

Chapter 18

HUD-VASH PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes HUD regulations and PHA policies related to the HUD-VASH program in nine parts:

Part I: Overview of the Program. General overview of the HUD-VASH program and goals.

Part II: Eligibility and Admissions. Policies related to the eligible and admission of eligible veterans for the HUD-VASH program including screening criteria for both the Veterans Affairs Department and the AHA. This also includes changes in required documentation for social security numbers, income targeting, and limitations on background screening.

Part III: Continued Occupancy. Policies related to the ongoing occupancy of participants under the HUD-VASH program including leasing concerns, inspections, and moves.

Part IV: Termination. Policies related to the termination of the assistance under the VASH program.

Part V: Resources. Additional documents pertaining to the VASH program.

PART I. OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

18-I.A. OVERVIEW

The HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program combines voucher rental assistance for homeless veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). VA provides these services for participating veterans at VA medical centers (VAMCs) and community-based outreach clinics (CBOCs). The goal is to provide permanent housing for eligible homeless veterans.

The HUD-VASH program works through a Housing-First model. This model provides permanent housing as quickly as possible to those experiencing homelessness and then provides supportive services as needed. Due to this model, there are minimal requirements for admittance to the program. After housing is secured, participants are connected with supportive services, such as substance abuse counseling, to maintain recovery and housing in the community.

18-I.B. RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER PROGRAM

The VAMC or CBOC's responsibilities include:

1. Screening of homeless veterans to determine whether they meet the HUD-VASH program participation criteria established by the VA national office;
2. Referring homeless veterans to the AHA;
3. Providing appropriate treatment and supportive services to potential HUD-VASH program participants, if needed, prior to AHA issuance of rental vouchers;
4. Identifying the social service and medical needs of HUD-VASH participants and providing, or ensuring the provision of, regular ongoing case management, outpatient health services, hospitalization, and other supportive services as needed throughout the veterans' participation period; and
5. Maintaining records and providing information for evaluation purposes, as required by HUD and the VA.

The AHA's responsibilities include:

1. Determining limited eligibility criteria of families that have been referred by the partner VA
2. Maintaining documentation of referrals from the partner VA
3. Administer the vouchers in accordance with the AHA's Administrative Plan, AHA policies and procedures, and HUD regulation.

To support the HUD-VASH Housing-First model, certain voucher requirements are waived. In most ways, the HUD-VASH program follows regular voucher requirements (24 CFR Section 982 and 983). However, the HUD Secretary, in consultation with the VA Secretary, has the authority to waive or alter any provision for the effective delivery and administration of voucher assistance (except for requirements related to fair housing, nondiscrimination, labor standards, and the environment).

HUD-VASH requirements differ from voucher requirements in eligibility, leasing, portability, and other categories. See the "HUD-VASH Reference Guide" for details.

PART II. ELIGIBILITY AND ADMISSION

18-II.A. ELIGIBILITY

Eligible families are homeless veterans and their families that are referred by the partnering VAMC. VA staff screen families according to the VA's screening criteria and determine clinical eligibility for the program. The VA criteria follow, but these are determined by VA staff and not the AHA:

Applicants must be VA health care eligible, meaning they have served in the active military and were separated under any condition except dishonorable.

Applicants must also be homeless, as defined by The McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. Additionally, participants are expected to participate in case management and utilize the supportive services, treatment recommendations and assistance needed to successfully maintain recovery and housing in the community.

VA HUD–VASH case managers refer HUD–VASH-eligible families to the Housing Authority for housing assistance. The AHA **must** accept referrals from their VA partner. Written documentation of these referrals **must** be maintained in the tenant file by the AHA. By agreeing to administer the HUD–VASH program, the AHA is relinquishing its authority to determine the eligibility of families in accordance with regular program rules and policies. The AHA will **not** have the authority to maintain a waiting list or apply local preferences for HUD–VASH vouchers. Admissions, cross-listing of the waiting list, and opening and closing the waiting list do not apply to the HUD–VASH program.

When a VA case manager refers an applicant to the AHA, AHA staff determine if the applicant is eligible based **only** on the following:

1. Income limits and
2. If any member of the household maintains Lifetime Sexual Offender Registry status

The applicant is not eligible for HUD-VASH if they exceed income limits and/or if they maintain Lifetime Sexual Offender Registry status. The AHA uses the low income level for the VASH program compared to the very-low income level for all other vouchers.

