Chapter 4

APPLICATIONS, WAITING LIST AND TENANT SELECTION

INTRODUCTION

When a family wishes to receive Section 8 assistance under the Housing Choice Voucher Program through the DMMHA, the family must submit a complete application that provides the DMMHA with the information needed to determine the family’s eligibility. When assistance becomes available, the DMMHA will select families from the waiting list in accordance with HUD requirements and DMMHA policies.

Adherence to the selection policies described in this Chapter ensures that the DMMHA will be in compliance with all relevant fair housing requirements, as described in Chapter 2.

This Chapter describes DMMHA policies for taking applications, managing the waiting list and selecting families for assistance. The policies outlined in this chapter are organized into three sections, as follows:

Part I: The Application Process. This part provides an overview of the application process, and discusses how applicants can obtain and submit applications. It also specifies how the DMMHA will handle the applications it receives.

Part II: Managing the Waiting List. This part presents the policies that govern how the DMMHA’s waiting list is structured, when it is opened and closed, and how the public is notified of the opportunity to apply for assistance. It also discusses the process the DMMHA will use to keep the waiting list current.

Part III: Selection for Assistance. This part describes the policies that guide the DMMHA in selecting families for assistance as such assistance becomes available.
PART I: THE APPLICATION PROCESS

4-I.A. OVERVIEW

This part describes the DMMHA policies for making applications available, accepting applications and making preliminary determinations of eligibility and the placement of applicants on the waiting list. This Chapter does not apply to the Veterans Administration Supportive Housing (VASH) Program. See Chapter 18 for policies regarding the VASH Program.

4-I.B. APPLYING FOR ASSISTANCE (Notice PIH 2009-36)

When the DMMHA determines the need to open the Section 8 Waiting List, interested individuals/families will be required to complete a pre-application form for admission and placement on the waiting list, if randomly selected by the computer’s random selection process. The DMMHA will use the pre-application form to collect only the information necessary to make a preliminary determination of eligibility. The pre-application includes information on the Section 8 Program, preference information (if applicable), and possible reasons for denials (not inclusive).

When the waiting list is open, pre-applications for the Section 8 Housing Assistance Payments Programs will be accepted either by DMMHA staff at the DMMHA Administrative Office, other sites as designated, or through a web-based computer application process.

The DMMHA may deny processing a pre-application for an individual or family who was denied eligibility within six (6) calendar months prior to the date that the applicant’s number reached the top of the waiting list and the application was pulled for processing.

Families are required to notify the DMMHA Application Specialist, in writing, if the family changes addresses after submitting their pre-application. Failure to properly notify the DMMHA of a new address will lead to the family being removed from the waiting list. In cases where the family’s mail is returned from the post office as undeliverable and the family has a guardian or a reasonable accommodation for copies to a service provider or other contact person, the DMMHA will contact the guardian or the service provider or other contact person and ask that they submit, in writing, a new address for the family. In the event that DMMHA does not receive a response or new address for the family, the family will be removed from the waiting list.

4-I.C. PLACEMENT ON THE WAITING LIST

The DMMHA Application Specialist, other staff member, or the web-based computer application, will record the date that each applicants completed pre-application form is received by DMMHA.

Following the receipt of a complete pre-application, the Application Specialist, other designated staff, or the web-based computer application process will enter/download the information into the computer system as required.
A Computerized Registration of Pre-Applications (Waiting List) for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program will be maintained by the DMMHA Application Specialist.

The DMMHA will select applicants from the waiting list though a lottery or random selection approach. Through this approach, the waiting list is not established based on the date and time of application. Instead, DMMHA randomly orders applications to form a waiting list. If DMMHA anticipates receiving far more applications than it can assist in a reasonable period of time, lottery rules may be established in advance with a limit to the number of applications that will be placed on the waiting list. DMMHA will determine the random or lottery selection order through a computer generated random selection program.
PART II: MANAGING THE WAITING LIST

4-II.A. OVERVIEW

This Part describes the DMMHA policies regarding various aspects of organizing and managing the waiting list of applicant families. This includes opening the list to new applicants, closing the list to new applicants, notifying the public of waiting list openings and closings, updating waiting list information, purging the list of families that are no longer interested in or eligible for assistance, as well as conducting outreach to ensure a sufficient number of applicants.

4-II.B. ORGANIZATION OF THE WAITING LIST [24 CFR 982.204 and 205]

The DMMHA will maintain a waiting list for the HCV program for each waiting list opening period. The DMMHA will exhaust the oldest waiting list first before accepting additional applicants and/or selecting families from the next waiting list(s).

