

**SOUTH HACKENSACK
COAH REHABILITATION PROGRAM
REHABILITATION OPERATING MANUAL**

SOUTH HACKENSACK, NEW JERSEY

June 13, 2013

**Prepared for:
The Township of South Hackensack**

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This copy conforms to the original copy of this report which is stamped and signed by Michael F. Kauker, Professional Planner's License Number 937; in accordance with *N.J.S.A. 45:14A* regulating the practice of Professional Planning in the State of New Jersey.



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INTRODUCTION

This Rehabilitation Operating Manual has been prepared to assist in the administration of the South Hackensack COAH Rehabilitation Program. It will serve as a guide to the program staff and applicants.

This manual describes the basic content and operation of the program, examines program purposes and provides the guidelines for implementing the program. It has been prepared with a flexible format allowing for periodic updates of its sections, when required, due to revisions in regulations and/or procedures.

This manual explains the steps in the rehabilitation process. It describes the eligibility requirements for participation in the program, program criteria, funding terms and conditions, cost estimating, contract payments, record keeping and overall program administration.

The following represents the procedures developed to offer an applicant the opportunity to apply to the program.

Fair Housing and Equal Housing Opportunities



It is unlawful to discriminate against any person making application to participate in the rehabilitation program or rent a unit with regard to race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, familial status, disability, nationality, sex, gender identity or expression or source of lawful income used for mortgage or rental payments.

For more information on discrimination or if anyone feels they are a victim of discrimination, please contact the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights at 1-866-405-3050 or <http://www.state.nj.us/lps/dcr/index.html>.

SECTION I. ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS

Categories of Participants

Both owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units are eligible to receive funding for rehabilitation provided that the occupants of the units are determined to be low- or moderate-income households and that the units are determined to be substandard. Owners of rental properties do not have to be low- or moderate-income households. If a structure contains two or more units and an owner, who is not income eligible, occupies one unit funding may be provided for the rehabilitation of the rest of the units if income-eligible households occupy those units. Rents must be affordable to low- or moderate-income households.

NOTE: Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 5:97-6.2(b)6 rental units may not be excluded from a municipal rehabilitation program. If a county administers the municipal rehabilitation program and the county program does not include rehabilitation of rental units, the municipality will need to supplement the county program with its own rehabilitation program for rental units.

Income Limits for Participation

The occupants of the units must have incomes that fall within the income guidelines established for Bergen County by the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH). These limits are revised annually as COAH figures become available.

For owner-occupied units, the carrying costs of the unit (taxes, mortgage, insurance, including the rehabilitation repayment mortgage) should meet COAH criteria (less than 33% of gross income for families, less than 40% of gross income for seniors).

NOTE: The program should strive to provide that low-income households occupy at least 50 percent of the units rehabilitated. If the rehabilitation program is funded with state or federal funds, the regulations of these funding sources must be taken into consideration. Regarding income limits, use the lowest income limits.

Target Neighborhood

This is a municipal-wide program. The rehabilitation property must be located in South Hackensack.

Certification of Substandard

The purpose of the program is to bring substandard housing up to code. Substandard units are those units requiring repair or replacement of at least one major system. A major system is any one of the following:

1. Roof
2. Plumbing¹
3. Heating
4. Electrical
5. Sanitary plumbing²
6. Weatherization (building insulation for attic, exterior walls and crawl space, siding to improve energy efficiency, replacement storm windows and storm doors and replacement windows and doors)

Code violations will be determined by an inspection conducted by a Program housing inspector.

¹ The South Hackensack COAH Rehabilitation Program does not provide rehabilitation fund to repair/service wells.

² The South Hackensack COAH Rehabilitation Program does not provide rehabilitation fund to repair/service septic systems.

SECTION II. AVAILABLE BENEFITS

Program Financing

Up to \$15,000 per unit may be available for improvements to eligible owner-occupied and renter-occupied units.

Owner-occupied Units

If a grant program, the municipality may chose to forgive the grant after ten years and require no repayment, but if the unit is vacated for any reason before the ten years (sale, death, foreclosure) the balance of the grant will become payable.

Renter-occupied Units

If a grant program, the municipality may chose to forgive the grant after ten years and require no repayment, but if the unit is vacated for any reason before the ten years (sale, death, foreclosure) the balance of the grant will become payable.

NOTE: Municipal rehabilitation investment shall average at least \$10,000 per unit in hard costs. Administrative costs may be covered in conformance with N.J.A.C 5:97-8.9.

Financing of rehabilitation programs shall be structured to encourage rehabilitation and continued occupancy. Low interest rates and forgivable loans are encouraged. Leveraging of private financing is also encouraged if the result is low interest loans that encourage rehabilitation. If an owner-occupied housing unit is sold prior to the end of the controls on affordability, at least part of the loan shall be recaptured and used to rehabilitate another housing unit, unless the unit is sold to a low- or moderate-income household at an affordable price pursuant to N.J.A.C. 5:97:-9.3

Program Affordability Controls

Ten-year controls on affordability on both owner-occupied units and rental units are required.

Owner-occupied Affordability Controls

On owner-occupied units, the controls on affordability may be in the form of a lien.

Renter-occupied Affordability Controls

For rental units, the controls on affordability shall be in the form of a deed restriction and may also include a lien. If a unit is vacant upon initial rental subsequent to rehabilitation, or if a renter-occupied unit is re-rented prior to the end of controls on affordability, the deed restriction shall require the unit to be rented to a low- or moderate- income household at an affordable price and affirmatively marketed pursuant to the N.J.A.C. 5:97-9. Rents in rehabilitated units may increase annually based on the standards in N.J.A.C. 5:97-9.

Subordination (Optional)

The municipality may agree to subordination of a loan if the mortgage company supplies an appraisal showing that the new loan plus the balance on the old loan does not exceed 95% of the appraised value of the unit. Additionally, for an owner occupied unit, the household must be re-certified as low- or moderate-income.

SECTION III. ELIGIBLE PROPERTY IMPROVEMENTS

Eligible Improvements

Housing rehabilitation funds may be used only for repairs or system replacements necessary to bring a substandard unit into compliance with municipal health, safety and building codes, applicable code violations, as well as any other cosmetic work that is reasonable and deemed necessary or is related to the necessary repairs.

At least one major system must be replaced or included in the repairs, which include one of the following:

- Roof
- Plumbing³
- Heating
- Electrical
- Sanitary plumbing⁴
- Weatherization (building insulation for attic, exterior walls and crawl space, siding to improve energy efficiency, replacement storm windows and storm doors and replacement windows and doors)

The related work may include, but not be limited to the following:

- Interior trim work,
- Interior and/or exterior doors
- Interior and/or exterior hardware
- Window treatment
- Interior stair repair
- Exterior step repair or replacement
- Porch repair
- Wall surface repair
- Painting⁵
- Exterior rain carrying system repair

³ The South Hackensack COAH Rehabilitation Program does not provide rehabilitation funds to repair/service wells.

⁴ The South Hackensack COAH Rehabilitation Program does not provide rehabilitation funds to repair/service septic systems.

⁵ The South Hackensack COAH Rehabilitation Program does not provide rehabilitation funds to do lead abatement.

Ineligible Improvements

Work not eligible for program funding includes but is not limited to luxury improvements (improvements which are strictly cosmetic), additions, conversions (basement, garage, porch, attic, etc.), repairs to structures separate from the living units (detached garage, shed, barn, etc.), furnishings, pools and landscaping. If determined unsafe, stoves or other substandard appliances may be replaced. Stove or other substandard appliance must be approved by local public service utility. Rehabilitation work performed by property owners shall not be funded under this program.

Rehabilitation Standards

Upon rehabilitation, housing deficiencies shall be corrected and the unit shall comply with the New Jersey State Housing Code, N.J.A.C. 5:28. For construction projects that require the issuance of a construction permit pursuant to the Uniform Construction Code, the unit must also comply with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Subcode (N.J.A.C. 5:23-6). In these instances, the more restrictive requirements of the New Jersey State Housing Code or the Rehabilitation Subcode shall apply. For projects that require construction permits, the rehabilitated unit shall be considered complete at the date of final approval pursuant to the Uniform Construction Code.

