# Table of Contents

**Introduction** ....................................................................................................................... 3

**Preparations for Opening Your Waiting List Online** .................................................... 3
  - Advertising and Outreach .................................................................................................... 3
  - Electronic Outreach .......................................................................................................... 3
  - Lists That Open and Close ............................................................................................... 3
  - Keeping Your List Open .................................................................................................... 4
  - Eligibility Requirements ................................................................................................. 4

**Collecting Applications** ................................................................................................... 4
  - Collecting Pre-Applications Online ................................................................................ 4
  - Using WaitListCheck to Collect Applications ................................................................ 4
  - Alternative Methods of Collection .................................................................................. 5

**Reviewing Applications** .................................................................................................. 5
  - Third Party Waiting List Software .................................................................................. 6

**Providing Status Information** .......................................................................................... 6

**Conclusion** .......................................................................................................................... 7

**Appendix A: Sample Web-based Public Notice** .............................................................. 8

**Appendix B: WaitListCheck Fact Sheet**

**Appendix C: Export File Specifications**
Introduction

Opening a waiting list can be a stressful and difficult event. New technologies and the widespread acceptance and availability of the Internet have created new opportunities to improve operations, reduce costs and provide more personalized service to clients applying for housing.

Why use the Internet to perform typical Waiting List functions?
- Faster and easier
- Less expensive
- More applications can be accepted with minimal effort
- Increase in the quality of data
- Not subject to hours of operation
- More convenient than office visits

This white paper discusses best practices for opening and managing a waiting list using the Internet and HAPPY’s WaitListCheck Online Application and Status Systems.

Preparations for Opening Your Waiting List Online

Advertising and Outreach
It is important to consult your Admin Plan before opening your list for information on your agency’s established waiting list policies and procedures. At a minimum, your advertisements must include information on how to apply, the date and time the waiting list will be opening and closing, and HUD’s fair housing logo. Your advertisements must be placed in publications that reach “those least likely to apply” – defined as the disabled, elderly, minorities, and those that do not speak English.

Electronic Outreach
In addition to print advertisements, it is recommended that you add an electronic notice to your agency or local government website. Once posted, you can electronically distribute this information by sending links to local papers and advocacy groups. A sample electronic notice is included as Appendix A.

Lists That Open and Close
Based on your housing needs, your agency may wish to open your waiting list(s) only for a specified amount of time. You must allow limited but ample time – approximately 2 to 4 weeks – for applications to be submitted.

To promote fairness when opening your list for a limited time, your agency should use a lottery system to rank your applications after the list has closed. For lists that open and close, it is strongly recommended that your agency not use “application date and time” to rank your applications. This method provides an advantage to those with the Internet at home and can cause a panic mentality and large spikes in usage on the website due to the rush of people trying to apply first.
Keeping Your List Open
If your Waiting Lists are continuously open, it is recommended that your agency use “application date and time” (and optionally preferences) to rank your applications.

Eligibility Requirements
It is important to explain all eligibility requirements upfront so applicants are aware of them when applying. Ensure that you do not promise assistance at any time and stick to your published policies exactly to prevent any issues. Common eligibility requirements include:

- Income Limits – list the maximum income levels for each list based on family size
- Drug/Crimes – include a statement regarding crimes that would prohibit applicants from receiving housing assistance
- Citizenship – applicants must be United States citizens
- Preferences – you must define what criteria will give an applicant a “preference” over others on the list. It is recommended that you use a local preference to discourage applicants from all across the country applying to your waiting list.

Collecting Applications

Collecting Pre-Applications Online
Collecting applications online is a more advanced method that will provide immediate results for applicants and eliminate data entry for your agency. Applicants will be able to complete the form online 24/7 and get instant confirmation of acceptance, or rejection if they had already applied. Online collection provides precise time and date stamping so you will know exactly when the application was submitted.

Additionally, there will be less need to review applications for completeness because built-in error checking will ensure all required information is filled-out before the system will accept the application.

Using WaitListCheck to Collect Applications
HAPPY’s WaitListCheck system, which is hosted and maintained completely by HAPPY Software, provides an easy way to collect applications online. We will provide your agency with a website link that you can place on your Agency’s webpage or in advertisements. Applicants simply follow the provided link to access and complete your agency’s preliminary application.

You can customize the application to include your agency’s logo and set additional configuration options right from your online WaitListCheck administrative account:

- Waiting List(s) Names
- List Open and Close Dates
- Application Instructions
- Eligibility Questions
- Preferences (by list)
Once the application has been accepted, a receipt will be displayed with customizable instructions on how to check status. (See Providing Status Information.)

