

Chapter 7

VERIFICATION

[24 CFR 982.516, 24 CFR 982.551, 24 CFR 5.230, Notice PIH2018-18]

INTRODUCTION

COC must verify all information that is used to establish the family's eligibility and level of assistance and is required to obtain written authorization from the family in order to collect the information. Applicants and program participants must cooperate with the verification process as a condition of receiving assistance. COC must not pass on the cost of verification to the family.

COC will follow the verification guidance provided by HUD in Notice PIH 2018-18 and any subsequent guidance issued by HUD. This chapter summarizes those requirements and provides supplementary PHA policies.

Part I describes the general verification process. Part II provides more detailed requirements related to family information. Part III provides information on income and assets, and Part IV covers mandatory deductions.

Verification policies, rules and procedures will be modified as needed to accommodate persons with disabilities. All information obtained through the verification process will be handled in accordance with the records management policies of COC.

PART I: GENERAL VERIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

7-I.A. FAMILY CONSENT TO RELEASE OF INFORMATION [24 CFR 982.516 AND 982.551, 24 CFR 5.230]

The family must supply any information that COC or HUD determines is necessary to the administration of the program and must consent to PHA verification of that information [24 CFR 982.551].

Consent Forms

It is required that all adult applicants and participants sign form HUD-9886, Authorization for Release of Information. The purpose of form HUD-9886 is to facilitate automated data collection and computer matching from specific sources and provides the family's consent only for the specific purposes listed on the form. HUD and COC may collect information from State Wage Information Collection Agencies (SWICAs) and current and former employers of adult family members. Only HUD is authorized to collect information directly from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Social Security Administration (SSA). Adult family members must sign other consent forms as needed to collect information relevant to the family's eligibility and level of assistance.

Penalties for Failing to Consent [24 CFR 5.232]

If any family member who is required to sign a consent form fails to do so, COC will deny admission to applicants and terminate assistance of participants. The family may request an informal review (applicants) or informal hearing (participants) in accordance with PHA procedures.

7-I.B. OVERVIEW OF VERIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

HUD's Verification Hierarchy [Notice PIH 2018-18]

HUD mandates the use of the EIV system and offers administrative guidance on the use of other methods to verify family information and specifies the circumstances in which each method will be used. In general HUD requires COC to use the most reliable form of verification that is available and to document the reasons when COC uses a lesser form of verification.

In order of priority, the forms of verification that COC will use are:

- Up-front Income Verification (UIV) using HUD's Enterprise Income Verification (EIV) system
- Up-front Income Verification (UIV) using a non-HUD system
- Written Third-Party Verification (may be provided by applicant or participant)
- Written Third-party Verification Form
- Oral Third-party Verification
- Self-Certification

Each of the verification methods is discussed in subsequent sections below.

Requirements for Acceptable Documents

COC Policy

Any documents used for verification generally must be dated within 60 days of COC request. The documents must not be damaged, altered or in any way illegible.

Any family self-certifications must be made in a format acceptable to COC and must be signed in the presence of a PHA representative or notary public.

File Documentation

COC must document in the file how the figures used in income and rent calculations were determined. All verification attempts, information obtained, and decisions reached during the verification process will be recorded in the family's file in sufficient detail to demonstrate that COC has followed all of the verification policies set forth in this plan. The record should be sufficient to enable a staff member or HUD reviewer to understand the process followed and conclusions reached.

COC Policy

COC will document, in the family file, the following:

- Reported family annual income
- Value of assets
- Expenses related to deductions from annual income
- Other factors influencing adjusted income

When COC is unable to obtain third-party verification, COC will document in the family file the reason that third-party verification was not available [24 CFR 982.516(a)(2); Notice PIH 2018-18].

7-I.C. UP-FRONT INCOME VERIFICATION (UIV)

Up-front income verification (UIV) refers to COC's use of the verification tools available from independent sources that maintain computerized information about earnings and benefits. UIV will be used to the extent that these systems are available to COC.

There may be legitimate differences between the information provided by the family and UIV-generated information. If the family disputes the accuracy of UIV data, no adverse action can be taken until COC has independently verified the UIV information and the family has been granted an opportunity to contest any adverse findings through the informal review/hearing process of COC.

See Chapter 6 for COC's policy on the use of UIV/EIV to project annual income.

Upfront Income Verification Using HUD's Enterprise Income Verification (EIV) System (Mandatory)

PHAs must use HUD's EIV system in its entirety as a third-party source to verify tenant employment and income information during mandatory reexaminations or recertifications of family composition and income in accordance with 24 CFR 5.236 and administrative guidance issued by HUD. The EIV system contains data showing earned income, unemployment benefits, social security benefits, and SSI benefits for participant families. The following policies apply to the use of HUD's EIV system.

EIV Income and IVT Reports

The data shown on income and income validation tool (IVT) reports is updated quarterly. Data may be between 3 and 6 months old at the time reports are generated.

COC Policy

COC will obtain income and IVT reports for annual reexaminations on a monthly basis. Reports will be generated as part of the regular reexamination process.

Income and IVY reports will be compared to family-provided information as part of the annual reexamination process. Income reports may be used in the calculation of annual income, as described in Chapter 6-I.C. Income reports may also be used to meet the regulatory requirement for third party verification, as described above. Policies for resolving discrepancies between income reports and family-provided information will be resolved as described in Chapter 6-I.C. and in this chapter.

Income and IVT reports will be used in interim reexaminations to identify any discrepancies between reported income and income shown in the EIV system, and as necessary to verify earned income, and to verify and calculate unemployment benefits, Social Security and/or SSI benefits. EIV will also be used to verify that families claiming zero income are not receiving income from any of these sources.

Income and IVT reports will be retained in participant files with the applicable annual or interim reexamination documents.

When COC determines through EIV reports and third-party verification that a family has concealed or under-reported income, corrective action will be taken pursuant to the policies in Chapter 14, Program Integrity.

EIV Identity Verification

The EIV system verifies tenant identities against SSA records. These records are compared to PIC data for a match on social security number, name, and date of birth.

PHAs are required to use EIV's *Identity Verification Report* on a monthly basis to improve the availability of income information in EIV [Notice PIH 2018-18].