Certification Standard

All code deficiencies noted in the inspection report must be corrected and rehabilitated units must be in compliance with the standards proscribed in sub-section C above upon issuance of a certificate of completion or occupancy. The housing inspector must certify any system repaired in whole or in part with rehabilitation funds to be free of any code violations.

Emergency Repairs

A situation relating to a safety and/or health hazard for the occupants would constitute an emergency. A municipal inspector will confirm the need for such work. In emergency cases, the formal solicitation process will not be followed. A minimum of two (2) estimates will be obtained when possible for the "emergency" work. However, eligibility, as stated in Section I,

subsection B, must be determined prior to soliciting estimates. Application for additional non-emergency work may be made in accordance with the procedures outlined in this Operating Manual. The funding for the emergency work and any additional rehabilitation may not exceed the program financing provisions in Section II, sub-section A.

SECTION IV. OVERVIEW OF ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES

Application/Interview

Property owners interested in participating in the housing rehabilitation program may submit preliminary applications to the Administrative Agent. Preliminary applications are available at the following locations:

South Hackensack Municipal Complex
227 Phillips Avenue
South Hackensack, NJ 07606

Upon request, the Administrative Agent will mail a preliminary application to an interested property owner.

After initial application is received by Administrative Agent, the application will be sent to the Program staff for eligibility determination.

If after the program staff reviews a preliminary application an owner-occupant appears to be income eligible, an interview will be arranged with the applicant for a formal application to the program. At the time of the interview, the applicant must present required documentation. Applicants for rental rehabilitation funding must provide a list of tenants and the rents paid by each. The program staff will contact the tenants to provide evidence of income eligibility of the occupants of the units.

Applications will be processed in the order of receipt.

If there is sufficient interest in the program, a random selection process will be utilized. See Random Selection process in Rental Section.

A municipality may also provide to deviate from the rank order for emergency situations, if these standards are incorporated into the Operating Manual. Only emergency situations shall be handled out of the order of receipt or randomly selected list.

Income Eligibility and Program Certification

For the households seeking a determination of income eligibility, both owner-occupants and renter-occupants, all wage earners 18 years of age or older in the household must submit appropriate documentation to document the household income, as further described below.

Property owners of both owner-occupied and renter-occupied units must submit the following documentation:

- Copy of the deed to the property.
- Proof that property taxes and water and sewer bills are current.
- Proof of property insurance, including liability, fire and flood insurance where necessary.

If after review of the income documentation submitted an applicant is determined to be ineligible, the applicant will receive a letter delineating the reasons for the determination of ineligibility. An applicant may be determined ineligible if the applicant's or each tenants' income exceeds COAH income limits or, for owner occupied units, if the carrying costs of the unit (taxes, mortgage, insurance, including the rehabilitation repayment mortgage) exceed COAH's criteria (less than 33% of gross income for families, less than 40% of gross income for seniors).

The program staff will arrange for a title search of all properties entering the program.

After the initial interview and the program staff has substantiated that the occupant is income-eligible, and the title search is favorable, the Eligible Certification Form will be completed and signed.

Upon confirmation of income eligibility of the applicant or the applicant's tenants, the program staff will send a letter, including the Eligible Certification Form, to the applicant certifying the applicant's and or tenant's eligibility. Eligibility will remain valid for six months. If the applicant has not signed a contract for rehabilitation within six months of the date of the letter of certifying eligibility, the applicant will be required to reapply for certification.

Housing Inspection/Substandard Certification

Once determined eligible, the program staff will arrange for a qualified, licensed, housing/building code inspector to inspect the entire residential property.

The Program housing inspector will inspect the house, take photographs, and certify that at least one major system is substandard. All required repairs would be identified.

Ineligible Properties

If after review of the property documentation submitted and the inspection report and/or work write-up an applicant's property is determined to be ineligible, the program staff will send a letter delineating the reasons for the determination of ineligibility. An applicant's property may be determined ineligible for any one of the following reasons:

- Title search is unfavorable.
- Property does not need sufficient repairs to meet eligibility requirements.
- Real estate taxes are in arrears.
- Proof of property insurance not submitted.
- Property is listed for sale.
- Property is in foreclosure.
- Total debt on the property will exceed the value of the property.
- Reverse Mortgages

The municipality may disqualify properties requiring excessive repairs to meet municipal housing standards. The estimated or bid cost of repairs must exceed at least 50 percent of the estimated after-rehabilitation value of the property for the municipality to exclude the property

If after review of the property documentation submitted and the inspection report and/or work write-up an applicant's property is determined to be eligible, the inspector will then certify that the dwelling is substandard by completing and signing the Certificate of Substandard Form and submitting this to the program staff.

Work Write-up

The program staff will prepare or cause to be prepared a Work Write-up. This write-up will include a breakdown of each major work item by category as well as by location in the house. A The Work Write-up will be included within the program documentation. The program staff will review the Preliminary Work Write-up with the property owner.

Contractor Bidding Negotiations

After the unit and the unit occupant have been certified as eligible, the program staff will provide a list of approved, pre-qualified trade contractors for bidding. The property owner reviews this list and selects a minimum of three and a maximum of five contractors from whom to obtain bids. The program staff and property owner will then review these bids. The lowest responsible trade contractor shall then be selected.

The program may permit a property owner to seek proposals from non-program participating contractors. However, the program staff must pre-approve the contractor prior to submitting a bid.

Cost Estimate Bids

The pre-certified contractors will prepare or cause to be prepared Cost Estimate. This estimate will include a breakdown of each major work item by category as well as by location in the house. It will contain information as to the scope and specifics on the materials to be used. A Cost Estimate will be computed and included within the program documentation.

Only required repairs to units occupied by income eligible households will be funded through the housing rehabilitation program. If the property owner desires work not fundable through the program, including work on an owner-occupied unit of a rental rehabilitation project, work on a

non-eligible rental unit in a multi-unit building or improvements not covered by the program, such work may be added to the work write-up if the property owner provides funds to be deposited in the municipality's Housing Trust Fund prior to the commencement of the rehabilitation of the property equivalent to 110 percent or a higher percentage of the estimated cost of the elective work. Such deposited funds not expended at the time of the issuance of a certificate of completion/occupancy will be returned to the property owner with accrued interest.

Contract Signing/Pre-Construction Conference

Program staff will meet with the property owner to review all bids by the various general contractors. The Contractor Agreement will be prepared by the program staff, as well as the Property Rehabilitation Agreement covering all the required terms and conditions.

The program staff will then call a Pre-Construction Conference. Documents to be executed at the Pre-construction Conference include: Contractors Agreement(s), Right of Entry Document, a Restricted Covenant, Mortgage and Mortgage Note. The property owner, program staff representative, contractor and bank representative will execute the appropriate documents and copies will be provided as appropriate. A staff member will outline project procedures to which property owner must adhere. A Proceed to Work Order will be determined and agreed upon with the contractor, homeowner and cost estimator.

Progress Inspections

The program staff will make periodic inspections to monitor the progress of property improvements. This is necessary to ensure that the ongoing improvements are in accordance with the scope of work outlined in the work write-up. It is the contractor's responsibility to notify the Building Inspector before closing up walls on plumbing and electrical improvements.

Change Orders

If it becomes apparent during the course of construction that additional repairs are necessary or the described repair needs to be amended, the program staff will have the qualified professional(s) inspect the areas in need of repair and prepare a change order describing the work to be done. The applicant and the contractor will review the change order with the program staff

and agree on a price. Once all parties approve of the change order and agree on the price, they will sign documents amending the contract agreement to include the change order. Additionally, if the applicant is not funding the additional cost, new financing documents will be executed reflecting the increase.

Payment Schedule

The payment for project is made as work is completed and approved by the cost estimator. The final payment form is prepared and signed off by the cost estimator.

