



APPLICANT SELECTION PROCEDURES

for Housing Providers in St. Thomas and Elgin County

Updated June 2012



Introduction:

Accurate waiting lists are important. Not only will accurate waiting lists save housing providers time and money by making it easier to fill vacant units quickly, they help provide the best service possible for applicants in financial need to find housing as quickly as possible.

Housing Providers and Housing Applications Centre staff are encouraged to work together to maintain lists that are up-to-date and accurate. These procedures were developed in conjunction with the Housing Applications Centre and input from housing providers to make the process of filling vacant units as efficient and easy as possible.

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What should a housing provider do when a vacancy occurs?

Step 1 Establish the nature of the vacant unit. Should the unit be filled by a **Special Needs** household requiring a modified or supported unit? If so, the Special Needs Housing - Policy and Procedures must be followed.

Step 2 For all other vacant units, the Housing Provider should first **check the internal waiting lists** for the project to ensure that any internal Special Priority applicants and over- or under-housed tenants or members are offered the unit in accordance with the Housing Provider's Internal Transfer Policy and in accordance with local RGI Occupancy Standards.

Step 3 Once all internal transfers have been completed, the Housing Provider should **check the existing mix of RGI and Market** households in the housing complex.

Step 4 Compare the RGI/Market mix to the **Target Plan** for the housing complex.

| Housing Provider Target Plans: | RGI Units | Market Units | Total Units |
|---|-----------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Elgin and St. Thomas Housing Corp. | 512 | 0 | 512 |
| 2. EFBC Non-Profit Housing Corporation | 108 | 18 | 126 |
| 3. Meadowdale Housing Co-operative | 37 | 23 | 60 |
| 4. Pinafore Station Co-operative Homes | 35 | 28 | 63 |
| 5. Elmview Estates Housing Co-operative | 49 | 18 | 67 |
| 6. Troy Village Co-operative Housing | 35 | 15 | 50 |
| 7. Kiwanis Non-Profit Homes of Rodney | 16 | 8 | 24 |
| 8. Dutton & District Lions NP Housing | 18 | 7 | 25 |
| 9. Menno Lodge of Aylmer | 73 | 2 | 75 |
| 10. Port Burwell Family Residences | 35 | 0 | 35 |
| 11. Port Burwell Non-Profit Housing Corp. | 16 | 4 | 20 |

Step 5 If a Market household is required to fill the vacant unit, the Housing Provider should select an applicant from his/her **Market** Waiting List.

Step 6 If an **RGI** household is required to fill the unit, the procedures in Steps 6 to 10 must be followed.

Housing Providers must select applicants from the Central Waiting List as follows:

- Go on-line to Yardi Voyageur and select the list for the bedroom size that is being vacated. (Note: applicants on this waiting list have already been cross-checked with the Arrears Database by Housing Applications Centre staff.)
- Start with the top name on the list (Special Priority applicants then chronological).
- Double-click on that applicant's name to open the file for more information and to read "memos".
- Conduct landlord reference checks, credit checks and any other screening procedures the Housing Provider usually performs.

Step 7 The Housing Provider should **contact the first applicant by phone**. The Housing Provider should state that a unit will be available on _____ (date) and, subject to re-verification of their eligibility for a



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subsidy, the Housing Provider is prepared to make an offer of housing.

Step 8 If the **applicant is interested** in the unit, arrangements should be made to show the unit and sign required paperwork. The Housing Provider should immediately mail to the applicant:

- i. an "Offer of Subsidized Housing" (Appendix 2)
- ii. a Household Income and Assets Review form.

(Note: ONPHA and CHF have developed sample Annual Income Verification forms that can be downloaded from their websites. Income, assets, and household composition should be re-verified by the Housing Provider before making an offer of housing.)

- iii. an "Acceptance of Accommodation" form (Appendix 3)

or give the documents to the applicant in person, depending on the timing of the meeting arrangements.

Step 9 If the **Housing Provider offers** the unit to an applicant, the form "Notice of Vacancy / Request for Applications" (Appendix 1) should be completed and faxed to the Housing Applications Centre at 519-633-8035. Housing Applications Centre staff will place the applicant "on offer" in Yardi.

Note: *It is important to let the Housing Applications Centre know when an offer has been made so the application can be removed from the common waiting list that other Housing Providers access. It is equally important not to just leave applicants "on offer" if they refuse an offer, as that application will remain excluded from the common waiting list and the applicant will not receive further offers from other Housing Providers.*

9(a) If a **Housing Provider refuses to offer** housing to an applicant based on a Housing Provider's rights of refusal, the Housing Provider must notify the applicant of the decision and the reason(s) for the decision in writing within five business days of offering the unit to another household. The Housing Provider must notify the applicant of the opportunity to appeal the decision within ten business days to the Housing Provider's Internal Appeals Committee. (See Appendix 5 for a sample letter.) A copy of the letter should be faxed to the Housing Applications Centre. Appeals must be heard within ten business days of receiving an appeal request. A decision in writing must be rendered to the applicant within five business days of the Appeals Committee's decision. (See "What is the process when an applicant appeals a Housing Provider's refusal to offer a unit?" on Page 5.)