**Alternative Methods of Collection**
Alternative methods of applying should be provided for those who cannot apply online. Most agencies will require those who cannot apply online to mail-in a request for a paper preliminary application.

**Reviewing Applications**

Once applications have been collected, your agency can electronically review the applications online in WaitListCheck or you can download the application data for further processing. The process for downloading depends on the software system you use to manage your Waiting List.

**HAPPY’s Waiting List Software**
HAPPY Software offers a comprehensive in-house Waiting List component to manage your waiting lists. When using HAPPY’s Waiting List, your application data will be automatically download and imported into the software nightly. All imported applications will have a status of “Online Application” and will be available for further review and processing by your housing staff. The following flowchart demonstrates this process.
**Third Party Waiting List Software**

If your agency is using another software program to manage your waiting list, you can manually download the data into a standard file format for possible upload into your software system. The flowchart below describes this process. For complete specifications, please refer to the WaitListCheck Fact Sheet included as Appendix B.

---

**Providing Status Information**

Once applications have been collected, your agency can provide status information to your applicants online, eliminating phone calls to your agency. HAPPY provides an online status system, [www.waitlistcheck.com](http://www.waitlistcheck.com), where tenants can logon anytime to check their application date/time and status. You can optionally provide the position number and the estimated wait time to the applicant. If an applicant has a question about their status, there is a link to email the designated waiting list contact at your agency. This will allow your staff to handle waiting list requests on their schedule.

The WaitListCheck system also allows for “announcements” to be displayed to all applicants that are active on a specific list. For example, you can display a notice stating “We will be mailing update forms on 7/1/2010. Please return form immediately to remain active on the list”. Each applicant will see this notice when they log into the WaitListCheck system.
For those applicants without access to the Internet, HAPPY also provides an automated IVR phone response system where applicants can get their status information by entering their information over the phone.

It is recommended that your agency include the policy for status updates on the receipt that displays after the application has been accepted. You should post that status information will only be available online and that phone calls will not be accepted.

**Conclusion**

Making the transition to an online application system does require some planning, but the rewards can be great. HAPPY Software’s WaitListCheck system is a complete application management system that will streamline the often daunting process of opening your waiting list. Good luck moving forward with this exciting technology. As always, contact us if you need assistance.
Appendix A: Sample Web-based Public Notice

Sample Housing Authority

Public Notice of 2010 Waiting List Opening
Public Housing and Section 8 Rental Assistance

The Sample Housing Authority announces the acceptance of pre-applications for housing assistance during the dates of March 1, 2010 through March 19, 2010.

Section 8 assistance covers the rent portion that exceeds approximately 30% of an eligible family’s monthly income. Public Housing is owned and operated by the Housing Authority and rents are also based on income. Any and all income-eligible households may submit a pre-application. Acceptance and/or assistance are based on income verification, eligibility requirements and local preference factors. Maximum income levels, based on family size are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Size</th>
<th>Section 8</th>
<th>Public Housing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$33,100</td>
<td>$42,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>37,800</td>
<td>48,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>42,550</td>
<td>54,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>47,250</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>51,050</td>
<td>64,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>54,800</td>
<td>69,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>58,600</td>
<td>74,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>62,350</td>
<td>79,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pre-applications will be accepted online only between March 1, 2010 and March 19, 2010.

To apply, click on the following link: Complete a Pre-Application.

You may apply using any computer with Internet access. Someone else may apply for you if you need help using a computer and many public libraries offer free computer access.

After you have successfully applied, you will receive a receipt with a confirmation number and instructions for checking your status online at www.waitlistcheck.com. Status information will only be available online.

Sample Housing Authority, 123 Main Street, Saratoga Springs, New York 12866
WaitListCheck

WaitListCheck is the revolutionary, automated system for online waiting list management. WaitListCheck allows agencies to accept applications online and provide applicants with the status information they want, without your agency ever having to pick up the phone.

Online Application Collection
- Eliminate the need to manually collect and enter application data
- Set application open and close dates
- Error-checking ensures accuracy
- Review applications before adding them to your waiting list
- Instantly view applications online

Easily Customizable
- Designated application website
- Customizable application
  - Include your agency's logo
  - Add up to 10 of your questions
  - Use different questions for different waiting lists
- Configurable preferences
- Customizable confirmation

Waiting List Status
- 24/7 access to status information
- Eliminate phone inquiries
- Optionally display estimated wait times and position number
- Upload data from multiple lists
- Replace costly IVR systems
- Automate documentation of address and family changes
WaitListCheck Demo Instructions

Try it out for yourself and see how easily your applicants can easily apply and get the status information they need. To view a guided demonstration, visit: www.happysoftware.com/demo/waitlistcheck.

