Commonwealth of Massachusetts
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF
HOUSING & LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

Maura T. Healey, Governor ◆ Kimberley Driscoll, Lieutenant Governor ◆ Edward M. Augustus Jr., Secretary

PHN 2023-08
AHVP Program Notice 2023-03

To: Local Housing Authorities (LHAs)

From: Ben Stone, Director, Division of Public Housing & Acting Director, Division of Rental Assistance

Re: Centralizing Screening Determinations for Priority & Preference in AHVP Program

Date: June 28, 2023

NEED TO KNOW

1. Centralizing priority screening and determinations for all AHVP applicants will begin on July 13, 2023.
2. Priority determination for AHVP applicants will apply to ALL their housing selections, including public housing waitlists.
3. LHA and Centralized Screener responsibilities.
4. Training on centralized screening guidance is available June – August.

EOHLC previously announced that it would move to a centralized priority/preference screening model for tenant selection in CHAMP. In this model, one centralized screening agent will make **all** determinations on priority/preference claims for all applicants claiming Priority 1-5 or Veterans Preference. These determinations will be made centrally on behalf of all administering agencies, with each applicant receiving one determination applying to all waitlists. Administering agencies will continue to review and make determinations on Local Preference for Priority 6 (Transfer for Good Cause) and 7 (Standard) applicants. The attached regulatory waiver provides for these changes.

EOHLC selected Archipelago Strategies Group (ASG) as the Centralized Screener. ASG will be making determinations for applicant priority and preference claims in CHAMP. They will begin their work on July 13, 2023 for Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP) applicants only.

If an AHVP applicant has also applied to public housing, ASG's determination will also apply to their priority and preference claims for public housing. AHVP applicants will only appear on

LHA waitlists with **verified** claims; they will have Priority 7 (Standard) status until ASG determines they made a valid priority claim. NOTE – If applicants have already-verified claims at certain LHAs, they will maintain those claims; ASG will not overturn determinations made **prior** to implementation of centralized screening.

ASG's priority and preference determinations will be the **official and final determinations in CHAMP** (see attached regulation waiver). LHAs may NOT overturn ASG's determination. LHAs will only make Local Preference determinations if the applicant does not claim any priority or Veteran's Preference. Applicants may still request a private conference with ASG and appeal to EOHLC following a negative private conference determination.

ASG will use EOHLC guidance on priority verification following 760 CMR 5.00. Please attend the EOHLC Monthly Presentation on Wednesday, July 19 at 10:00 am (details at the end of this notice) to learn about the EOHLC priority standards and the centralized screening process.

EOHLC will add the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) into CHAMP in September 2023. ASG will begin making priority and preference determinations for **all public housing and MRVP applicants** immediately upon MRVP's launch.

LHAs continue to be responsible for:

- Mailing Vacancy Screening Packages for eligibility and qualification;
- Determining applicants' program eligibility and qualification;
- Determining applicants' Local Preference if no other priority or preference is claimed;
- Determining Priority 6 (Transfer for Good Cause) for applicants;
- Entering any paper applications received into CHAMP in a timely manner;
- Helping applicants with their CHAMP application, either via CHAMP or otherwise;
- Uploading any priority and preference documents received into CHAMP;
- Answering applicant questions about programs; and
- Holding private conferences for negative eligibility and qualification determinations.

ASG will be responsible for:

- Sending out priority and preference verification requests to applicants claiming Priority 1-5 and to all applicants claiming Veterans Preference;
- Receiving priority and preference verification documents from applicants;
- Following up with applicants to gather all necessary priority/preference documentation;
- Uploading any priority/preference verification documents received into CHAMP;
- Determining priority and preference;
- Sending notice to applicants of priority/preference determinations; and
- Holding private conferences for negative priority determinations.

Important Action Items for AHVP Issuing Agencies:

- Don't pull any AHVP lists in CHAMP from July 1, 2023 through August 13, 2023.
- Finish up verification of priority and preferences for any lists pulled through June 30, 2023 for AHVP in CHAMP by July 13, 2023.

As of July 13, 2023, ASG will begin working on the AHVP backlog of unverified priority and preference claims. AHVP Issuing Agencies may begin pulling AHVP lists in CHAMP as of August 14, 2023; the pause is necessary to give ASG time to verify priority and preference claims before AHVP Issuing Agencies begin pulling lists to determine qualifications.

ASG Contact Information for Housing Authorities:

- LHA Email: HACSquestions@discoverasg.com
- LHA Inbound Line: (978) 955-7009

ASG Contact Information for Applicants

- Applicant Email: CSquestions@discoverasg.com
- Applicants Inbound line: (978) 935-4900

Any questions regarding this PHN should be directed to Andy Clinton (andrew.clinton@mass.gov) and/or George King (george.king@mass.gov).

Attachment A: Cybersense Training Notice
Attachment B: Regulatory Waiver

EOHLC Monthly Presentation on Wednesday, July 19 at 10:00 am information

Join on your computer, mobile app or room device

Click here to join the meeting

Meeting ID: 242 709 553 708
Passcode: 4NDPKt

Download Teams | Join on the web

Or call in (audio only)

+1 857-327-9245,,266757528# United States, Boston

Phone Conference ID: 266 757 528#

Find a local number | Reset PIN

Hi everyone -

Please join us for an overview of the new Centralized Priority / Preference Functionality in CHAMP. The classes are scheduled for 1.5 hours, however they will very likely last less than one hour. Only one classes is needed, however you may certainly attend more than once. We will be covering:

1. Archipelago Strategies Group (ASG) role in Tenant Selection
    a. ASG determinations are final
    b. Phone #'s to Call: Applicants and LHAs will have a specific phone # to call ASG with questions
2. Visual Changes to the List Pull
    a. Lists ranked by **granted** priority, not *claimed* priority
3. LHAs will no longer send Priority/Preference Letters
    a. Fewer letters, Updates to Vacancy Screening packages
4. New Screening Workflow for LHAs to confirm Granted Priorities prior to offer

Name of Class: Centralized Priority / Preference Screening

June classes:	**Time:**
Thu, June 29	2:00 – 3:30
Fri, Jun 30	9:00 – 10:30
July classes:	**Time:**
Tue, Jul 11	2:00 – 3:30
Thu, Jul 13	9:00 – 10:30
Mon, Jul 17	2:00 – 3:30
Wed, Jul 19	9:00 – 10:30
Tue, Jul 25	2:00 – 3:30
Wed, Jul 26	9:00 – 10:30
August classes:	**Time:**
Wed, Aug 2	2:00 – 3:30
Thu, Aug 3	9:00 – 10:30
Tue, Aug 8	2:00 – 3:30
Thu, Aug 10	9:00 – 10:30

Connection Links: **For All of the above Sessions**

CHAMP Classes (KA GTM acct)

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.
https://meet.goto.com/719616341
You can also dial in using your phone. +1 (571) 317-3129
Access Code: 719-616-341

Sincerely,

~~Your CHAMP Training Team