When identity verification for a participant fails, a message will be displayed within the EIV system and no income information will be displayed.

COC Policy

COC will identify participants whose identity verification has failed by reviewing EIV's *Identity Verification Report* on a monthly basis.

COC will attempt to resolve PIC/SSA discrepancies by obtaining appropriate documentation from the participant. When COC determines that discrepancies exist due to PHA errors such as spelling errors or incorrect birth dates, the errors will be corrected promptly.

Upfront Income Verification Using Non-HUD Systems (Optional)

In addition to mandatory use of the EIV system, HUD encourages PHAs to utilize other upfront verification sources.

COC Policy

COC will inform all applicants and participants of its use of the following UIV resources during the admission and reexamination process:

HUD's EIV system

7-I.D. THIRD-PARTY WRITTEN AND ORAL VERIFICATION

HUD's current verification hierarchy defines two types of written third-party verification. The more preferable form, "written third-party verification," consists of an original document generated by a third-party source, which may be received directly from a third-party source or provided to COC by the family. If written third-party verification is not available, COC must attempt to obtain a "written third-party verification form." This is a standardized form used to collect information from a third party.

Written Third-Party Verification [Notice PIH 2018-18]

Written third-party verification documents must be original and authentic and may be supplied by the family or received from a third-party source.

Examples of acceptable tenant-provided documents include, but are not limited to: pay stubs, payroll summary reports, employer notice or letters of hire and termination, SSA benefit verification letters, bank statements, child support payment stubs, welfare benefit letters and/or printouts, and unemployment monetary benefit notices.

COC is required to obtain, at minimum, two current and consecutive pay stubs for determining annual income from wages.

COC may reject documentation provided by the family if the document is not an original, if the document appears to be forged, or if the document is altered, mutilated, or illegible.

COC Policy

Third-party documents provided by the family must be dated within 60 days of COC request date.

If COC determines that third-party documents provided by the family are not acceptable, COC will explain the reason to the family and request additional documentation.

As verification of earned income, COC will require the family to provide the two most current, consecutive pay stubs.

Written Third-Party Verification Form

When upfront verification is not available and the family is unable to provide written third-party documents, COC must request a written third-party verification form. HUD's position is that this traditional third-party verification method presents administrative burdens and risks which may be reduced through the use of family-provided third-party documents.

PHAs may mail, fax, or e-mail third-party written verification form requests to third-party sources.

COC Policy

COC will send third-party verification forms directly to the third party.

Third-party verification forms will be sent when third-party verification documents are unavailable or are rejected by COC.

Oral Third-Party Verification [Notice PIH 2018-18]

For third-party oral verification, PHAs contact sources, identified by UIV techniques or by the family, by telephone or in person.

Oral third-party verification is mandatory if neither form of written third-party verification is available.

Third-party oral verification may be used when requests for written third-party verification forms have not been returned within a reasonable time—e.g., 10 business days.

PHAs should document in the file the date and time of the telephone call or visit, the name of the person contacted, the telephone number, as well as the information confirmed.

COC Policy

In collecting third-party oral verification, PHA staff will record in the family's file the name and title of the person contacted, the date and time of the conversation (or attempt), the telephone number used, and the facts provided.

When any source responds verbally to the initial written request for verification COC will accept the verbal response as oral verification but will also request that the source complete and return any verification forms that were provided.

When Third-Party Verification is Not Required [Notice PIH 2018-18]

Third-party verification may not be available in all situations. HUD has acknowledged that it may not be cost-effective or reasonable to obtain third-party verification of income, assets, or expenses when these items would have a minimal impact on the family's total tenant payment.

COC Policy

If the family cannot provide original documents, COC will pay the service charge required to obtain third-party verification, unless it is not cost effective in which case a self-certification will be acceptable as the only means of verification. The cost of verification will not be passed on to the family.

The cost of postage and envelopes to obtain third-party verification of income, assets, and expenses is not an unreasonable cost [VG, p. 18].

Primary Documents

Third-party verification is not required when legal documents are the primary source, such as a birth certificate or other legal documentation of birth.

Imputed Assets

HUD permits PHAs to accept a self-certification from a family as verification of assets disposed of for less than fair market value [HCV GB, p. 5-28].

COC Policy

COC will accept a self-certification from a family as verification of assets disposed of for less than fair market value.

Value of Assets and Asset Income [24 CFR 982.516(a)]

For families with net assets totaling \$5,000 or less, COC may accept the family's declaration of asset value and anticipated asset income. However, COC is required to obtain third-party verification of all assets regardless of the amount during the intake process and at least every three years thereafter.

COC Policy

COC will obtain tenant provided third-party documentation of all assets regardless of the amount.

7-I.E. SELF-CERTIFICATION

When HUD requires third-party verification, self-certification, or “tenant declaration,” is used as a last resort when COC is unable to obtain third-party verification.

Self-certification, however, is an acceptable form of verification when:

- A source of income is fully excluded
- Net family assets total \$5,000 or less and COC has adopted a policy to accept self certification at annual recertification, when applicable
- COC has adopted a policy to implement streamlined annual recertifications for fixed sources of income (See Chapter 11)

When COC was required to obtain third-party verification but instead relies on a tenant declaration for verification of income, assets, or expenses, the family’s file must be documented to explain why third-party verification was not available.

COC Policy

When information cannot be verified by a third party or by review of documents, family members will be required to submit self-certifications attesting to the accuracy of the information they have provided to COC.

COC may require a family to certify that a family member does not receive a particular type of income or benefit.

The self-certification must be made in a format acceptable to COC and must be signed by the family member whose information or status is being verified. All self-certifications must be signed in the presence of a PHA representative or notary public.

PART II: VERIFYING FAMILY INFORMATION

7-II.A. VERIFICATION OF LEGAL IDENTITY

COC Policy

COC will require families to furnish verification of legal identity for each household member.

Verification of Legal Identity for Adults	Verification of Legal Identity for Children
Certificate of birth, naturalization papers	Certificate of birth
Church issued baptismal certificate	Adoption papers
Current, valid driver's license or Department of Motor Vehicles identification card	Custody agreement
U.S. military discharge (DD 214)	Health and Human Services ID
Current U.S. passport	Certified school records
Current employer identification card	

If a document submitted by a family is illegible for any reason or otherwise questionable, more than one of these documents may be required.

