

SECTION 8 ADMINISTRATIVE PLAN

APPENDIX B

**MAINSTREAM HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

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PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Mainstream Housing Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (Mainstream) Program is a targeted voucher program for families with disabilities to allow such persons to rent affordable private housing. The Mainstream program is designed to assist housing authorities in providing Section 8 vouchers to a segment of the population recognized by HUD's housing research as one of the worst case housing needs of any group in the United States (i.e. very-low income households with adults with disabilities). Additionally, the Mainstream program will assist persons with disabilities who often face difficulties in locating suitable and accessible housing in the private market.

DEFINITIONS

Disabled Family: A family whose head, spouse, or sole member is a person with disabilities. The term "disabled family" may include two or more persons with disabilities living together, and one or more persons with disabilities living with one or more live-in aides. A disabled family may include a person with disabilities who is elderly.

Person with Disabilities: See the Section 8 Administrative Plan for definition.

Section 8 Search Assistance: Assistance to increase access by program participants to housing units in a variety of neighborhoods (including areas with low poverty concentrations) and to locate and obtain units suited to their needs.

All definitions in the main body of the Section 8 Administrative Plan apply to the Mainstream Program.

ELIGIBILITY

Only a disabled family may receive a rental voucher under the Mainstream program. Applicants with disabilities will be selected from the IHFA waiting list according to date and time of application.

RENTAL VOUCHER ASSISTANCE

This program will be administered in accordance with HUD regulations covering the regular Section 8 program

MAINSTREAM ADMISSIONS AND OCCUPANCY REQUIREMENTS

With the exception of waiting list management and turnover, all other aspects of the Mainstream program will be handled according to the regulations and IHFA Administrative policies governing the regular Section 8 program.

If there is ever an insufficient pool of disabled families on the waiting list, IHFA will conduct outreach to encourage eligible persons to apply for this special allocation of rental vouchers. Outreach may include

contacting independent living centers, advocacy organizations for persons with disabilities, and medical, mental health, and social service providers for referrals of persons receiving such services who would benefit from Section 8 assistance.

TURNOVER

When a rental voucher under the Mainstream program becomes available for reissue (e.g. the family initially selected for the program drops out of the program, is unsuccessful in the search for a unit, or is terminated from the program), the rental assistance may be used only for another individual or family eligible for assistance under the Mainstream program for five years from the date the rental assistance is placed under an ACC.

WAITING LIST MANAGEMENT

When funding was received initially, the IHFA waiting list was searched for all disabled families and their date and time of application. These applicants were pulled without regard to their IHFA preference. Once all identified families had been through the eligibility determination a system was put into place whereby each branch office could run its waiting list by disability designation and date and time of application, providing a waiting list for the Mainstream program to run concurrently with the regular Section 8 waiting list.

Currently, disabled families (including disabled single person households) are placed on the waiting list according to the established IHFA local preference for which they qualify, if any. At that time, a designation is made in the appropriate field in the computerized waiting list screen, designating the family as disabled. Each of the IHFA's four branch offices is assigned a certain number of Mainstream slots. As a Mainstream slot becomes available, the branch office runs a listing of all those families within their area that are on the waiting list and designated disabled. The system is configured so that this listing will run all those that qualify as disabled by date and time of application. By maintaining all applicants who are families with disabilities in this manner, IHFA ensures that they are categorized by local preference as well as disability status, which enables them to be housed in proper order for whichever program, regular Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher or Mainstream, first becomes available.

OUTREACH

IHFA may choose to employ a variety of strategies to ensure households and owners are aware of the availability of housing assistance, such as newspaper stories and/or the purchase of advertising space. IHFA will follow the activities outlined in the Equal Opportunity Housing Plan (EOHP) to ensure outreach to and selection of eligible households are performed without regard to race, religion, color, sex, age, disability, familial status, national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation or marital status. Additionally, IHFA will notify extremely-low income and very-low income households, minorities, persons with disabilities, and others who may be least likely to apply, of the availability of housing assistance. According to the Special Outreach Section of the EOHP, IHFA will contact community organizations that primarily serve such persons. These community organizations typically provide information and eligibility requirements for assistance programs. It is IHFA's position that organizations that represent minorities and individuals with a disability are the most effective means for distributing information about the IHFA program to their clientele.

