeless college students. THA pays down the rents to levels affordable to the students.

The City of Tacoma is experiencing an affordable housing crisis. Rent increases over the past several years have made finding affordable housing difficult. It is even more difficult for households who may be homeless, have criminal backgrounds or weak rental history. THA's data, participants and post-secondary partners tell us that CHAP participants struggle to secure housing on the program. Fifty percent of CHAP applicants are unable to find housing. Since 2017, 71 CHAP participants have been housed on the program and 75 were unable to use their voucher.

Responding to CHAP's poor lease up rates, THA developed a new innovative housing program to serve students. THA's Property Based Subsidy (PBS) program buys down the affordability in privately owned units to make them affordable to homeless or near-homeless college students. THA has reserved 73 units for CHAP eligible households within walking distance of TCC. THA has also reserved 52 units for UW Tacoma students at a property adjacent to the university. Although students housed at PBS properties are not participants in the CHAP tenant based voucher program, they realize affordable rents and THA considers them participants in the CHAP.

Responding to program expansion inquiries and the barriers faced by participants, THA's Policy, Innovation & Evaluation (PIE) team initially proposed a redesign of CHAP to achieve four goals:

1. to support the program's future expansion to other public post-secondary institutions;
2. to promote continuing education, more specifically the completion of a Bachelor's degree;
3. to expand a warm welcome to students who are exiting from corrections who are or will engage with post-secondary education; and
4. to increase the successful lease up rates of students who receive a voucher.

The recommended changes reflect the first three goals. To achieve the fourth goal, THA considered increasing the CHAP subsidy amount as an intervention to increase successful lease-ups. Due to budget constraints, THA cannot spend additional HAP dollars at this time. If THA receives flat funding from Congress in 2020 and beyond, the agency projects a deficit beginning in 2021 of \$1.5 million. These deficits arise from the claims on the agency's use of its rental assistance

dollars. As a result, the recommended changes do not include any strategies to increase the successful lease up rates of students who receive a voucher.

Based on community consultation and discussions with THA's Cabinet, we recommend the following be implemented immediately:

1. Program Expansion

- The College Housing Assistance Program has expanded beyond a tenant based voucher program operated by TCC. The program now includes student households paying affordable rents at PBS properties as a result of THA subsidies. THA seeks to formalize this expansion and prepare for a future when CHAP may be implemented with other education partners. To do so, THA will revise its Administrative Plan and program documents to reflect that CHAP is a program that may be implemented at other partner institutions.

2. Extend the Time Limit To Promote the Completion of a Bachelor's Degree

- If the CHAP expands to a public four year institution a student will need more time to complete a degree. PIE recommends changing the CHAP time limit from up to 3 years to up to 5 years.
- Graduation from a post-secondary institution does not guarantee immediate employment in a living wage job. For this reason, PIE recommends granting graduate households that have not reached the five year time limit up to an additional year of housing assistance. Students can use this income building year (not to exceed 1 year or the five year time limit) to use their new degree to secure a living wage job. Most student loans have a six month grace period before repayment begins. An income building year may allow students to receive housing assistance as they adjust and make changes to accommodate loan repayment.

3. Students May Transfer Between Participating Institutions.

4. Expand the Definition of Homelessness to Include Students Exiting from Corrections

- THA and TCC are in the design stages of developing a CHAP sub-cohort for formerly incarcerated individuals who are enrolled or will enroll in a degree program. PIE recommends expanding CHAP's definition of "at serious risk of homelessness." The expanded definition will include those who have exited corrections without a housing discharge plan or with a housing discharge plan that provides housing for 6 months or less. This expanded definition will provide housing assistance for households exiting corrections with or without a time limited early release voucher. Individuals exiting into a transitional housing facility are included in the existing definition of homeless.

Public Consultation

THA consulted and offered to confer with a wide array of interested persons and community voices, including:

- CHAP voucher participants
- CHAP property based subsidy participants
- students who were unable to find housing with a CHAP voucher
- prospective CHAP participants
- post-secondary partners including Tacoma Community College and UW Tacoma
- the general public

On May 22, 2019, THA hosted a public hearing at TCC to seek advice about the proposed changes. In attendance were approximately 30 people representing the interests listed above. In general, most people who expressed views supported the recommendations in this resolution.

Recommendation

Authorize THA's Executive Director to make program changes to the College Housing Assistance Program as outlined in resolution 2019-07-24 (4). This would change THA's Administrative Plan Chapters 18 and 19.



TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION 2019-07-24 (4) **(Updating THA's Administrative Plan: CHAP Changes)**

WHEREAS, The Administrative Plan relates to the administration of the College Housing Assistance Program and is required by HUD; and

WHEREAS, The purpose of the Administrative Plan is to establish policies for carrying out programs in a manner consistent with HUD requirements and local goals and objectives contained in THA's Moving to Work plan; and

WHEREAS, Tacoma Housing Authority's College Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) has a three-year time limit it seeks to change; and

WHEREAS, Tacoma Housing Authority seeks to promote the completion of a post-secondary degree; and

WHEREAS, Tacoma Housing Authority seeks to support students who wish to transfer between participating institutions; and

WHEREAS, Tacoma Housing Authority seeks to reduce barriers for people exiting corrections who intend to enroll in post-secondary education; and

WHEREAS, Staff consulted a wide array of community members; and

WHEREAS, Changes to the Administrative Plan must be approved by THA Board of Commissioners; now, therefore, be it

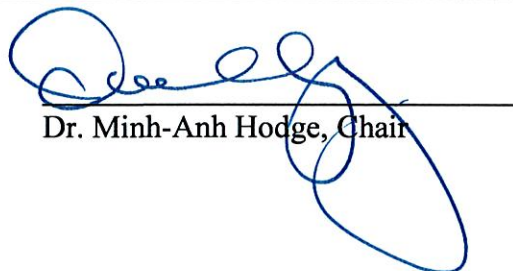
Resolved by the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City Of Tacoma, Washington, that:

THA's Executive Director is authorized to revise THA's Administrative Plan Chapters 18 and 19, related to the College Housing Assistance Program in the following ways:

Policy Proposal	Administrative Plan Section Requiring Revision
<p>CLARIFY THE CHAP TENANT-BASED VOUCHER PROGRAM AND THE CHAP PROPERTY BASED SUBSIDY PROGRAM</p> <p>The Administrative Plan governs the tenant-based voucher CHAP program.</p>	<p>19.I. “Introduction”</p>
<p>REVISE THE TIME LIMIT</p> <p>The College Housing Assistance Program time limit is five (5) years.</p> <p>Participants who complete the credits required to graduate with an Associate’s or Bachelor’s degree may receive up to one year of additional housing payment assistance or five (5) total years of assistance. The additional time (up to one year) will begin at the time the credits were completed.</p> <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant receives an Associate’s degree after receiving 18 months of CHAP assistance. The participant may receive an additional 12 months of assistance. The time limit for the additional 12 months will begin at the time the credits were completed. • A participant receives a BA degree after receiving 52 months of CHAP assistance. The participant may receive an additional 8 months of assistance. The time limit for the additional 8 months will begin at the time the credits were completed. 	<p>18.XVI.C “Program Term”</p> <p>18.XXIII “Family Obligations”</p> <p>19.I. “Introduction”</p> <p>19.XVIII “Termination of Assistance and Tenancy”</p> <p>19.XXII “Hardship Policy”</p>
<p>PROGRAM EXPANSION</p> <p>Remove some references to “Tacoma Community College” and replace them with “partner institution”.</p> <p>Remove the requirement to be enrolled and replace it with a requirement to intend to enroll in college level classes or be enrolled.</p>	<p>18.XXIII “Family Obligations”</p> <p>19.I. “Introduction”</p> <p>19.IV. “Overview of Participant Criteria”</p>

Policy Proposal	Administrative Plan Section Requiring Revision
<p>DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS AND AT SERIOUS RISK OF HOMELESSNESS Change the definition of homelessness to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Has been discharged or is facing discharge from a public institution (e.g. incarceration, hospital etc.) without a housing discharge plan.</i> <p>Change the definition of at serious risk of homelessness to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Has been discharged or is facing discharge from a public institution (e.g. incarceration, hospital etc.) with a housing discharge plan that provides housing assistance for 6 months or less.</i> 	<p>19.IV. "Overview of Participant Criteria"</p>
<p>ALLOW PARTICIPANTS TO TRANSFER BETWEEN PARTICIPATING PARTNER INSTITUTIONS <i>A CHAP tenant-based voucher holder may transfer among participating post-secondary partner institutions.</i></p>	<p>19.VII. "College Housing Assistance Program Transfers"</p>

Approved: July 24, 2019



Dr. Minh-Anh Hodge, Chair