If none of these documents can be provided and at COC’s discretion, a third party who knows the person may attest to the person’s identity. The certification must be provided in a format acceptable to COC and be signed in the presence of a PHA representative or a notary public.

Legal identity will be verified for all applicants at the time of eligibility determination and in cases where COC has reason to doubt the identity of a person representing him or herself to be a participant.

VERIFICATION OF FAMILY

COC Policy

A family includes two or more individuals who are not related by blood, marriage, adoption, or other operation of law but who either can demonstrate that they have lived together previously or certify that each individual’s income and other resources will be available to meet the needs of the family.

In such case, one of the following verifications is required: joint bank account statements, joint tax returns, joint insurance claims/policies, a lease in both (or all) individual’s names, or certification from each individual that each individual’s income and other resources will be available to meet the needs of the family.

7-II.B. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS [24 CFR 5.216, Notice PIH 2018-24]

The family must provide documentation of a valid social security number (SSN) for each member of the household, with the exception of individuals who do not contend eligible immigration status. Exemptions also include, existing program participants who were at least 62 years of age as of January 31, 2010, and had not previously disclosed an SSN.

Note that an individual who previously declared to have eligible immigration status may not change his or her declaration for the purpose of avoiding compliance with the SSN disclosure and documentation requirements or penalties associated with noncompliance with these requirements. Nor may the head of household opt to remove a household member from the family composition for this purpose.

COC must accept the following documentation as acceptable evidence of the social security number:

- An original SSN card issued by the Social Security Administration (SSA)

- An original SSA-issued document, which contains the name and SSN of the individual

- An original document issued by a federal, state, or local government agency, which contains the name and SSN of the individual

COC may only reject documentation of an SSN provided by an applicant or participant if the document is not an original document or if the original document has been altered, mutilated, is illegible, or appears to be forged.

COC Policy

COC will explain to the applicant or participant the reasons the document is not acceptable and request that the individual obtain and submit acceptable documentation of the SSN to COC within 90 days.

In the case of Moderate Rehabilitation Single Room Occupancy (SRO) individuals, the required documentation must be provided within 90 calendar days from the date of admission into the program. COC must grant one additional 90-day extension if it determines that the applicant's failure to comply was due to circumstances that were beyond the applicant's control and could not have been reasonably foreseen.

COC Policy

COC will grant one additional 90-day extension if needed for reasons beyond the participant's control such as delayed processing of the SSN application by the SSA, natural disaster, fire, death in the family, or other emergency. If the individual fails to comply with SSN disclosure and documentation requirements upon expiration of the provided time period, COC will terminate the individual's assistance.

If an applicant family includes a child under 6 years of age who joined the household within the 6 months prior to the date of voucher issuance, an otherwise eligible family may be admitted to the program and the family must provide documentation of the child's SSN within 90 days of the effective date of the initial HAP contract. A 90-day extension will be granted if COC determines that the participant's failure to comply was due to unforeseen circumstances and was outside of the participant's control.

COC Policy

COC will grant one additional 90-day extension if needed for reasons beyond the applicant's control, such as delayed processing of the SSN application by the SSA, natural disaster, fire, death in the family, or other emergency.

When a participant requests to add a new household member who is under the age of 6 and has not been assigned an SSN, the participant must provide the SSN assigned to each new child and the required documentation within 90 calendar days of the child being added to the household. A 90-day extension will be granted if COC determines that the participant's failure to comply was due to unforeseen circumstances and was outside of the participant's control. During the period COC is awaiting documentation of the SSN, the child will be counted as part of the assisted household.

Social security numbers must be verified only once during continuously-assisted occupancy.

COC Policy

COC will verify each disclosed SSN by:

Obtaining documentation from applicants and participants that is acceptable as evidence of social security numbers

Making a copy of the original documentation submitted, returning it to the individual, and retaining a copy in the file folder

Once the individual's verification status is classified as "verified," COC may, at its discretion, remove and destroy copies of documentation accepted as evidence of social security numbers. The retention of the EIV Summary Report or Income Report is adequate documentation of an individual's SSN.

COC Policy

Once an individual's status is classified as "verified" in HUD's EIV system, COC will remove and destroy copies of documentation accepted as evidence of social security numbers.

7-II.C. DOCUMENTATION OF AGE

A birth certificate or other official record of birth is the preferred form of age verification for all family members. For elderly family members an original document that provides evidence of the receipt of social security retirement benefits is acceptable.

COC Policy

If an official record of birth or evidence of social security retirement benefits cannot be provided, COC will require the family to submit other documents that support the reported age of the family member (e.g., school records, driver's license if birth year is recorded) and to provide a self-certification if the document is not provided by a government agency.

Age must be verified only once during continuously-assisted occupancy.

7-II.D. FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Applicants and program participants are required to identify the relationship of each household member to the head of household. Definitions of the primary household relationships are provided in the Eligibility chapter.

COC Policy

Family relationships are verified only to the extent necessary to determine a family's eligibility and level of assistance. Certification by the head of household normally is sufficient verification of family relationships.

Marriage

COC Policy

Certification by the head of household is normally sufficient verification. If COC has reasonable doubts about a marital relationship, COC will require the family to document the marriage.

A marriage certificate generally is required to verify that a couple is married.

In the case of a common law marriage, the couple must demonstrate that they hold themselves to be married (e.g., by telling the community they are married, calling each other husband and wife, using the same last name, filing joint income tax returns).

Separation or Divorce

COC Policy

Certification by the head of household is normally sufficient verification. If COC has reasonable doubts about a separation or divorce, COC will require the family to provide documentation of the divorce or separation.

A certified copy of a divorce decree, signed by a court officer, is required to document that a couple is divorced.

A copy of a court-ordered maintenance or other court record is required to document a separation.

If no court document is available, documentation from a community-based agency will be accepted.

Absence of Adult Member

COC Policy

If an adult member who was formerly a member of the household is reported to be permanently absent, the family must provide evidence to support that the person is no longer a member of the family (e.g., documentation of another address at which the person resides such as a lease or utility bill).

Foster Children and Foster Adults

COC Policy

Third-party verification from the state or local government agency responsible for the placement of the individual with the family is required.

