



HUD Issues Initial Section 8 Salvo

HUD tells public housing authorities and other Section 8 housing voucher administrators the department will cut subsidies that support administration of the vouchers by 26%. That is in addition to several years of previous cuts that have resulted in vouchers going unused because there is no one to assess an applicant's qualifications and point a voucher recipient to a source of housing.

The notice comes as PHA administrators scramble to keep their housing programs functioning in a continuing environment of funding cuts that have decimated capabilities to maintain basic care for the nation's public housing investment.

Public Housing Authorities Directors Association Director Timothy Kaiser tells *HAL* the cuts coming on the heels of a succession of cuts and the prospect of a new season of budget sequestration Oct. 1 is wreaking financial devastation on PHAs.

"This is one of the most frustrating and lamentable things confronting HAs and potential low income renters -- more than 100,000 vouchers going unused, in part, because HAs don't have the money to run the voucher program," Kaiser says.

HUD began cutting voucher administration fees at the beginning of the Obama administration in 2009, and the decline reached 92% of money needed in 2016 to apply basic standards to qualify voucher applicants.

Kaiser says PHADA studies show more than 100,000 low-income households (4% of total vouchers available) being lost that would otherwise be housed with money already appropriated by Congress. Kaiser reasons that, if Congress would allow PHAs to use some of the voucher appropriations (voucher funding is separate from administrative funding) for voucher administration, the crunch would be eased.

"If limited fungibility were allowed and HAs could tap a small portion of unused HAP (Housing Assistance Program) funds, they could house many more families," Kaiser says.

The cuts have forced PHAs into a *Catch-22* position. They must either cut back on the number of vouchers provided or use public housing employees who otherwise are responsible for public housing administration and maintenance to fill the gap. That employee shuffling has resulted in a decline in the quality of public housing operations.