

FREQUENTLY ASKED SHIP QUESTIONS

State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program



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These SHIP Clips focus on the SHIP special needs requirements. A minimum of 20 percent of the 2013-2014 SHIP funding allocated under SB 1852 must be used to serve persons with special needs as defined in 420.0004(13) of the Florida Statutes. Additionally, the first priority of this 20 percent is to serve homeowners with development disabilities by providing home modifications, including technological enhancements and devices which will allow homeowners to remain independent in their own homes and maintain their homeownership.

Although there is a priority for homeowners with Developmental Disabilities, the fundamental requirement is to document that 20 percent of the 13/14 allocation is spent

providing rental or homeownership assistance to households that include one or more household members with special needs.

SHIP staff is encouraged to network with service provider agencies in the community.

These agencies maintain waiting lists of clients needing affordable rental housing, accessibility modifications, home repairs and other housing assistance. Each SHIP jurisdiction has received emailed lists of agencies working with individuals with developmental disabilities, persons with disabling conditions, survivors of domestic violence, and youth aging out of foster care. You may request these contacts from the Florida Housing Coalition at 850 878-4219.

In at least 8 instances, SHIP jurisdictions are offering rental assistance. Some are offering a rent deposit strategy and others are using existing strategies that offer rental rehabilitation and accessibility modification.

Q. What types of strategies are SHIP jurisdictions using to comply with the special needs requirement?

A. Prior to receiving 13/14 funds, each city and county SHIP office was required to provide Florida Housing with a summary of its special needs plan. A review of these plans reveals that the most common approach involves an owner-occupied rehabilitation strategy. SHIP administrators are offering applicants with special needs priority placement on their waiting lists for general repairs as well as accessibility modifications like widened doorways and accessible bathrooms.

Some jurisdictions have proposed other special needs plans. A handful of jurisdictions are working with existing strategies in their local housing assistance plans designed to support local agencies that are housing providers for individuals with special needs. The 13/14 SHIP allocation may not be expended on new construction activity, but some SHIP offices are repairing or expanding existing special needs housing in their areas.

Q. How should I document that an applicant has one or more household members with a special housing need? Should a household member obtain a doctor's letter?

A. Add a 'yes or no' question to your SHIP application about whether any household member has a special need according to the statutory definition. A doctor's letter is not required. Instead, Florida Housing will allow SHIP staff to rely on the records of other agencies that are providing applicants with services based on their special needs. In general, SHIP staff will accept signed statements from state and local agencies including the Department of Children and Families, local offices of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Centers for Independent Living and Arc offices. The statement should in-

dicate if the SHIP applicant is eligible for services from the agency and should be signed by an agency staff person.

SHIP staff should request that applicants with developmental disabilities (DD) provide written documentation from the agency from which they have been determined eligible to receive services. An applicant not currently receiving services may provide written documentation that he or she has been “determined eligible” to be placed on a waiting list. For all others not receiving services and not on a waiting list, request written documentation that the person was referred by an agency that serves persons with developmental disabilities.

Individuals with disabling conditions are another category of persons who have special needs. In some cases, you may simply obtain an award letter that documents that the person receives disability benefits from Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program or the Veterans Administration. Count this financial assistance when calculating total household income. Individuals with disabling conditions—defined in 420.0004(7) Florida Statutes may have a mental illness, a substance abuse disorder, or a chronic physical illness or disability. In all cases, their special needs status may be documented with a signed letter from an agency providing them with services.

Young adults formerly in foster care are an additional category of persons who have special needs. These applicants are discharged from foster care at the age of 21—recently increased from 18—but may receive aftercare and transitional support services until they are 23. The Florida Department of Children and Families contracts



with 18 community-based care lead agencies across the state that manage and deliver services to those aging out of the foster care system. The only way to document that an applicant is a member of this category is for SHIP staff to collect a signed statement that the applicant was referred by an agency that is providing support. The written proof provided by agency staff should list the transition services the applicant is receiving, which may include participation in the Road to Independence Program, which provides financial funding for youths formerly in foster care to continue their education.

Q. What documentation is required for survivors of domestic violence?

A. SHIP staff should request written documentation in the form of a letter from a victim service provider, attorney, or medical professional. The letter must state that the professional has helped the applicant address incidents of domestic violence. The professional must state in the letter that he or she believes that the incidents of abuse are real. Both

the applicant and the professional must sign, and the statement must declare that both the applicant and the professional are signing “under penalty of perjury.” This simple signed statement will suffice to document applicants who are survivors of domestic violence.

Some survivors are currently receiving services that include emergency shelter, safety planning, counseling, case management, and child assessments. SHIP staff may obtain the signed statement from agencies providing these services. The Florida Department of Children and the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence have provided SHIP offices with contact information for 42 certified centers in Florida. [HNN](#)

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT THE SHIP PROGRAM? Free telephone technical assistance is available to help you successfully implement your SHIP funded work. Call the Florida Housing Coalition’s SHIP hotline at (800) 677-4548, M-F 8:30-5:00.