7-II.E. VERIFICATION OF STUDENT STATUS

General Requirements

COC Policy

COC requires families to provide information about the student status of all students who are 18 years of age or older. This information will be verified only if:

The family reports full-time student status for an adult other than the head, spouse, or cohead.

The family reports child care expenses to enable a family member to further his or her education.

The family includes a student enrolled in an *institution of higher education*.

Restrictions on Assistance to Students Enrolled in Institutions of Higher Education

This section applies only to students who are seeking assistance on their own, separately from their parents. It does not apply to students residing with parents who are seeking or receiving HCV assistance.

COC Policy

In accordance with the verification hierarchy described in section 7-1.B, COC will determine whether the student is exempt from the restrictions in 24 CFR 5.612 by verifying any one of the following exemption criteria:

The student is enrolled at an educational institution that does not meet the definition of *institution of higher education* in the Higher Education Act of 1965 (see section Exhibit 3-2).

The student is at least 24 years old.

The student is a veteran, as defined in section 3-II.E.

The student is married.

The student has at least one dependent child, as defined in section 3-II.E.

The student is a person with disabilities, as defined in section 3-II.E, and was receiving assistance prior to November 30, 2005.

If COC cannot verify at least one of these exemption criteria, COC will conclude that the student is subject to the restrictions on assistance at 24 CFR 5.612. In addition to verifying the student's income eligibility, COC will then proceed to verify either the student's parents' income eligibility (see section 7-III.J) or the student's independence from his/her parents (see below).

Independent Student

COC Policy

COC will verify a student's independence from his/her parents to determine that the student's parents' income is not relevant for determining the student's eligibility by doing all of the following:

Either reviewing and verifying previous address information to determine whether the student has established a household separate from his/her parents for at least one year or reviewing and verifying documentation relevant to determining whether the student meets the U.S. Department of Education's definition of *independent student* (see section 3-II.E)

Reviewing the student's prior year income tax returns to verify the student is independent or verifying the student meets the U.S. Department of Education's definition of *independent student* (see section 3-II.E)

Requesting and obtaining written certification directly from the student's parents identifying the amount of support they will be providing to the student, even if the amount of support is \$0, except in cases in which COC determines that the student is a *vulnerable youth* (see section 3-II.E)

7-II.F. DOCUMENTATION OF DISABILITY

COC must verify the existence of a disability in order to allow certain income disallowances and deductions from income. COC is not permitted to inquire about the nature or extent of a person's disability [24 CFR 100.202(c)]. COC may not inquire about a person's diagnosis or details of treatment for a disability or medical condition. If COC receives a verification document that provides such information, COC will not place this information in the tenant file. Under no circumstances will COC request a participant's medical record(s). For more information on health care privacy laws, see the Department of Health and Human Services' website at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/>.

The above cited regulation does not prohibit the following inquiries, provided these inquiries are made of all applicants, whether or not they are persons with disabilities [VG, p. 24]:

- Inquiry into an applicant's ability to meet the requirements of ownership or tenancy
- Inquiry to determine whether an applicant is qualified for a dwelling available only to persons with disabilities or to persons with a particular type of disability
- Inquiry to determine whether an applicant for a dwelling is qualified for a priority available to persons with disabilities or to persons with a particular type of disability
- Inquiring whether an applicant for a dwelling is a current illegal abuser or addict of a controlled substance
- Inquiring whether an applicant has been convicted of the illegal manufacture or distribution of a controlled substance

Family Members Receiving SSA Disability Benefits

Verification of the receipt of disability benefits from the Social Security Administration (SSA) is sufficient verification of disability for the purpose of qualifying for waiting list preferences (if applicable) or certain income disallowances and deductions [VG, p. 23].

COC Policy

For family members claiming disability who receive disability benefits from the SSA, COC will attempt to obtain information about disability benefits through the HUD Enterprise Income Verification (EIV) system. If documentation from HUD's EIV System is not available, COC will request a current (dated within the last 60 days) SSA benefit verification letter from each family member claiming disability status. If the family is unable to provide the document(s), COC will ask the family to request a benefit verification letter by either calling SSA at 1-800-772-1213, or by requesting it from www.ssa.gov. Once the applicant or participant receives the benefit verification letter they will be required to provide it to COC.

Family Members Not Receiving SSA Disability Benefits

Receipt of veteran's disability benefits, worker's compensation, or other non-SSA benefits based on the individual's claimed disability are not sufficient verification that the individual meets HUD's definition of disability in 24 CFR 5.403.

COC Policy

For family members claiming disability who do not receive disability benefits from the SSA, a knowledgeable professional must provide third-party verification that the family member meets the HUD definition of disability. See the Eligibility chapter for the HUD definition of disability. The knowledgeable professional will verify whether the family member does or does not meet the HUD definition.

7-II.G. CITIZENSHIP OR ELIGIBLE IMMIGRATION STATUS [24 CFR 5.508]

Overview

Housing assistance is not available to persons who are not citizens, nationals, or eligible immigrants. Prorated assistance is provided for "mixed families" containing both eligible and ineligible persons. A detailed discussion of eligibility requirements is in the Eligibility chapter. This verifications chapter discusses HUD and PHA verification requirements related to citizenship status.

The family must provide a certification that identifies each family member as a U.S. citizen, a U.S. national, an eligible noncitizen or an ineligible noncitizen and submit the documents discussed below for each family member. Once eligibility to receive assistance has been verified for an individual it need not be collected or verified again during continuously-assisted occupancy. [24 CFR 5.508(g)(5)]

U.S. Citizens and Nationals

HUD requires a declaration for each family member who claims to be a U.S. citizen or national. The declaration must be signed personally by any family member 18 or older and by a guardian for minors.

COC may request verification of the declaration by requiring presentation of a birth certificate, United States passport or other appropriate documentation.

COC Policy

Family members who claim U.S. citizenship or national status will be required to provide additional documentation. COC

Eligible Immigrants

Documents Required

All family members claiming eligible immigration status must declare their status in the same manner as U.S. citizens and nationals.

The documentation required for eligible noncitizens varies depending upon factors such as the date the person entered the U.S., the conditions under which eligible immigration status has been granted, age, and the date on which the family began receiving HUD-funded assistance. Exhibit 7-1 at the end of this chapter summarizes documents family members must provide.

