



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON, DC 20410-5000

DATE: February 14, 2019

MEMORANDUM FOR: FY17 Mainstream NOFA Awardees

FROM: Steven Durham, Director, Office of Housing Voucher Programs

SUBJECT: Program Implementation Information for Mainstream PHAs

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded vouchers to your public housing agency (PHA) through *FR-6100-N-43 FY2017 Mainstream Voucher Program Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)* in September 2018. HUD is working on a Public and Indian Housing (PIH) notice for program implementation, as well as a webinar on waiting list administration. However, the purpose of this letter is to address a few key issues that PHAs are currently facing as they lease new mainstream vouchers.

HUD established a webpage for the [Mainstream Voucher Program](#). All forthcoming program guidance will be linked on [this website](#). If you have additional questions that are not addressed in this letter, please see the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) on the Mainstream webpage. If the FAQ does not answer your question, please send to MainstreamVouchers@hud.gov.

1. Administrative fees

HUD will advance administrative fees on 50% of newly awarded mainstream voucher assistance through June 2019. If your PHA was awarded 40 mainstream vouchers, HUD will disburse to your agency the prorated fee for 20 units for January through June 2019. The Financial Management Division will reconcile administrative fees based on actual leasing and make appropriate adjustments in fee payments later this year. If your PHA has already leased more than 50% of units allocated and would like an advance on your administrative fee, please contact your Financial Analyst.

2. Mainstream vouchers are regular housing choice vouchers with special eligibility criteria

Aside from serving a specific population, mainstream vouchers are treated the same as regular voucher assistance. The same regulations apply to mainstream vouchers. There is no special authority to treat families that receive a mainstream voucher differently from other applicants and participants of the housing choice voucher program. For example, the PHA cannot apply different payment standards, conditions for allowing portability, or eligibility screening criteria for mainstream voucher families than regular housing choice voucher families. See FAQ for more detailed information.

3. Awarded vouchers are for new admissions

PHAs must lease the awarded vouchers by pulling mainstream-eligible applicants from the waiting list. PHAs are not permitted to reassign existing participants to the mainstream program in order to “free up” regular tenant-based vouchers. There is no provision that allows PHAs to skip the waiting list when using a mainstream voucher.

4. Waiting list administration

HUD has received many questions about waiting list administration for mainstream vouchers and special vouchers in general. Please see the existing [FAQ](#) on the Mainstream webpage. HUD is currently working on a webinar and guidance on this topic, however, we understand that PHAs need guidance quickly at this critical time. We would like to make a few high-level points to help PHAs get started and plan for successful administration of their mainstream vouchers.

A. One waiting list requirement

PHAs must maintain one waiting list for all tenant-based assistance (24 CFR 982.204(f)) which includes mainstream voucher assistance. PHAs must not have a separate waiting list for mainstream voucher assistance. When issuing a mainstream voucher, the PHA will choose the first mainstream-eligible family from its tenant-based waiting list.

B. Admissions preference

An admissions preference affects the order applicants appear on the waiting list. Most PHAs that received mainstream vouchers under this NOFA received points for adopting an admissions preference for specific targeted populations. If your PHA claimed points for a preference, your PHA must adopt a preference for at least one of the targeted groups in the NOFA.

- i. PHA may limit the number of people who will qualify for the preference - 24 CFR 982.207(a)(3) allows PHAs to set a limit to the number of applicants that may qualify for a local preference. HUD expects PHAs that claim points under the NOFA will establish a preference for at least the number of vouchers awarded to the PHA under this competition.
- ii. Option to open waiting list for a limited preference – The PHA may adopt criteria defining which families may apply for assistance when opening its waiting list (24 CFR 982.206(b)(1)). For example, if the PHA opens its waiting list solely for applicants that meet the Mainstream NOFA preference, the PHA must provide public notice that it is opening its waiting list specifically for non-elderly persons with disabilities who are transitioning out of institutional or other segregated settings, at serious risk of institutionalization, homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless. The PHA must comply with the requirements for opening the waiting list under 24 CFR 982.206, including the requirement to provide public notice and to accept applications from families for whom the list is open.
- iii. Update preference policy/procedures – In order to effectively apply and manage preferences, the PHA must have a written policy for how preferences will be applied including how families with the same preference will be selected – either in order by the date and time of their application or a random choice technique (24 CFR 982.207(c)).

C. Updating waiting list for change in eligible population

Your PHA may choose to do a full waiting list update or a limited update. A full or limited update may be done regardless of whether your PHA will be opening the waiting list or not.

Full waiting list update: Update entire existing waiting list to determine if all current applicants meet the eligibility criteria for mainstream vouchers and new preferences (if adopted).

Sample process for preparing for and leasing mainstream families including a full waiting list update

- Step 1: Send out letter to all applicants on the current waiting list to determine 1) if there are any household members who are non-elderly persons with disabilities and 2) if the household qualifies for the new preference (if applicable).
- Step 2: Update waiting list order based on new information on preferences and the PHA's specific policies for how to apply preferences.
- Step 3: Begin pulling families from waiting list, beginning with the first mainstream-eligible family on the regular tenant-based waiting list.

Limited waiting list update: If your PHA is NOT adopting a new preference, then you may determine the eligibility of existing families on the waiting list in smaller batches. For example, your PHA could contact the top 30 families on the waiting list to determine if any of these families qualify for a mainstream voucher, offering a mainstream voucher to the first family that includes a non-elderly person with disabilities in the order they appeared on the waiting list. Since these names are highest on the waiting list, any eligible families would be the first to be eligible for a mainstream voucher.