

Homelessness Preference – Housing Choice Voucher Program

MDOC has received a request to consider adding a preference to the Section 8 waitlist for families or individuals that are homeless. Essentially this would mean that any family/individual that declares a preference of homelessness, would be allowed to receive a housing choice voucher ahead of others on the waitlist regardless of the date and time of application (date/time is the method that is currently being used to offer vouchers to eligible applicants).

Currently, MDOC provides rental assistance for homeless individuals through Shelter Plus Care and VASH (Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing) Programs. Under these programs, applicants are referred to MDOC by case managers from resource programs outside of Montana Department of Commerce after eligibility is determined through application of complex regulatory requirements and definitions.

MDOC would need to develop a comprehensive program from application stage to participant stage for administering a homelessness preference program. Input from community-wide entities would also need to be solicited to ensure program requirements take into consideration the needs of the homeless population. Linkages and partnerships with social service agencies need to be formed and exercised in order to properly certify homeless individuals/families, and to assist these homeless individuals/families as they apply for housing, interact with landlords, complete required Section 8 documents and certifications, and successfully live in subsidized housing.

Additionally, a full analysis of the current software system would need to be performed to determine whether the system has the capabilities necessary to administer the program. Finally, training of MDOC staff and field agents would also need to be accomplished prior to program implementation. Based on the complexities of developing this program, MDOC anticipates the process will likely take several months to a year to develop. MDOC will continue to administer the current homeless programs.

During the upcoming PHA year, MDOC will consider, on a test basis, designing and implementing procedures to preference S+C participants so that they can seamlessly transition as “successful graduates” from S+C housing subsidy to the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program subsidy.

MDOC invites comments on these topics.