

Tenant Relations in Your Community

Tenant Selection



TENANT SELECTION POLICY

Some Tips and Guidelines

Tenant selection is a housing manager's first step to creating a professional relationship with residents.

Having a fair tenant selection process that is clear, well documented and available to all members will help avoid misunderstandings about how housing is allocated in a community. While each First Nation will have its own way of selecting tenants and assigning them housing, below are some key elements to include as part of a selection policy:

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Application forms

It is good practice to have each adult who will occupy the unit, including those in a common-law arrangement, complete, sign and date an application form. If their application is approved, each adult should sign or be named on the lease or other required documents.



Application assessment criteria

The housing department must determine the criteria to be used for assessing applications. Criteria used to select tenants could include the following:

- Family size and composition (single-parent family, elders, etc.)
- Household income levels
- Length of time on housing waiting list
- Current housing suitability and adequacy (Is the applicants' current housing situation crowded? Is their unit in need of major repairs?)
- Housing track record (history of regular payments, proper maintenance)
- Ability and willingness to pay housing charges and contribute to maintenance
- Prior attendance at housing workshops or willingness to attend them
- Personal references
- Credit history

Points allocation process

Applications can be assessed using a point system based on clearly defined needs.

Waiting list

A system for receiving applications and managing the waiting list for housing should be set up.

THE ABILITY TO PAY RENT

Income verification

A process for assessing the financial situation of applicants in order to determine total household income and calculate rent based on income will be required.

Social assistance

A process that enables First Nation members on social assistance to authorize monthly direct payments to the housing department can be established.

Rent collection

As poor tenant selection is the largest contributing factor to rental arrears, a selection policy should include a process to ensure rent collection; otherwise, the housing department could be forced to assume enormous costs and great effort to collect rents that are owed.

INFORMING APPLICANTS WHO HAVE NOT BEEN SELECTED

Rejecting an application

Without a clear selection process and policy in place, the housing manager and other staff may be required to spend a considerable amount of time explaining and justifying decisions to reject applications from prospective tenants.

It is important to keep the following things in mind in order to help prevent misunderstandings:

- Before informing applicants that their application has been rejected, the housing manager must be sure that all facts have been considered.
- Applicants should be informed of the reason(s) why their application was rejected. Simply telling applicants that “you do not meet the requirements” may leave their questions unanswered, and they will want to pursue the issue further.
- All rejected applications should be kept on file for at least three months, for future reference, if required.

In some cases, a person who is rejected for housing may contact the Chief and Council or representatives of the housing organization to request reconsideration of the application or to force the decision to be overturned at

the political level. If decisions are frequently overturned in that way, it will be difficult to maintain the selection process in the future. It is therefore important to work with the chief and council to ensure they understand and support a formal selection process. It is also necessary to have a clear and transparent process for appeals, should an applicant decide to appeal a selection decision.

For more information on this and other housing management topics, be sure to contact your CMHC Specialist.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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