



2023-2024 Agency Plan

Resident Advisory Board Meeting

Agenda

- Overview of plan and HASCO's housing programs
 - Understanding RAB's role
 - Review HASCO's goals and progress
 - Future Plans
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What is the Agency Plan?

- HUD requirement : A 5-year plan.
 - Our current five-year plan ends next year, 2024
- Updated Annually
- Process includes participant and community feedback


RAB's Role?

- Review a draft plan
 - HASCO's goals and progress made
 - Plans for the coming year
- Provide feedback and comments on the voucher programs
- Learn more about HASCO and the programs we have

2023-2024 Schedule

- November 1st, November 2nd, and November 29th – RAB meetings
 - HASCO Board approved draft plan – December 19th, 2023
 - 45 days of resident and public comment
 - HASCO Board approves final plan – March 19th, 2024
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What We Do

- We serve families throughout Snohomish County with 4,292 vouchers.
 - Subsidize Housing Choice Vouchers & Project-Based Vouchers
 - Special Programs for Homeless, Elderly, Veterans, People with disabilities, Youth aging out of foster care
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Key Goals and Updates – Increase HASCO’s Pool of Housing Vouchers

- 34 new vouchers since December 2022 , with 77 new voucher holders searching for a unit and 158 voucher holders moving.
- HASCO applied for 25 additional VASH vouchers in 2023.
 - These will be effective May 2024
- 30 additional Mainstream vouchers were added in January 2023
 - Increases our total Mainstream vouchers to 300
- We received 4 additional FUP -FYI vouchers

Key Goals and Updates – Ensure housing opportunities , promote stabilities, strengthen community, and affirmatively further fair housing

- Updated HASCO’s Language Access Plan to reflect current practices.
 - Identified new vendors and processes for procuring ASL interpreters
 - Producing training for staff to help implement the Language Access Plan
- Continued using a formal process to review RA and VAWA requests.
- Provided resource information for HCV participants as requested.
- Provided housing navigation and supportive services for tenant-based voucher holders and at one Project Based Voucher project.

Key Goals and Updates – Work with local community to determine needs and solutions

- Working with the Elos Institute, a social impact organization, to engage the Lynnwood community in future housing planning.
- Coordinating with Snohomish County to ensure we are working toward the same broad goals.
- The Tenant Based Assistance Director serves on the county's Partnership to End Homelessness board to stay connected with partners and help guide community efforts to end homelessness.

Key Goals and Updates – Reduce The HCV program's environmental impact

- Received a demonstration of the online recertification portal and will work with the vendor to install and test it in 2024.
- Increased the use of email to communicate with clients, including
 - Sending and receiving documents electronically
 - Creating fillable forms and placing them on HASCO.org

Key Goals and Updates – Provide service aligned with HASCO's Core Values

- The Housing Team had a significant staff turnover, with 1/3 of the current staff joining in the last year.
- The department has been restructured to distribute work in a sustainable manner and all specialists have gone through additional training.
- HASCO's Core Values are a guide for staff to act with high integrity. Staff participate in workshops to improve diversity, integrity, and service.

Future Plans

- Review our entire Administrative Plan for policies that are over - restrictive, unnecessary, or that impact some groups more than others.
- Explore data sharing agreements to streamline verifications and identify programs with the best outcomes.
- Solicit input and then draft the goals for our new 5 -year plan.
Participant involvement is needed so we can create a plan that aligns with the values of HASCO but also the needs of our clients.



Thank you for attending!
Questions and Discussion



Resident Advisory Board

Wednesday, November 1, 2023
HASCO Office

The RAB meeting took place in the Grand Canyon meeting room at HASCO's office. Housing Choice Voucher program participant M [REDACTED] M [REDACTED] along with Housing Specialist Danielle Clark attended. Jodie Halsne, Tenant Based Assistance Director presented and Sara O'Neill, TBA Administrative Specialist took notes.

The meeting began at 1:02pm. With one participant in attendance, the presentation was more of a conversation. HASCO began the presentation, though it was open for questions and conversation with MM.