The DMMHA will not merge the HCV waiting list with the waiting list for any other program the DMMHA operates. However, applicants on the HCV waiting list may be contacted regarding vacancies in other Targeted Funding Programs. Interested applicants on the HCV waiting list must submit the appropriate application and be found eligible by DMMHA to qualify for any other such programs.

The DMMHA shall maintain a list of applicants for the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Applicants who are on the waiting list for other Housing programs (i.e Public Housing Program) and present Public Housing residents will be eligible to apply for the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

Families on waiting lists for any type of assisted housing will have no special status with respect to the Section 8 HCV Program; families must apply specifically for these programs. Applicants will not lose their place on any other DMMHA waiting list should they make pre-application for the Section 8 HCV Program, and this right will be explained to each applicant for the Section 8 HCV Program who might previously have filed a pre-application for a dwelling unit available through any other DMMHA Program.

4-II.C. OPENING AND CLOSING THE WAITING LIST [24 CFR 982.206]

Closing the Waiting List

If the number of families on the waiting list for a Housing Choice Voucher is such that there is no reasonable prospect that additional applicants could be provided assistance within the next year, the DMMHA may suspend the taking of further applications. If such suspension occurs, the DMMHA will publicly announce the effective date of such suspension. Where the DMMHA has particular preferences or funding criteria that require a specific category of family, the DMMHA may elect to continue to accept applications from these applicants while closing the waiting list to others.

Opening the Waiting List

The DMMHA will announce the opening of the waiting list at least thirty (30) calendar days prior to the date applications will first be accepted. If the list is only being opened
for certain categories of families or for a certain period of time, this information will be contained in the notice.

The DMMHA will give public notice by publishing the relevant information in suitable media outlets including, but not limited to:

- Local Newspapers
- Local Service Providers via e-mail notification
- City of Des Moines website
- Polk County Housing Continuum via e-mail notification

4-II.D. OUTREACH

Because of the complexity of the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program, efforts will be on-going to inform all interested or associated groups or individuals that DMMHA will be attempting to reach and serve. The more obvious means of communications have been proposed, such as newspapers, television, radio and community group contacts. However, as the program progresses, these methods will be evaluated as to their necessity and/or effectiveness. Various outreach methods will be brought into play if it is determined that a segment or segments of the community are not being reached or that very low-income families have not been certified in sufficient numbers to achieve and maintain full leasing status of the project(s). A detailed plan of outreach is outlined in the Agency’s Marketing Plan (Exhibit 4-1).

4-II.E. Not Used

4-II.F. UPDATING THE WAITING LIST (24 CFR 982.204)

Purging the Waiting List

Periodically, applicants on the waiting list will be contacted by letter to determine their continued interest in program participation. Each applicant will be required to complete an update request and return it to the Agency.

This update request will be sent to the last address that the DMMHA has on record for the family. The update request will provide a deadline by which the family must respond and will state that failure to respond will result in the applicant’s name being removed from the waiting list.

The family’s response must be in writing and may be delivered in person, by mail, or by fax. Responses must be received by the DMMHA by the deadline required.

If the family fails to respond by the deadline required, the family will be removed from the waiting list without further notice.

If a family is removed from the waiting list for failure to respond, the DMMHA Housing Voucher Administrator or his/her designee may, in their sole discretion, reinstate the
family if s/he determines the lack of response was due to DMMHA error, or to circumstances beyond the family’s control.

Applicants with questions regarding their removed application must submit their questions in writing to the DMMHA Housing Voucher Administrator or his/her designee.

**Removal from the Waiting List due to DMMHA Determination of Ineligibility**

If the DMMHA determines that the family is not eligible for assistance (see Chapter 3), the family will be removed from the waiting list.

If a family is removed from the waiting list because the DMMHA has determined the family is not eligible for assistance, a notice will be sent to the family’s address of record. The notice will state the reasons the family was removed from the waiting list and will inform the family how to request an informal review regarding the DMMHA’s decision (see Chapter 16) [24 CFR 982.201(f)].
PART III: SELECTION FOR ASSISTANCE

4-III.A. OVERVIEW
As vouchers become available, families on the waiting list will be selected for assistance in accordance with the policies described in this Part.

4-III.B. HCV FUNDING SOURCES

Special Admissions (24 CFR 982.203)

HUD may award funding for specifically-named families living in specified types of units (e.g., a family that is displaced by demolition of public housing). In these cases, the DMMHA may admit such families whether or not they are on the waiting list, and, if they are on the waiting list, without considering the family’s position on the waiting list. These families are considered non-waiting list selections. The DMMHA must retain records showing that such families were admitted with special program funding.