IHFA has close working relationships with local agencies and individuals involved in rental housing. IHFA staff monitors the rental market by maintaining a comprehensive rent comparability library in each of its four branch offices. These libraries are updated at least annually through contact with local property owners, rental agencies, etc. Additionally, IHFA inspectors are able to monitor the rental market in the

course of carrying out unit inspections. When IHFA becomes aware of vacant units that appear applicable to the Mainstream program, staff may contact the owner and present the program to the owner. If the owner is interested in participating, staff will record the names, addresses, and phone numbers or available units for future contact. IHFA is also involved in the development of new construction and rehabilitation projects through IHFA's HOME and Tax Credit Programs. A minimum of 5 percent of these units are accessible to physically disabled persons. Information regarding these units is provided to the IHFA branch offices and other service providers through the Homeless Service Providers Directory that includes a section on affordable housing projects.

IHFA maintains bulletin boards or binders in each of its branch offices with information about available rental units. Current participating owners are encouraged to notify IHFA of any vacancies. Other owners who may be past participants in the program are also encouraged to notify the branch office of vacancies. Voucher holders are given lists of owners in the area that are familiar with the programs and may have vacancies in their units. Voucher holders are also informed that the list is not all inclusive, and are encouraged to search classified ads in the newspapers, to look for "for rent" signs in their community, and to contact rental management companies that may not be on the list. At the request of households that include a disabled person, IHFA provides current listings of accessible units.

IHFA may invite property owners to participate in the program through newspaper ads, minority media, landlord briefings, and other suitable means. IHFA strives to develop and maintain positive "working relationships" with private landlords and real estate brokers' groups, and civic and local organizations with an interest in housing matters. By doing so, IHFA encourages participation in the Section 8 program among owners of a wide range of housing, including housing outside areas with concentrations of low-income or minorities.

IHFA maintains four branch offices. Households entering the program are encouraged, when possible, to call with requests for assistance or to discuss problems with a staff member. A TDD machine is used to provide communication access for the hearing impaired. Each office posts informational materials (including Fair Housing posters) where they are visible from a wheelchair. IHFA staff members are advised to refer program questions or problems they are unable to answer or solve to the Branch Office Supervisor. Questions or problems beyond the scope of the supervisor are referred to the Rental Assistance Programs Administrator or the Section 8 Coordinator.

Problems beyond IHFA's resources, such as transportation and other assistance for households with a member with a disability are referred to appropriate social service agencies upon request. Telephone contact will be made for the household, with the objective of obtaining an appointment, whenever appropriate.

IHFA is committed to ensuring that all potentially eligible persons who express an interest in a rental assistance program are given an equal opportunity to apply for assistance. In addition, IHFA is committed to receiving and processing applications in such a way that all applicants are treated fairly and consistently. IHFA will make every effort to assure accessibility for all individuals. If IHFA cannot make accommodations for a person with a disabling condition to visit the branch office, IHFA will ensure access to its programs by taking the paperwork, briefing information, or other materials to the individual.

IHFA gives households with a disabled member 120 days initially to secure an appropriate rental unit. This time period is permitted without requiring the participant to request an extension every thirty days. If the first 120 days pass without a lease up occurring, IHFA will apply to HUD for a waiver requesting additional time, if warranted.

IHFA will identify public and private funding sources available to help participants cover the costs of modifications needed for their units as reasonable accommodation to their disabilities. Some possibilities include: referring participants to programs operated by the Department of Health and Welfare that provide a limited amount of funds for accessibility modifications; exploring the use of HOME funds to develop a revolving loan fund pool; networking with disability groups, churches, Habitat for Humanity, Paint the Town Building Association, contractor groups, and Americorps; seeking funding through foundations, including the Idaho Community Foundation; and approaching trade unions and vocational school programs providing training in carpentry and other necessary services to provide free or low cost labor.