- MM asked how HASCO projects funding?
 - Funding for the following year is based on what was needed/used in the current year.
 - MM asked if going over budget in one year would increase the funding received the following year based on that logic.
 - HASCO discussed the details of shortfall in regards to going over the funding received and the delicate balance that is needed. In short, HASCO going into shortfall would mean reducing the payment standards for vouchers, no more voucher issuance, and in the end would mean participants would end up paying more.
- When HASCO provided numbers about vouchers and special programs we have, MM asked about the need in Snohomish County
 - HASCO explained that there are upwards of 75,000 households in Snohomish County that are eligible for assistance, and HASCO has 4,292 vouchers. Because the need is high in our county, one of HASCO's biggest goals is to increase the number of vouchers we have. HASCO spoke about how we are not the only housing authority in Snohomish County however. In combination with Everett Housing Authority, we have almost 9,000 vouchers.
- MM asked about the caseload size for each housing specialist
 - HASCO discussed the change in our redistribution of work in the department, and how the numbers are less concrete as they were before. However, HASCO

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- spoke about the range of 100 households for our newest specialists up to 600 households for senior specialists.

After the presentation, it was open for more questions and discussion.

- MM talked about her specific situation in that the rent for the other units at the property she lives in are lower than hers. She wanted to know if that was legal.
 - HASCO explained how Tax Credit properties work. In that having units that rent for lower than fair market prices and being aimed at low-income household are able to charge more for voucher holder families. The idea being that since the households are assisted, the voucher can provide more subsidy.
- MM asked if HASCO saw more changes coming to provide more assistance for participants in finding places to live?
 - HASCO provided more information about the Community Services department and their role in helping people with finding new places to use their voucher if they are moving, or new voucher holders.
- When discussing the change in department structure, MM spoke about the positive changes she has felt in communication from HASCO. Like night and day in terms of a faster response.
- MM observed that the trickiest part of the RAB is getting participants to attend and give their input.
- MM asked about her specific situation where she lived, about if a rent increase is too high. What would she do then?
 - HASCO informed her more about the rent increase process. The landlord must give notice to both the resident and HASCO of a rent increase. HASCO reviews the rent increase for rent reasonableness, but also checks that the rent increase is within the limits allowed for Tax Credit properties.
- The last question MM asked was what she could do as a resident to help HASCO.
 - HASCO thanked her for being at the RAB, and recommended she continue being a good tenant, and following the rules of the HCV program as she has. But also to spread the word about the RAB and other opportunities to be involved in the process of helping HASCO create goals for the future of our programs.

The meeting ended at 2pm

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Resident Advisory Board

Thursday, November 2nd, 2023

Teams Meeting

The RAB meeting was RSVP'd to by a program participant, however they were unable to attend due to an emergency. Sarah Max, Director of Internal Legal Affairs, Jenisa Story, Chief Operating Officer, Jodie Halsne, Director of Tenant Based Assistance, and Sara O'Neill, TBA Administrative Specialist attended.

The presentation began 5:05pm

Jodie ran through the presentation for the people who attended.

After the presentation, SM began the discussion commenting that her department, Internal Legal Affairs, would like to offer any assistance they can in helping TBA (Tenant Based Assistance) achieve our goals. They also have ideas from the legal side they would be happy to give. They hope to deepen the connection and work together between departments.

SM also spoke about an interest in long term plans regarding NOFOs (Notice of Funding Opportunities). Explore more about possibly looking at new plans for new funding opportunities, or re-examining our current policies. Also offered support from the legal team in terms of research or applications. JH discussed that HASCO has most vouchers, save Faircloth vouchers. She explained the hesitation to get into these vouchers because they are tied to Public Housing. Something HASCO no longer participates in.

SM, JH, and JS discussed more about fair housing, VAWA, and how best to train staff in these areas. Finally, the group ended on the topic of trauma-informed care. How it helps the staff, but will also best support our clients.

The meeting ended 6:07pm

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Resident Advisory Board

Wednesday, November 29, 2023

HASCO Office/Microsoft Teams meeting

This additional RAB meeting was scheduled when several HASCO participants reached out with interest because they received the flyer by mail later than the initial RAB meetings. The meeting took place in Grand Canyon meeting room, with some attendees participating through Microsoft Teams.

HASCO participants M [REDACTED], J [REDACTED], S [REDACTED], M [REDACTED], L [REDACTED], K [REDACTED], S [REDACTED], G [REDACTED], K [REDACTED], Y [REDACTED], and B [REDACTED] were present at the HASCO office. HASCO employees Chad Hansen, Erika Santos, Lewis Kizanis, Hannah Valadez, Jenisa Story, Marcus Showalter, Tanya Rodriguez, and Pamela Thompson attended in the office as well. HASCO participants A [REDACTED], C [REDACTED] and C [REDACTED], M [REDACTED] attended through Microsoft Teams alongside HASCO employees Sara Haskell, Debbie Krick, Serjay Shevchuk, Jessica Merritt, Troy Burke, and Stephanie Jensen. TBA director Jodie Halsne presented with Sara O'Neill, TBA Admin Specialist taking notes.

