



# FREQUENTLY ASKED SHIP QUESTIONS

## State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program



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THESE SHIP CLIPS FOCUS ON SPECIAL NEEDS COMPLIANCE. FOR A SECOND CONSECUTIVE YEAR, THE SHIP ALLOCATION COMES WITH A REQUIREMENT TO RESERVE FUNDS FOR APPLICANTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS. PRIOR TO RECEIVING 2014/15 FUNDS, EACH CITY AND COUNTY SHIP OFFICE MUST PROVIDE FLORIDA HOUSING WITH A SUMMARY OF ITS SPECIAL NEEDS PLAN.

**Q. What is required to comply with the SHIP special needs requirement?**

**A.** Details are included in the following proviso language from the Appropriations Act, for the 2014/15 SHIP appropriation:

“From the funds in Specific Appropriation 2247, each local government must use a minimum of 20 percent of its allocation to serve persons with special needs as defined in section 420.0004, Florida Statutes... The first priority of these special needs funds must be to serve persons with developmental disabilities as defined in section 393.063, Florida Statutes, with an emphasis on 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 (DD), the fundamental requirement is to document that 20 percent of both the 2013/14 and 2014/15 allocations are spent providing rental or homeownership assistance to households that include one or more household members with special needs.

When ranking which SHIP applicants will receive assistance first, homeowners with DD receive top priority. Second priority is for applications in which a household member other than the head of household has DD. Third priority is received by other applicants who meet some aspect of the statutory definition of special needs, including elderly applicants and others with disabling conditions, survivors of domestic violence, and youth aging out of foster care.

**Q. What are ways to increase the number of applicants with special needs that request SHIP assistance? Are there groups in our community that can help with this outreach?**

**A.** In the past year especially, SHIP staff has been networking statewide with service provider agencies in Florida’s communities to increase the number of special needs applications they receive. The Coalition’s website [www.flhousing.org](http://www.flhousing.org) includes lists of the agencies working with individuals with developmental disabilities, persons with disabling conditions, survivors of domestic violence, and youth aging out of foster care.

The Coalition’s 2013 conference included a well-attended workshop on using SHIP for special needs. SHIP staff learned that the local ARC offices and Centers for Independent Living in their communities maintain lists of homeowners with disabilities who need accessibility renovations. More recently, the Florida Housing Coalition has shared a SHIP update and contact information with individuals with DD and those who offer support services.

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

**A.** The most common approach involves owner-occupied rehabilitation. Some projects include barrier removal for applicants with accessibility needs in the kitchen, bathroom, entrances and beyond. In other cases, SHIP provides only general housing repairs, not accessibility modifications. In all cases, however, the entire amount

of SHIP assistance provided to an applicant with special needs counts toward compliance with the 20 percent requirement. While most repair assistance is provided to homeowners, a handful of SHIP jurisdictions offer rental rehabilitation and accessibility modification.

Assisting applicants with special needs can take many forms, and interesting stories abound of recent special needs assistance (see article on page 25):

- Clay County is assisting residents with DD through the rehabilitation of group homes.
- The City of Sunrise offers homeowners with disabilities home repair and accessibility modifications through its Architectural Barrier Removal program.
- The City of Cape Coral received a 2013 SHIP Award at the Coalition's conference for the community organizing and SHIP purchase assistance it provided to a buyer with a spinal cord injury.

SHIP jurisdictions have had varying degrees of success locating applicants with Developmental Disabilities. In communities that are not able to dedicate an entire 20 percent of funds for applicants with DD, SHIP may assist applicants with other special needs. For example, SHIP may help finance the development or rehabilitation of a shelter for survivors of domestic violence. SHIP may also assist youth aging out of foster care by constructing or repairing a transitional housing facility. Both survivors and youth might also benefit from rent and utility deposits or possibly purchase assistance.

**Q. Do any of the constraints contained in the 2013/14 allocation apply to the 2014-15 allocation?**

**A.** No. The 2013/14 allocation did not come from the Sadowski Local Government Trust Fund monies; it was a portion of the Attorney General Bank Settlement Funds and therefore had a number of requirements that were outside the SHIP statute, including a prohibition on new construction activities. The 2014/15 alloca-

tion is from SHIP funds and may be expended on new construction of rental and homeownership units. This opens the door for SHIP to be leveraged with funding sources like Housing Credits for rental new construction. In this way, SHIP funds could help finance a large rental property, for example, where SHIP assisted rental units are reserved for special needs residents. Other leverage sources for new construction come from Florida Housing, which has announced several recent Requests for Applications (RFAs) involving housing for individuals with special needs.

**Q. How should we document our compliance with the special needs requirement? What should be added to an applicant's file or included on the SHIP annual reports?**

**A.** Florida Housing has provided detailed guidance on how to document the files of applicants who meet the definition of special needs. SHIP staff must also check details about special needs to monitor compliance with the 20 percent requirement. TRAKSHIP, the SHIP tracking spreadsheet used by many SHIP staff, has been updated for special needs compliance. The SHIP annual reports due in September will require an interim update on the 2013/14 allocation. This 2013/14 report includes a new Form 5 reserved for special needs data about the types of assistance provided, the types of special needs of recipients and dollar amounts expended.

**Q. Does the Florida Housing Coalition offer additional resources on this topic?**

**A.** Yes, several resources are available by emailing [chaney@flhousing.org](mailto:chaney@flhousing.org), including training materials and a recording of a 2013 special needs compliance webinar. The Coalition has assembled lists of contacts for foster care service agencies and domestic violence shelters. We can offer a range of assistance, from emailing a list of special needs statutory references and answering questions by phone, to scheduling a site visit for more detailed planning related to SHIP compliance. **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.