



TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION 2018-02-28 (6)

Date: February 28, 2018
To: THA Board of Commissioners
From: Michael Mirra, Executive Director
Re: Legacy Families in the 2017-2018 Elementary School Housing Assistance Program (ESHAP)

Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) and Tacoma Public Schools (TPS) are planning to redesign and expand the Elementary School Housing Assistance Program (ESHAP) to account for what we have learned in 5 years of experience and to adapt to Tacoma's new, much more expensive rental market. The program presently serves about 40 families who joined the program in 2016 and 2017. This resolution will direct how to serve these "legacy" families while THA and TPS are redesigning the program. This will provide those families with some important stability and clarity despite the uncertainty that comes from a redesign.

Background

The Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) in partnership with the Tacoma Public Schools (TPS), are currently redesigning the Elementary School Housing Authority Program (ESHAP). This program helps homeless families, or families facing imminent threat of homelessness within the Tacoma School District, receive rental assistance. Its redesign is the subject of another memo that staff will present to the board in the coming months in time for the redesigned program to begin in September 2018.

Throughout this redesign period, 38 households, with 57 elementary school-age children, are actively enrolled and receiving program services. They enrolled in ESHAP in 2016 and 2017. We refer to them as legacy families. THA and TPS staff recommend a legacy policy applicable only to these families that will limit the redesign from disrupting their progress and allow them to continue maintaining program assistance and services.

Staff intend the legacy policy to give these families some stability and clarity about the program despite the uncertainty that comes from redesign. The legacy policy will provide a clear service plan and rules for legal families along with procedural steps for program staff to administer during this redesign period. It will also specify the rental assistance the families will get and for how long, and the commitments the program will request from the families. The legacy policy also specifies procedures for ESHAP staff to follow when a household is out of program compliance.

Proposed Legacy Changes

THA and TPS proposes the following rules apply for ESHAP legacy families:

1. Continue to allow these families to attend the school of their choice. THA and TPS had waived the requirement that households must keep their child enrolled at McCarver at the start of the 2017-2018 school year. Households are now encouraged to attend their neighborhood schools or verify to THA that they have a reliable method of transportation if they choose to enroll elsewhere. Removing this restriction helped to resolve transportation challenges, tardiness and absenteeism, and support households wanting to invest more into their local neighborhood schools.
2. Program households must continue to engage in their child's education, at minimum by ensuring that their children are attending school on-time every day. The following steps will help set the program minimum requirements of the families:
 - 2.1.1. For households with children enrolled in TPS, the ESHAP Education Specialist will gather monthly attendance reports from each TPS school, including excused and unexcused absences, tardies, and early dismissals;
 - 2.1.2. For program families who enroll in non-TPS schools, the ESHAP caseworker will assist parents with setting up their parent portal accounts. This is a database school districts use to provide parents access to their child's academic reports. THA will require each household to log into their portal and submit a monthly attendance report to the THA caseworker. If the parent portal is not actively updated by the school, or if the household does not have device access to log into a portal, THA will require the household to request a monthly attendance report from their school administrator.
3. ESHAP staff will review each report and identify households with student absences and tardies. ESHAP staff will pursue the following actions if the student's attendance is not on track:
 - 2 absences or tardies will trigger THA to issue a "nudge letter" to the household, which is a gentle reminder to families about the importance of on-time school attendance;
 - 5 absences or tardies will trigger an in-person meeting with the ESHAP caseworker and/or a school administrator to address attendance concerns and resolve any barriers that might prevent the student from attending school on time;
 - 7 absences or tardies will trigger a conditional termination letter from THA that will notify the household that they are out of compliance, that THA will terminate them from the program, but will offer them a chance to confer about alternative consequences that THA, in its sole discretion, may consider. To explore

alternatives, the letter will explain, the family must contact ESHAP staff within 10 business days to confer. When determining the consequences, THA will consult with TPS and will consider case-by-case circumstances that may have caused the student's truancy, including tardies that have district-related causes, such as delayed school bus-transportation.