COC Verification [HCV GB, pp. 5-3 and 5-7]

For family members age 62 or older who claim to be eligible immigrants, proof of age is required in the manner described in 7-II.C. of this plan. No further verification of eligible immigration status is required.

For family members under the age of 62 who claim to be eligible immigrants, COC must verify immigration status with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

COC will follow all USCIS protocols for verification of eligible immigration status.

7-II.H. VERIFICATION OF PREFERENCE STATUS

COC must verify any preferences claimed by an applicant that determined placement on the waiting list.

COC Policy

COC will offer a preference to any family that has been terminated from its HCV program due to insufficient program funding. COC will verify this preference using COC's termination records.

Displaced Category I

Families displaced or scheduled for displacement due to COC redevelopment efforts. The PHA will verify this preference using the PHA's redevelopment records.

Displaced Category II

Families displaced due to other state/local governmental action for reasons beyond resident control and/or declared natural disasters within no more than six months from the date of verification by COC. Families are considered displaced if they are required to vacate housing as a result of one of the following:

A disaster-fire, flood, earthquake, etc. that has caused the unit to be uninhabitable.

Federal, state or local government action related to code enforcement, public improvement or development.

COC will verify this preference by requiring a written verification by the displacement unit or agency of government, or by a service agency such as the Red Cross.

VAWA

The PHA will offer a preference to families that include victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking who have either been referred by a partnering service agency or consortia or is seeking an emergency transfer under VAWA from the PHA's public housing program or other covered housing program operated by the PHA.

The PHA will work with the following partnering service agencies:

Domestic Violence Crisis Center

The applicant must certify that the abuser will not reside with the applicant unless the PHA gives prior written approval. After six months, COC may require an update of the preference documents.

This preference extends to victims of domestic violence and families who must vacate their current unit because a court or law enforcement agency has determined a need for relocation is required as a matter of public safety (includes victims of hate crimes and households that are part of a witness protection program).

COC will also verify this preference as follows:

- Victims of domestic violence will be verified in accordance with VAWA documentation requirements as outlined in Chapter 16.
- Families who must vacate their current unit because a court or law enforcement agency has determined a need for relocation as a matter of public safety will be verified by documentation issued by the court or law enforcement agency.

Family Protection

This preference extends to victims of domestic violence and families who must vacate their current unit because a court or law enforcement agency has determined a need for relocation is required as a matter of public safety (includes victims of hate crimes and households that are part of a witness protection program).

A hate crime is an actual or threatened physical violence or intimidation that is directed against a person or his property and is based on the person's race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability or familial status including sexual orientation, gender identity and marital status occurred within the last 90 days or is of a continuing nature.

COC will verify this preference by requiring a written statement from a law enforcement agency, HUD, Fair Housing or other agency responsible for non-discrimination advocacy. Statement should contain approximate number of occurrences and date of last occurrence.

Chronic Homelessness and Other Vulnerable Homeless Persons

The PHA will offer a chronic homelessness persons preference to any family that meets the HUD definition of chronic homelessness. If there are no chronic homeless families at the time of vacancy, the opportunity will be offered to the next most vulnerable homeless person in accordance with prioritization established by the Coordinated Access Network “CAN”. The family must be referred to COC by a homeless service provider through the CAN based on their vulnerability. Referring agencies must have an executed Memorandum of Understanding with COC in coordination with the Stamford Housing First Collaborative, outlining the provider's responsibility to provide services for the referred household.

The referral must include a commitment by the homeless service provider to supportive services to help the household transition from homelessness to permanent housing, including tenant selection, eligibility and lease requirements.

One of every five applicants selected from the waiting list will be made available to a chronically homeless applicant or other vulnerable homeless persons.

COC will verify this preference by requiring documentation to certify chronic homelessness and supportive services from referring agency or the CAN.

Mainstream Vouchers (Mainstream Vouchers Only)

A mainstream voucher preference is given to those who are non-elderly persons with disabilities transitioning out of institutional and other segregated settings, at serious risk of institutionalization, currently experiencing homelessness, previously experienced homelessness and currently a client in a permanent supportive housing or rapid rehousing project, or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

COC will verify this preference by requiring documentation to certify mainstream voucher preference from a referring agency. Referring agencies must have an executed Memorandum of Understanding with COC in coordination with the Stamford Housing First Collaborative, outlining the provider's responsibility to provide services for the referred household.

PART III: VERIFYING INCOME AND ASSETS

Chapter 6, Part I of this plan describes in detail the types of income that are included and excluded and how assets and income from assets are handled. Any assets and income reported by the family must be verified. This part provides PHA policies that supplement the general verification procedures specified in Part I of this chapter.

7-III.A. EARNED INCOME

Tips

COC Policy

Unless tip income is included in a family member's W-2 by the employer, persons who work in industries where tips are standard will be required to sign a certified estimate of tips received for the prior year and tips anticipated to be received in the coming year.

Wages

COC Policy

For wages other than tips, the family must provide originals of the two most current, consecutive pay stubs.

7-III.B. BUSINESS AND SELF EMPLOYMENT INCOME

COC Policy

Business owners and self-employed persons will be required to provide:

An audited financial statement for the previous fiscal year if an audit was conducted. If an audit was not conducted, a statement of income and expenses must be submitted and the business owner or self-employed person must certify to its accuracy.

All schedules completed for filing federal and local taxes in the preceding year.

If accelerated depreciation was used on the tax return or financial statement, an accountant's calculation of depreciation expense, computed using straight-line depreciation rules.

COC will provide a format for any person who is unable to provide such a statement to record income and expenses for the coming year. The business owner/self-employed person will be required to submit the information requested and to certify to its accuracy at all future reexaminations.

At any reexamination COC may request documents that support submitted financial statements such as manifests, appointment books, cash books, or bank statements.

If a family member has been self-employed less than three (3) months, COC will accept the family member's certified estimate of income and schedule an interim reexamination in three (3) months. If the family member has been self-employed for three (3) to twelve (12) months COC will require the family to provide documentation of income and expenses for this period and use that information to project income.

7-III.C. PERIODIC PAYMENTS AND PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF EARNINGS

For policies governing streamlined income determinations for fixed sources of income, please see Chapter 11.