It is prohibited to deny an applicant for any grounds permitted under 24 CFR 982.552 (broad denial for violations of program requirements) and 982.553 (specific denial for criminals and alcohol abusers), other than Lifetime Sexual Offender Registry Status. This applies to all family members. For instance, AHA cannot deny assistance to an otherwise eligible HUD-VASH family that owes money to a Housing Authority in connection with a past program participation.

However, when **new** family members are added **after** the veteran is a participant, 24 CFR 982.551(h)(2) and regular AHA screening criteria apply. Other than the birth, adoption, or court-awarded custody of a child, the AHA must approve additional family members and may apply its regular screening criteria in doing so.

18-II.B. ACCEPTABLE DOCUMENTATION:

To verify Social Security numbers for homeless veterans and their family members, an original document issued by a federal or state government agency, which contains the name of the individual and the SSN of the individual along with other identifying

information of the individual, is acceptable. In the case of the homeless veteran, the AHA must accept the Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty (DD-214) or the VA-verified Application for Health Benefits (10-10EZ) as verification of SSN and cannot require the veteran to provide a SSN card.

18-II.C. INCOME TARGETING:

The income targeting requirement of 75% of families being extremely low-income does not apply to HUD-VASH. The AHA uses the low income level for the VASH program compared to the very-low income level for all other vouchers.

PART III. CONTINUED OCCUPANCY

18-III. A. LEASING

For the AHA's VASH allocation, all vouchers are project-based VASH vouchers. Since the vouchers are project-based vouchers, the family must live in the unit to which the assistance is tied for at least 12 months before transferring with assistance.

18-III. B. UNIT INSPECTIONS

AHAs may pre-inspect units that veterans may be interested in leasing. If a family selects a unit that passed a HQS inspection (without intervening occupancy) within 45 days of the date of the Request for Tenancy Approval, the unit may be approved.

18-III. C. PORTABILITY AND TRANSFERS

Families receiving HUD-VASH voucher assistance must receive case management services provided by a partnering VAMC or CBOC. Therefore, special mobility and portability procedures must be established. A HUD-VASH family can move within the VAMC's catchment area as long as case management can still be provided, as determined by the VA. The VA must **always** be consulted prior to a move to ensure that case management will continue to be provided.

In accordance with 24 CFR § 983.261(a) and the lease, the family may terminate the assisted lease any time after the first year of occupancy. In 24 CFR § 983.261(b) it is further stated that if the family has elected to terminate the lease in this manner, the PHA must offer the family the opportunity for continued tenant-based rental assistance in the form of either assistance under the voucher program or other comparable tenant-based rental assistance as defined in 24 CFR § 983.3. However, in accordance with 24 CFR § 983.261(c), before providing notice to terminate the lease (with a copy to the PHA), the family must contact the PHA to request comparable tenant-based rental assistance if the family wishes to move with continued assistance.

As a condition of PBV rental assistance, a HUD-VASH family must receive case management services from the VAMC or CBOC; however, a VAMC or CBOC determination that the participant family no longer requires case management is not

grounds for termination of assistance. In such cases where a HUD-VASH family wishes to move from its PBV unit, at its option, the AHA may offer the family continued HCV assistance through one of its regular vouchers to free up the HUD-VASH voucher for another eligible family referred by the VAMC or CBOC if there are available HCVs. Where case management is still required, tenant-based rental assistance will be limited to jurisdictions where VAMC or CBOC case management services are available and the family may receive a tenant-based VASH voucher, if available.

However, to ensure that all PBV units under a housing assistance payments contract remain continuously funded, the following must be implemented when a HUD-VASH family is eligible to move from its PBV unit and there is no other comparable tenant-based rental assistance to offer the family:

- a. If a HUD-VASH tenant-based voucher (in another jurisdiction through portability) is not available at the time the family wants (and is eligible) to move, the AHA could require the family to wait for a HUD-VASH tenant-based voucher for a period not to exceed 180 days;
- b. If a HUD-VASH tenant-based voucher is still not available after that period of time, the family must be allowed to move with its HUD-VASH voucher and the AHA would be required to replace the assistance in the PBV unit with one of its regular vouchers unless the AHA and owner agree to remove the unit from the HAP contract; and
- c. If after 180 days, a HUD-VASH tenant-based voucher does not become available and the AHA does not have sufficient available funding in its HCV program to attach assistance to the PBV unit, the family may be required to remain in its PBV unit until such funding becomes available.

