



# TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

## RESOLUTION 2020-09-08 (2)

**Date:** September 8, 2020

**To:** THA Board of Commissioners

**From:** Michael Mirra  
Executive Director

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

*Tacoma Housing Authority's (THA) 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 seek to align program requirements across both the tenant based and property based subsidy models and give colleges the ability to waive program requirements during times of a natural disaster or pandemic.*

### Background and Summary Recommendations

The College Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) began in 2014 as a pilot program that provides housing assistance to homeless and near-homeless students at Tacoma Community College (TCC). TCC has a student population of nearly 14,000 students. It is the largest college in the South Puget Sound Region. 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. In 2019, Temple University's Hope Center surveyed TCC students about basic needs. 63% of TCC students responding to the survey reported serious housing insecurity within the 12 months prior to the survey; 23% reported that within those 12 months they experienced homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

CHAP voucher participants receive a rental assistance subsidy in the form of a voucher. The voucher is used to secure housing on the private rental market. THA contributes housing resources to CHAP. That is its main and usually only contribution. THA is not funded for other elements often essential to CHAP, including marketing of programs to students, the determination of their needs, the provision of support service or the monitoring of their academic

<sup>1</sup> Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice. (2020). Washington State Community and Technical Colleges #RealCollege Survey. Retrieved from [https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2019\\_WashingtonState\\_Report.pdf](https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2019_WashingtonState_Report.pdf)

progress. These elements must come from the post-secondary partner and other community partners. TCC operates the program, provides case management services, and assistance with security deposits and move in fees when funding allows.

The CHAP pilot housed 47 homeless TCC students and their children. The pilot's evaluation tracked their retention/graduation rates and grade point average, in comparison with 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. 25 of the 150 vouchers are set-aside for a program that is under development to serve students exiting corrections.

In 2018, the CHAP program expanded further 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, Tacoma (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, with these expansions, THA's CHAP program provides or finances housing in three ways for homeless or near homeless college students at TCC and UW-Tacoma:

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

This resolution would align program requirements across the property based and tenant based subsidy models. Tenant based subsidy requirements are governed by the THA Administrative Plan. Changes require approval by THA's Board of Commissioners. Property based subsidies are not governed by the Administrative Plan. In the past, the CHAP program requirements did not apply to students using property based subsidies. However, THA and the education partners have discussed and begun to extend program requirements to students in covered units at the partner properties.

This proposal also seeks to give the education partners the authority to waive select program requirements in cases of a natural disaster or pandemic.

The education partners have been working with THA to develop an MOU and Program Manual for CHAP as a whole. The intent to develop program-wide requirements is to ensure an equitable experience and simplify the tracking and data collection carried out by the education partners. A single Program Manual and consistent program requirements will benefit all parties.

The section that follows outlines the program requirements suggested by and negotiated with the education partners. Based on community consultation we recommend the following be implemented immediately:

### **1. Revise and Align Program Requirements**

During the process of developing an MOU between THA, TCC, UW Tacoma, and TPS, the following modifications were agreed upon by all parties with the intent that they be applied to participants receiving any form of CHAP subsidy:

- Allow part-time enrollment.
- Do not use GPA alone to define academic progress, take into account whether the student is using/seeking academic supports to improve their grades.
- Allow participants to disenroll and/or withdraw for up to two quarters.
- Remove the summer quarter community service/internship requirement and financial literacy course requirement.

Both institutions stated that these modifications were more aligned with student needs and would offer added flexibility for students overcoming multiple barriers while also balancing multiple responsibilities.

THA has already implemented these requirements at two of the properties with property based subsidies. THA plans to implement the program requirements at the other properties through contract amendments or re-negotiation.

### **2. Expand Post-Graduation Assistance**

Last year THA's Board of Commissioners approved up to an additional year of housing assistance, not to exceed five years of total assistance, for students graduating with an Associate's or Bachelor's degree. The intent is for students to have an "income building year" to use their new post-secondary credentials to secure a living wage job.

Our education partners and PIE staff proposed expanding the additional year of assistance to students completing certificate programs and those transferring to a non-participating school or apprenticeship program. This expansion will support students pursuing a variety of education paths and help address on-going requests to expand the program to other schools like Evergreen State College, Tacoma, and Bates Technical College.

### **3. Temporary Suspension of Program Requirements During Natural Disaster or Pandemic**

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, PIE staff worked with the education partners to explore temporary changes to accommodate students. Specifically, TCC and UW Tacoma proposed suspending minimum credit requirements and academic progress requirements. This proposal was approved as an Executive Act and is in place until fall term of 2020.