Appeal Process – Property Improvements

If an applicant does not approve a payment that the housing/building inspector has approved, the disputed payment will be appealed to the municipality's Township Committee for a hearing. The municipality's Township Committee will decide if the payment shall be released to the contractor or the contractor must complete additional work or correct work completed before the release of the payment. The municipality's Township Committee decision will be binding on both the applicant and the contractor

Final Inspection

Upon notification by the contractor that all work is complete and where required a Certificate of Occupancy has been issued, a final inspection shall be conducted and photographs taken. The program staff (or a representative), the property owner, and the necessary contractors shall be present at the final inspection to respond to any final punch list items.

Record Mortgage Documentation and Restricted Covenant

Program staff will file the executed Restricted Covenant and Mortgage with the County Clerk.

File Closing

After the final payment is made, the applicant's file will be closed by the Program staff and submitted to the Township upon termination of the program. The file will be maintained by the Township.

SECTION V. PROCEDURE FOR INCOME-ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

Complete a Household Eligibility Determination Form

If the rehabilitation program is funded with state or federal funds, the regulations of these funding sources must be taken into consideration. Regarding income limits, use the lowest income limits. For the income qualifying process, use the regulations of the funding source and modify this Operating Manual accordingly.

The program staff shall require each member of an applicant household who is 18 years of age or older to provide documentation to verify their income, pursuant to the Uniform Housing Affordability Controls at N.J.A.C. 5:80-16.1 et seq. (except for the asset test).⁶ Income verification documentation should include, but is not limited to the following for each and every member of a household who is 18 years of age or older:

- Four current consecutive pay stubs [including both the check and the stub], including bonuses, overtime or tips, or a letter from the employer stating the present annual income figure or if self-employed, a current Certified Profit & Loss Statement and Balance Sheet.
- Copies of Federal and State income tax returns for each of the preceding three tax years - A Form 1040 Tax Summary for the past three tax years can be requested from the local Internal Revenue Service Center or by calling 1-800-829-1040.
- A letter or appropriate reporting form verifying monthly benefits such as
 - Social Security or SSI – Current award letter or computer print out letter
 - Unemployment – verification of Unemployment Benefits
 - Welfare -TANF⁷ current award letter
 - Disability - Worker’s compensation letter or
 - Pension income (monthly or annually) – a pension letter
- A letter or appropriate reporting form verifying any other sources of income claimed by the applicant, such as alimony or child support – copy of court order or recent original letters from the court or education scholarship/stipends – current award letter.

⁶ Asset Test – N.J.A.C. 5:80-26.16(b)3 which provides that if an applicant household owns a primary residence with no mortgage on the property valued at or above the regional asset limit as published annually by COAH, a certificate of eligibility shall be denied by the administrative agent, unless the applicant’s existing monthly housing costs ...exceed 38 percent of the household’s eligible monthly income.

⁷ TANF – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

- Current reports of savings and checking accounts (bank statements and passbooks) and income reports from banks or other financial institutions holding or managing trust funds, money market accounts, certificates of deposit, stocks or bonds (In brokerage accounts – most recent statements and/or in certificate form – photocopy of certificates).
- Evidence or reports of income from directly held assets, such as real estate or businesses.
- Interest in a corporation or partnership – Federal tax returns for each of the preceding three tax years.
- Current reports of assets – Market Value Appraisal or Realtor Comparative Market Analysis and Bank/Mortgage Co. Statement indicating Current Mortgage Balance. For rental property attach copies of all leases.

NOTE: Administrative Agents typically use a spreadsheet or worksheet similar to the one included in the Appendix to help calculate an applicant's income. This summarizing document will also prove useful in the event there is an appeal or question by the applicant concerning the calculation or during COAH monitoring visits. The Operating Manual should include a reasonable period [30 days is recommended] to complete the submission of all required documentation and this policy should be included in the manual.

The following is a list of various types of wages, payments, rebates and credits. Those that are considered as part of the household's income are listed under Income. Those that are not considered as part of the household's income are listed under Not Income.

Income

1. Wages, salaries, tips, commissions
2. Alimony
3. Regularly scheduled overtime
4. Pensions
5. Social security
6. Unemployment compensation (verify the remaining number of weeks they are eligible to receive)
7. TANF
8. Verified regular child support
9. Disability
10. Net income from business or real estate
11. Interest income from assets such as savings, certificates of deposit, money market accounts, mutual funds, stocks, bonds
12. Imputed interest (using a current average annual rate of two percent) from non-income producing assets, such as equity in real estate. Rent from real estate is considered income, after deduction of any mortgage payments, real estate taxes, property owner's insurance.

-
13. Rent from real estate is considered income
 14. Any other forms of regular income reported to the Internal Revenue Service

Not Income

1. Rebates or credits received under low-income energy assistance programs
2. Food stamps
3. Payments received for foster care
4. Relocation assistance benefits
5. Income of live-in attendants
6. Scholarships
7. Student loans
8. Personal property such as automobiles
9. Lump-sum additions to assets such as inheritances, lottery winnings, gifts, insurance settlements
10. Part-time income of dependents enrolled as full-time students
11. Court ordered payments for alimony or child support paid to another household shall be deducted from gross annual income

To calculate income, the current gross income of the applicant is used to project that income over the next 12 months.

Student Income

Only full-time income of full-time students is included in the income calculation. A full-time student is a member of the household reported to the IRS as a dependent who is enrolled in a degree seeking program for 12 or more credit hours per semester; and part-time income is income earned on less than a 35-hour workweek.

Income from Real Estate

If real estate owned by an applicant for affordable housing is a rental property, the rent is considered income. After deduction of any mortgage payments, real estate taxes, property owner insurance and reasonable property management expenses as reported to the Internal Revenue Service, the remaining amount shall be counted as income.

If an applicant owns real estate with mortgage debt, which is not to be used as rental housing, the Administrative Agent should determine the imputed interest from the value of the property. The Administrative Agent should deduct outstanding mortgage debt from the documented market

value established by a market value appraisal. Based on current money market rates, interest will be imputed on the determined value of the real estate.

Records Documenting Household Composition and Circumstances

The following are various records for documenting household information:

- Social Security records or cards. Either individual Social Security card or letter from Social Security Administration
- Adoption papers, or legal documents showing adoption in process
- Income tax return
- Birth Certificate or Passport
- Alien Registration Card

Certify the Household Income Eligibility

Certify the income eligibility of low- and moderate-income households by completing the application form. Provide the household with the original and keep a copy in the project files.

Appeal Process – Income Eligibility

Appeals from all decisions of an Administrative Agent shall be made in writing to the Executive Director of the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH), 101 South Broad Street, P.O. Box 813, Trenton, New Jersey 08615. The Executive Director's written decision, which shall be made within 15 days of receipt of an appeal, shall be a final administrative action of COAH.

SECTION VI. CONTRACTOR RELATED PROCEDURES

Contractor Selection

Contractors must apply to the program staff to be placed on the pre-approved contractors list. Contractors seeking inclusion on the list must submit references from at least three recent general contracting jobs. Contractors also must submit documentation proving financial stability.

Number of Proposals Required

The property owner will select a minimum of three general contractors from a list of pre-approved contractors. Property owners may not select contractors who do not appear on the list.⁸ The approved work write-up will be submitted to the selected contractors by the program staff. Contractors must visit the property and submit bids within 14 days. The contract will be awarded to the lowest bidder, provided that the housing/building inspector or the professional who drafted the work write-up certify that the work can be completed at the price bid and that the bid is reasonably close to the cost estimate. Bids must fall within the cost estimate.

Contractor Requirements

Upon notification of selection, the contractor shall submit all required insurance certification to the program staff. A contract signing conference will be called by the program staff to be attended by the property owner and contractor. At the time of Agreement execution, the contractor shall sign a Certification of Work Schedule.

⁸ The program may permit a property owner to seek proposals from non-program participating contractors. However, the program staff must pre-approve the contractor prior to submitting a bid.

