

# **Memorandum of Understanding**

**Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC)**

**and**

**Alaska Network on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault (ANDVSA)**

**and**

**State of Alaska Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA)**



# Empowering Choice Housing Program

Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC), the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA), and the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA) agree to enter this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) whereby AHFC will provide transitional tenant-based rental assistance to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

AHFC shall administer Empowering Choice Housing Program (ECHP) vouchers in accordance with Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCV) tenant-based rental assistance regulations set forth at 24 CFR 982 with specific waivers for program eligibility as outlined in this MOU and the AHFC Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCV) Administrative Plan.

On August 29, 2012, the AHFC Board of Directors reviewed and unanimously approved the ECHP by Board Resolution 2012-29. After AHFC Board approval, AHFC requested HUD MTW office approval of the ECHP and required waivers. HUD MTW office approval was received by AHFC on October 9, 2012.

The Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA), whose primary mission is to represent victim services programs throughout the state who provide services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, shall assist those programs in providing referrals for program participants based on their expertise to determine displacement due to domestic violence or sexual assault.

A primary duty of the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA) is to implement, maintain, and monitor DVSA crisis intervention and prevention programs in consultation with authorities in the field. CDVSA approved programs shall provide referrals of program participants to AHFC (DVSA Programs).

## I. General Provisions

The Empowering Choice Housing Program (ECHP) is a referral-based transitional housing assistance program designed to meet the housing needs of victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Continuing operation of the ECHP is contingent upon available funding and continuing appropriations. The following general provisions apply to all ECHP participants.

### A. Screening

AHFC will follow its screening criteria as presented in Chapter 2 of the AHFC Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan and Chapter 2 of the Public Housing Admissions and Occupancy Policy.



## **B. 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.

Vouchers issued to ECHP referrals will not have any information identifying the applicant as a participant in the ECHP or as a victim of domestic violence or sexual assault. To do so would breach applicants' rights to privacy and confidentiality.

## **C. Fund Administration**

ECHP vouchers are funded by a State of Alaska appropriation and a set aside from AHFC's Moving To Work Block Grant. Both funding sources include monies for the housing assistance payments and the administrative fees to cover the costs of the program. ECHP Public Housing assistance is funded through the Asset Management operating budget. AHFC shall administer funding from these sources consistent with its Housing Choice Voucher Program and Public Housing Assistance Program rules.

## **D. Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Protections**

Applicants will be afforded the protections specified under the VAWA. Each lease issued under this program will contain an addendum outlining tenant rights under the VAWA. In addition to rights contained in VAWA, all other tenant rights applicable under state, federal, and local laws and AHFC's HCV Administrative Plan and Public Housing Admissions and Occupancy Policy shall apply.

## **E. Conflict with Housing Choice Voucher Administrative Plan and Public Housing Admissions and Occupancy Policy**

In case of any conflict, silence, or ambiguity between this MOU and the AHFC HCV Administrative Plan and the Public Housing Admissions and Occupancy Policy, the requirements of the AHFC HCV Administrative Plan and the Public Housing Admissions and Occupancy Policy shall control.

## **F. Time-Limited Assistance**

The ECHP is designed to help individuals and families transition into housing from displacement due to domestic violence and sexual assault. Unlike AHFC's Housing Choice Voucher Program, the ECHP is time-limited. Each participant is eligible for 36 months of rental assistance. At the end of this period, the participant may choose to continue their rental relationship with the landlord under a standard lease agreement.



ECHP participants in the Public Housing Program are not subject to the 36-month time limit on rental assistance. Participation in the Public Housing Program will be guided by AHFC's Public Housing Program Admissions and Occupancy Policy.

## **II. Program Operations**

There are two distinct components to the ECHP, a voucher program and a public housing program. Details for each are provided below.

### **A. ECHP Voucher Assistance**

ECHP voucher assistance is available in the twelve communities where AHFC currently offers a housing choice voucher program. The ECHP voucher assistance program has been divided into two components, a Balance of State Program and an Anchorage Program.