Step 10 If the **applicant accepts** the unit, Housing Providers should require the household to sign the lease or Occupancy Agreement as soon as possible so that a contractual agreement with the applicant exists. The lease or Occupancy Agreement legally obligates the household to provide a landlord with two months' notice if the household changes its mind at the last minute. The household should also sign a Consent and Declaration form to collect and share income and personal information, as required. Then again complete the form Notice of Vacancy/Request for Applications and fax it to the Housing Applications Centre to let staff know the applicant has or will be housed.

10(a) For **refusals by applicants** to accept an offer of housing or if a Housing Provider or if an applicant does not respond to the Housing Provider's communications, the "Refusal of an offer" letter (Appendix 4) should be mailed to the applicant and a copy faxed to the Housing Applications Centre. Applications Centre staff will track the number of refusals in Yardi.

Housing Providers must notify the Housing Applications Centre at hpc@esthc.ca of the final decision regarding each applicant contacted in order to update Yardi as required.



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Should the Housing Provider contact only one applicant at a time?

The Housing Provider should continue contacting applicants in chronological order on the waiting list while waiting for a response from the first applicant contacted.

Housing Providers should use good judgment to determine how many more applicants to contact. Each situation is different. Housing Providers may not skip over applicants who have been waiting longest but should do their best to avoid long delays in filling units.

Housing Providers should explain to other applicants being contacted that there are applicants ahead of them on the waiting list who have first right of refusal. It should be emphasized that the Housing Provider cannot promise an offer of housing, however an offer might be forthcoming if the other applicants cannot be contacted or are not ready to move at this time.

What happens if an applicant does not immediately answer the phone?

1. A Housing Provider should leave a voice message with the following information:
 - (a) The name and address of the housing project
 - (b) the name and telephone number of the Housing Provider contact person
 - (c) a statement that the Housing Provider is prepared to offer a unit to the applicant subject to re-verification of the applicant's eligibility for a subsidy
 - (d) the date a unit will be available
 - (e) a statement that unless a response is received by _____ (*the date and time 48 hours after the initial phone call*), the Housing Provider will consider the lack of response a "refusal" of the unit and the Housing Applications Centre will be advised accordingly unless they have a valid reason for not returning the call. (*Note: valid reasons for not responding could be vacation, hospitalization, etc. A Housing Provider should use good judgment, keeping in mind that our purpose is to help people in need of affordable housing*).
2. Mail an Offer of Housing package immediately (see Step 8), indicating the applicant is required to contact the Housing Provider within ten business days from the date of the Offer letter or the lack of response will be considered a "refusal" unless the applicant has a valid reason for not responding. The Housing Applications Centre must be advised of the refusal by way of an email or by faxing the "Notice of Vacancy" form.
3. If a response is received within 48 hours, Housing Providers should follow the process outlined in "What should a Housing Provider when a vacancy occurs?"
4. If no response is received within 48 hours, the Housing Provider should phone again the next day, repeat the previous message and using the same response deadline (re-state the date and time).
5. If an applicant does not respond within 48 hours or if the applicant has refused the offer of housing, send a "Refusal of Offer of Accommodation" letter (see sample letter attached as Appendix 4). Housing Providers should send a copy of this letter together with the updated "Notice of Vacancy" form to the Housing Applications Centre, whether or not the applicant returns the signed "refusal" letter to the Housing Provider.

What happens if an applicant does not have a telephone?

If an applicant does not have a telephone or if the phone number listed on the application form is out of service or incorrect and the Housing Provider is not able to leave a voice message, the Housing Provider should take the following steps:



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1. Mail an Offer of Housing package immediately (see Step 8), indicating the applicant is required to contact the Housing Provider within ten business days from the date of the Offer letter or the lack of response will be considered a “refusal” unless the applicant has a valid reason for not responding. (*Note: valid reasons for not responding could be vacation, hospitalization, etc. Again, Housing Providers should use good judgment*).
2. If the applicant has not responded within ten business days (*five business days should be allowed for mail delivery to the applicant plus five business days for the receipt of a written reply*), Housing Providers should advise the Housing Applications Centre by faxing the “Notice of Vacancy” form and providing a copy of the letter sent by the Housing Provider to the applicant, indicating the lack of response should be counted as a “refusal”.
3. Housing Applications Centre staff will attempt to contact the applicant as well (by phone and mail) before removing the applicant household from the Central Waiting List after the third refusal.