Targeted Funding [24 CFR 982.204(e)]

HUD may award DMMHA funding for a specified category of families on the waiting list. The DMMHA will use this funding only to assist the families within the specified category. In order to assist families within a targeted funding category, the DMMHA may skip families on the waiting list that do not qualify within the targeted funding category. Within this category of families, the order in which such families are assisted is determined according to the policies provided in Section 4-III.C.

The DMMHA administers the following types of targeted funding:

- Non-Elderly Disabled Voucher Program
- Family Unification Program (FUP)
- Veterans Administrative Housing (VASH) Program
- Project Based Voucher Program (see Chapter 17)

Regular HCV Funding

Regular HCV funding may be used to assist any eligible family on the waiting list. Families are selected from the waiting list according to the policies provided in Section 4-III.C.

4-III.C. SELECTION METHOD

Regular Funding Selection:

Families will be selected from the Housing Choice Voucher waiting list in numerical order based on the numbers that were assigned to each application, by lottery, at the time the applications were placed on the waiting list.
The DMMHA will comply with the income targeting requirements of “Income Targeting” as required in 24CFR 982.201(b)(2). Meeting the income targeting requirements may require skipping higher income families on the waiting list as necessary to satisfy DMMHA’s annual targeting requirement.

Targeted Funding Selection:

Families that qualify for a specified category of program funding (targeted funding) may be selected from the waiting list ahead of higher placed families that do not qualify for the targeted funding. Documentation will be maintained by DMMHA as to whether families on the list qualify for and are interested in targeted funding. If a higher placed family on the waiting list is not qualified or not interested in targeted funding, there will be a notation maintained so that DMMHA does not have to ask higher placed families each time targeted selections are made.

Non-Elderly Disabled Voucher Program: Applicants who qualify for this category will be selected in numerical order based on the numbers that were assigned to each application, by lottery, at the time the applications were placed on the list.

Family Unification Program Voucher Program (FUP): Upon initial funding and FUP Program start up, certified FUP eligible families or individuals aging out of foster care and referred by DHS will be selected in numerical order based on the numbers that were assigned to each application, by lottery, at the time the applications were placed on the list. If FUP vouchers remain after serving all eligible applicants on the waiting list, certified FUP eligible families or individuals aging out of foster care and referred by DHS will be selected on a first-come, first served basis according to the date and time their complete application is received by DMMHA.

Project Based Voucher Program: See Chapter 17 regarding selection from the waiting list for the Project Based Voucher Program.

Preferences:

The DMMHA will give a preference for applicants eligible for the Family Unification Program (FUP).

The DMMHA will also give a preference for FUP Youth participants who are approaching their 36 month time limit on FUP Voucher Assistance in an effort to permit the FUP Youth to retain rental assistance under the regular HCV program.

The DMMHA will give a preference for current Shelter Plus Care participants that have been in the Permanent Supportive Housing Program, formerly known as the Shelter Plus Care program located within the jurisdiction of the DMMHA for a minimum of three (3) consecutive years in good standing and meet DMMHA’s admission guidelines. Good standing shall be verified in written correspondence by the Agency’s administering the Shelter Plus Care Program to the DMMHA and include:

- Participant is not in violation of their lease agreement;
- Participant efforts in working with case management; and
- Client’s care of the unit
The DMMHA will offer a preference to any family that has been terminated from the HCV program due to insufficient program funding.

The DMMHA will offer a preference to current Public Housing families that include victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking who have been referred by the DMMHA’s public housing program.

The applicant must certify that the abuser will not reside with the applicant unless the DMMHA gives prior written approval. In making a determination whether or not the DMMHA will permit the abuser to reside with the applicant, the DMMHA will require that the applicant submit a request to add the abuser and provide verification that the abuser has successfully completed domestic violence treatment or assaultive behavior classes and has not had any domestic violence charges within five (5) years prior to the request to add the abuser.

The DMMHA will first assist families that have been terminated from the HCV program due to insufficient funding and then assist families that qualify for the VAWA preference.

**Effects of Funding Shortfalls on Selection Method:**

The DMMHA may experience funding shortfalls in a given calendar year in which event it may stop issuing vouchers or recall vouchers from families that are searching for units. If the DMMHA is not assisting the required number of special purpose vouchers (NED families, HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) families, and Family Unification Program (FUP) families) when it resumes issuing vouchers, the DMMHA will issue vouchers first to these special purpose voucher categories of families on its waiting list until the DMMHA is assisting its required number of special purpose vouchers.

