

Owner News

For property owners and managers participating in the Chicago Housing Choice Voucher Program



Message from the Chief Executive Officer

As part of CHA's ongoing efforts to improve customer service, program administration, and cost effectiveness, several important program changes have been made to the Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan (the program's governing document). These changes are targeted to simplify your interactions with CHA and to

make our policies more transparent and accommodating for Property Owners.

These program changes directly affect you, so I encourage you to read this issue carefully. I also look forward to sharing more about the updated Administrative Plan at the upcoming Landlord Symposium on June 20. Call (312) 935-2600 to reserve your space today as seating is limited.

As always, contact the CHA Call Center — *your front line resource* — at (312) 935-2600 if you have any questions.

Kind regards,

**Lewis Jordan, President and Chief Executive Officer
Chicago Housing Authority**

New Inspection Standards

The updated Administrative Plan includes new inspection standards outlined below:

New Minimum Temperature Requirements

Units are now required to be able to maintain a minimum heat of 68 degrees Fahrenheit from September 15 to June 1. Windows and doors must be weather tight.

Changes in Type of Locks Permitted

To ensure sufficient egress for tenants and their guests in case of a fire, double key deadbolts and skeleton keys are prohibited.

Utilities Must Be on for Inspections

Owners are now responsible for ensuring that all utilities are on at the time of the initial inspection, even if the tenant will be the responsible party for utilities after the lease commencement. Not only is this a program requirement, it is good business practice. Maintaining the heat in a vacant unit reduces the risk of frozen pipes or other weather-related damage. Keeping the electricity and water on makes it easier to repair and clean your unit as you prepare for your new tenant. It also demonstrates to prospective tenants that the unit is in good, working order.

Read page three inside for information about additional policy changes related to inspections.

Read All About It !

Administrative Plan Updates Discussed Inside

Headliners to Speak at June Landlord Symposium

CHA is pleased to announce the second *Landlord Symposium* will be held at *The Field Museum* on June 20th — just a few short weeks away. This year's event promises to be even more spectacular than the last. This premier educational forum will offer Property Owners exclusive access to and valuable insight from national and regional industry professionals.

This semi-annual event will address the entire range of property management services Landlords perform on a daily basis, ranging from tenant screening to eviction. Lewis Jordan, CHA's President and Chief Executive Officer, will give the opening remarks.

Guest speakers will include:

The Honorable Joan Powell, Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County, will discuss the legalities of the evictions process.

Chicagoland Apartment Association representatives from both the national and regional branches will discuss how to be successful in today's rental market, and the educational benefits of real estate trade organizations.

Other leading professionals will discuss forecasted trends in the rental market and proven tenant screening methods.

The Field Museum will provide space for vendor booths offering valuable information, services, and discounts to all attendees.

Admission to the event is free and includes general admission to The Field Museum following the event.

*Space is limited for this exclusive event.
RSVP by Wednesday, June 10 to reserve your space.
CHA Landlord Hotline (312) 786-3602
Email ownerinfo@thecha.org*

CHA LAUNCHES UPDATED ADMINIS

For more than ten years, the Chicago Housing Authority has had the privilege of the *HUD Moving-to-Work Agency* designation. This prestigious designation is only awarded to 1% of all housing authorities nationwide. It allows CHA to manage the Housing Choice Voucher Program differently from other agencies in that we can customize particular aspects of the program in order to streamline operations and improve customer service. Revising the Administrative Plan allows us to achieve this objective.

Rent Your Unit Quickly

Vouchers are now only valid for 90 days from date of issuance. *Tolling* has been eliminated which makes it even more important to have your unit rent-ready at the time of initial inspection.

Participants may shy away from selecting your unit if it does not appear to be ready for immediate move-in. A rent-ready unit will be more likely to pass initial inspection and in turn expedite the move-in process.

Choose Your Tenant Wisely, New Guidelines for Moving In & Out

CHA will deny a family permission to make an elective move during the family's initial lease term. CHA will also limit the number of elected moves after the initial term to once in any 12 month period. This policy change benefits Property Owners by providing a greater assurance that your unit will remain occupied. With this change, comes an increase in the importance of tenant screening.



