



RENTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

P.O. Box 2316 • Renton, WA 98056-0316
Office 425/226-1850 • Fax 425/271-8319

GRIEVANCE HEARING PROCEDURE

A copy of this policy shall be posted in the admissions office and provided to the tenant at the time of leasing. A summary of the procedure will be included in every notice of decision sent to an applicant or tenant.

1.0 RIGHT TO A HEARING

Upon the filing of a written request as provided in these procedures, a tenant shall be entitled to a hearing before a Hearing Officer.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Grievance Procedure, the following definitions are applicable:

- A. **"Grievance"** shall mean any dispute, which a tenant may have with respect to the Renton Housing Authority's action or failure to act in accordance with the individual tenant's lease, or Authority regulations, which adversely affect the individual tenant's rights, duties, welfare or status. Grievance does not include any dispute a tenant may have with the Authority concerning a termination of tenancy or eviction that involves any criminal activity that threatens the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of the Authority's public housing premises by other tenants or employees of the Authority; or any violent or drug-related criminal activity on or near such premises. Nor shall this process apply to disputes between tenants not involving the Renton Housing Authority or to class grievances.
- B. **"Complainant"** shall mean any tenant whose grievance is presented to the Renton Housing Authority in accordance with sections 3.0 and 4.0 of this procedure.
- C. **"Elements of Due Process"** shall mean an eviction action or a termination of tenancy in a State or local court in which the following procedural safeguards are required:
 - 1. Adequate notice to the tenant of the grounds for terminating the tenancy and for eviction;
 - 2. Right of the tenant to be represented by counsel;
 - 3. Opportunity for the tenant to refute the evidence presented by the Housing Authority including the right to confront and cross examine witnesses and to present any affirmative legal or equitable defense which the tenant may have; and
 - 4. A decision on the merits.

- D. **"Hearing Officer"** shall mean a person selected in accordance with section 4.0 of these procedures to hear grievances and render a decision with respect thereto.
- E. **"Tenant"** shall mean the adult person other than a live-in aide:
 - 1. Who resides in the unit and who executed the lease with the Renton Housing Authority as lessee of the premises, or, if no such person now resides in the premises,
 - 2. Who resides in the unit and who is the remaining head of household of the tenant family residing in the unit.
- F. **"Resident Organization"** includes a tenant management corporation.
- G. **"Promptly"** (as used in section 3.0, and 4.0 (D)), shall mean within the time period indicated in a notice from Renton Housing Authority of a proposed action, which would provide the basis for a grievance if the tenant has received a notice of a proposed action from the agency.

3.0 PROCEDURES PRIOR TO A HEARING

Applicant denial, lease enforcement and other such decision notices will advise the family of their right to request a grievance hearing and to do so they must submit a written grievance hearing request within fourteen (14) calendar days of the date of the notice.

Any tenant grievance not related to a decision notice shall be promptly and personally presented, either orally or in writing, to the Renton Housing Authority main office so that the grievance may be discussed informally and settled without a hearing. A summary of such discussion shall be prepared within ten (10) business days and one copy shall be given to the tenant and one retained in the Authority's tenant file. The summary shall specify the names of the participants, dates of the meeting, the nature of the proposed disposition of the complaint and the specific reasons therefor, and shall specify the procedures by which a hearing under these procedures may be obtained if the tenant is not satisfied.

4.0 PROCEDURES TO OBTAIN A HEARING

4.1 REQUEST FOR HEARING

The tenant shall submit a written request for a hearing to the Renton Housing Authority main office within fourteen (14) calendar days from the date of a notice of decision that allows for a grievance hearing, or from the date of the summary of a discussion pursuant to section 3.0. The written request shall specify:

- A. The reasons for the grievance; and
- B. The action or relief sought.

4.2 SELECTION OF A HEARING OFFICER

A grievance hearing shall be conducted by an impartial person appointed by the Renton Housing Authority other than a person who made or approved the action under review or a subordinate of such person.

4.3 FAILURE TO REQUEST A HEARING

If the tenant does not request a hearing in accordance with this procedure, then the Renton Housing Authority's notice of decision or disposition of the grievance under section 3.0 shall become final. However, failure to request a hearing does not constitute a waiver by the tenant of the right thereafter to contest the Renton Housing Authority's action in disposing of the complaint in an appropriate judicial proceeding.

If the tenant can show good cause why there was failure to proceed in accordance with section 3.0 the provisions of this subsection may be waived by the Housing Authority's Executive Director.

