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## Utah County may get extra cash to help low-income renters

Delay » Housing Authority to apply for extra funds

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The Salt Lake Tribune

Salt Lake Tribune

Updated: 08/04/2009 12:26:49 PM MDT

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Utah County residents relying on Section 8 housing subsidies may be one step closer to keeping their financial assistance. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development officials have told the Utah County Housing Authority to apply for funding that -- if received -- would allow the agency to keep 125 families on its rolls.

Last month, those households received letters notifying them that their Section 8 subsidy would end on September 1. Now, the families are being told that they will be covered for another month.

"We want to be cautiously optimistic here," said Gene Carly, executive director of the Utah County Housing Authority.

In the Section 8 program, renters typically pay 30 percent of their income on rent. The housing authority uses federal dollars to cover what remains.

Normally, a housing agency can assume a certain number of families will leave the program each month. But during these difficult economic times, fewer families left and more needed even greater financial help as their income declined. At the same time, Section 8 HUD dollars have shrunk.

Community leaders have voiced concerns that without financial aid many of these families could become homeless.

The issue has drawn national attention as agencies scramble to resolve their financial quandaries. HUD sent 2,400 letters to housing authorities last week on possible funding solutions. The federal office asked agencies to let them know by August 14 if low funding may force them to eliminate families.

But one benefit from the ongoing crisis is the increased awareness about the importance of Section 8 housing, said Tara Rollins, the executive director of the Utah Housing Coalition.

"I think the federal government really needs to hear the need for housing and how it affects [people] when they cut programs," she said.

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