Social Security/SSI Benefits

COC Policy

To verify the SS/SSI benefits of applicants, COC will request a current (dated within the last 60 days) SSA benefit verification letter from each family member that receives social security benefits. If the family is unable to provide the document(s), COC will help the applicant request a benefit verification letter from SSA's Web site at www.ssa.gov or ask the family to request one by calling SSA at 1-800-772-1213. Once the applicant has received the benefit verification letter they will be required to provide it to COC.

To verify the SS/SSI benefits of participants, COC will obtain information about social security/SSI benefits through the HUD EIV System, and confirm with the participant(s) that the current listed benefit amount is correct. If the participant disputes the EIV-reported benefit amount, or if benefit information is not available in HUD systems, COC will request a current SSA benefit verification letter from each family member that receives social security benefits. If the family is unable to provide the document(s) COC will help the participant request a benefit verification letter from SSA's Web site at www.ssa.gov or ask the family to request one by calling SSA at 1-800-772-1213. Once the participant has received the benefit verification letter they will be required to provide it to COC.

7-III.D. ALIMONY OR CHILD SUPPORT

COC Policy

The methods COC will use to verify alimony and child support payments differ depending on whether the family declares that it receives regular payments.

If the family declares that it *receives regular payments*, verification will be obtained in the following order of priority:

Copies of the receipts and/or payment stubs for the 60 days prior to PHA request

Third-party verification form from the state or local child support enforcement agency

Third-party verification form from the person paying the support

Family's self-certification of amount received

If the family declares that it *receives irregular or no payments*, in addition to the verification process listed above, the family must provide evidence that it has taken all reasonable efforts to collect amounts due. This may include:

A statement from any agency responsible for enforcing payment that shows the family has requested enforcement and is cooperating with all enforcement efforts

If the family has made independent efforts at collection, a written statement from the attorney or other collection entity that has assisted the family in these efforts

Note: Families are not required to undertake independent enforcement action.

7-III.E. ASSETS AND INCOME FROM ASSETS

Assets Disposed of for Less than Fair Market Value

The family must certify whether any assets have been disposed of for less than fair market value in the preceding two years. COC needs to verify only those certifications that warrant documentation [HCV GB, p. 5-28].

COC Policy

COC will verify the value of assets disposed of only if:

COC does not already have a reasonable estimation of its value from previously collected information, or

The amount reported by the family in the certification appears obviously in error.

Example 1: An elderly participant reported a \$10,000 certificate of deposit at the last annual reexamination and COC verified this amount. Now the person reports that she has given this \$10,000 to her son. COC has a reasonable estimate of the value of the asset; therefore, reverification of the value of the asset is not necessary.

Example 2: A family member has disposed of its 1/4 share of real property located in a desirable area and has valued her share at approximately \$5,000. Based upon market conditions, this declaration does not seem realistic. Therefore, COC will verify the value of this asset.

7-III.F. NET INCOME FROM RENTAL PROPERTY

COC Policy

The family must provide:

A current executed lease for the property that shows the rental amount or certification from the current tenant

A self-certification from the family members engaged in the rental of property providing an estimate of expenses for the coming year and the most recent IRS Form 1040 with Schedule E (Rental Income). If schedule E was not prepared, COC will require the family members involved in the rental of property to provide a self-certification of income and expenses for the previous year and may request documentation to support the statement including: tax statements, insurance invoices, bills for reasonable maintenance and utilities, and bank statements or amortization schedules showing monthly interest expense.

7-III.G. RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS

COC Policy

COC will accept written third-party documents supplied by the family as evidence of the status of retirement accounts.

The type of original document that will be accepted depends upon the family member's retirement status.

Before retirement, COC will accept an original document from the entity holding the account with a date that shows it is the most recently scheduled statement for the account but in no case earlier than 6 months from the effective date of the examination.

Upon retirement, COC will accept an original document from the entity holding the account that reflects any distributions of the account balance, any lump sums taken and any regular payments.

After retirement, COC will accept an original document from the entity holding the account dated no earlier than 12 months before that reflects any distributions of the account balance, any lump sums taken and any regular payments.

7-III.H. INCOME FROM EXCLUDED SOURCES

A detailed discussion of excluded income is provided in Chapter 6, Part I.

HUD guidance on verification of excluded income draws a distinction between income which is fully excluded and income which is only partially excluded.

For fully excluded income, COC is **not** required to follow the verification hierarchy, document why third-party verification is not available, or report the income on the 50058. Fully excluded income is defined as income that is entirely excluded from the annual income determination (for example, food stamps, earned income of a minor, or foster care funds) [Notice PIH 2013-04].

PHAs may accept a family's signed application or reexamination form as self-certification of fully excluded income. They do not have to require additional documentation. However, if there is any doubt that a source of income qualifies for full exclusion, PHAs have the option of requiring additional verification.

For partially excluded income, COC **is** required to follow the verification hierarchy and all applicable regulations, and to report the income on the 50058. Partially excluded income is defined as income where only a certain portion of what is reported by the family qualifies to be excluded and the remainder is included in annual income (for example, the income of an adult full-time student, or income excluded under the earned income disallowance).

COC Policy

COC will accept the family's self-certification as verification of fully excluded income. COC may request additional documentation if necessary to document the income source.

COC will verify the source and amount of partially excluded income as described in Part 1 of this chapter.

7-III.I. ZERO ANNUAL INCOME STATUS

COC Policy

COC will check UIV sources and/or request information from third-party sources to verify that certain forms of income such as unemployment benefits, SS, SSI, and earnings are not being received by families claiming to have zero annual income.

7-III.J. STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Any financial assistance, in excess of amounts received for tuition, that a person attending an institution of higher education receives under the Higher Education Act of 1965, from private sources, or from an institution of higher education must be considered income unless the student is over the age of 23 with dependent children or is residing with parents who are seeking or receiving HCV assistance [24 CFR 5.609(b)(9) and FR 4/10/06].

For students over the age of 23 with dependent children or students residing with parents who are seeking or receiving HCV assistance, the full amount of student financial assistance is excluded from annual income [24 CFR 5.609(c)(6)]. The full amount of student financial assistance is also excluded for students attending schools that do not qualify as institutions of higher education (as defined in Exhibit 3-2). Excluded amounts are verified only if, without verification, COC would not be able to determine whether or to what extent the income is to be excluded (see section 7-III.H).