Exceptions to this policy include:

- to protect the health and safety of a family member (e.g., domestic violence, sexual abuse, witness protection programs)
- to address an emergency situation over which the family has no control
- when a need for reasonable accommodations exists.

CHA's new policy requires families to give proper notice to both the landlord and CHA prior to moving and submitting an RTA. The notice must be in accordance with the lease. Families who move without proper notice or within the first year of their lease will be subject to termination proceedings.

Remember, Owners can always evict families for lease violation and file for eviction proceedings at any time during the leasing period. If eviction is the course of action for removing a family from the unit, state and local laws must be followed the same as for any market rate tenant. CHA's waiting list contains 40,000 families; therefore, getting another Family to rent the unit is very likely.

Attend the Landlord Symposium on June 20 to find out more about tenant screening and the eviction process from industry experts.

New Bedroom Standards Determine Unit Size & Subsidy Amount

A Participant's housing assistance/subsidy amount is based in part on the bedroom size designated on their voucher. The standard CHA uses to determine a Participant's bedroom size / subsidy amount size has changed. This is an important change to be aware of, particularly for tenants who are moving from one unit to another or changing their family composition.

The new standard is:

- ◇ one bedroom for the head of household and spouse **plus**
- ◇ one additional bedroom for every two additional household members.

For example, if a family consists of the head of household, a girl, and a boy; the family would receive a two bedroom voucher — one bedroom for the head of household, and one bedroom for the two children to share.

This new standard will be used to determine the bedroom size and subsidy amount for all new admissions. This new standard will also apply to families:

- who move after June 1, 2009. The new bedroom standard will apply at the time of the move.
- whose household composition decreases, resulting in a smaller unit size. The new bedroom standard will apply at their next reexamination.
- whose household composition increases, and as a result exceeds the maximum number in a household (refer to table at right). The family will be required to move in order to prevent over crowding.

If the above scenarios do not apply, the Participant will continue to have their assistance calculated based on the subsidy standards in place *before* June 1, 2009.

Please refer to the table below outlining the new standards to see how this change may affect your tenant(s).

Exceptions to these new bedroom size standards include reasonable accommodations for family members.

New Bedroom Standards, June 1, 2009

# of Bedrooms	Minimum # in Household	Maximum # in Household
0	1	1
1	1	2
2	2	4
3	4	6
4	6	8
5	8	10
6	10	12

ADMINISTRATIVE PLAN FOR HCVP JUNE 1

Abatement Period for Failed Inspections

In an effort to encourage Property Owners to make timely repairs, the period during which a unit can remain in abatement due to failed inspection is now 60 days. Once a unit has been in abatement for longer than 60 days due to failed inspections, a *HAP Termination Notice* will be mailed to the Property Owner. At that time, the tenant will be asked to attend a moving briefing and will be issued moving papers in preparation for them to move.

Property Owners can easily avoid this by proactively maintaining the unit and promptly making all required repairs. Please be reminded that CHA is prohibited from paying HAP to you for any period during which a unit is under abatement. It is also illegal to require a tenant to pay out of pocket any HAP amounts withheld due to an abatement.

Marginal Unit Policy Eliminated

Property Owners will benefit from elimination of the marginal unit policy because regardless of the property's condition, you will now be given an opportunity to make the necessary repairs. The marginal unit policy, which has been eliminated, prevented certain units from being approved to participate in the HCV program based upon their condition.

It is still important that the unit be rent-ready and in good condition at all times. This is especially important since *tolling* has been eliminated which has reduced the length of time a Participant has to locate and secure housing.

Should a unit fail inspection, the time frames allowed for repairs and the consequences for failing to do so are outlined in the inspection results letters sent after each inspection.

