

Memorandum

To: Community Development Committee

From: Caroline Gregerson

Date: 8/7/2020

Re: Approval of detailed process around Housing Quality Standards for homeless agencies receiving funding from CDBG-Covid Funds.

Background:

The CDC Committee approved several grants to various agencies for Covid-19 related work.

For homelessness the following criteria was approved:

“Agency to allow City to accompany an HQS inspection or have City staff perform rental unit inspection to ensure it is not found to be unfit for human habitation and meets City of La Crosse minimum standards for being suitable environment for safe and healthy living.ⁱ Landlord name/address shall also be release to City to ensure property is not on a chronic nuisance list or has outstanding orders to correct. This is for any beneficiary that receives rental assistance from agency, as part of this program. “

Staff is requesting the following modifications around this process, cognizant of risk for staff during Covid and in learning more about the processes for each individual agency:

1. Couleecap already ensures that its units meet Housing Quality Standards and its staff are trained to conduct these inspections. **Recommendation:** Request copies of the Inspections and staff will review them. Request Couleecap also take photos of the units and provide those, as part of the review process.
 2. Catholic Charities uses another standard called Minimum Standards for Permanent Housing. A review of these standards would indicate that these to would be the Committee’s criteria of establishing minimum standards. Staff do not receive specific training. While City Hall is closed and staff are being encouraged to work from home, staff will request a copy of these standards and photos or video of the unit. Staff will review these and follow up with concerns. Once City staff are able to return to the office environment, a staff member will accompany the inspections in-person, until staff are satisfied with the inspections being performed by the Agency. Thereafter, paper copies and photos will asked to be provided.
 3. Independent Living Resources will be supporting individuals to find their own housing or connecting them to Catholic Charities or Couleecap. In the cases where ILR is providing a rental subsidy to the person, a city staff will be contacted to assist in conducting an inspection.
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