

APPLICABLE TO:

DATE: February 20, 2014

<input type="checkbox"/>	Provincial Reform Non-Profit
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provincial Reform Co-operative
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Special Needs Housing Administrators
<input type="checkbox"/>	Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Mandatory
<input type="checkbox"/>	For Information

SUBJECT: *Housing Services Act – Special Needs Housing*

To inform the six (6) special needs housing administrators (SNHA) of the mandatory requirements, local rules and requirements of the *Housing Services Act (HSA)* and associated regulations related to special needs housing.

BACKGROUND

Special needs housing refers to:

- a) Modified units without supports; and,
- b) Units attached to provincially funded supports.

The *HSA* defines eligibility for special needs housing as:

O. Reg. 367/11, s. 69(1): For a household to be eligible for special needs housing, at least one member of the household must require accessibility modifications or provincially funded support services in order to live independently in the community.

Special Needs Housing Administrator Requirements (New Requirement)

In Niagara, there are 6 housing providers who are designated SNHAs (*O.Reg. 367/11, Schedule 3*) because they provide special needs housing as defined above. They are Bethlehem Housing & Support, Faith Lutheran Social Services, Niagara Ina Grafton Gage, Open Doors Concept, Ridley Terrace Non-Profit, and Stamford Kiwanis Non-Profit.

There are two categories of SNHAs:

1. Modified Units & External Support	2. Provincially-Funded Support
Description: . SNHA has referral/service agreement with external support agency . external agency maintains the special needs waiting list and fills units according to support agency's criteria	Description: . Waiting list for SNHAs is maintained by NRH . Households apply to the SNHA for eligibility determination, and are added to the centralized waiting list

HSA Requirements

Prior to the *HSA*, the special needs housing administrators operated independently and structured their selection process according to their mandate, and type/amount of support services required.

With the introduction of the *HSA*, the SNHAs maintain flexibility in establishing eligibility criteria for the special needs units; however, they must formally establish rules for the operation of the special needs housing system that complies with the *HSA*, and must demonstrate to the Service Manager that they are in compliance with all relevant regulations.

The eligibility and selection of households for special needs units is to be governed by rules established by each SNHA which must be in compliance with the requirements of the *HSA*. The responsibility for managing these units, including operating a separate waiting list (where applicable) and confirming household eligibility for special needs housing, falls to the SNHA. Determining basic eligibility for rent-geared-to-income will continue to be the responsibility of the service manager (i.e., NRH acting on behalf of Niagara Region).

To summarize, the *HSA* requires SNHAs to establish certain rules and procedures related to:

- establishing a special needs selection system;
- special needs eligibility;
- timelines for determining eligibility;
- refusing to offer a unit;
- the provision of information to the public; and,
- establishing a review body for decisions/appeals.

Appendix A lists the requirements of special needs housing administrators. Appendix B is a sample special needs policy and procedures that all special needs housing administrators are required to develop.

Special Needs Housing Eligibility Appeals

Under the *HSA*, the review of eligibility for special needs housing falls to the service manager. However, the *HSA* also allows the service manager to delegate the responsibility to the SNHA. In Niagara, the responsibility for eligibility review for special needs housing has been delegated to each Special Needs Housing Administrator (*status quo*). The SNHA may delegate the responsibility for special needs eligibility review to their external support agency through a referral/service agreement, however, the SNHA is ultimately responsible to ensure compliance with the *HSA* and associated regulations related to special needs housing.

The new requirements laid out in the *HSA* ensure that the selection system for special needs housing is operated fairly and transparently, and that households have access to clear information regarding the application and selection process.

Due Date

A due date of June 30, 2014 has been established for SNHAs to develop their special needs housing policies and procedures, in compliance with the requirements of the *HSA*.

Housing Provider's Role

All SNHAs should ensure that their board of directors reviews this notice.

SHNAs are required to develop their special needs policy and procedures in compliance with the *HSA* requirements and Appendix A.

Service Manager's Role

The Housing Administrator will contact their special needs housing administrators to review the requirements of this Notice.

NRH will review compliance with this notice during the operational review process.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this notice, please contact your Housing Administrator at (905) 682-9201.

(Original signed by Lora Beckwith)

Lora Beckwith, General Manager