COC Policy

For a student subject to having a portion of his/her student financial assistance included in annual income in accordance with 24 CFR 5.609(b)(9), COC will request written third-party verification of both the source and the amount. Family-provided documents from the educational institution attended by the student will be requested, as well as documents generated by any other person or entity providing such assistance, as reported by the student.

In addition, COC will request written verification of the student's tuition amount.

If COC is unable to obtain third-party written verification of the requested information, COC will pursue other forms of verification following the verification hierarchy in section 7-I.B.

7-III.K. PARENTAL INCOME OF STUDENTS SUBJECT TO ELIGIBILITY RESTRICTIONS

If a student enrolled at an institution of higher education is under the age of 24, is not a veteran, is not married, does not have a dependent child, and is not a person with disabilities receiving HCV assistance as of November 30, 2005, the income of the student's parents must be considered when determining income eligibility, unless the student is determined independent from his or her parents or a *vulnerable youth* in accordance with PHA policy [24 CFR 5.612, FR Notice 4/10/06, p. 18146, and FR Notice 9/21/16].

This provision does not apply to students residing with parents who are seeking or receiving HCV assistance. It is limited to students who are seeking or receiving assistance on their own, separately from their parents.

COC Policy

If COC is required to determine the income eligibility of a student's parents, COC will request an income declaration and certification of income from the appropriate parent(s) (as determined in section 3-II.E). COC will send the request directly to the parents, who will be required to certify to their income under penalty of perjury. The parents will be required to submit the information directly to COC. The required information must be submitted (postmarked) within 10 business days of the date of COC's request or within any extended timeframe approved by COC.

COC reserves the right to request and review supporting documentation at any time if it questions the declaration or certification. Supporting documentation may include, but is not limited to, Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax returns, consecutive and original pay stubs, bank statements, pension benefit statements, benefit award letters, and other official and authentic documents from a federal, state, or local agency.

PART IV: VERIFYING MANDATORY DEDUCTIONS

7-IV.A. DEPENDENT AND ELDERLY/DISABLED HOUSEHOLD DEDUCTIONS

The dependent and elderly/disabled family deductions require only that COC verify that the family members identified as dependents or elderly/disabled persons meet the statutory definitions. No further verifications are required.

Dependent Deduction

See Chapter 6 (6-II.B.) for a full discussion of this deduction. COC must verify that:

- Any person under the age of 18 for whom the dependent deduction is claimed is not the head, spouse, or cohead of the family and is not a foster child
- Any person age 18 or older for whom the dependent deduction is claimed is not a foster adult or live-in aide, and is a person with a disability or a full time student

Elderly/Disabled Family Deduction

See Eligibility chapter for a definition of elderly and disabled families and Chapter 6 (6-II.C.) for a discussion of the deduction. COC must verify that the head, spouse, or cohead is 62 years of age or older or a person with disabilities.

7-IV.B. MEDICAL EXPENSE DEDUCTION

Policies related to medical expenses are found in 6-II.D. The amount of the deduction will be verified following the standard verification procedures described in Part I.

Amount of Expense

COC Policy

Medical expenses will be verified through:

Written third-party documents provided by the family, such as pharmacy printouts or receipts.

COC will make a best effort to determine what expenses from the past are likely to continue to occur in the future. COC will also accept evidence of monthly payments or total payments that will be due for medical expenses during the upcoming 12 months.

Written third-party verification forms, if the family is unable to provide acceptable documentation.

If third-party or document review is not possible, written family certification as to costs anticipated to be incurred during the upcoming 12 months.

In addition, COC must verify that:

- The household is eligible for the deduction.
- The costs to be deducted are qualified medical expenses.
- The expenses are not paid for or reimbursed by any other source.
- Costs incurred in past years are counted only once.

Eligible Household

The medical expense deduction is permitted only for households in which the head, spouse, or cohead is at least 62, or a person with disabilities. COC must verify that the family meets the definition of an elderly or disabled family provided in the Eligibility chapter and as described in Chapter 7 (7-IV.A.) of this plan.

Qualified Expenses

To be eligible for the medical expenses deduction, the costs must qualify as medical expenses. See Chapter 6 (6-II.D.) for COC's policy on what counts as a medical expense.

Unreimbursed Expenses

To be eligible for the medical expenses deduction, the costs must not be reimbursed by another source.

COC Policy

The family will be required to certify that the medical expenses are not paid or reimbursed to the family from any source. If expenses are verified through a third party, the third party must certify that the expenses are not paid or reimbursed from any other source.

Expenses Incurred in Past Years

COC Policy

When anticipated costs are related to on-going payment of medical bills incurred in past years, COC will verify:

The anticipated repayment schedule

The amounts paid in the past, and

Whether the amounts to be repaid have been deducted from the family's annual income in past years

7-IV.C. DISABILITY ASSISTANCE EXPENSES

Policies related to disability assistance expenses are found in 6-II.E. The amount of the deduction will be verified following the standard verification procedures described in Part I.

Amount of Expense

Attendant Care

COC Policy

COC will accept written third-party documents provided by the family.

If family-provided documents are not available, COC will provide a third-party verification form directly to the care provider requesting the needed information.

Expenses for attendant care will be verified through:

Written third-party documents provided by the family, such as receipts or cancelled checks.

Third-party verification form signed by the provider, if family-provided documents are not available.

If third-party verification is not possible, written family certification as to costs anticipated to be incurred for the upcoming 12 months.

Auxiliary Apparatus

COC Policy

Expenses for auxiliary apparatus will be verified through:

Written third-party documents provided by the family, such as billing statements for purchase of auxiliary apparatus, or other evidence of monthly payments or total payments that will be due for the apparatus during the upcoming 12 months.

Third-party verification form signed by the provider, if family-provided documents are not available.

If third-party verification is not possible, written family certification of estimated apparatus costs for the upcoming 12 months.

In addition, COC must verify that:

- The family member for whom the expense is incurred is a person with disabilities (as described in 7-II.F above).
- The expense permits a family member, or members, to work (as described in 6-II.E.).
- The expense is not reimbursed from another source (as described in 6-II.E.).