#### **1. In-State Moves**

An ECHP voucher may be moved from one AHFC HCV jurisdiction to another AHFC HCV jurisdiction within Alaska with the prior approval of AHFC. ECHP vouchers are not eligible for portability out of the state of Alaska (see AHFC's Administrative Plan, Chapter 10, Portability and In-State Moves).

For participants that request to move their ECHP voucher to another community at the time of initial admittance, AHFC will waive the residency requirement. In order to request an in-state move, participants need to have a minimum of 12 months of assistance remaining.

#### **2. Shopping Time and Extensions**

An ECHP voucher participant must lease up within 60 days. Two 30 day extensions may be granted by AHFC subject to progress reports verifying unit shopping efforts. Persons with disabilities requiring the full 120-day shopping time may request a reasonable accommodation.

#### **3. Concurrent Waiting Lists**

ECHP applicants may apply for other open AHFC rental assistance programs that are not time-limited such as the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) or Public Housing (PH) programs while participating in the ECHP program. All applicants for the AHFC's HCV or PH programs are placed on waiting lists according to AHFC's policy at the time of application.

### **B. Balance of State Voucher Program**

The following communities will offer the ECHP under the Balance of State Program.

City	City
Fairbanks	Petersburg
Homer	Sitka



City	City
Juneau	Soldotna
Ketchikan	Valdez
Kodiak	Wrangell
Mat-Su	

Referrals are accepted by AHFC from the following DVSA Programs only:

City	Approved Referral Source
Fairbanks	Interior Alaska Center for Non-Violence Living (IAC)
Homer	South Peninsula Haven House (SPHH)
Juneau	Aiding Women in Abuse & Rape Emergencies (AWARE)
Ketchikan	Women In Safe Homes (WISH)
Kodiak	Kodiak Women's Resource and Crisis Center (KWRCC)
Mat-Su	Alaska Family Services (AFS)
Petersburg	Working Against Violence for Everyone (WAVE)
Sitka	Sitkans Against Family Violence (SAFV)
Soldotna	The LeeShore Center
Valdez	Advocates for Victims of Violence (AVV)
Wrangell	Women In Safe Homes (WISH)

### 1. Referral Process

Applicants will be directed to go to the local AHFC office to obtain a date/time stamp on their Referral and to apply for any open rental assistance waiting lists. The AHFC office will date/time stamp the application and Referral form, process the applicant's assistance application, and fax or scan a copy of the date/time stamp Referral confirmation to the local DVSA Program.

The local DVSA Program will place the applicant on the program's ECHP date/time list. There is no expiration date on ECHP Referrals for Balance of State. Each DVSA Program will monitor and maintain its own date/time list.

When a voucher becomes available, the AHFC office will contact the local DVSA Program. The local DVSA Program will provide the name of the next program applicant on the date/time list. AHFC will contact the applicant and proceed with an eligibility interview and screening. If the referred program applicant fails to respond to a request for an eligibility interview within ten (10) business days, AHFC will withdraw that applicant. The local AFHC office will contact the DVSA Program for referral of the next program applicant on the date/time list.

### 2. Reinstated Applications

If an applicant appeals his/her withdrawn application and is reinstated by AHFC, AHFC will be responsible for notifying the local DVSA program so the applicant can be reinstated on the DVSA's ECHP date/time list.



### C. Anchorage

The ECHP Anchorage program includes AHFC operation of a waiting list. Referrals are accepted by AHFC from the following DVSA Programs only:

City	Approved Referral Source
Anchorage	Abused Women's Aid in Crisis (AWAIC)
Anchorage	Standing Together Against Rape (STAR)

#### 1. Referral Process

Applicants will be directed to go to the local AHFC office to obtain a date/time stamp on their Referral and to apply for any open rental assistance waiting lists. The AHFC office will date/time stamp the application and Referral form, process the applicant's assistance application, and place the applicant on the ECHP waiting list.

