



NIAGARA
REGIONAL
HOUSING



NRH Notice

NUMBER: 03-05
DATE: March 3, 2003

Mandatory
 For Information

Applicable to:

- Municipal & Private Non Profit**
- Co-operatives**
- Federal Non Profits**
- OCHAP/CSHP**
- Rent Supplement**

Subject: Local Priority Household Categories Policy

Act/Regulation Reference: *Social Housing Reform Act*, Section 77 and O. Reg. 298/01, Section 43.

Policy:

Niagara Regional Housing has established two local priority household categories:

1. Health & Safety Priority Status
2. Homeless Priority Status

1. Health & Safety Priority Status

Health & Safety Priority status would be assigned to a household where a member of the household meets at least one of the following indicators:

- ◆ Persons whose personal safety is significantly at risk (other than an abusive relationship);
- ◆ Persons with a serious health condition or terminal illness, that would result in significant hardship or personal risk should the applicant be required to wait a prolonged period of time to access housing.

2. Homeless Priority Status

Homeless Status would be assigned to a household where a member of the household meets at least one of the following indicators:

- ◆ Persons living on the street (no shelter);
- ◆ Persons living in substandard housing which has been condemned by the municipality;
- ◆ Persons using the emergency shelter system as their primary residence;
- ◆ Persons whose accommodation has recently been destroyed by fire or natural disaster;

- ◆ Persons awaiting release from hospital or other time-limited treatment facility, who cannot return to their former place of residence;
- ◆ Persons living with family or friends on a temporary basis for a period not longer than six months;
- ◆ Family whose children will not be returned by a child protection agency until adequate housing is provided, and lack of housing is the only outstanding custody issue.

Background:

The Social Housing Reform Act, 2000, establishes special priority for victims of family violence (see Appendix "A" for details). The Act also provides the service manager with the authority to establish local priority rules (Section 77(4)).

In consultation with Niagara social housing providers, it was agreed that priority should also be given for applicants with health and safety concerns and the homeless.

The intent of these local priority rules is to address applicant hardship and disadvantage while respecting the need to offer fair and predictable access for all other applicants on the waiting list.

Implementation:

These local priority categories are effective immediately.

All applicants, with the exception of these 3 categories, are placed on the waiting list based on the date of their application. Offers of accommodation are made in the following order from the centralized waiting list:

- Special Priority - Victims of Family Violence
- Health & Safety Applicant
- Homeless Applicant (1 in every 10 vacancies)
- Chronological Applicant

1. Health & Safety Priority Status Requirements:

- ◆ Applicants that have Health & Safety Priority status assigned to their application will be made ONE offer of housing. Should the applicant refuse the offer, Health & Safety Priority status will be removed from their application and the applicant will be placed on the chronological waiting list.
- ◆ Applicants granted Health & Safety Priority status must choose a minimum of three housing communities within their desired municipality (where appropriate size units/communities exist).
- ◆ Verification for Health & Safety Priority Status is required and can be completed by a shelter worker, social worker, community health care worker, doctor, law enforcement officer, teacher, guidance counselor, member of the clergy, or other service agency or medical care facility staff with knowledge of the applicant's situation.

- ◆ Applicants denied Health & Safety Priority Status will be provided with an opportunity for an appeal of the decision.

2. Homeless Priority Requirements:

- ◆ Applicants that have Homeless Status assigned to their application will be offered 1 out of every 10 vacancies of RGI housing.
- ◆ Applicants that have Homeless Status Assigned to their application will be made ONE offer of housing. Should the applicant refuse the offer, Homeless Status will be removed from their application and they will be placed on the chronological waiting list.
- ◆ Applicants granted Homeless Status must choose a minimum of three housing communities within desired municipality. (Where appropriate size units/communities exist)
- ◆ Applicants denied Homeless Status would be offered an appeal of the decision.

◆ Service Manager's Role

NRH will review all required documentation and assign applicable priority status. If Priority Status is denied the applicant, tenant or member requesting the priority will be advised of the right to appeal the decision.

◆ Housing Provider's Role

Housing Providers are requested to include Health & Safety and Homeless Priority Groups in documents or agreements where all other eligibility requirements for RGI eligibility is communicated to social housing applicants, tenants or members.

Any questions or concerns regarding priority status of applicants should be directed to Housing Access & Community Programs at (905) 935-7645.

If you have any questions regarding the *Social Housing Reform Act, 2000* go to www.e-laws.gov.on.ca or contact your Housing Administrator at (905) 682-9201.

(Original signed by Lora Beckwith)

Lora Beckwith
General Manager

Appendix "A"

Provincial Special Priority Status – Victims of Family Violence

Special Priority Status allows the applicant to move ahead of all other applicants on all centralized waiting lists. In order to assess an applicant's request for Special Priority Status, written verification of the applicant's situation is required. Verification may be submitted by a shelter worker, social worker, victim services worker, community health care worker, doctor, lawyer, law enforcement officer, teacher, guidance counsellor, member of the clergy, or other service agency with knowledge of the applicant's abusive situation. In order to qualify for Special Priority Status, the applicant's situation must correspond to at least one of the following indicators:

- ◆ A member of the household has been subject to abuse from another member of the same household.
- ◆ The abused individual intends to separate permanently from their abuser.
- ◆ The abusing individual is or was living with the abused individual or is sponsoring them as an immigrant. The applicant must request Special Priority Status within three months of separating from the abuser.

It is imperative that documentation be accurate, complete and correct, prior to assigned Special Priority Status. Once the applicant has been assigned Special Priority Status, the status cannot be reconsidered and will remain with the applicant until the applicant is selected for RGI housing whether or not the abused individual reconciles with the abuser.