

The purpose of the Homeless Preference for MSHDA's Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) is to better ensure that critical, long-term housing subsidies are directed to those experiencing homelessness. It is incorporated as part of MSHDA's Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program so that each community has the ability to add eligible households to HCV waitlist under this preference, utilizing it as another tool to help end homelessness.

Under MSHDA ESG funding, each Housing Assessment Resource Agency (HARA) is responsible for the addition of homeless households to HCV waitlists via Homeless Preference. The HCV waitlists are held by county, which means that some Continuums of Care (CoCs) or Local Planning Bodies (LPBs) may have multiple waitlists within the geographic coverage area. The ability to add households to the HCV waitlist is secured via completion of the Key Person Security Agreement (MSHDA Form 1796c). Only HARAs are permitted to request Key Person Security Agreements, unless otherwise requested and approved by MSHDA.

Questions or concerns? Email [mshda-hs@michigan.gov](mailto:mshda-hs@michigan.gov).

### WHO QUALIFIES FOR THE HOMELESS PREFERENCE WAITLIST?

- Category 1: Literally Homeless
- Category 4: Fleeing/Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence
- Temporary shelter with another household
  - This is only permitted when a community does not have a homeless shelter available to assist the general population.
  - Annual requests for approval must be made by the CoC or LPB with the ESG Exhibit 1 and submitted to MSHDA for final approval.

Applicants who are enrolled in housing assistance programs maintain their homeless status provided that:

- Assistance is term limited and does not exceed 24 months. Examples include but are not limited to Rapid Re-Housing, Tenant Based Rental Assistance, Transitional Housing, Rehabilitation or Substance Use Disorder Facility, etc.
- Applicant was qualified as category 1, 4, or, in qualified communities only, temporarily sheltered with another household *prior to entry*.

### WHO DOES NOT QUALIFY FOR THE HOMELESS PREFERENCE WAITLIST?

Including, but not limited to, any individual or family:

- Living in Permanent Supportive Housing, Shelter Plus Care, or Project Based Vouchers
- Living in subsidized rental units and the subsidy does not have a specified end date
- Living in a shelter, shelter-type facility, home, etc. that has *not* been designated to provide temporary living arrangements
- Living in a unit through the Offender Success program
- Who is at risk or imminent risk of homelessness, excluding category 4
- Who is stably or permanently housed
- Who is paying for their current shelter/housing on their own (ex. Paying for own hotel stay)

### REQUIRED HOMELESS PREFERENCE WAITLIST DOCUMENTATION

For all applicants, the following 3 items of documentation must be obtained **prior** to filing the HCV Homeless Preference Waitlist Application:

#### 1. *Consent for the Release of Confidential Information for the HCV Homeless Preference*

The Consent for the Release of Confidential Information for the HCV Homeless Preference must be signed and dated prior to filing the application. This document is valid for 12 months from the date of applicant's signature. This document will also need the HMIS number of the applicant, unless it is a DV or Fleeing DV applicant.

This consent is unique to the Homeless Preference waitlist. General agency, MSHDA, or HMIS releases of information will not suffice for the purposes of this release of information and cannot take the place of this release of information.

## 2. Proof of Residency in the County of Application

HARA staff must verify that the head of household, spouse, or co-head is living or working in the county for which they are applying. This verification can be documented as outlined below.

Proof of Residency can be in the form of Proof of Homelessness. Both items are addressed in this documentation:

- Letter from a shelter provider for shelter verification
- Letter written by HARA staff, outreach staff, or another housing or service provider that indicates residency. This includes but is not limited to one of the following:
  - Observation details regarding the applicant's primary nighttime residence
  - Verification of an applicant's participation in a housing assistance program
  - Verification of temporary shelter with another household with the host household

If, for any reason, the following above items are not utilized for proof of homelessness, a valid copy of one of the following provides proof that the head of household, spouse, or co-head currently lives in the County:

- Driver's license, State ID card, Medicaid card, Social Security printout letter, or voter's registration card
- If the applicant is not residing in his/her resident county, HARA staff must explain why the applicant is currently staying in one county but applying for assistance in another

A valid copy of one of the following provides proof that the head of household, spouse, or co-head currently works in the County:

- A letter from the employer stating the applicant is employed in the County
- A letter from the employer stating the applicant will be employed in the County. A start date for employment must be within 60 calendar days of the date of application.
- A copy of a valid paycheck stub with the employer's address showing the business is in the County. The paycheck stub must be dated within 60 calendar days of the date of application.