Online Application Collection System:
1. Go to www.waitlistcheck.com/demo
2. Choose to complete the sample application in English or Spanish.
3. Enter required sample data and click “Submit”.
4. View receipt with instructions for checking status.

Online Application Status System:
1. Go to www.waitlistcheck.com
2. Enter the following information to log in as a sample applicant:
   • Year of Birth: 1975
   • Social Security Number: 123456781
3. View the page that displays sample waiting list status information.

IVR Phone System:
Applicants can also check their status over the telephone using our optional IVR phone system. To test the IVR system:
1. Dial 1-800-376-5058
2. When prompted, enter the following sample applicant information:
   • Social Security Number: 123456781
   • Year of Birth: 1975

Technical Information:
The WaitListCheck system consists of two parts:
• Online Application System
• Website for displaying applicant status information

The WaitListCheck system is entirely self-contained and requires no hardware or additional third-party software to be installed or maintained. The website is protected using industry standard SSL (Secure Socket Layer) technology and is hosted on dedicated servers in a secure data center. Data transferred from your Waiting List to the Web is accomplished via SSH (Secure Shell), an industry standard method for reliably and securely transferring files between computers over Wide Area Networks (Outbound Port 22 needs to be open to allow this). All files to be transferred are first automatically compressed and encrypted with 256-bit encryption. All data transfer is performed automatically at night with no necessary user intervention. Data presented on the Web is maintained in an industry-standard SQL database. All sensitive data, including Social Security Numbers, is encrypted at the database field level with 128 bit encryption. The upload/download of waiting list information to/from HAPPY Software to WaitListCheck is completely automated. The upload/download from third-party systems must be performed manually.

Product specifications subject to change – 2/11
File Specifications – WaitListCheck

Online Application System
Application data is downloaded from our online WaitListCheck application system in five separate tables in Comma-Separated Value (csv) format.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application Table</th>
<th>Family Mem Table</th>
<th>Application Contacts (92006) Table</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KeyApplication</td>
<td>KeyMember</td>
<td>KeyContact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AgencyID</td>
<td>KeyApplication</td>
<td>KeyApplication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WNumber</td>
<td>NameLast</td>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WName</td>
<td>WILNumber</td>
<td>NameFirst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WILInstructions</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>SSN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>NameFirst</td>
<td>DOB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NameFirst</td>
<td>NameLast</td>
<td>Sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NameLast</td>
<td>MailAddress1</td>
<td>Disabled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MailAddress1</td>
<td>MailAddress2</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MailAddress2</td>
<td>MailCity</td>
<td>IncomeAnnual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MailCity</td>
<td>MailState</td>
<td>IncomeChecking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MailState</td>
<td>MailZIP</td>
<td>IncomeSavings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MailZIP</td>
<td>LegalAddress1</td>
<td>IncomeRealEstate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LegalAddress1</td>
<td>LegalAddress2</td>
<td>IncomeOther</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LegalAddress2</td>
<td>LegalCity</td>
<td>AssetsChecking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LegalCity</td>
<td>LegalState</td>
<td>AssetsSavings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LegalState</td>
<td>LegalZIP</td>
<td>AssetsInvestments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LegalZIP</td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>AssetsRealEstate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>OtherContact</td>
<td>AssetsOther</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OtherContact</td>
<td>OtherType</td>
<td>QuestionIDs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OtherType</td>
<td>SSN</td>
<td>OptOut92006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSN</td>
<td>DOB</td>
<td>PreviousAgencyID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOB</td>
<td>EmancipatedMinor</td>
<td>TSMmodified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EmancipatedMinor</td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>TSCreated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Online Status System
Only TAB Separated (tab), Text (txt), and Comma-Separated Value (csv) format files can be uploaded to the WaitListCheck online status system. TAB Separated (tab) is the preferred file format. Values in Comma-Separated Value (csv) files must be enclosed by quotation marks. The contents of the file must be in the following order. Columns marked with an asterisk (*) must contain a value.

*Column 1: Social Security Number
Column 2: Applicant ID
*Column 3: Applicant Date of Birth (yyyymmdd)
Column 4: Waiting List Code
Column 5: Applicant Position
Column 6: Applicant Status
*Column 7: Application Time Stamp (yyyymmddhhmmss)
Column 8: Application Key (required for applications collected online)

Specifications subject to change – 6/11