The education partners requested that THA add a section to the CHAP Program Manual and THA Administrative Plan allowing them to suspend certain program requirements in times where students may be affected by a natural disaster or pandemic. PIE supports this recommendation. Memorializing it in the Program Manual and Administrative Plan will allow the education partners to respond quickly. This will help inform students of temporary program modifications promptly rather than waiting for THA leadership and Board of Commissioners to approve an Executive Act.

## **Public Consultation**

Due to COVID, public consultation was limited. PIE staff worked with our education partners to inform CHAP participants of the proposed changes and comment period. The full report and a survey were posted on THA's website and shared through social media. PIE staff also communicated directly to CHAP voucher participants in order to solicit their feedback. The community was given the option to complete a short online survey, provide comment via email, voicemail, or written post.

In total, THA received seven (7) responses from the community. All of the responses were from current or past CHAP participants.

Five of the seven community members expressed support for changing and aligning the program requirements. One supported the change if it would make program tracking simpler. One did not support the change.

All responses supported giving the education partners the ability to waive program requirements in times of a natural disaster or pandemic.

## **Recommendation**

Authorize THA's Executive Director to make program changes to the College Housing Assistance Program as outlined in resolution 2020-09-08 (2). This would change THA's Administrative Plan Chapters 18 and 19.



# TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

## **RESOLUTION 2020-09-08 (2)** **(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 program requirements it seeks to change and bring into alignment across the full program; and

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

**WHEREAS**, Tacoma Housing Authority seeks to support students who wish to transfer between post-secondary institutions; and

**WHEREAS**, Tacoma Housing Authority seeks to reduce barriers for students who are overcoming multiple barriers in order to pursue a higher education; and

**WHEREAS**, staff consulted our education partners and a wide array of community members,

**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><b>MODIFY PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS</b></p> <p>Revise program requirements to align with the requirements being used for the property based subsidies and agreed upon by the education partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Maintain at least part-time enrollment of 6 credits or more at a participating institution,</li> <li>(b) Make satisfactory academic progress towards a degree or certificate program. If the student's cumulative GPA drops below a 2.0, the participant must be responsive to recommendations and referrals to academic support services.</li> <li>(c) Have attempted to access FAFSA and if eligible, maintain an active FAFSA.</li> <li>(d) Provide full cooperation with the college program staff assigned to the student.</li> <li>(e) In compliance with FERPA, allow THA, TCC, UW Tacoma, and TPS to share individually identifiable information about the participants and their household to assist with referrals and potential success.</li> <li>(f) Comply with all lease terms, including paying their share of the rent on time and in full, being a good neighbor and taking care of the apartment.</li> <li>(g) Comply with other conditions in Chapter 12 of THA's Administrative Plan.</li> </ul> <p>Add the following exception:</p> <p><i>Participants may disenroll or withdraw from classes for one term.</i></p> <p><i>A participant may request to extend their leave for an additional term as long as they meet regularly with program staff to ensure they will be able to re-enroll the following term.</i></p>	<p>18.XXIII "Family Obligations"</p> <p>19.IV. "Overview of Participant Criteria"</p>

Policy Proposal	Administrative Plan Section Requiring Revision
<p>Remove the following program requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Summer quarter students must participate in an approved community service activity or in an internship.</li> <li>(b) Participate in a Financial Literacy workshop before the end of their second quarter of enrollment in this program.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>EXPAND POST-GRADUATION ASSISTANCE</b></p> <p>Upon completion of an Associate's or Bachelor's degree, a certificate program, or transfer to a non-participating college/university or apprenticeship program participants 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"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	<p>19.I. "Introduction"</p> <p>19.VII. "College Housing Assistance Program Transfers"</p> <p>19.XVIII "Termination of Assistance and Tenancy"</p> <p>19.XXII "Hardship Policy"</p>
<p><b>ALLOW EDUCATION PARTNERS TO WAIVE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS IN TIMES OF A NATURAL DISASTER OR PANDEMIC</b></p> <p>Add a section to include:</p> <p><i>In times of a natural disaster or pandemic, minimum credit requirements and academic progress program requirements will be suspended for a period of time agreed upon by the Education Partners.</i></p>	<p>Add section to follow 19.IV. "Overview of Participant Criteria"</p>

Policy Proposal	Administrative Plan Section Requiring Revision
<i>During the period of suspended requirements, participants will remain eligible as long as their income is at or below 80% AMI at the time of lease renewal or annual recertification.</i>	

**Approved: September 8, 2020**



Stanley Rumbaugh, Chair