SECTION VII. MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS AND CLIENT FILES

Files to be Maintained on Every Applicant

The program staff will maintain files on every applicant. All files will contain a preliminary application. If an applicant's preliminary application is approved, and the applicant files a formal application, the file will contain at a minimum:

- Application Form
- Tenant Information Form (Rental Units Only)
- Income Verification
- Letter of Certification of Eligibility or Letter of Determination of Ineligibility

Files of applicants approved for the program will also contain the following additional documentation:

- Housing Inspection Report
- Photographs - Before
- Certification of Property Eligibility or Determination of Ineligibility
- Proof of Homeowners Insurance
- Copy of Deed to Property

For properties determined eligible for the program where the applicants choose to continue in the program, the files shall contain the following:

- Work Write-Up/Cost Estimate
- Copies of Bids
- Applicant/Contractor Contract Agreement
- Recorded Mortgage/Lien Documents
- Copies of All Required Permits
- Contractor Requests for Progress Payments
- Progress Payment Inspection Reports
- Progress Payment Vouchers
- Change Orders (If needed)
- Final Inspection Report
- Photographs - After
- Certification of Completion
- Certification of Release of Contractor's Bond

Individual files will be maintained throughout the process and submitted to the municipality upon termination of the program.

Rehabilitation Log

A rehabilitation log will be maintained by the program staff that depicts the status of all applications in progress.

Monitoring Information

The Administrative Agent will maintain the closed files received from the program staff. For each unit the following information must be retained to be reported annually:

- Street Address
- Block/Lot/Unit Number
- Owner/Renter
- Income: Very Low/Low/Mod
- Final Inspection Date
- Funds expended on Hard Costs
- Development Fees expended
- Funds Recaptured
- Major Systems Repaired
- Unit Below Code & Raised to Code
- Effective date of affordability controls
- Length of Affordability Controls (yrs)
- Date Affordability Controls removed
- Reason for removal of Affordability Controls

SECTION VIII. PROGRAM MARKETING

The Township will conduct a public meeting announcing the implementation of the housing rehabilitation program. For the term of the program, the municipality will include flyers once a year with the tax bills. Program information will be available at the municipal building and senior center. Posters regarding the program will be placed in retail businesses throughout the municipality.

Prior to commencement of the program and periodically thereafter, the municipality will hold informational meetings on the program to all interested contractors. Each contractor will have the opportunity to apply for inclusion of the pre-approved contractor list.

SECTION IX. RENTAL PROCEDURES

Rental units are subject to the Uniform Housing Affordability Controls (UHAC) at N.J.A.C. 5-80:26.1 et. seq. once the rental units are rehabilitated.

Fair Housing and Equal Housing Opportunities



It is unlawful to discriminate against any person making application to participate in the rehabilitation program or rent a unit with regard to race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, familial status, disability, nationality, sex, gender identity or expression or source of lawful income used for mortgage or rental payments.

For more information on discrimination or if anyone feels they are a victim of discrimination, please contact the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights at 1-866-405-3050 or <http://www.state.nj.us/lps/dcr/index.html>.

Overview of the Affordable Housing Administration Process for Rental Units

- The Municipal Housing Liaison serves as an initial point of contact for unsolicited calls to the municipality about affordable housing and where appropriate directs applicants to an Administrative Agent.
- The Administrative Agent implements the Township's Affirmative Marketing Plan.
- The Administrative Agent serves as the initial point of contact for all inquiries generated by the affirmative marketing efforts and sends out pre-applications to interested callers.
- The Administrative Agent will accept these returned pre-applications for a specific period of time, for example, 30 to 90 days. At the end of this time period these applications will be randomly selected, through a lottery, to create a pool of applicants.
- The Administrative Agent pre-qualifies applicants in the applicant pool for income eligibility and sends either a rejection letter to those over income or a preliminary approval letter to those who appear income-eligible.
- When a unit becomes available, the Administrative Agent will interview the applicant households and proceed with the income qualification process.

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- The Administrative Agent must notify applicant households in writing of certification or denial within 20 days of the determination.
 - Once certified, households are further screened to match household size to bedroom size.
 - Certified households that are approved for a rental affordable housing unit will sign Appendix K and any other applicable documents, which are held in the applicant file. Applicants then make an appointment with the leasing agent. Applicant households seeking rental units proceed with a credit check, which is generally conducted by the developer, affordable housing sponsor or landlord. If approved, the applicant will sign the lease, pay the first month's rent and the security deposit and receive the keys.
 - The certified household moves in to the affordable rental unit.

Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Municipal Housing Liaison

The Municipal Housing Liaison is responsible for coordinating all the activities of the municipal government as it relates to the creation and administration of affordable housing units, in conjunction with the Municipal Attorney, where appropriate (see the section **Responsibilities of the Municipal Attorney**). The primary purpose of the Municipal Housing Liaison is to ensure that all affordable housing projects are established and administered according to the Regulations as outlined in an Operating Manual. The duties of the Municipal Housing Liaison include the following duties, and may include the responsibilities for providing administrative services as described in the next Section under, Responsibilities of an Administrative Agent.

Monitor the status of all restricted units in the municipality's Fair Share Plan. Regardless of any arrangements the municipality may have with one or more Administrative Agents, it is the Municipal Housing Liaison's responsibility to know the status of all restricted units in their community.

Serve as the municipality's primary point of contact for all inquiries from the State, Administrative Agents, developers, affordable housing sponsors, owners, property managers, and interested households. The Municipal Housing Liaison serves as the

municipality's primary point of contact on affordable housing issues. Interested applicants should be provided with information on the types of affordable units within the municipality and, where applicable, the name of the Administrative Agent that manages the units and the contact information for the Administrative Agent.

Compile, verify and submit annual reporting. Administrative Agents are responsible for collecting much of the data that is ultimately included in an annual COAH monitoring report. However, it is the Municipal Housing Liaison's responsibility to collect and verify this data and consolidate it into the annual report to COAH. Any requests from COAH for additional information or corrections will be directed to the Municipal Housing Liaison.

Provide Administrative Services, unless those services are contracted out.

Responsibilities of an Administrative Agent

The primary responsibility of an Administrative Agent is to establish and enforce affordability controls and ensure that units in their portfolio are rented to eligible households. Administrative Agents must:

Secure written acknowledgement from all owners that no restricted unit can be offered or in any other way committed to any person other than a household duly certified by the Administrative Agent.

Create and adhere to an Operating Manual. Administrative Agents are required to follow the policies and procedures of an Operating Manual, as applicable to the scope of services they have been contracted to perform.

Implement the municipality's Affirmative Marketing Plan. The Administrative Agent, the developer, affordable housing sponsor or owner could be responsible for implementing the Affirmative Marketing Plan adopted by the municipality. At the first meeting with the Municipal Housing Liaison, Administrative Agent, and the developer, affordable housing

sponsor or owner this responsibility should be discussed. Affirmative marketing includes conducting regional outreach and advertising for available affordable units. Advertising costs may also be delegated to the developer, but this must be established by ordinance and a condition of approval of the Planning Board or Zoning Board.

Accept applications from interested households. In response to marketing initiatives or by referral from the Municipal Housing Liaison, interested households will contact the Administrative Agent. The Administrative Agent will supply applicants with applications, provide additional information on available units and accept completed applications.

Conduct random selection of applicants for rental of restricted units. The Administrative Agent is responsible for conducting the random selection in accordance with the Affirmative Marketing Plan and any related local ordinances, and as described in the Operating Manual.

Create and maintain a pool of applicant households. This includes reaching out to households in the applicant pool to determine continued interest and/or changes in household size and income.

Determine eligibility of households. The task of collecting application materials and documentation from applicant households and analyzing it for eligibility is the responsibility of an Administrative Agent. A written determination on a household's eligibility must be provided within twenty (20) days of the Administrative Agent's determination of eligibility or non-eligibility. Whether or not the household is determined to be eligible for a unit, it is an Administrative Agent's responsibility to secure all information provided by the household in individual files and to maintain strict confidentiality of all information regarding that household. An Administrative Agent is required to ensure that all certified applicants execute a certificate acknowledging the rights and requirements of renting an affordable unit, in the form of Appendix K of UHAC.