4. Households must engage with the THA caseworker by checking-in at least once every 30 days using the method of communication identified in each household's individualized training and services plan. Methods of communication may include phone call, in-person meetings, text-message, e-mail or letter.
 - If the household fails to check-in with the caseworker after 30 days, THA will issue a reminder letter to the home and the household will receive a phone call. The household will have 10 business days to respond;
 - If the household does not follow up, THA will issue a conditional termination letter that states that THA will terminate them from the program but will offer them a chance to confer about alternative consequences that THA in its sole discretion, may consider. To explore alternatives, the letter will explain, the family must contact ESHAP staff within 10 business days to confer.
5. THA will guarantee eligible program households an extension of the present Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) to July 1, 2019. Until then, they will retain a rental subsidy based upon family income. On July 1, 2019, all such households will transition to the Housing Opportunity Program (HOP). HOP rules and policies shall govern their rental subsidy. They will no longer participate in the ESHAP program.

To receive the HOP subsidy, households must demonstrate that they are engaged in a qualifying self-sufficiency activity. "Qualifying activities" is any activity in which will increase earned income for a sustained period. Examples of qualifying self-sufficiency activities include: degree, vocational certificate, homeownership programs or completion of Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program.

Data

The current legacy ESHAP cohort is made up of 38 households with 57 elementary school children; 8 of these households leased up in 2016, 27 households leased up in 2017, 3 households are currently shopping as of January 2018. The majority of these families are navigating the early stages of financial management and securing employment or educational opportunities as they transition from crisis to stability. 54% of these families who are currently leased-up would be shelter burdened by 50% or higher on a HOP voucher based on current gross income data¹. Of the current 35 ESHAP families who are leased-up, 77% of households enrolled into the program and leased-up in 2017. This means that many are still transitioning out of homelessness and rely on the deep-subsidy offered through the HCV to effectively reach stabilization.

¹ December 2017 ESHAP Household Income Data

As of January 2018, these legacy ESHAP students are located at these schools:

- 36 students attend McCarver Elementary
- 9 students attend other TPS schools including Manitou, Skyline, Whittier, Blix, Downing and Stafford Elementary
- 12 students attend schools in neighboring school districts including Clover Park, University Place and Franklin Pierce

Consultation

THA consulted with TPS staff, program staff and program households to devise the legacy policy that this resolution proposes. Below are the comments and ideas that helped shape this memorandum.

Topic	Response
Extend rental assistance for 2017-2018 school year households beyond July 1, 2018.	<p>ESHAP Households:</p> <p>During the September 2017 Family Night, households expressed the concern to THA staff of being ill-prepared for the private market, particularly if THA were to end assistance on July 2018. In November 2017, THA solicited ESHAP household feedback through focus groups. Households gave recommendations that THA extend assistance after July 2018 and expressed willingness to pay more of their share of rent once households increased their income. In January 2018, THA surveyed ESHAP families, of the 20 households that responded, 94% agreed that they'd be willing to absorb a greater percentage of their rent if THA extended the length of assistance.</p> <p>TPS Staff:</p> <p>Out of best interest for students on the program, district staff recommends that THA help keep families stabilized by extending rental assistance for program families.</p>
Household readiness to transition to the HOP by July 2018. While there is general consensus that it's important for THA to extend the duration of rental assistance, it's important to acknowledge	<p>ESHAP Households:</p> <p>85% of households who answered the January survey indicated that they are either not at all confident or somewhat confident of their abilities to pay 50% of their rent by July 2018. Only three (3) households rated themselves as very confident.</p> <p>TPS Staff:</p> <p>District staff favors an option that would provide ESHAP families adequate assistance that reflects the cohort's needs so that</p>

Topic	Response
that majority of program households are still transitioning from crisis to stability, and therefore may not be ready to absorb a greater percentage of their rent that the HOP requires by July 2018.	households will have a chance to stabilize. Otherwise, the program will risk disrupting student progress in school, as well as increase household's likelihood of returning to homelessness.
Minimum check-in once every 30 days with THA caseworker.	<p>ESHAP Staff: Given that participants are geographically spread throughout the greater Tacoma region, THA can better monitor household progress by establishing a minimum check-in. This requirement holds households accountable for reporting their progress, and an opportunity to communicate any key issues, needs or accomplishments with THA in a timely manner.</p> <p>ESHAP Households:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 90% of families who answered the survey agreed that this requirement is appropriate, many stating that maintaining communication from the caseworker is helpful for their progress. ● The small percentage that disagreed stated that they currently have a separate communication plan with the caseworker.
School attendance monitoring	<p>TPS & ESHAP Staff: Prioritizing the monitoring of on-time school attendance as the main indicator of the family and student's participation commitment will help set a program minimum definition of school engagement. On-time school attendance is a district initiative, therefore this decision aligns nicely with district goals.</p> <p>ESHAP Households: Majority of households agreed that this requirement is aligned with their assumptions about the program's expectation. Families also expressed their personal beliefs about the importance of on-time school attendance. Some families did request that THA take into consideration each household circumstance and that decisions that may impact household eligibility be taken on a case-by-case basis. THA agrees with this and</p>

Recommendation

Authorize THA's Executive Director to adopt these legacy policies and incorporate them and related documents into the ESHAP Program manual.



TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION 2018-02-28

(ESHAP Legacy Policy for Households Enrolled in the 2017-2018 School Year)

A RESOLUTION of the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Tacoma

WHEREAS, Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) and the Tacoma Public School District (TPS) are redesigning the Elementary School Housing Assistance Program (ESHAP) for expansion in the fall of 2018; and

WHEREAS, during this redesign the 38 presently enrolled ESHAP families (legacy families) are experiencing considerable uncertainty about the rules governing their rental assistance and their obligations in the program;

WHEREAS, THA and TPS wish to provide these legacy families with more certainty and stability as they recover from their experience of homelessness;

WHEREAS, THA and TPS staff consulted with these families on how to do that, and developed recommendations and program changes the purpose to apply only to these families;

WHEREAS, Changes to the ESHAP 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:

Authorize THA's Executive Director to adopt these policy documents and update the ESHAP Program Manual to read substantially as follows:

1. Continue to allow present ESHAP legacy families to attend the school of their choice. Encourage them to opt into their neighborhood school that is closest to their home or verify to THA that they have a reliable method of transportation if they opt to enroll elsewhere.
2. Legacy families must engage in their child's education, at minimum by ensuring that their children are attending school on-time every day. For households with children enrolled in TPS, the ESHAP Education Specialist will gather monthly attendance reports from each TPS school, including excused and unexcused absences, tardies, and early dismissals.

For program families who are enrolled in non-TPS schools, the ESHAP caseworker will assist parents with setting up their parent portal accounts. This is a database school districts use to provide parents access to their child's academic reports. THA will require each household to log into their portal and submit a monthly attendance report to the

THA caseworker.


If the parent portal is not actively updated by the school, or if the household does not have device access to log into a portal, THA will require the household to request a monthly attendance report from their school administrator.

3. ESHAP staff will review attendance reports on a monthly basis and identify households with student absences and tardies. ESHAP staff will pursue the following actions if the student is not attending school daily and on time:
 - 2 absences or tardies will trigger THA to issue a “nudge letter” to the household, which is a gentle reminder to families about the importance of on-time school attendance;
 - 5 absences or tardies will trigger an in-person meeting with the ESHAP caseworker and/or a school administrator to address attendance concerns and resolve any barriers that might prevent the student from attending school on time;
 - 7 absences or tardies will trigger a conditional termination letter from THA that will notify the household that they are out of compliance, that THA will terminate them from the program but will offer them a chance to confer about alternative consequences that THA in its sole discretion, may consider. To explore alternatives, the letter will explain, the family must contact ESHAP staff within 10 business days to confer. When determining the consequences, THA will consult with TPS and will consider case-by-case circumstances that may have caused the student’s truancy, including tardies that have district-related causes, such as delayed school bus-transportation.
4. Legacy households must engage with the THA caseworker by checking-in at least once every 30 days using the method of communication identified in each household’s individualized training and services plan. Methods of communication may include phone call, in-person meetings, text-message, e-mail or letter.
 - If the household fails to check-in with the caseworker after 30 days, THA will issue a reminder letter to the home and the household will receive a phone call. The household will have 10 business days to respond;
 - If the household does not follow up, THA will issue a conditional termination letter that states that THA will terminate them from the program but will offer them a chance to confer about alternative consequences that THA in its sole discretion, may consider. To explore alternatives, the letter will explain, the family must contact ESHAP staff within 10 business days to confer.

5. THA will guarantee eligible legacy program households an extension of the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) to July 1, 2019. During this time, they will retain a rental subsidy based upon family income. On July 1, 2019, all such households will transition to the HOP. HOP rules and policies shall govern their rental subsidy. They will no longer participate in the ESHAP program.

Households must demonstrate that they are engaged in a qualifying self-sufficiency activity. "Qualifying activities" is any activity in which will increase earned income for a sustained period. Examples of qualifying self-sufficiency activities include: degree, vocational certificate, homeownership programs or completion of Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program.

Approved February 28, 2018



Janis Flauding, Chair