Family Member is a Person with Disabilities

To be eligible for the disability assistance expense deduction, the costs must be incurred for attendant care or auxiliary apparatus expense associated with a person with disabilities. COC will verify that the expense is incurred for a person with disabilities (See 7-II.F.).

Family Member(s) Permitted to Work

COC must verify that the expenses claimed actually enable a family member, or members, (including the person with disabilities) to work.

COC Policy

COC will request third-party verification from a rehabilitation agency or knowledgeable medical professional indicating that the person with disabilities requires attendant care or an auxiliary apparatus to be employed, or that the attendant care or auxiliary apparatus enables another family member, or members, to work (See 6-II.E.). This documentation may be provided by the family.

If third-party verification has been attempted and is either unavailable or proves unsuccessful, the family must certify that the disability assistance expense frees a family member, or members (possibly including the family member receiving the assistance), to work.

Unreimbursed Expenses

To be eligible for the disability expenses deduction, the costs must not be reimbursed by another source.

COC Policy

The family will be required to certify that attendant care or auxiliary apparatus expenses are not paid by or reimbursed to the family from any source.

7-IV.D. CHILD CARE EXPENSES

Policies related to child care expenses are found in Chapter 6 (6-II.F). The amount of the deduction will be verified following the standard verification procedures described in Part I of this chapter. In addition, COC must verify that:

- The child is eligible for care (12 or younger).
- The costs claimed are not reimbursed.
- The costs enable a family member to work, actively seek work, or further their education.
- The costs are for an allowable type of child care.
- The costs are reasonable.

Eligible Child

To be eligible for the child care deduction, the costs must be incurred for the care of a child under the age of 13. COC will verify that the child being cared for (including foster children) is under the age of 13 (See 7-II.C.).

Unreimbursed Expense

To be eligible for the child care deduction, the costs must not be reimbursed by another source.

COC Policy

The family (and the care provider) will be required to certify that the child care expenses are not paid or reimbursed to the family from any source.

Pursuing an Eligible Activity

COC must verify that the family member(s) that the family has identified as being enabled to seek work, pursue education, or be gainfully employed, are actually pursuing those activities.

COC Policy

Information to be Gathered

COC will verify information about how the schedule for the claimed activity relates to the hours of care provided, the time required for transportation, the time required for study (for students), the relationship of the family member(s) to the child, and any special needs of the child that might help determine which family member is enabled to pursue an eligible activity.

Seeking Work

Whenever possible COC will use documentation from a state or local agency that monitors work-related requirements (e.g., welfare or unemployment). In such cases COC will request family-provided verification from the agency of the member's job seeking efforts to date, and require the family to submit to COC any reports provided to the other agency.

In the event third-party verification is not available, the family member must record job search efforts, and provide COC with written a statment. COC will review this information at each subsequent reexamination for which this deduction is claimed.

Furthering Education

COC will request third-party documentation to verify that the person permitted to further his or her education by the child care is enrolled and provide information about the timing of classes for which the person is registered. The documentation may be provided by the family.

Gainful Employment

COC will seek third-party verification of the work schedule of the person who is permitted to work by the child care. In cases in which two or more family members could be permitted to work, the work schedules for all relevant family members may be verified. The documentation may be provided by the family.

Allowable Type of Child Care

The type of care to be provided is determined by the family, but must fall within certain guidelines, as discussed in Chapter 6.

COC Policy

COC will verify that the type of child care selected by the family is allowable, as described in Chapter 6 (6-II.F).

COC will verify that the fees paid to the child care provider cover only child care costs (e.g., no housekeeping services or personal services) and are paid only for the care of an eligible child (e.g., prorate costs if some of the care is provided for ineligible family members).

COC will verify that the child care provider is not an assisted family member. Verification will be made through the head of household's declaration of family members who are expected to reside in the unit.

Reasonableness of Expenses

Only reasonable child care costs can be deducted.

COC Policy

The actual costs the family incurs will be compared with COC's established standards of reasonableness for the type of care in the locality to ensure that the costs are reasonable.

If the family presents a justification for costs that exceed typical costs in the area, COC will request additional documentation, as required, to support a determination that the higher cost is appropriate.

**EXHIBIT 7-1: SUMMARY OF DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS
FOR NONCITIZENS [HCV GB, pp. 5-9 and 5-10]**

- All noncitizens claiming eligible status must sign a declaration of eligible immigrant status on a form acceptable to COC.
- Except for persons 62 or older, all noncitizens must sign a verification consent form
- Additional documents are required based upon the person's status.

Elderly Noncitizens

- A person 62 years of age or older who claims eligible immigration status also must provide proof of age such as birth certificate, passport, or documents showing receipt of SS old-age benefits.

All other Noncitizens

- Noncitizens that claim eligible immigration status also must present the applicable USCIS document. Acceptable USCIS documents are listed below.

- Form I-551 Alien Registration Receipt Card (for permanent resident aliens)
- Form I-94 Arrival-Departure Record annotated with one of the following:
 - “Admitted as a Refugee Pursuant to Section 207”
 - “Section 208” or “Asylum”
 - “Section 243(h)” or “Deportation stayed by Attorney General”
 - “Paroled Pursuant to Section 221 (d)(5) of the USCIS”

- Form I-94 Arrival-Departure Record with no annotation accompanied by:
 - A final court decision granting asylum (but only if no appeal is taken);
 - A letter from a USCIS asylum officer granting asylum (if application is filed on or after 10/1/90) or from a USCIS district director granting asylum (application filed before 10/1/90);
 - A court decision granting withholding of deportation; or
 - A letter from an asylum officer granting withholding or deportation (if application filed on or after 10/1/90).

- Form I-688 Temporary Resident Card annotated “Section 245A” or Section 210”.

Form I-688B Employment Authorization Card annotated “Provision of Law 274a. 12(11)” or “Provision of Law 274a.12”.

- A receipt issued by the USCIS indicating that an application for issuance of a replacement document in one of the above listed categories has been made and the applicant’s entitlement to the document has been verified; or
- Other acceptable evidence. If other documents are determined by the USCIS to constitute acceptable evidence of eligible immigration status, they will be announced by notice published in the *Federal Register*