Establish and maintain effective communication with property managers and landlords. Property managers and landlords of restricted units should be instructed and regularly reminded that the Administrative Agent is their primary point of contact. The Administrative Agent must immediately inform all property managers and landlords of any changes to the Administrative Agent's contact information or business hours.

Property managers and landlords should be instructed to immediately contact the Administrative Agent:

- Immediately upon learning that an affordable rental unit will be vacated.
- For review and approval of annual rental increases.

Provide annual notification of maximum rents. Each year when COAH releases its low- and moderate-income limits, rental households must be notified of the new maximum rent that may be charged for their unit. The Administrative Agent's contact information must be included on such notification in case the tenant is being overcharged.

Serve as the custodian of all legal documents. An Administrative Agent is responsible for maintaining originals of all legal instruments for the units in their portfolio. Throughout the duration of a control period, an Administrative Agent must maintain a file containing its affordability control documents. This includes, but is not limited to, the recorded Declarations of Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions, Deed Restrictions, Deeds, Repayment Mortgages, Repayment Mortgage Notes, Leases and Appendix K.

Serve as point of contact on all matters relating to affordability controls. It is recommended that the Administrative Agent develop a system to be notified by lenders when a unit is at risk of foreclosure. In the event of a foreclosure, the Administrative Agent should work with the foreclosing institution to ensure that the affordability controls are maintained. The Administrative Agent should seek the counsel of the municipality's attorney on legal matters that threaten the durability of the affordability controls.

Provide annual activity reports to Municipal Housing Liaison for use in the annual COAH monitoring report. An Administrative Agent is responsible for collecting the reporting data on each unit in their portfolio.

Maintain and distribute information on HUD-approved Housing Counseling Programs.

Responsibilities of the Municipal Attorney

The Municipal Attorney assists the municipality with developing, administrating, and enforcing affordability controls, including but not limited to

- Providing all reasonable and necessary assistance in support of the Administrative Agent's efforts to ensure compliance with the housing affordability controls.

Responsibilities of Owners of Rental Units

Open and direct communication between the Owners of rental units, the Municipal Housing Liaison and the Administrative Agent is essential to ongoing administration of affordability controls. Although the Administrative Agent is required to serve as the primary point of contact with households, the Owner must provide the Municipal Housing Liaison and Administrative Agent with information on vacancies. Owners of rental units are also responsible for working with the Administrative Agent to ensure that the Municipal Housing Liaison has all necessary information to complete the annual COAH reporting.

Responsibilities of Landlords and Property Managers

Landlords and property managers must place a notice in all rental properties annually informing residents of the rent increase for the year and the contact information for the Administrative Agent.

Affirmative Marketing

Overview of the Requirements of an Affirmative Marketing Plan

All affordable units are required to be affirmatively marketed using South Hackensack's Affirmative Marketing Plan. An Affirmative Marketing Plan is a regional marketing strategy designed to attract households of all majority and minority groups, regardless of race, creed,

color, national origin, ancestry, marital or familial status, gender, affectional or sexual orientation, disability, age, or number of children to housing units which are being marketed by an Administrative Agent or a developer, sponsor, owner or property manager of affordable housing. The primary objectives of an Affirmative Marketing Plan are to target households who are least likely to apply for affordable housing, and to target households throughout the entire housing region in which the units are located.

South Hackensack's Affirmative Marketing Plan can be provided by the Administrative Agent.

NOTE: Every Affirmative Marketing Plan and any revisions thereto must be adopted by resolution of the governing body, referenced by ordinance and approved by COAH. A form to help municipalities set up an Affirmative Marketing Plan is available on COAH's website for Administrative Agents. It is recommended to include the approved Affirmative Marketing Plan in the Appendix rather than in the text of the Operating Manual so that if any revision is required to the Affirmative Marketing Plan, the manual will not need to be revised, only the insertion in the Appendix.

Every Affirmative Marketing Plan must include all of the following:

- Publication of at least one advertisement in a newspaper of general circulation within the housing region; and
- Broadcast of at least one advertisement by radio or television throughout the housing region.
- At least one additional regional marketing strategy such as a neighborhood newspaper, religious publication, organizational newsletter, advertisement(s) with major employer(s), or notification through community and regional organizations such as non-profit, religious and civic organizations.

NOTE: Although not a requirement of UHAC, COAH encourages municipalities to list all affordable housing units in their community on the New Jersey Housing Resource Center at www.njhousing.gov. The New Jersey Housing Resource Center is a free service to both owners and administrators of affordable housing and households

seeking affordable housing opportunities.

For each affordable housing opportunity within the municipality, the Affirmative Marketing Plan must include the following information:

- The address of the project and development name, if any
- The number of rental units
- The price ranges of the rental units
- The name and contact information of the Municipal Housing Liaison, Administrative Agent, property manager or landlord
- A description of the Random Selection method that will be used to select applicants for affordable housing.
- Disclosure of required application fees, if any.

Advertisements must contain the following information for each affordable housing opportunity:

- The location of and directions to the units
- A range of prices for the housing units
- The bedroom size(s) of the units
- The maximum income permitted to qualify for the housing units
- The locations of applications for the housing units
- The business hours when interested households may obtain an application for a housing unit
- Application fees, if any

NOTE: It is also recommended that the following information be included in the advertisements:

- Last date applications will be accepted
- Contact number of the Municipal Housing Liaison, Administrative Agent, property manager or landlord
- A statement concerning the availability of credit, budget and/or homeownership counseling services
- If already adopted by ordinance, a statement concerning regional preference.

COAH recommends including the following statement on all advertisements. "Visit www.njhousing.gov for more affordable housing opportunities."

OPTIONAL: Regional Preference

South Hackensack has by ordinance provided that households that live or work in COAH Housing Region 1 comprised of the following counties Bergen, Hudson, Passaic and Sussex region shall be selected for an affordable housing unit before households from outside this region. Units that remain unoccupied after households who live or work in the region are exhausted, may be offered to the households outside the region.

NOTE: Municipalities that wish to give preference to applicant households that live or work in their housing region must state this preference in the form of an ordinance. This preference cannot be limited to families that live or work in the host municipality – if preference is given, it must be given to all households that live or work in the housing region.

Implementation of the Affirmative Marketing Plan

NOTE: The Operating Manual must identify who will market the affordable units, the municipality or the Administrative Agent, and how frequently they will be marketed, depending on such factors as whether there will be advertising to create and maintain a central list of applicants or advertising shall be conducted for each project, or some combination thereof.

It is strongly recommended that detailed records on all marketing initiatives be maintained.

The affirmative marketing process for affordable units shall begin at least four months prior to expected occupancy. In implementing the marketing program, the Administrative Agent shall undertake all of the strategies outlined in the South Hackensack's Affirmative Marketing Plan. Advertising and outreach shall take place during the first week of the marketing program and each month thereafter until all the units have been sold. Applications for affordable housing shall be available in several locations in accordance with the Affirmative Marketing Plan. The time period when applications will be accepted will be posted with the applications. Applications shall be mailed to prospective applicants upon request.

An applicant pool will be maintained by the Administrative Agent for re-rentals.

When a re-rental affordable unit becomes available, Administrative Agent applicants will be selected from the applicant pool and, if necessary, the unit will be affirmatively marketed as described above.