## 3. Proof of Homelessness

HARAs can secure proof of homelessness in a number of ways. The general order of priority for obtaining evidence is: third-party documentation first, intake worker observations second, and certification by the individual or family seeking assistance third.

Proof of homelessness documentation must be created and dated the same day as the homeless verification date. Proof of homelessness can be documented in one of the following ways:

- Homeless verification date (the date that the household's homelessness was observed or verified); **AND**
- Details regarding the applicant's primary nighttime residence on the homeless verification date.

Proof of homelessness documentation must be created and dated the same day as the homeless verification date. Proof of homelessness can be documented in one of the following ways:

- Agency letterhead with signature and printed name of the verifier; **OR**
- Email from an agency email address embedded with the verifiers name, contact information, and agency email signature (see example on next page),\* **OR**
- Self-certification of homelessness completed by the household (see [MSHDA ESG Self-Certification form](#)).

Agency Email Example:

Not Approved	Approved
Thanks,  John  ABC Agency	Thanks,  John Doe, Position Title ABC Agency Name and/or Logo Phone Number

*\*Please note: The date the email is sent must match the homeless verification date. Emails should be saved electronically and/or printed for the physical client file.*

Applications to the HCV Homeless Preference waitlist must be filed within five (5) business days from the homeless verification date.

Proof of homelessness for the applicant's primary nighttime residence at the time of application is required for the Homeless Preference waitlist. This proof is only required for the date observed or verified. If the applicant has a history of homelessness, it is not necessary to supply or include the entire history.

**Category 1: Literally Homeless**

Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning:

- **Place Not Meant for Human Habitation** A public or private place not meant for, or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including street, sidewalk, car, park, abandoned building, bus station, airport, or camp ground.
- **Emergency Shelter** A publicly or privately-owned emergency shelter designated to provide temporary living accommodations.
- **Hotel or Motel paid for by a Charitable Organization or Federal, State, and Local Government Program**
- **Exiting an Institutional Care Facility** (i.e., jail, substance abuse treatment facility, mental health treatment facility, hospital, or other similar facility); stay must be 90 days or less and resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation before entering the institution.
- **Transitional Housing** A project that is designed to provide housing and appropriate supportive services to homeless persons to facilitate movement to independent living.

**Required Documentation for the HCV Homeless Preference Waitlist**

- Written observation by a street outreach worker or HARA staff member; **OR**
  - o Example: "I, staff name, on date observed that client name is residing at/in location description. I have verified that physical description is in this County. In my professional opinion, this is client name's primary nighttime residence and is a public or private place not meant for human habitation."
- Written letter from emergency shelter provider for emergency shelter verification that denotes date(s) of stay; **OR**
- Written referral by another housing or service provider; **OR**
- Self-certification of homelessness completed by the household (see [MSHDA ESG Self-Certification form](#)).

#### Category 4: Fleeing/Attempting to Flee DV

Any individual or family who is fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, trafficking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member, that has either taken place in the individual's or family's primary nighttime residence or has made the individual or family afraid to return to their primary or nighttime residence, and they have no other residence.

#### Required Documentation for the HCV Homeless Preference Waitlist

- Letter from a Domestic Violence Service Provider stating the applicant is fleeing or attempting to flee; **OR**
- Court documentation; **OR**
- Self-certification of homelessness completed by the household (see [MSHDA ESG Self-Certification form](#)).

**Pre-approved CoCs and LPBs can also add households to the HCV Homeless Preference waitlist if they are temporarily sheltered with another household (also known as “doubled up”). This is only permitted when a community does not have a homeless shelter available to assist the general population. Annual requests for approval must be made by the CoC or LPB within the ESG Exhibit 1 and submitted to MSHDA for final approval.**

#### Temporary Shelter with Another Household

Individual or family who must vacate their primary nighttime residence, provided that:

- Their primary nighttime residence is with another household; AND
- Residence will be lost within 14 days; AND
- No subsequent residence has been identified and the individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.

