Streamline Your PHA Waitlist Management in
6 Steps

Efficient waitlist management is crucial for Public Housing Agencies (PHAs).

You play a key role in helping eligible individuals and families receive needed financial and resource support to address housing instability. But, facilitating the verifications and screenings required by the Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP) can sometimes lead to long wait times, outdated information, and manual processes that can delay the process of verifying applicant eligibility and providing safe and affordable housing.

Leveraging technology and a data-driven approach focused on timeliness, effective decisions, and transparent communication can help you streamline the application process, reduce manual effort, and accelerate the process for both applicants and staff.

1 **Clearly Define and Communicate Eligibility Criteria**

- Demonstrate fairness and transparency in your process by establishing clear, objective eligibility criteria such as income limits, family size requirements, and other criteria based on program guidelines and local needs.

- Clearly communicate these criteria to both applicants and PHA staff through your website, application forms, and outreach materials. This can help set expectations and reduce confusion.

- Consider background screening criteria early in the process to reduce delays.

2 Streamline and Modernize the Application Process

- Offer online applications with user-friendly interfaces, clear instructions, and pre-screening questions to help staff filter out ineligible applicants early in the process.

- Leverage technology to automate parts of the application process, such as data entry, document verification, and initial eligibility checks to help reduce manual effort and accelerate the process for both applicants and staff.

- Utilize income and employment verification tools like The Work Number® to access current data contributed directly by employers and payroll providers each time they process payroll to help eliminate the need for applicants to submit physical pay stubs or other documentation.

- Pair your verification with criminal history and sex offender registry checks using tools like Smart Screen™ - TenantCheck Government to potentially reduce additional manual efforts that may be needed.

3

Prioritize Proactive and Transparent Communication with Applicants

- Set clear and realistic expectations about wait times and be transparent about the factors that influence placement decisions.

- Establish clear communication channels with applicants and provide regular updates on their application status, estimated wait times, and required documentation.

- Offer multiple communication options, such as email, phone, text messages, and even a dedicated online portal where applicants can track their progress.

- If an applicant is flagged in the background check, communicate the results clearly and offer a chance for them to provide additional information or context.

4   **Regularly Update and Optimize Waitlist Placements**

- Conduct regular reviews to remove inactive or ineligible applicants and update contact information for those who remain on the waitlist.

- Consider using data cleansing tools to identify and correct mistaken or outdated information, so your waitlist is a reflection of current demand.

- Re-screen applicants on a periodic basis, particularly those with a long waiting time, so their background information remains current.

- Use data analytics to match applicants with suitable housing units based on their needs, preferences, and eligibility criteria.

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Leverage Technology and Data-Driven Insights

- Invest in waitlist management software that integrates with current verification and screening tools to create a seamless and efficient workflow.

- Track key metrics such as wait times, turnover rates, and demographics to identify bottlenecks, trends, and areas for improvement.

- Use this data to inform your decision-making, refine your processes, and allocate resources more effectively.

- Consider implementing a resident portal where applicants can access information, update their details, and communicate with PHA staff. This empowers residents and reduces the burden on your team.
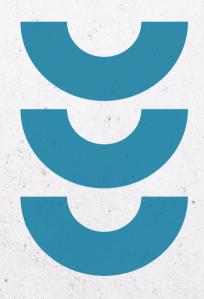
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Train Staff on Best Practices and Customer Service

- Provide ongoing training for staff on eligibility criteria, verification processes, communication protocols, background check interpretation, and technology use.

- Encourage a customer-centric approach to waitlist management, emphasizing transparency and responsiveness to applicant needs, while promoting equitable and consistent application of policies.

A well-managed waitlist not only benefits applicants but also strengthens the overall efficiency and effectiveness of your PHA. By following these steps, you can transform your waitlist management from a reactive, time-consuming process into a proactive, data-driven tool that helps qualified applicants get the assistance they need.

Learn more about how The Work Number and Smart Screen - TenantCheck Government can help you <u>streamline your income and employment verification process</u>.

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