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ALTERNATIVE SCREENING CRITERIA

INTRODUCTION AND MISSION STATEMENT

The multi-family housing industry is creating screening criteria for housing providers to utilize in connection with applications from our veterans, and from other applicants who are participating in some type of acceptable housing case management program. While this alternative criteria is not mandatory, it will provide a consistent means by which landlords can process applications for prospective tenants who cannot qualify under the first tier of criteria.

While most landlords screen applications based upon income, credit, housing references, and criminal background checks, some applicants would not ever qualify under this process. Therefore, the following criteria are being made available as a consistent alternative to the criteria that are otherwise and normally utilized.

CATEGORY ONE: INCOME

If an applicant does not meet the stated income requirements, they may be able to qualify, if they can provide written verification of sufficient income that is acceptable to the landlord. That verification must be provided by an acceptable case manager or program source that is acceptable to the landlord.

If an applicant receives verifiable housing assistance from a verifiable third party, then the landlord may use their standard income criteria for the tenant's portion of the rent.

CATEGORY TWO: HOUSING HISTORY/EVICTIONS

A landlord may differentiate between an eviction filing and an eviction judgment, such that an eviction filing (without an eviction judgment) would not count against the applicant. In the event of one or more eviction judgments, the applicant may still qualify if the landlord is satisfied that the case management program will be sufficient to sustain the tenancy.

A landlord should follow their normal procedures in obtaining a housing reference from the current landlord, and at least one previous landlord. To the extent that any 5-day notices are reported, inquiry may be made as to the nature of the 5-day notice (rent, policy violation, etc.). If the 5-day was served for rent, and the applicant's future rent will be paid by Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH), or other agency acceptable to the landlord, then the 5-day notice for rent could be disregarded. In addition, if the 5-day notice was served for violation of a policy that is not applicable at the new housing (e.g., no smoking), then this violation could similarly be disregarded (i.e., if the proposed apartment is NOT a no smoking building). And, finally, if the violation was for drugs, alcohol, or other behavior, then acceptable, written verification of case management and/or therapy or counseling, could permit this violation to be disregarded as well.

CATEGORY THREE: CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK

The application may still be denied if the criminal activity involved violence to persons (e.g., battery, child abuse, sexual assault, etc.), destruction of property, or operating a drug house. As for these crimes, while no longer required by law, a landlord could impose their own time limitation as to how many years they would consider these types of matters as grounds for denial. Landlords should be aware that most housing agencies will not consider applicants who are registered sex offenders, or those who have criminal convictions for offenses subject to the sex offender registration. There may be circumstances where the nature of the criminal offense is such that the applicant's involvement in a case management program and/or a therapy/counseling program could allow a landlord to the disregard that conviction in reviewing their application.

NOTES

It is important for both the landlord and the applicant to understand that this is a voluntary program for the landlord, and the landlord is still able to reject any applicant, as long as they comply with all applicable fair housing laws. Landlords must understand that there are risks associated with participating in this program, and that a careful analysis of all applicants should still be made.

It is also important to note that the alternative screening criteria set forth above do not give consideration to the fourth category that is normally used in the screening process, that being credit. The reason that credit is not included is that most applicants for whom this alternative screening would be utilized would either have bad credit or no credit. However, when sufficient proof is provided that the rent will be paid by a third party, the credit criteria becomes less important. In addition, landlords are still able to request a qualified guarantor, in the event that one might be available for the applicant.