4.4 ESCROW DEPOSIT

Before a hearing is scheduled in any grievance involving the amount of rent as defined in the lease which the Renton Housing Authority claims is due, the tenant shall pay to the Renton Housing Authority an amount equal to the amount of the rent due and payable as of the first of the month preceding the month in which the act or failure to act took place. The tenant shall thereafter deposit monthly the same amount of the monthly rent in an escrow account held by the Renton Housing Authority until the complaint is resolved by decision of the Hearing Officer. Amounts deposited into the escrow account shall not be considered as acceptance of money for rent during the period in which the grievance is pending. In extenuating circumstances, the Renton Housing Authority may waive these requirements. Unless so waived, the failure to make such payments shall result in a termination of the grievance procedure. However, failure to make payment shall not constitute a waiver of any right the tenant may have to contest the Renton Housing Authority's disposition of his grievance in any appropriate judicial proceeding.

4.5 SCHEDULING OF HEARINGS

Upon the tenant's compliance with this section the Hearing Officer shall promptly schedule a hearing for a time and place reasonably convenient to both the tenant and the Renton Housing Authority. A written notification specifying the time, place and the procedures governing the hearing shall be delivered to the tenant and the appropriate agency official.

5.0 PROCEDURES GOVERNING THE HEARING

The tenant shall be afforded a fair grievance hearing, which shall include:

- A. The opportunity to examine before the grievance hearing any Authority documents, including records and regulations that are directly relevant to the

hearing. The tenant shall be provided a copy of any such document at the tenant's expense. If the Renton Housing Authority does not make the document available for examination upon request by the tenant, the Renton Housing Authority may not rely on such document at the grievance hearing.

- B. The right to be represented by counsel or other person chosen as the tenant's representative and to have such person make statements on the tenant's behalf;
- C. The right to a private hearing unless the tenant requests a public hearing;
- D. The right to present evidence and arguments in support of the tenant's complaint, to controvert evidence relied on by the Authority or development management, and to confront and cross examine all witnesses upon whose testimony or information the Renton Housing Authority or development management relies; and
- E. A decision based solely and exclusively upon the facts presented at the hearing.

The Hearing Officer may render a decision without holding a hearing if the Hearing Officer determines that the issue has been previously decided at another hearing.

If either the tenant or Housing Authority fails to appear at a scheduled hearing, the Hearing Officer may postpone the hearing for up to five business days or determine that the missing party has waived their right to a hearing. Both the Renton Housing Authority and the tenant shall be notified of the Hearing Officer's decision. This decision shall not waive a tenant's right to contest the disposition of the grievance in an appropriate judicial proceeding.

The following accommodation will be made for persons with disabilities:

- A. The Renton Housing Authority shall provide reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities to participate in the hearing. Reasonable accommodations may include qualified sign language interpreters, readers, accessible locations, or attendants.
- B. If the tenant is visually impaired, any notice to the tenant that is required by these procedures must be in an accessible format.

6.0 INFORMAL HEARING PROCEDURES FOR DENIAL OF ASSISTANCE ON THE BASIS OF INELIGIBLE IMMIGRATION STATUS

The participant family may request that the Renton Housing Authority provide for an informal hearing after the family has notification of the INS decision on appeal, or in lieu of request of appeal to the INS. The participant family must make this request within 30 days of receipt of the *Notice of Denial or Termination of Assistance*, or within 30 days of receipt of the INS appeal decision.

7.0 DECISION OF THE HEARING OFFICER

The Hearing Officer shall prepare a written decision, together with the reasons therefor, within fourteen (14) business days after the hearing. A copy of the decision shall be sent to the tenant and the Renton Housing Authority. The Authority shall retain a copy of the decision in the tenant's folder. A copy of such decision with all names and identifying references deleted shall also be maintained on file by the Renton Housing Authority and made available for inspection by a prospective complainant, his or her representative, or the Hearing Officer.

The decision of the Hearing Officer shall be binding on the Renton Housing Authority who shall take all actions, or refrain from any actions, necessary to carry out the decision unless the Renton Housing Authority's Board of Commissioners determines within reasonable time, and promptly notifies the complainant of its determination, that:

- A. The grievance does not concern Renton Housing Authority action or failure to act in accordance with or involving the tenant's lease or Authority regulations, which adversely affect the tenant's rights, duties, welfare or status;
- B. The decision of the Hearing Officer is contrary to applicable Federal, State, or local law, Authority regulations, or requirements of the Annual Contributions Contract between the Authority and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

A decision by the Hearing Officer or Board of Commissioners in favor of the Renton Housing Authority or which denies the relief requested by the tenant in whole or in part shall not constitute a waiver of, nor affect in any manner whatsoever, any rights the tenant may have to a trial do novo or judicial review in any judicial proceedings, which may thereafter be brought in the matter.