What are a Housing Provider’s “rights of refusal” to offer housing to an applicant?

Under the *Housing Services Act*, Reg. 367/11 sec. 50, Housing providers may refuse to offer a unit to an applicant if:

- (a) Selection of the household would be contrary to the housing project’s mandate.
- (b) The Housing Provider has reasonable grounds to believe, based on the household’s rental history, that the household may fail to fulfill its obligations to pay rent for the unit in the amount and at the times the rent is due.
- (c) The Housing Provider is a non-profit housing co-operative and the household does not agree to accept its responsibilities as a member of the housing provider or the Housing Provider has reasonable grounds to believe that the household will not accept or will be unable to accept those responsibilities.
- (d) The unit is one in which individuals will reside in a shared living situation and the Housing Provider has reasonable grounds to believe that it is unreasonable for the household to reside in the shared accommodation.

What is the process when an applicant appeals a Housing Provider’s refusal to offer a unit?

Housing Providers must establish their own Internal Appeals policies to hear requests for reviews of a Housing Provider’s decision to refuse to offer a unit to a household.

The procedures must include the following:

- Within five business days of offering a unit to another household, a Housing Provider must notify the household of the refusal in writing, stating the reason(s) for the decision to refuse housing.
- The written notice of refusal must include information on the household’s right to request a review of the decision.
- The written notice of refusal must notify the household that a written request for a review of the decision must be received by the Housing Provider within ten (10) business days of the date of the refusal letter.
- An internal review must be conducted within 10 business days (5 business days if the applicant is Special Priority) of receipt of a written request for a review.
- The household may withdraw the request for internal review by giving written notice of the withdrawal to the Housing Provider before the review takes place.
- An individual who participated in the making of the decision to refuse to offer the unit to the household shall not participate in an internal review of that decision.



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- The Housing Provider must give written notice of the result of the internal review to the household within five (5) business days after the review is completed.
- The rules for internal reviews apply only to the first refusal by a Housing Provider to make an offer to a household and not to subsequent refusals by the Housing Provider with respect to the same household.

Things to remember

- Housing Applications Centre staff will share notes or observations in the “memo” section of Yardi. Housing Providers are encouraged to provide helpful and relevant information to Housing Applications Centre staff to post to “memos”.
- Use the “Notice of Vacancy” forms to notify Housing Applications Centre staff of vacancies, offers, refusals, and move-ins.
- Housing Providers should send email messages to the Housing Applications Centre to update applicant information or to ask questions about applicants. The email address is hpc@esthc.ca
- Housing Providers are encouraged to keep their own lists as accurate as possible by contacting applicants to determine continued interest in an offer of housing. If applicants indicate they are not interested or if an applicant cannot be contacted by phone or mail, the Housing Provider should notify the Housing Applications Centre right away by e-mail or telephone.
- Only Housing Applications Centre staff are able to add, delete, put “on offer”, or house applicants in Yardi, therefore Housing Providers must notify the Housing Applications Centre in writing of all changes.

NOTICE OF VACANCY / REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS
FAX TO 519-633-8035

Provider/Unit Information

Name of Provider: _____

Vacancy Address: _____ Unit Number: _____

Vacating tenant

Name: _____

Notice Date: _____ Move out Date: _____

Reason for move out: _____

Applicant #1

Name: _____

Date placed On Offer: _____ *(Fax this information to the Applications Centre.)*

Applicant Accepted Offer: YES NO If no, why? _____

If Yes, Move in Date: _____ *(Fax this information to Applications Centre)*

Note: if you, as the housing provider are refusing to offer the applicant housing, fax a copy of your letter to the Applications Centre.

Applicant #2

Name: _____

Date placed On Offer: _____ *(Fax this information to the Applications Centre.)*

Applicant Accepted Offer: YES NO If no, why? _____

If Yes, Move in Date: _____ *(Fax this information to the Applications Centre.)*

Note: If you, as the housing provider are refusing to offer the applicant housing, fax a copy of your letter to the Applications Centre.

Applicant #3

Name: _____

Date placed On Offer: _____ *(Fax this information to the Applications Centre.)*

Accepted for Housing: YES NO If no, why? _____

If Yes, Move in Date: _____ *(Fax this information to the Applications Centre.)*

Note: If you, as the housing provider are refusing to offer the applicant housing, fax a copy of your letter to the Applications Centre.