There is no expiration date on ECHP Referrals for the Anchorage ECHP waiting list. AHFC may choose to update this list periodically in order to maintain accurate contact information for applicants.

When a voucher becomes available, the AHFC office will contact the first applicant on the ECHP waiting list and proceed with an eligibility interview and screening. If the applicant fails to respond to a request for an eligibility interview within ten (10) business days, AHFC will withdraw that applicant. AHFC will then contact the next applicant on the ECHP waiting list.

#### 2. Reinstated Applications

If an applicant appeals his/her withdrawn application and is reinstated by AHFC, AHFC will reinstate the applicant's application with its original date and time on the ECHP date/time list.

### D. Public Housing Assistance

AHFC will offer preferential placement on their public housing waiting lists for displaced victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in the communities of Bethel, Cordova and Nome which have no voucher program. ECHP public housing preferential placement is provided to applicants referred through use of a standardized referral form by the following DVSA Programs only:

City	Approved Referral Source
Bethel	Tundra Women's Coalition
Cordova	Cordova Family Resource Center
Nome	Bering Sea Women's Group

#### 1. Referral Process

Applicants will be directed to go to the local AHFC office to obtain a date/time stamp on their Referral. The local AHFC office will date/time stamp the application and Referral form, process the applicant's assistance application, and place the applicant



on the public housing waiting list with a preference for displacement due to domestic violence or sexual assault.

ECHP Referrals for public housing are valid for one year. If an applicant remains on the waiting list for a period of time exceeding one year without receiving an offer of assistance, the applicant must obtain an updated Referral form from the local DVSA Program which can be forwarded, upon request of the applicant, by fax or mail to the local AHFC office.

## **2. No Time Limit on Assistance**

ECHP participants in the Public Housing Program are not subject to the 36-month time limit on rental assistance. Participation in the Public Housing Program will be guided by AHFC's Public Housing Program Admissions and Occupancy Policy.

### **III. Monitoring Data**

In order to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the program, the following data will be provided upon request. Data collected by AHFC or provided to third parties must be in aggregate form with no personally identifying information provided to preserve victim privacy and confidentiality. Data to be monitored includes, but is not limited to:

1. Number of vouchers issued in each participating community
2. Number of vouchers in shopping status
3. Average number of shopping days
4. Number of vouchers leased
5. Number of vouchers returned or not utilized during the period
6. Number of available vouchers in each participating community
7. Average housing assistance payments for each participating community

### **IV. Geographic Allocation of Vouchers**

Initial baseline and target goal allocation of vouchers, by community, is provided in Exhibit A and is hereby incorporated into this MOU.



**V. Signatures**

All parties agree to and will abide by the provisions stated above.

**Alaska Network on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault**

 10/23/12  
Representative Signature Date

PEGGY BROWN  
Printed Name

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
Title

**State of Alaska Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault**

 10/24/12  
Representative Signature Date

Laurie Morton  
Printed Name

Executive Director  
Title

**Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC)**

 10/31/2012  
Representative Signature Date

Catherine M. Stone  
Printed Name

Director, Public Housing  
Title





## Exhibit A

ECHP vouchers are initially allocated for the first year as follows:

City	Population	Percentage	Baseline	Target
Anchorage	295,570	46.72%	95	115
Fairbanks (North Star Borough)	99,192	15.68%	35	40
Homer	5,003	0.79%	5	5
Juneau (City and Borough)	32,164	5.08%	10	15
Ketchikan (Ketchikan Gateway Borough)	13,593	2.15%	5	5
Kodiak (Kodiak Island Borough)	13,872	2.19%	5	5
Matanuska-Susitna Borough	91,946	14.54%	25	30
Petersburg (Census Area)	3,838	0.61%	2	2
Sitka (City and Borough)	8,952	1.42%	5	5
Soldotna (Kenai Peninsula Borough)	56,293	8.90%	20	25
Valdez (Valdez/Cordova Census Area)	9,770	1.54%	5	5
Wrangell	2,382	0.38%	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>632,575</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>254</b>

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