The selection of applicants from the applicant pool is described in more detail in this manual under the section **Random Selection & Applicant Pool(s)**.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question: *How often should we advertise?*

Answer: Administrative Agents responsible for new developments, or newly hired Administrative Agents, must advertise initially to create an applicant pool. For new developments, advertising should begin four months prior to the anticipated occupancy of the units. Advertising should continue monthly until all units are sold or rented. Once all vacant units are filled with eligible households, the Administrative Agent can either close the applicant pool or keep it open. If the applicant pool has sufficient eligible households for approximately two years worth of turnover, COAH recommends that the applicant pool be closed and applications no longer be accepted. In this case, advertising does not need to be conducted until four months before the applicant pool is to be reopened. If the Administrative Agent wishes to keep the applicant pool open, they must conduct some form of advertising on a monthly basis. However, all the components of the Affirmative Marketing Plan do not need to be implemented every month. One strategy can be implemented each month on a rotating basis. The next section provides more information on random selection and applicant pool maintenance to help determine how often advertising should be conducted.

Question: *My county doesn't have a library. How do I comply with the application availability rule?*

Answer: Only 11 of New Jersey's 21 counties have a county library (a list is included on COAH's website for Administrative Agents). If one or more of the counties in a housing region do not have county libraries, applications must be made available at the county administration building.

Question: *Our affordable housing development is very small. It is unnecessary for us to conduct monthly marketing initiatives and the number of applicants in our existing pool already exceeds the two-year rule of thumb. Is there any way for us to maintain compliance without conducting monthly outreach initiatives?*

Answer: COAH suggests that you attempt to partner with other municipalities in your housing region to help defray time and cost or close the applicant pool and do not accept applications until the applicant pool contains fewer applicants and affirmative marketing is implemented.

Question: *We have moderate-income units available, but not low-income units. Can we keep only the moderate portion of the applicant pool open?*

Answer: Yes. In fact, if you regularly have a type of unit that is hard to fill, you may tailor marketing initiatives to fill that type of unit. However, households that submit applications and are not interested or eligible for the targeted unit type must be notified that they will not be placed in the applicant pool until it is reopened for their unit type.

Question: *Are all developments required to conduct affirmative marketing, or just those with a certain number of units, for example, more than five units?*

Answer: All affordable units governed by UHAC are required to be affirmatively marketed. If it is burdensome for a small development to conduct its own affirmative marketing, the municipality and Administrative Agent(s) should consider conducting the affirmative marketing for all the units within the municipality at the municipal level, not at the development level. An alternative is to contract with an Administrative Agent who will do the affirmative marketing for your units as well as other units they manage.

Random Selection & Applicant Pool(s)

Randomization after Certification

Random selection is conducted when funds are available for rehabilitation, and only certified households seeking approved projects are placed in the lottery. The process is as follows:

After advertising is implemented, applications are accepted for 30 days.

All applications are reviewed and households are either certified or informed of non-eligibility. (The certification is valid for 180 days, and may be renewed by updating income-verification information.)

Eligible households are placed in applicant pools based upon the number of bedrooms needed (and any other special requirements, such as regional preference, or the need for an accessible unit)

When rehabilitation funds are available, only the certified households in need of approved projects are selected for a lottery.

Households are informed of the date, time, and location of the lottery and invited to attend.

After the lottery is conducted, the first household selected is given 10 business days to express interest or disinterest in the unit. (If the first household is not interested in the unit, this process continues until a certified household selects the unit.)

Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis, certified households are added to the pool for the appropriate household income and size categories, and advertising and outreach is ongoing, according to the Affirmative Marketing Plan.

Application Fees

The Administrative Agent's fee schedule is identified in the Shared Services Agreement.

Maximum Monthly Payments

The percentage of funds that a household can contribute toward housing expenses is limited. However, an applicant may qualify for an exception based on the household's current housing cost (see below). The Administrative Agent will strive to place an applicant in a unit with a monthly housing cost equal to or less than the applicant's current housing cost.

UHAC states that a certified household is not permitted to lease a restricted rental unit that would require more than 35 percent of the verified household income (40 percent for age-restricted units) to pay rent and utilities. However, at the discretion of the Administrative Agent, this limit may be exceeded if:

- The household currently pays more than 35 percent (40 percent for households eligible for age-restricted units) of its gross household income for rent and the proposed rent will reduce the household's housing costs;

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- The household has consistently paid more than 35 percent (40 percent for households eligible for age-restricted units) of eligible monthly income for rent in the past and has proven its ability to pay;
 - The household is currently in substandard or overcrowded living conditions;
 - The household documents the existence of assets, with which the household proposes to supplement the rent payments; or
 - The household documents proposed third party assistance from an outside source such as a family member in a form acceptable to the Administrative Agent and the Owner of the unit; and
 - The household receives budget counseling.

Housing Counseling

The Administrative Agent is responsible for providing housing counseling, or providing referrals for counseling, as a part of the Affirmative Marketing Plan and during the application process. Although housing counseling is recommended, a household is only required to attend counseling if their monthly housing expense exceeds UHAC standards. A HUD-approved housing counseling agency, or a counseling agency approved by the NJ Department of Banking and Insurance, meets UHAC's requirements for an experienced Housing Counseling Agency. If the Administrative Agent is not approved by HUD or by the NJ Department of Banking and Insurance, the Agent will make referrals to one of the HUD-approved housing counseling agencies in New Jersey. This counseling to low- and moderate-income housing applicants will focus on subjects such as budgeting, credit issues, and mortgage qualification, and is free of charge. A list of non-profit counselors approved by HUD and/or the New Jersey Department of Banking and Insurance is included on COAH's website and is available from the Administrative Agent.

The Applicant Interview

Ideally, the prospective applicant will be available to meet with the Administrative Agent to review the certification and random selection processes in detail and ask any questions they may have about the project or the process. However, scheduling time off from work may prove burdensome to the applicant. Applicants may also have mobility issues or special needs that also pose an obstacle to an interview. Therefore, the Administrative Agent is prepared to complete the

certification process via telephone and mail. If an interview is to be conducted, the Administrative Agent will attempt to achieve the following objectives:

- Confirm and update all information provided on the application.
- Explain program requirements, procedures used to verify information, and penalties for providing false information. Ask the head of household, co-head, spouse and household members over age 18 to sign the Authorization for Release of Information forms and other verification requests.
- Review the applicant's identification and financial information and documentation, ask any questions to clarify information on the application, and obtain any additional information needed to verify the household's income.
- Make sure the applicant has reported all sources for earned and benefit income and assets (including assets disposed of for less than fair market value in the past two years). Require the applicant to give a written certification as to whether any household member did or did not dispose of any assets for less than fair market value during the past two years.

Procedure for Income-Eligibility Certification

1. Complete a Household Eligibility Determination Form

If the rehabilitation program is funded with state or federal funds, the regulations of these funding sources must be taken into consideration. Regarding income limits, use the lowest income limits. For the income qualifying process, use the regulations of the funding source and modify this Operating Manual accordingly.

The program staff shall require each member of an applicant household who is 18 years of age or older to provide documentation to verify their income, pursuant to the Uniform Housing Affordability Controls at N.J.A.C. 5:80-16.1 et seq. Income verification documentation should include, but is not limited to the following for each and every member of a household who is 18 years of age or older:

- Four current consecutive pay stubs [including both the check and the stub], including bonuses, overtime or tips, or a letter from the employer stating the present annual income figure or if self-employed, a current Certified Profit & Loss Statement and Balance Sheet.
- Copies of Federal and State income tax returns for each of the preceding three tax years - A Form 1040 Tax Summary for the past three tax years can be requested from the local Internal Revenue Service Center or by calling 1-800-829-1040.
- A letter or appropriate reporting form verifying monthly benefits such as

- Social Security or SSI – Current award letter or computer print out letter
- Unemployment – verification of Unemployment Benefits
- Welfare -TANF⁹ current award letter
- Disability - Worker’s compensation letter or
- Pension income (monthly or annually) – a pension letter
- A letter or appropriate reporting form verifying any other sources of income claimed by the applicant, such as alimony or child support – copy of court order or recent original letters from the court or education scholarship/stipends – current award letter.
- Current reports of savings and checking accounts (bank statements and passbooks) and income reports from banks or other financial institutions holding or managing trust funds, money market accounts, certificates of deposit, stocks or bonds (In brokerage accounts – most recent statements and/or in certificate form – photocopy of certificates).
- Evidence or reports of income from directly held assets, such as real estate or businesses.
- Interest in a corporation or partnership – Federal tax returns for each of the preceding three tax years.
- Current reports of assets – Market Value Appraisal or Realtor Comparative Market Analysis and Bank/Mortgage Co. Statement indicating Current Mortgage Balance. For rental property attach copies of all leases.