Your Non-Profit's Letterhead

Date: _____

Dear Applicant:

Offer of Subsidized Housing

We are pleased to offer you **(tenancy/occupancy)** of a _____ bedroom unit at _____
_____ on _____ **(date)**.

Please note that you may be required to offer your current landlord 60 day's notice of termination. If this is the case, we are prepared to hold the unit for you.

This offer is subject to your continued eligibility for rent-geared-to-income assistance, and we therefore strongly advise you not to give notice to your current landlord until your eligibility for assistance has been re-confirmed by us.

The **(rent/housing charge)** will be based on your gross monthly income. Please provide the following information by _____ **(date)** so that we are able to verify your current income information and finalize the **(lease/Occupancy Agreement)**:

- A signed Acceptance of Accommodation letter (attached)
- A completed Household Income and Assets Review form (attached)
- Copies of your most recent pay stubs, Ontario Works or ODSP cheque stub and drug card, child support payment documents, and any other supporting documents for all your income sources.
- A copy of your Notice of Property Assessment, if you own a home.

If you wish to see the unit before making your decision, please contact

_____ **(name & phone #)**.

If you accept this offer and provide the information required, _____ **(name)** will contact you to arrange a time to sign your **(lease/Occupancy Agreement)** and pay your **(first month's rent/damage deposit)**. At this point, you should give 60 days' notice to your current landlord.

IMPORTANT:
If we do not receive this information and the signed acceptance form by _____ **(date)**,
this offer will be withdrawn
and will be considered a "refusal" of an offer of accommodation.

A self-addressed envelope has been provided for your convenience.

Yours truly

(Name)

(Title)

Acceptance of Accommodation

I / We, _____

accept the unit at _____

I / We will move in on _____

I / We understand that I / we will be responsible for the rent as of the move-in date above.

I / We also agree to pay the first month's rent on the day the **(lease/Occupancy Agreement)** is signed. I/ we understand that if the rent is not received, this offer of accommodation may be withdrawn.

I / We agree that I / we accept the unit in an "as is" condition.

I / We agree that _____ **(name of Housing Provider)** will hold the above unit for my / our possession effective on the above date and that no other applicant will be considered for this unit.

Signature

Date

Signature

Date

Your Non-Profit's Letterhead

REFUSAL OF OFFER OF ACCOMMODATION

Date

Name of Applicant

Address of Applicant

Dear _____:

A vacant subsidized unit is available. Either

- We have made several attempts to contact you about an offer of subsidized housing but we have not heard back from you.

or

- You have made a decision to decline an offer of housing.

Please confirm this refusal of an offer of housing by signing this form and returning it to our office in the self-addressed envelope, enclosed.

If we do not receive this signed confirmation within five business days of the date above, we will assume that you refuse to accept the offer of housing, and we will record this as a "refusal of an offer of housing".

I / We, _____

DO NOT accept the unit at _____

Signature

Date

Your Non-Profit's Letterhead

Date: _____

Applicant's Name

Applicant's Address

Re: Notice – Refusal to offer a unit

Dear _____:

Your name was selected from the subsidized housing waiting list for **(name of the Housing Project)**.

We reviewed information available to us about your household and have made a decision not to offer you a unit.

The reason we decided not to offer your household a unit was **(select the appropriate reason from the list below and delete the others)**

- Because our Non-Profit's mandate is to provide housing for seniors aged 65 and older, and your household does not fit this mandate.
- Because we conducted a landlord reference check and/or credit check and we have reason to believe you will not or cannot pay the rent when it is due.
- Because, as a Co-operative Housing provider, we have reason to believe you will not accept your responsibilities as a member of the Co-op.
- Because the unit is one in which you will reside in a shared living situation and we have reasonable grounds to believe that it is unreasonable for you to reside in the shared accommodation.
- Because we think your household is not eligible for special needs housing as
 - (i) The level of service your household requires is significantly greater than the level of service we provide for units in the building
 - (ii) The level of service your household requires is significantly less than the level of service we provide for units in the building.

We based our decisions on **(list the reasons why you made the decision)**.

You may ask for a review of this decision. People who were not involved in making the original decision will conduct the review. Their decision will be final.

Your request for an independent review must be submitted in writing and sent to **(provide details here)** within ten business days of the date on this letter. Please use the form on the back of this letter to request a review. On the form, please state why you disagree with the decision. If we do not receive a request for a review within the time limit, our decision will be final. If you make a request for a review and then decide you no longer want the review to take place, you must advise **(provide details of who and how to notify)** in writing that you have changed your mind.

Sincerely

Housing Provider representative

Request for Review

I /We would like to request a review of the decision to refuse to offer our household a unit at _____.

I/We request this review because:

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Mail, fax, or take this form to:

Name of Housing Provider representative

Title

Address

Fax number