The meeting began at 1:07pm. Jodie went through the presentation we have used for the previous two RAB meetings.

- When discussing the kinds of programs HASCO has, LK asked if it was required that households must have an elderly member to be eligible.
 - Jodie clarified that an elderly household member is not required to be eligible for the voucher. She went on to discuss more about the different programs that do have non-elderly, disabled requirements for example.
- Reasonable Accommodations were discussed more by participants, as well as CH providing additional information at the Fair Housing Manager.
- VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) were discussed as well. What makes something a VAWA situation, as well as HASCO's obligations under VAWA. Also went into some detail about landlords' VAWA obligations as well.
- The question of additional moving assistance came up from BI. "How do I get that?"
 - Jodie informed the participants that HASCO's budget for assistance is limited to the vouchers. However in some cases for certain types of vouchers, EHV for example, there may be additional assistance for the voucher holders.

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- Marcus, the Community Services Manager, and Hannah, Community Services navigator, spoke about their roles in finding extra assistance or support for voucher holders.
 - In the case of issues with landlords, third party mediation was discussed as well. Many participants expressed concerns with their landlords and shared those experiences.
- As we neared the end of the presentation, Jodie spoke about the future resident portal and the plans about changing the way paperwork is turned in.
 - Participants seemed interested/excited about the possibility of less paper and mailing.
 - It was asked how the process would work for participants if they did not have computers or were not interested in using the resident portal.
 - Jodie explained that this is the direction HASCO is hoping to go, so in those cases, Reasonable Accommodations can be used if people are unable to use the portal. She also highlighted the hope for having a kiosk in the main office for participants to use for paperwork as well.
 - She stressed that there will be much testing on this process, and more info to come as it becomes available.
- Jodie finished the presentation and opened up the meeting to questions and discussion.
- SM is currently going through the process of moving and she talked about her struggles.
 - She said she would have benefited from additional resources (ie moving fees, help finding good places to rent, etc)
 - SM spoke about coming across landlords who don't accept Section 8 or turned her away because of her voucher.
 - Jodie reiterated that landlords in Washington state cannot say no S8 participants, but that doesn't mean it doesn't happen.
 - Spoke about working with HASCO's landlord liaison to better inform local landlords about the law.
 - In this conversation, it was suggested that perhaps a handout should be created and given to participants to provide to landlords with more of this sort of information. FAQs included as well.
 - Along similar lines, another participant asked what they should do if they have faced multiple rejections for units due to the voucher. – HASCO reminded the participants that they do have the option to report these landlords to the Washington Department of Commerce or HUD's Fair Housing contingent for discrimination.
- LK stated that she doesn't believe HASCO's Core Values are followed because HASCO doesn't help maintain people being housed.

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- She expanded on this by saying HASCO does not provide a list of places that accept Section 8 – Jodie again explained the Source of Income law for Washington state, since landlords are not allowed to not accept Section 8, there is not a list HASCO could provide of landlords in the county.
- HASCO should provide legal advice regarding landlords and their rights as a tenant. CH and HV discussed some resources for guidance on landlord/tenant relations for legal related means.
- The homeownership assistance program was asked about in the Teams chat from AC.
 - JH spoke about this program and the reasons for discontinuing it at HASCO. She also spoke about how unlikely it is for HASCO to bring this program back.
- Inflation and the struggles tied to that was discussed.
 - LK spoke about how housing has “eaten up” a bigger portion of her monthly income and that it is hard to keep up.
 - In response to the question about why HASCO cannot go up \$1 for example on the budget for the voucher, JH explained our payment standard and HUD policies about how much the PHA can provide in assistance.
 - In certain cases if there is a unit that the participant needs to lease up in but the cost is over the CAPs, the unit might be approved for the voucher with an RA.
 - JH also discussed utility allowances and what HASCO can provide assistance for.
- A question posed in the Microsoft Teams chat about having a landlord who has not fixed a maintenance issue for the last year. What is the procedure for this?
 - JH spoke about the process of special or emergency inspections HASCO can do if needed. And if repairs are still not made in the allotted time, HASCO can move forwards toward abatement. JH clarified for the participants that the landlords cannot penalize the tenant for HASCO’s unpaid rent portions in times of abatement.
- In response to questions about dealing with abusive or negligent landlords – JH talked more about the landlord liaison as well as MS stating community services may have some lists of resources.
 - JH also discussed more about the process of barring landlords from working with HASCO.

The meeting ended at 2:30pm

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