NOTE: Administrative Agents typically use a spreadsheet or worksheet similar to the one included in the Appendix to help calculate an applicant’s income. This summarizing document will also prove useful in the event there is an appeal or question by the applicant concerning the calculation or during COAH monitoring visits. The Operating Manual should include a reasonable period [30 days is recommended] to complete the submission of all required documentation and this policy should be included in the manual.

The following is a list of various types of wages, payments, rebates and credits. Those that are considered as part of the household’s income are listed under Income. Those that are not considered as part of the household’s income are listed under Not Income.

Income

1. Wages, salaries, tips, commissions
2. Alimony

⁹ TANF – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

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3. Regularly scheduled overtime
 4. Pensions
 5. Social security
 6. Unemployment compensation (verify the remaining number of weeks they are eligible to receive)
 7. TANF
 8. Verified regular child support
 9. Disability
 10. Net income from business or real estate
 11. Interest income from assets such as savings, certificates of deposit, money market accounts, mutual funds, stocks, bonds
 12. Imputed interest (using a current average annual rate of two percent) from non-income producing assets, such as equity in real estate. Rent from real estate is considered income, after deduction of any mortgage payments, real estate taxes, property owner's insurance.
 13. Rent from real estate is considered income
 14. Any other forms of regular income reported to the Internal Revenue Service

Not Income

1. Rebates or credits received under low-income energy assistance programs
2. Food stamps
3. Payments received for foster care
4. Relocation assistance benefits
5. Income of live-in attendants
6. Scholarships
7. Student loans
8. Personal property such as automobiles
9. Lump-sum additions to assets such as inheritances, lottery winnings, gifts, insurance settlements
10. Part-time income of dependents enrolled as full-time students
11. Court ordered payments for alimony or child support paid to another household shall be deducted from gross annual income

To calculate income, the current gross income of the applicant is used to project that income over the next 12 months.

Student Income

Only full-time income of full-time students is included in the income calculation. A full-time student is a member of the household reported to the IRS as a dependent who is enrolled in a degree seeking program for 12 or more credit hours per semester; and part-time income is income earned on less than a 35-hour workweek.

Real Estate Asset Limit

Except for federal programs, if an applicant's primary residence, which is to be sold upon purchase of an affordable unit, has no mortgage debt and is valued at or above the regional asset limit as published annually by COAH with COAH's Annual Regional Income Limits Chart, the household must be determined ineligible for certification.

However, if the applicant's existing monthly housing costs including taxes, homeowner insurance, and condominium or homeowner association fees exceed 38 percent of the household's eligible monthly income, the household will be exempt from the asset limit.

An applicant must provide a recent, Market Value Appraisal or Realtor Comparative Market Analysis, on the home they own unless the applicant has mortgage debt on the home or can demonstrate that the existing monthly housing costs exceed 38 percent of the household's eligible monthly income, in which case the applicant is exempt from the asset limit.

Before obtaining a professional appraisal, the applicant should review the property's tax appraisal and the current market value and compare it to the asset limit to avoid any unnecessary expense. For instance, if homes are commonly selling in the applicant's neighborhood for over \$250,000, it is unlikely that an appraisal will determine a value below the asset limit. The maximum asset limit for Region 1 in 2006, for example, is \$139,396.

Income from Real Estate

If real estate owned by an applicant for affordable housing is a rental property, the rent is considered income. After deduction of any mortgage payments, real estate taxes, property owner insurance and reasonable property management expenses as reported to the Internal Revenue Service, the remaining amount shall be counted as income.

If an applicant owns real estate with mortgage debt, which is not to be used as rental housing, the Administrative Agent should determine the imputed interest from the value of the property. The Administrative Agent should deduct outstanding mortgage debt from the documented market value established by a market value appraisal. Based on current money market rates, interest will be imputed on the determined value of the real estate.

2. Records Documenting Household Composition and Circumstances

The following are various records for documenting household information:

- Social Security records or cards. Either individual Social Security card or letter from Social Security Administration
- Adoption papers, or legal documents showing adoption in process
- Income tax return
- Birth Certificate or Passport
- Alien Registration Card

3. Certify the income eligibility of low- and moderate-income households

Certify the income eligibility of low- and moderate-income households by completing the application form. Provide the household with the original and keep a copy in the project files.

Approving or Rejecting a Household

Administrative Agents must notify applicant households of their eligibility within twenty (20) days of the Administrative Agent's determination.

Households with a verified total household income that exceeds 80 percent of the regional income limit for the appropriate family size are ineligible for purchase or rental of restricted units. A letter rejecting the household's application shall be mailed to the household.

Similarly, households with a verified total household income that is within the income limits, but too low to afford any of the units administered by the Administrative Agent shall be sent a letter rejecting the household's application, and/or referring them to housing counseling.

Households with a verified total household income of less than 80 percent shall be issued a letter certifying eligibility. This certification is valid for 180 days. If the Administrative Agent is unable to place the household in a restricted unit at the conclusion of 180 days, an extension may be granted once the household's eligibility is verified.

Once the applicant is certified and matched to an available unit, the Administrative Agent must secure from the applicant a signed and notarized acknowledgement of their requirements and responsibilities in renting a restricted unit. UHAC's Appendix K shall be forwarded to the applicants.

In addition to non-eligibility based on income, the Administrative Agent may deny a certification because of the household's failure or inability to document household composition, income, assets, sufficient funds for down payment, or any other required facts and information. A household may also be denied certification if the Administrative Agent determines that there was a willful or material misstatement of fact made by the applicant.

Dismissal of Applications

Applications can be dismissed for the following reasons:

1. The application is not signed or submitted on time.
2. The applicant commits fraud, or the application is not truthful or complete.
3. The applicant cannot or does not provide documentation to verify their income or other required information when due.
4. The household income does not meet the minimum or maximum income requirements for a particular property.
5. The applicant owns assets that exceed the Asset Limit.
6. The applicant fails to respond to any inquiry in a timely manner.
7. The applicant is non-cooperative or abusive with the staff, property manager or landlord.
8. The applicant changes address or other contact information without informing the Administrative Agent in writing.

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9. The applicant does not meet the credit standard or other requirement set forth by managers of rental properties.
 10. The applicant fails to verify attendance in a credit counseling program when required to do so by the program rules.
 11. The applicant does not respond to periodic update inquiry in a timely fashion.
 12. The applicant fails to sign the Compliance Certification, Certificate for Applicant, Lease Document, as may be required.
 13. The applicant, once approved, fails to sign the lease in a timely manner.
 14. Applicants will also be removed from all lists held by the Administrative Agent once they have been approved for an affordable unit. However, these applicants may re-apply for other opportunities in that municipality once they have occupied their unit.

Applicants who are dismissed must re-apply. A minimum time period of six months applies in most situations where the applicant has been withdrawn for fraud, poor credit, uncooperative behavior or other serious matters.

Applicants are not automatically removed from rental lists if they do not respond to a Notice of Availability.

Applications may be held in abeyance for a period not to exceed 60 days if there is an error on the credit report, so that the applicant can correct the error and re-apply. Units will not be held open for that applicant. However, once the credit report is corrected, the applicant will be given a priority for the next opportunity at that property.

Appeal Process – Income Eligibility

Appeals from all decisions of an Administrative Agent shall be made in writing to the Executive Director of the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH), 101 South Broad Street, P.O. Box 813, Trenton, New Jersey 08615. The Executive Director's written decision, which shall be made within 15 days of receipt of an appeal, shall be a final administrative action of COAH.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Question: <i>Is it a requirement of UHAC that Administrative Agents meet with applicants in person?</i>

Answer: Because an applicant interview could prove to be burdensome to many households it is not a prerequisite to purchase or occupancy, although it is encouraged. Administrative Agents should be prepared to conduct the household certification via mail.