**4-III.D. NOTIFICATION OF SELECTION**

When a Housing Choice Voucher becomes available, a letter will be sent to the next family or person on the waiting list and/or otherwise selected in accordance with Section 4-III.C. Upon receipt of this notice, families will be required to complete a full application for admission and to meet with DMMHA staff. The family will be notified by mail of the date and time of the appointment. If a notification letter is returned to the DMMHA with no forwarding address, the family will be removed from the waiting list.

1) **Recognized Transitional Housing Program Participants**

In the event that an applicant is selected from the waiting list and the applicant notifies the DMMHA that they are a participant in a recognized transitional housing program, the DMMHA may, at its sole discretion, allow the applicant to hold their current position on the waiting list while completing the approved program. The DMMHA will require the applicant to submit written verification of participation in the program and the approximate date of completion from the Program prior to holding the applicant’s position on the waiting list. Upon receipt of the required
verification, the DMMHA will notify the applicant, in writing, of its decision to approve or deny the request to hold their position on the waiting list until participation in the approved program is completed. Applicants who are approved to hold his/her position on the waiting list must inform DMMHA when they have completed the approved Program. Upon written notification from the applicant that the approved Program has been completed, the DMMHA will begin processing the pre-application in accordance with the policies set forth in this plan.

Applicants who are approved to hold their position on the waiting list must comply with the same requirements as all other HCV applicants, including but not limited to, supplying any information that is required and submitting address changes in writing. Such applicants that do not respond within the required timeframe or have correspondence that is returned by the post office, will be removed from the waiting list.

4-III.E. THE APPLICATION INTERVIEW

At the discretion of the DMMHA, applicants may be mailed a full application update packet to complete and return within fourteen (14) calendar days or be required to attend an in-person interview with DMMHA staff to complete the full application update packet.

All family members over the age of eighteen (18) years of age must appear for a scheduled appointment with DMMHA to determine program eligibility. If a full application update packet was mailed to the applicant for completion, all family members over the age of eighteen (18) must sign the required documents.

All household members age 18 or older are encouraged to attend the interview together. If all adult household members cannot attend at the same time, the adult household members that could not attend will be asked to schedule an appointment to sign all required documents.

At the appointment, the Application Specialist, or other DMMHA staff, will complete all information contained on the DMMHA’s full application form. Family composition and income must be verified at this time.

All information provided by the applicant regarding previous rental history and/or program participation, criminal background, gross family income, gross assets, and preference rating (if applicable) must be true and complete and verified and maintained in the applicant's file (see Chapter 7 – Verification).

The family must provide the information necessary to establish the family’s eligibility and determine the appropriate level of assistance, as well as complete required forms, provide required signatures, and submit required documentation. If any materials are missing, the DMMHA will provide the family with a written list of items that must be submitted.

Any required documents or information that the family is unable to provide at the interview must be provided within 14 calendar days of the interview (Chapter 7 provides details about longer submission deadlines for particular items, including documentation of eligible noncitizen status).
If the required documents and information are not provided within the required time frame (plus any extensions approved by DMMHA), the family’s application will be retired from the waiting list.

If an applicant family includes a child under 6 years of age who joined the household within the 6 months prior to the date of voucher issuance, an otherwise eligible family may be admitted to the program and the family must provide documentation of the child’s SSN within 90 calendar days of the effective date of the initial HAP contract. A 90-calendar day extension will be granted if the DMMHA determines that the applicant family’s failure to comply was due to unforeseen circumstances and was outside of the family’s control.

The DMMHA will grant one additional 90-calendar day extension if needed for reasons beyond the applicant family’s control, such as delayed processing of the SSN application by the SSA, natural disaster, fire, death in the family, or other emergency.

Interviews will be conducted in English. For limited English proficient (LEP) applicants, the DMMHA will, upon request, provide translation services in accordance with the DMMHA’s LEP plan. The DMMHA LEP Plan is located in Chapter 2.

After having missed one scheduled appointment for the meeting to complete the full application, the DMMHA, at its sole discretion, may retire the family's pre-application and remove their name from the waiting list. However, if the applicant contacts the Agency prior to the scheduled meeting, the Agency may reschedule the applicant’s appointment. An applicant will only be afforded the opportunity to request that the full application appointment be rescheduled two (2) times.

4-III.F. COMPLETING THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The DMMHA will verify all information provided by the family (see Chapter 7). Based on verified information, the DMMHA will make a final determination of eligibility (see Chapter 3).

If the DMMHA determines that the family is ineligible, the DMMHA will send written notification of the ineligibility determination. The notice will specify the reasons for ineligibility, and will inform the family of its right to request an informal review (Chapter 16).

If the DMMHA determines that the family is eligible to receive assistance, the DMMHA will send written notification to the family to attend a briefing in accordance with the policies in Chapter 5.