#### Required Documentation for the HCV Homeless Preference Waitlist

- Letter from the host with phone number and address stating the applicant must vacate the residence within 14 days; AND
- HARA verification with the host that all provided host information is true and accurate, the situation described in the letter is true; AND
- A self-certification from the household or HARA staff certification of items in the first two bullets in the definition above.

## RECERTIFICATION

Recertification must be completed every 120 days for an applicant to remain on the HCV Homeless Preference waitlist. Updated and current proof of homelessness and proof of residency must be obtained in order to verify the re-certification. Once the documentation is obtained, re-certification can be completed in the applicant portal within 30 days prior to the application expiration.

If an applicant is not recertified within 30 days of the application expiration, the system will automatically remove the applicant on their expiration date. The automatic removal will result in a letter being sent to the applicant's address listed in the portal notifying them of the removal.

If a household that was previously certified as temporarily sheltered with another household and the recertification of homelessness is listed as the same address as the previous application, the HARA is instructed to let the application expire.

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION REVIEWS

The HCV Homeless Preference waitlist supporting documentation is reviewed by MSHDA Homeless Solutions staff. In all circumstances, MSHDA and HARA staff should strive to maintain a Homeless Preference waitlist for qualified applicants only. The goal of the review process is to maintain the integrity of this limited resource and ensure that it is being utilized in a fair and consistent manner across the state of Michigan.

Details regarding the reviews are as follows:

- Requests will be made monthly, or as needed, via email to a designated HARA staff person from Homeless Solutions staff.
- Requests will be made for copies of the following information:
  - Consent for the Release of Confidential Information for the HCV Homeless Preference,
  - Proof of residency in the county of application, and
  - Proof of homelessness in the county of application.
- The review will cover completeness of forms, timeliness of applications, county of residence, and ensuring that all necessary components of proof of homelessness have been provided.
- Documentation must be sent to [mshda-hs@michigan.gov](mailto:mshda-hs@michigan.gov) or faxed to 517-763-0185
- HARA staff will be given a deadline to provide a response or request additional time.
- Failure to respond or request additional time to any request for documentation or clarifying information will result in removal of the applicant(s).

## REMOVAL OF AN APPLICANT

- If MSHDA Homeless Solutions staff find that an application to the HCV Homeless Preference Waitlist was insufficiently documented or completed in error, removals will be facilitated through [mshda-hs@michigan.gov](mailto:mshda-hs@michigan.gov).
  - HARA staff will be notified of the request and the removal.
  - It is the responsibility of HARA staff to notify the applicant of the removal.
- If HARA staff find that an applicant no longer meets eligibility requirements for any reason, an email should be sent to MSHDA's HCV waitlist staff at [mshdawl@michigan.gov](mailto:mshdawl@michigan.gov) to request their removal.
  - This email must include the applicants first name, last name, county of application, waitlist type (homeless), and reason for the removal request.
  - It is the responsibility of the HARA staff to notify the applicant of the removal.
- If HARA staff determine that a previously removed applicant qualifies for homeless preference, HARA staff can obtain the proper documentation then complete a new application at that time.
- If an applicant is not recertified within 30 days of the application expiration, the system will automatically remove the applicant on their expiration date. The automatic removal will result in a letter being sent to the applicant's address listed in the portal notifying them of the removal.

## APPLICANT CORRECTIONS

- In the event of a spelling error, corrections should be sent directly from HARA staff to [mshdawl@michigan.gov](mailto:mshdawl@michigan.gov).
  - This email must include the applicant's current incorrect name spelling, and the applicants correct first name, last name, and county of application.
- In the event that an applicant is entered onto an incorrect county, an email should be sent to [mshdawl@michigan.gov](mailto:mshdawl@michigan.gov).
  - This email must include the applicants first name, last name, original county of application, and the correct county of application you are requesting the applicant to be added.
  - This is only allowed when the county of application was an error, not when applicant relocates.