Riverside County Housing Authority

Background

The Riverside County Housing Authority (RCHA) was established in 1942 under the Housing Act of 1937 and the State of California Housing Authority Law of 1938 to administer both federal and state housing programs. The governing body is the County Board of Supervisors, serving as the board of commissioners, and is assisted by a ten-member advisory commission.

The RCHA is a nonprofit agency, chartered by the State of California to administer the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) affordable housing programs in Riverside County. This is accomplished by a variety of programs administered by the agency, and wholly or partially funded by state and federal grants.

Through the HUD-funded Section 8 programs, the RCHA utilizes existing rental housing to assist low income families, elderly and disabled persons with their monthly rent payments. In this program there are two sections, Certificates and Vouchers. In both programs, the property owner is responsible for tenant selection, rent collection and maintenance of the unit.

Under the Certificate Program, landlords may not charge rents in excess of HUD defined "fair market" rent ceilings. The RCHA certifies tenant eligibility and administers the HUD subsidy funds to assist renters in paying the difference between 30 percent of their household income and rent amount.

In the Voucher Program, there are no regulated limits on the rent an owner can charge, only on what the RCHA can pay which is the difference between 30 percent of the family's adjusted income and a set payment standard. If the family elects to rent a dwelling that exceeds the payment standard, the family may do so, but assumes payment of the difference between the payment standard and the negotiated rent that is in addition to the 30 percent adjusted family income payment.

Under the Section 8 Aftercare Program, local housing authorities administer a program that provides rentalassistance to physically disabled, mentally disordered and developmentally disabled persons. The RCHA makes a rent payment to the landlord that is the difference between the total rent and the tenant's portion as determined by the normal Section 8 certification process.

The RCHA also owns and maintains HUD affordable public housing throughout the county. At present, there are 491 units in addition to 100 units for migrant workers in the Ripley area. The RCHA is the sole maintenance and managing entity for this program.

Findings

1.At present, the waiting list has more than 20,000 applicants. The RCHA processes approximately 1,000 from that list each month. This results in applicants waiting an inordinate amount of time before they are allowed to fill out an application for rental assistance.

2.The Housing Assistance Eligibility Booklet must be completed by applicants who must sign and date each form in the booklet, whether or not it applies to their application.

The booklet is repetitive and demands multiple signatures of applicants and family members (eighteen years of age and over). In addition, the terminology contained in the booklet is beyond the comprehension of some applicants.

3.Unauthorized access can easily be gained through locked gates at public housing complexes by selecting tenants at random through the interphone system.

Recommendations

The Housing Authority Director:

1.Revise the initial waiting list application form to include specific conditions that could make applicants ineligible for housing assistance, such as

criminal history, illegal drugs, domestic violence, alcohol, past housing problems and lack of proof of U.S. citizenship.

2.Simplify the forms in the booklet and eliminate duplication. Reduce attestations by applicants and family members to one signature as required on the final page of the booklet. Reword the terminology so that it can be more easily understood by applicants.

3.Assure that security is enforced by the resident manager with positive identification required for all visitors. Post signs with entry and exit information applicable to tenants as well as visitors.