

Exhibit 11-7

Empowering Choice Housing Program

AHFC has partnered with the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA) and the State of Alaska Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA) to provide transitional tenant-based rental assistance to victims of domestic violence¹. AHFC shall administer Empowering Choice Housing Program (ECHP) vouchers in accordance with the AHFC Housing Choice Voucher Administrative Plan with any exceptions noted below.

1. Overview

ECHP was approved by AHFC's Board of Directors with Board Resolution 2012-29. The use of Moving to Work funding and exceptions to Housing Choice Voucher regulations at 24 CFR 982 were approved with MTW Activity 2013-2 on October 9, 2012.

1.A ECHP is Time-Limited

Each family is eligible for 36 months of rental assistance or up to the effective date of the third annual anniversary, whichever is first. An ECHP family's rental assistance clock begins with their initial leasing. The time limit will not stop should the assistance be interrupted while a family chooses to shop for a different rental unit.

At the end of the rental assistance period, families may choose to continue their rental relationship with a landlord with a standard lease agreement.

1.A.1. ECHP Term

Changes in family composition (additions or deletions) have no effect on a family's term. When adult household members are added, the new adult household member's participation will end on the same schedule established at the family's initial participation even if all of the original adult household members leave the family.

1.A.2. Less Than 12 Months of Assistance

For families with less than 12 months of assistance that wish to move to a new unit, see section How Many Moves in the Leasing chapter.

1.B Administration

The AHFC case manager will administer ECHP vouchers under the same rules as a Housing Choice Voucher except as described in the sections below. In general,

¹ Throughout this exhibit "victim of domestic violence" will conform to the current definition in Exhibit 1-7. This includes a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and sexual assault.

1. ECHP vouchers are reissued to ANDVSA referrals only.
2. An ECHP family may transfer to another AHFC voucher area by following AHFC's current In-State Move policy in Chapter 6.
3. ECHP vouchers are not eligible for portability out of the state of Alaska.
4. Because AHFC is using Moving to Work funds as a funding source for ECHP vouchers, ECHP vouchers will be reported to HUD. This means AHFC will follow EIV requirements.

1.C ECHP Program Locations

ECHP assistance is available in all AHFC voucher communities. In the communities of Bethel, Cordova, and Nome where no voucher program is available, AHFC will give housing priority to families referred by ANDVSA member agencies.

1.D Confidentiality of Records

All information provided to AHFC regarding the fact that an individual is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking shall be retained in confidence by AHFC and shall not be entered into any shared database, provided to any owner or manager of the leased property, or provided to any other third party. DVSA programs will not release any confidential information regarding the basis for a referral to AHFC, or any other third party, and AHFC will not ask for that information.

Because referral families qualify as persons displaced due to domestic violence, AHFC will ensure that all protections afforded to these persons under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) are afforded to the applicant or participant (see Exhibit 1-7).

2. ANDVSA Member Agencies

AHFC will honor referrals submitted by member agencies in the local AHFC community. Member agencies will not submit referrals for other communities. See the Administrative Desk Manual for a list of ANDVSA member agencies.

2.A Allocation

Voucher allocation will be reviewed and considered for reallocation annually in consultation with all parties to the Memorandum of Understanding.

3. Initial Referral

AHFC will match the referral type to the appropriate action below.

3.A Anchorage Vouchers

Because there are two member agencies in Anchorage, Anchorage will operate an ECHP waiting list. In order to be eligible for the Anchorage ECHP waiting list, a referral family must submit an ECHP application and the ECHP Referral Anchorage.

1. There is no expiration date on ECHP Referrals for the Anchorage ECHP waiting list.
2. As with other open waiting lists, AHFC may choose to update this list periodically in order to maintain accurate contact information for applicants.

3.B Balance of State Vouchers

ANDVSA member agencies not in Anchorage will maintain a local ECHP waiting list. In order to be eligible for the ECHP waiting list, a referral family must submit an ECHP application and the ECHP Referral Balance of State.

1. The local ANDVSA program office will place the applicant on the program's ECHP date/time list.
2. There is no expiration date on ECHP Referrals.
3. Each ANDVSA office will monitor and maintain its own date/time list.

3.C Bethel, Cordova, and Nome Public Housing

AHFC offers preferential placement on its public housing waiting lists for displaced victims of domestic violence in the communities of Bethel, Cordova, and Nome. In order to be eligible for an open waiting list, a referral family must submit an ECHP application and the ECHP Referral Bethel, Cordova, and Nome.

4. Working Waiting Lists

If an ECHP voucher becomes available, AHFC will allow an ECHP family ten (10) calendar days to respond.

4.A Family Failure to Respond to Interview Notification

AHFC will withdraw families that fail to respond to AHFC correspondence within the deadline listed in the letter.

4.B Family Ineligible for Assistance

If a family is determined ineligible for an ECHP voucher, AHFC will use the Ineligibility Notice to notify the family. AHFC will include the Applicant Informal Review with the letter.

5. Briefing the Family

Each AHFC office may determine if it is more efficient to brief families individually or as a group; however, AHFC will not delay issuance of vouchers to qualified families more than seven (7) calendar days after the eligibility determination.

5.A Voucher Extensions

ECHP participants have the same shopping guidelines as HCV participants.

5.B Voucher Expiration

If a family does not extend a voucher or submit leasing paperwork timely, AHFC will withdraw the ECHP Voucher. AHFC will send the Voucher Expiration Notice to notify the family.

6. In-State Moves and Ports

A family that wishes to move must first make a written request for approval to AHFC before moving. Families are eligible to move (to a new unit or another jurisdiction) as long as they have a minimum of 12 months of housing assistance remaining. With AHFC advance approval, ECHP families may move their ECHP vouchers to any AHFC voucher location.

ECHP families are not eligible to port their voucher outside Alaska.

6.A ECHP Vouchers Tied to Referral City

If an ECHP family moves their voucher to another AHFC city, the voucher remains tied to the original referring city.

6.B New Admissions and Residency Requirement

For applicants or participant families that request to move their ECHP voucher to another community at the time of initial admittance, AHFC will waive the residency requirement.

7. Anniversary

ECHP participants required to certify continuing eligibility annually.

7.A Enterprise Income Verification (EIV)

ECHP clients are reported to HUD on a 50058. These clients are subject to the annual requirement to pull an EIV report.

7.B Examination Notices

ECHP families have their own Family Examination First Notice. This first letter informs the family of their annual examination requirement as well as detailing the timeline for remaining rental assistance.

If an ECHP family does not respond to the first notice, AHFC will use the voucher standard second and final notices. See Chapter 4 for notice timing and deadlines.

7.C HQS Inspection

AHFC will follow existing HCV inspection protocols in Chapter 7 for scheduling and conducting the HQS inspection.

8. Hardship Policy

ECHP families may request to participate in the Minimum Rent Exemption or Bridge Process.

9. Terminations

AHFC will use standard HCV forms for termination actions. AHFC will follow existing policies in Chapter 9 when determining whether to grant an Informal Hearing for ECHP participants or an Informal Review for applicants.

10. Archiving

AHFC will follow archiving procedures for HCV when archiving ECHP files. This includes ineligible and withdrawn applicant files.

Numbered Memo

19-03 Rent Reform Policy Updates