Application Intake
and
Preliminary Assessment

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Because there's no place like HOME.

Application Intake

- Each household applying for assistance must complete the TDHCA Intake Application form
  - Record date and time of receipt

- Application must be completed by a member of the household
  - If a household member is unable to complete the application documents, he/she may request assistance
  - All sections should be completed - if not applicable, indicate "n/a"

- All information must be verified prior to approval for assistance

- Provide each household all required documents referenced on the *Project File Documentation Checklist*

Preliminary Assessment

- *Best Practice: Conduct a preliminary assessment of the applicant's income eligibility based on information provided by the applicant. The applicant may have provided information which indicates ineligibility for the HOME Program.*

  - For example, if your Reservation Agreement was funded from the Persons with Disabilities set-aside, and the applicant household does not include a member who is a person with a disability, the household is not eligible to receive assistance. The household's application should be noted on the wait list, but the household should be informed as soon as possible of its ineligibility.

Preliminary Assessment (2)

- If the household is not eligible, the Administrator must notify the household in writing within 60 days of the:
    - Reason(s) for the determination, and
    - Family's right to an informal review
    - How to arrange/request the informal review

Wait List Management

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Wait List Management Overview

- Administrator should develop wait list management procedures which include:
    - Selection process
    - Processing and managing
    - Current status
    - Purging
    - Safeguards
    - Public awareness
    - Additional Administrator efforts
    - Possible strategies

Wait List Objectives

- Promote open, equitable and convenient application access to households

- Replenish pool of households

- Minimize disruption of services to current owners and households

- Serve greatest community needs

- Provide clear delineation of levels of need

- Provide a fair and reasonable system of wait list management

Basic Principles of a Wait List

- All persons who express a desire to participate in the Program must be given an equal opportunity to apply for assistance whenever the wait list is open

- Administrator is responsible for receiving and processing applications in a way which treats all households fairly and consistently

- Administrator's policies may allow for applications to be received by mail, by fax, in person, over the internet, or at other locations established by Administrator

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Wait List Eligibility

- Administrators may choose to conduct preliminary reviews of applications or they may choose to place all households on the wait list and review their eligibility when the application reaches the top of the wait list

- The Administrator must notify all households of their placement on the wait list within 60 days of application

- *Best Practice: Add all households who apply to the wait list, even if they are not eligible for assistance. The wait list should contain a column for application status.*

Wait List - Targeting

- Administrators may limit assistance to specific populations. This practice is called "targeting" assistance.

- Assistance may only be targeted to populations as stated in the Administrator's application for a HOME contract or agreement and in accordance with the TDHCA One Year Action Plan.

- Assistance may only be targeted if approval to implement a target is approved by TDHCA.

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Wait List Preferences

- Administrators may institute preferences which allow applications to be weighted. Households who meet the preference criteria would be prioritized over households which do not meet the criteria
  - Selection preferences must be clearly defined and described in the affirmative marketing plan
  - Preferences are limited to those populations for whom a preference is permitted in the TDHCA One-Year Action Plan

- The definition should be simple enough so that:
  - Families claiming preferences clearly understand what they are claiming
  - Preferences can be easily verified

Preferences (2)

- The Administrator must clearly explain each preference to households and provide the household with an opportunity to show that they are qualified for the preference

- Preferences can only affect <u>the order</u> in which an application is reviewed. Applicants that are otherwise eligible do not become ineligible just because they do not meet a preference

- Preferences do not supersede or suspend the requirement that an Administrator screen applications for Program and income eligibility

Preferences (3)

- Preferences must be clearly noted in the affirmative marketing plan, and all preference must be approved by TDHCA prior to implementing the preference.

Special Needs

- Administrator should review households for special needs, as it relates to:
  - The program design
  - HOME Contract or Reservation System Agreement

- Administrator must maintain all documentation related to special needs in the household file.

- Documentation related to a specific medical condition must not be included in the file. Administrator should document a review of documentation and return the originals to the household.

Placement on the Wait List

- Each application will be assigned a number

- Each applicant assigned to the wait list will be documented electronically or in hardcopy format

- Applications that meet the preference requirement(s) will be ranked higher than applications that do not meet the preference requirement
  - Affects the order of review

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Wait List Management

- Administrator must organize the wait list to assure that household selection takes place according to Program requirements and program design

- Each application assigned to the wait list will be documented

- The wait list must be organized to indicate the following:
  - Applicant name
  - Family/unit size (for TBRA)
  - Date and time of application receipt and application number
    - Must correspond to date and time noted on Intake Application
  - Qualification for any preferences for which the family may be eligible

Wait List Management

- Any system Administrator uses to maintain its wait list must document how and when households are selected in a way that allows for a clear, easy-to-understand Department and HUD management review.

- Applications that meet the preference requirement(s) will be ranked higher than applications that do not meet the preference requirement.

- Remember, the wait list is the beginning of a paper-trail and must enable a reviewer to immediately determine if this selection is in accordance with Program rules and the program design.

Purging the Wait List

- The program design must state procedures for removal of a household from the wait list

- Administrator should document the reason any household's name is removed from the wait list and must notify the applicant of the removal in writing

Purging the Wait List Policy Considerations

- Examples of acceptable policy on when an household's name may be removed from the wait list:
  - Applicant request
  - Applicant failure to respond to requests for information or updates in a timely manner
  - Applicant's refusal of assistance
  - Applicant was clearly advised of a requirement to notify the Administrator of its continued interest by a particular time and failed to do so
  - Administrator has made reasonable, documented efforts to contact the household to determine if there is continued interest, but has been unsuccessful
  - Administrator has notified the household of its intention to remove the household's name because of ineligibility

Prohibited Wait List Actions

- Administrator may not take any of the following actions because a household has applied for, received, or refused other housing assistance:

  - Refuse to place the household on the wait list

  - Deny admission preference for which the household currently qualifies