



ADMINISTRATION MANUAL

SUBJECT:	Local Priority Groups	POLICY/PROCEDURE #: F-21
SECTION:	F – Local Rules	
IMPLEMENTATION DATE:	November 2014	APPROVED BY: General Manager
REVISION DATE(S):	Implementation of Housing Services Act	SIGNATURE: <i>Original Signed by Maryellen MacLellan, General Manager</i>
REASON FOR CHANGE:		
RELEVANT LEGISLATION:	Housing Services Act 2011, s. 48 O. Reg. 367/11, s. 52(2)	

PURPOSE

To inform all Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) staff and housing providers of the mandatory requirements, local rules and requirements related to the *Housing Services Act* and associated regulations related to Local Priority Groups for the Affordable Housing Waiting list.

BACKGROUND

The *Housing Services Act (HSA)* gives Service Managers the option to develop a local rule related to priority groups.

POLICY

NRH has established the following Local Priority Groups:

1. Special Priority Policy (SPP)
2. Overhoused
3. Urgent
 - a. Mobility Barrier
 - b. Extreme Hardship
4. Homeless (1 in every 10 vacancies)

DETAILS

1. Special Priority Policy (SPP)

This priority category continues to be mandated by Province and remains the top priority on the Affordable Housing Waiting list.

2. Overhoused

Overhoused households have been established as the second priority group after SPP. The following processes have been determined for overhoused tenants:

- A provider initially deems a household to be overhoused
- The provider is required to send the household a letter advising them of their overhoused status and next steps
- The provider must place the household on its internal transfer list (*if the provider has units with the number of bedrooms required by the household*); if not, the provider must advise NRH Access to place the household on the Affordable Housing Waiting list
- During the first year after being deemed overhoused, the household will receive appropriate offers of accommodation, but they are not required to accept any offer during the first year
- When the first year expires, the provider advises NRH Access to place the household on the Affordable Housing Waiting list, as second priority (*if they are not on the Affordable Housing Waiting list*)
- Households must choose a minimum of five housing communities within their municipality of choice (or up to the maximum in the community if there are less than five), excluding all rent supplement buildings
- Households will be offered a maximum of two offers of appropriate accommodation
- If the household does not accept the second offer, they will lose their RGI subsidy and their rent/housing charge will be increased to the market rent/housing charge

3. Urgent

The existing Health/Safety priority category has been eliminated and replaced with a priority category called Urgent.

All applications for the Urgent category are assessed and approved by NRH.

The Urgent category has two sub-categories – a) Mobility Barrier and b) Extreme Hardship.

a) Mobility Barrier

The mobility barrier sub-category refers to circumstances where a tenant has physical limitations, cannot walk up stairs, and is living in a building that has no elevator.

Physical limitations include but are not limited to heart conditions, arthritis, osteoarthritis, amputation, and neurological disorders associated with balance. A doctor's note will be required to confirm that the applicant's health is compromised due to the individual's condition and inability to do stairs.

b) Extreme Hardship

This sub-category refers to circumstances where the individual's situation puts them at extreme risk and/or causes severe hardship and relocation would reduce the risks and/or alleviate the hardship.

If the household is approved under the Urgent category, they will be placed as third priority on the waiting list and receive one offer of appropriate accommodation. If they decline the offer, the priority category will be removed but the household will remain on the waiting list in chronological order.

Ineligible Circumstances under Urgent Category

There are several circumstances that are considered ineligible under the Urgent Category, including issues that would normally be the responsibility of the private landlord:

General Circumstances

- Police issues – related to activities in the building and safety concerns
- Financial reasons – including low income and high rent
- Medical condition not affected by current accommodation
- Pregnancy

Landlord Issues

- AODA issues – landlord is responsible to provide accessibility modifications
- Maintenance of unit/building
- Verbal abuse by landlord, neighbours, loud noise
- Bed bugs, roaches, ants, and other insects

4. Homeless

There are no changes to the Homeless priority category. Housing providers are to continue to offer one in every 10 vacancies to applicants on the waiting list who have been identified as homeless.

Effective Date

Effective Date: **November 1, 2014**, with the exception of the overhoused category.

Effective Date for Overhoused: **April 1, 2015**. This will allow a grace period for those households who may have just been added to the Affordable Housing Waiting list and who may receive an offer of appropriate accommodation quickly. This will allow the household time to adjust and carefully review all offers they may receive during the five month grace period.

Grandfathering

The change to the local rule will require grandfathering of existing applications as follows:

- Existing health/safety applicants on the waiting list will be grandfathered. However, the group will be moved to third priority after SPP and Overhoused
- All current overhoused households on the Affordable Housing Waiting list will be subject to the new guidelines, once the five month grace period ends.

SUPPORTING FORMS

n/a