CHA Now Offers Owner Briefings in Spanish

As part of CHA's continued outreach to our Spanish-speaking community, we are pleased to now offer *Owner Briefings* in Spanish on a quarterly basis. Additionally, this newsletter, and the Participant's newsletter (*Going Places*) are also available in Spanish. Contact the Call Center at (312) 935-2600 for more information or to obtain a copy of these documents in Spanish.

CHA continues to offer Spanish speaking representatives at both the Call Center and all Satellite Offices.

Neighborhood & Site Unit Policy Eliminated

Another change to the Administrative Plan eliminates the *site and neighborhood policy*. Previously, this policy would "fail" units based upon the number of abandoned buildings or vacant lots on the same block as the inspected unit.

Property Owners will benefit from this change if their unit is in good condition, but the units surrounding it are not.

It is important to note that a unit can still fail an inspection due to hazardous site conditions of adjacent properties. Please be proactive as a participating Property Owner, and report any of the items listed below to the proper authorities:

- vacant buildings
- improperly maintained lots
- drug or other criminal activity
- other situations that may be hazardous to your tenants.



Extensions to Make Repairs

In some situations, extensions may be granted in order for a Property Owner to make repairs to a unit. These include circumstances where needed parts are not available and cannot be delivered in a timely manner or when weather conditions prohibit repairs. Note: extensions **cannot** be granted if the needed repair creates an imminent threat to the health and safety of the tenant(s).

All requests for extensions must be submitted in writing and will not be granted until all other repairs are made. For questions regarding repair extensions, please contact the HCV Inspections Department at (312) 895-2409.

Remember to Match Your Unit Size to the Participant's Voucher Size

When renting to an HCV family in the future, please take care to match the size of the unit you are renting to the bedroom size designated on the Participant's voucher. The maximum rent that CHA can approve for a family is based in part on the bedroom size of their voucher. While it is permissible for a family to rent a unit larger than their voucher size, it often requires the Owner to accept a lesser contract rent.

Visit us online at www.thecha.org

Si usted necesita esta publicación en español por favor llame al (312) 935-2600.

Free Computer Classes

Need to learn how to use your computer? How about Microsoft Word or Excel? If so, then visit Mercy Housing Lakefront's Employment, Training and Education Centers. They offer two convenient locations including South Loop and North Side.

Computer classes focus on software and internet usage as well as an introduction to basic computers. Learn basic skills to use a personal computer — a great starting point for individuals with little experiencing using computers.

The *Intro to Microsoft Word* course will help those needing to improve their word processing skills. This class teaches how to create and edit documents such as resumes and letters. The north side location also offers typing classes that teach keyboard skills and data entry.

North Side Location

Harold Washington Apartments
Computer Technology Center
4946 N. Sheridan Road
Chicago, IL 60640

Weekly Courses Offered

Intro to Microsoft Word
Intro to Microsoft Excel
Basic Computers
Typing

Please register on-site, as phone registration is not permitted.

Contact: Shawn Stephenson
(312) 447-4601

South Loop Location

South Loop Apartments
Computer Technology Center
1521 S. Wabash Avenue
Chicago, IL 60605

Class Schedule

Intro to Microsoft Word
Tues. & Wed. 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Intro to Microsoft Excel
Thurs. & Fri. 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Courses are taught in 6 week sessions, but mid-session enrollment is permitted. Call to register.

Contact: Cedric Nesbitt
(312) 447-4681



Being an HCVP Partner Has Significant Benefits

In these troubled economic times, renting to CHA Voucher Holders can be more beneficial than ever. Housing Assistance Payments provide a stable and reliable source of income. Even though you are responsible for enforcing your lease, CHA is effectively your partner because we enforce program violations which may result in termination from the program. Program violations include lease violation for failure to pay their share of the rent or damaging your unit.

Annual HQS inspections provide you additional opportunities to assess the condition of your property. Units receiving HCVP assistance are generally in better condition than their neighboring properties, and thus more likely to hold their value in the real estate market. They are also less likely to be cited for City Code Violations.

Learn about the forecast of the real estate market from local and national experts at the Landlord Symposium at The Field Museum on June 20, 2009.