Question: *With households filing taxes through e-filing, we are having trouble getting copies of tax returns. How can we get copies of e-filed tax returns?*

Answer: According to the IRS website, transcripts of previously filed tax returns can be ordered by completing a Form 4506-T or calling (800) 829-1040 and following the prompts in the recorded message. There is no charge for the transcript and you should receive it in 10 business days from the time they receive your request. Tax return transcripts are generally available for the current and past three years.

Question: *How can child support payments that are made in cash be documented?*

Answer: If the applicant is depositing the cash child support payments into a bank account, a series of statements from that account should be used to establish a trend of payments. If not, a notarized statement from the former spouse should be obtained to document the income.

Question: *Is it a requirement that the Administrative Agent always obtain a written statement from the household's employer(s) confirming their income and job status?*

Answer: No. However, when evaluating overtime and other income trends, such as bonuses, working directly with the employer is typically much more efficient and reliable than simply evaluating pay stubs.

Question: *Are there any potential issues with renting to a separated family that has a divorce pending?*

Answer: Yes, until a divorce is finalized, a spouse can make claim on a residence rented by the other spouse. Until a divorce is finalized, it is suggested that Administrative Agents place these types of cases on hold.

Question: *How can income eligibility be established for someone that may have been out of work for two years, but had a job during the most recent tax year?*

Answer: As long as the applicant is currently employed, a series of consecutive pay stubs (at least 3

months) should be used to establish the income of an applicant in this or similar situations.

Question: *Can an applicant for a rental unit be rejected solely because they have Section 8 rental assistance?*

Answer: No. A household receiving Section 8 assistance cannot be rejected based on this status. Discrimination such as this is illegal.

Question: *Can an applicant be required to attend and graduate from a Housing Counseling Program in order to rent a restricted unit?*

Answer: No. A household is only required to attend housing counseling if their monthly housing expense exceeds UHAC standards. Administrative Agents, however, are required to provide housing counseling or refer applicants to an approved Housing Counseling Program.

Question: *Do households with Section 8 vouchers automatically qualify for affordable housing under UHAC?*

Answer: Yes, a Section 8 voucher is acceptable for income qualification, provided the applicant meets the criteria of the property manager or landlord. The Administrative Agent must still collect income verification documentation to match the household to an appropriately priced unit.

Question: *Can an existing moderate-income tenant be moved to a low-income unit when they can substantiate that there has been a change in their income? If so, can they bypass the random selection process?*

Answer: Yes, an existing tenant household may re-apply for a low-income unit within the same project if they can prove a change in their circumstances. If qualified, the tenant would be added to the applicant pool. The tenant should also be referred to the local Affordability Assistance Program, if available.

Question: *Does the Administrative Agent need to impute the value of a household's stocks as an asset?*

Answer: Only dividends from stock count towards a household's income. IRS Form-1099 from the previous year should be requested from the applicant if it was not part of their initial application.

Question: *Is there a maximum cost for the credit check?*

Answer: No, but the credit check is included in application fees which may total no more than five percent of the monthly rent.

Question: *In order to overcome inadequate or poor credit, can an applicant have a cosigner on a lease?*

Answer: No one outside the household, as certified by the Administrative Agent, may cosign or otherwise be party to any financing or legal instruments.

Question: *Does UHAC set a minimum income for eligibility for affordable housing?*

Answer: No, UHAC does not specify a minimum income for affordable housing units. However, an applicant household must be able to afford the unit and must not pay more than 33 percent for sale units or 35 percent for rental units of its monthly income (or 40 percent for age-restricted units), unless they meet the exemption criteria set forth in N.J.A.C. 5:80-26.7(b) or N.J.A.C. 5:80-26.13(b).

Question: *After I certify an applicant, how long is that certification valid?*

Answer: Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 5:80-26.16(b), an initial certification is valid for 180 days and may be extended for an additional 180 days once the household's eligibility is verified.

Question: *How do I document third-party assistance from a guarantor? For example, a relative is providing funds toward the applicant's monthly payments.*

Answer: In the case of a rental unit, the applicant should demonstrate regular deposits from third party assistance, or a notarized letter from the third party documenting future assistance. The Administrative Agent must receive a copy of the policy regarding guarantors from the developer, affordable housing provider or owner, so as to assure the policy is applied consistently.

Question: *If an applicant for affordable housing has a "reverse mortgage", how does an Administrative Agent count income from that mortgage?*

Answer: An applicant for affordable housing with a "reverse mortgage" would not be eligible for affordable housing unless that mortgage was satisfied or, at a minimum, a contract for sale of the market

unit was in place. "Reverse mortgages" require that the mortgaged property remain the principal place of residence of the person taking the mortgage. Since this is also a requirement of affordable housing only one such residence can be owned or leased at any given time.

Question: *For the purpose of income-qualification, what is considered part-time income of full-time students?*

Answer: Under UHAC, part-time income of persons enrolled as fulltime students, who are reported as dependents to the IRS, is not included in income calculations for determining eligibility. COAH recommends stipulating in the Operating Manual the following criteria in applying this rule:

- A full-time student is a member of the household who is enrolled in a degree seeking program for 12 or more credit hours per semester; and
- Part-time income is income earned on less than a 35-hour workweek.

Please note that full-time income of full-time students is included in the income calculation.

Determining Affordable Rents

To determine the initial rents the Administrative Agent uses the COAH calculators located at <http://www.nj.gov/dca/affiliates/coah/resources.calculators.html>.

Pricing by Household Size. Initial rents are based on targeted "model" household sizes for each size home as determined by the number of bedrooms. Initial rents must adhere to the following rules. These maximum sales prices and rents are based on COAH's Annual Regional Income Limits Chart at the time of occupancy:

- A studio shall be affordable to a one-person household;
- A one-bedroom unit shall be affordable to a one- and one-half person household;
- A two-bedroom unit shall be affordable to a three-person household;
- A three-bedroom unit shall be affordable to a four- and one-half person household; and
- A four-bedroom unit shall be affordable to a six-person household.

Size of Unit	Household Size Used to Determine Max Rent
Studio/Efficiency	1
1 Bedroom	1.5
2 Bedrooms	3
3 Bedrooms	4.5
4 Bedrooms	6

The above rules are only to be used for setting initial rents. They are not guidelines for matching household sizes with unit sizes. The pricing of age-restricted units may not exceed affordability based on a two-person household.

Split Between Low- and Moderate-income Rental Units. *At least 50 percent (of the affordable units within each bedroom distribution (unit size) must be low-income units and at least 10 percent of the affordable units within each bedroom distribution must be affordable to households earning no more than 35 percent of the regional median income. The remainder of the affordable units must be affordable to moderate-income households.*

Affordability Average. The average rent for all affordable units cannot exceed 52 percent of the regional median income. At least one rent for each bedroom type must be offered for both low-income and moderate-income units. Calculation of the affordability average is available on COAH's website.

Maximum Rent. The maximum rent of restricted rental units within each affordable development shall be affordable to households earning no more than 60 percent of the regional median income.

Determining Rent Increases

Annual rent increases are permitted in affordable units. Rent increases are permitted at the anniversary of tenancy according to COAH's Annual Regional Income Limits Chart, available on COAH's website. These increases must be filed with and approved by the Administrative Agent. Property managers or landlords who have charged less than the permissible increase may use the maximum allowable rent with the next tenant with permission of the Administrative Agent. The maximum allowable rent would be calculated by starting with the rent schedule approved as part of initial lease-up of the development, and calculating the annual COAH-approved increase from the initial lease-up year to the present. Rents may not be increased more than once a year, may not be increased by more than one COAH-approved increment at a time, and may not be increased at the time of new occupancy if this occurs less than one year from the

last rental. No additional fees may be added to the approved rent without the express written approval of the Administrative Agent.