PORTABILITY WITHIN CATCHMENT AREA OF INITIAL VAMC OR CBOC

If the family initially leases up, or moves, under portability provisions, but the initial VAMC will still be able to provide the necessary case management services due to the family's proximity to the partnering VAMC, the receiving PHA must process the move in accordance with the portability procedures of 24 CFR 982.355. For example, a participant family initially received HUD-VASH assistance in the City of Alameda. They then wish to move Oakland. Since they are still close enough to the initial VAMC to receive services and participate in case management, they would be permitted to move.

The VASH amendment to HUD-Form 52665 will be attached.

PORTABILITY BEYOND CATCHMENT AREA OF INITIAL VAMC OR CBOC

If a family wants to move to another jurisdiction where it will not be possible for the initial VAMC to provide case management services, the VAMC must first determine that the HUD-VASH family could be served by another VAMC that is participating in this

program. The receiving PHA must also have a HUD–VASH voucher available for this family. In these cases, the families must be absorbed by the receiving PHA.

PORTABILITY WHEN CASE MANAGEMENT IS NO LONGER REQUIRED

If the family no longer requires case management, there are no portability restrictions. Normal portability rules apply.

18-III. D. FAMILY BREAK-UP

The HUD-VASH voucher will remain with the veteran in the case of family break-ups. The only exception to this would be protections for victims under VAWA and the veteran is the perpetrator.

PART IV. TERMINATION

A participant cannot be terminated from the program for a reason that could not be used for denying admission to the program. Prior to any termination action, the AHA will contact the VA case manager to determine if there are extenuating circumstances that should be considered to avoid the termination.

The AHA **may** terminate assistance for the following reasons:

1. Program violations that occur after admission to the voucher program

A HUD–VASH participant family must not be terminated after admission for a circumstance or activity that occurred before admission and was known to the AHA, but could not be considered at the time due to the HUD–VASH Operating Requirements. For instance, once accepted to the program, a family could not be terminated for money owed to the AHA on a past voucher; however, families are not protected if violations occur after admission. The AHA will work with the VA to find alternatives to termination to minor program infractions as long as the AHA staff and other residents are not endangered by the family’s behavior.

2. Failure to participate, without good cause, in case management as verified by the VAMC

As a condition of receiving rental assistance, a HUD–VASH-eligible family must receive case management services from the VAMC or CBOC. Therefore, a HUD– VASH participant family’s assistance must be terminated for failure to participate, without good cause, in case management as verified by the VAMC or CBOC.

However, a VAMC or CBOC determination that the participant family no longer requires case management is **not** grounds for termination of assistance. In such a case, the AHA may offer the family continued HCV assistance through one of

its regular vouchers, to free up the HUD–VASH voucher for another eligible family referred by the VAMC or CBOC. If the AHA has no voucher to offer, the family will retain its HUD–VASH voucher until such time as the AHA has an available voucher for the family.

PART V. MORE INFORMATION

Up to date information can be found on HUD’s “HUD-VASH Vouchers” webpage:

https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/vash

HUD-VASH OPERATING REQUIREMENTS:

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-03-23/pdf/2012-7081.pdf>

This notice establishes the policies and procedures for the administration for the administration of tenant-based HCV rental assistance under the HUD-VASH program.

In this second version of the HUD-VASH Operating Requirements published on March 23, 2012, HUD provides new and clarifying guidance on verification documentation, the addition of family members after the veteran is a participant in the HCV program, PHA termination of assistance, portability moves, reallocation of HUD-VASH vouchers, and Housing Quality Standards (HQS) initial inspections.

HUD-VASH QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=DOC_9175.pdf

These Qs & As serve as a supplement to the HUD-VASH Operating Requirements published in the Federal Register on May 6 and 19, 2008.

HUD-VASH REFERENCE GUIDE

<http://portal.hud.gov/huddoc/vash-referguide2012-10.pdf>

This two-page document provides an easy-to-read overview of the unique requirements that govern the voucher side of the HUD-VASH program.

HUD-VASH 101 WEBINAR; HUD-VASH 101 SLIDES:

<http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=vash-101-slides.pdf>

HUD-VASH webinar on January 24, 2012.

HUD-VASH BEST PRACTICES - VERSION 1.0:

<http://portal.hud.gov/huddoc/VASH-BestPractices.pdf>

The purpose of this working document is to spread the word about effective strategies for administering HUD-VASH, as well as highlight the innovation and dedication of HUD-VASH sites and our partners in the field.