

For Property Owners and Managers participating in the Chicago Housing Authority's Housing Choice Voucher Program



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



The last time I saw many of you was in early October at CHA's Third Annual Owner Symposium. Thank you to all of you who attended the event. I hope you found it as helpful as I did. I enjoyed speaking with many of you and learning about your perspective on the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program.

Since then, the weather has cooled. Soon many of our homes will be filled with loved ones as we take time to enjoy the holidays and prepare ourselves for the New Year. I want to wish you a very happy and safe holiday season and a successful 2011.

And speaking of success, we know that the success of CHA's Housing Choice Voucher Program is directly related to the success of our partners—you, our participating Property Owners and Managers. As you'll read in this issue of Owner News, we're instituting a number of improvements including our new Owner Services department launching in 2011 to better help you navigate and work with the HCV Program.

We've made these changes based on your feedback in an effort to make your dealings with the HCV Program more efficient. In addition, we're offering additional services to help our partners become better Property Owners and Managers.

Thank you for continuing to help us provide quality housing to low-income families throughout Chicago.

Sincerely,

Lewis A. Jordan
President and CEO, CHA

INSIDE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

NEW Owner Services department—Page 2

CHA to pay HAPs via direct deposit only beginning April 2011—Page 2

NEW \$40 fee for third inspection—Page 3

Third Annual Owner Symposium a success: see what you may have missed—Page 3

Bedbugs: How to handle them—Page 4

ENHANCED PROPERTY LISTING SERVICE

CHA has partnered with ILHousingSearch.com to offer participating Property Owners and Managers a more robust property listing service. Never has it been more convenient for Owners and Property Managers to list their vacant units and promote these units to CHA's Voucher Holders and others moving to Chicago.

To preview the user's (a tenant looking for a place to live) experience with the new listing service, visit www.thecha.org/units. As you'll see, the service offers more detailed listings, pictures of the properties and a more sophisticated search function.

Best of all, the service makes registering and posting your available properties quick and efficient: you can either register online at www.thecha.org/post or call 877-428-8844. Don't wait, fill your vacancies today.

New Owner Education Materials Now Available



To get your copy of our updated **Property Owner Reference Manual** and our new **HQS Inspection Guidebook**, attend one of our bimonthly Owner Briefings.

For a schedule of Owner Briefings, visit:
www.thecha.org/ownerbrief

OWNER SERVICES

CHA recognizes Property Owners and Managers as an integral part of the success of its HCV Program. To continue to enhance this partnership, CHA has developed a new Owner Services department that will launch in January 2011. In addition, CHA will introduce new programs and requirements in an effort to recruit more, qualified Owners to the Program as well as provide incentives to current Property Owners and Managers to encourage them to improve their properties, tenant relations and business overall.

Centralized Owner Services Office

CHA will centralize Owner Services at the HCVP Central Office. Located at 60 E. Van Buren St., the Central Office will serve as a “one stop shop” for all HCV Program Property Owners’ and Managers’ needs.

For example, at the Central Office, Property Owners and Managers will be able to register as new Owners with the Program, change their contact information, submit change of ownership/management forms and resolve any HCV Program issues—no matter what regional office (South, Southwest or West) serves their ZIP code.

The new Owner Services office will provide you with a single point of contact for all Program-related business.

New Eligibility Requirements

Starting Jan. 1, 2011, all incoming Property Owners will be required to follow the new registration process as outlined below:

1. **Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA) Packet Submission**—Property Owner/Manager submits a complete and accurate RTA Packet to CHA
2. **Owner Eligibility**—CHA determines if the Property Owner/Manager is eligible to participate in the HCV Program by conducting the following:
 - a. Criminal background check—*beginning 2nd Quarter 2011*
 - b. Credit check (specific to foreclosures)—*beginning 2nd Quarter 2011*
 - c. Verification that the property’s taxes are current
3. **HQS Inspection and Rent Determination**—CHA will schedule and conduct an HQS inspection and determine whether the Owner’s asking rent is appropriate/reasonable
4. **Owner Briefing**—All new Property Owners/Managers must attend an Owner Briefing; if a Property Owner/Manager already participates in the HCV Program, CHA still recommends that they attend a briefing

5. **Execute Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract**—The Property Owner/Manager signs a HAP Contract with CHA to initiate payment of CHA’s portion of the rent, **disbursed via direct deposit**.

Owner Excellence Program

Another addition to Owner Services, as mentioned in the last issue of *Owners News*, is the Owner Excellence Program, which will officially launch in early 2011.

Members of the exclusive Owner Excellence Program can expect to enjoy the following benefits:

- Elite lounge
- Staff devoted exclusively to members’ business
- Inspections privileges
- And more

Membership is not automatic. Members will need to be certified in property management, receive additional education from CHA, have leased a unit to a Participant for more than one year, be in good standing with the HCV Program and more.

CHA realizes that not all HCVP Property Owners or Managers will be willing or able to meet the requirements for entrance into the program. Members will have proven themselves to be extraordinary partners in the HCV Program by providing excellent housing and service to their HCV Program tenants. They will have demonstrated a commitment, beyond just the four walls of their property, to the larger community in which their property resides.

Register Today for Direct Deposit!

If you’re not already registered for direct deposit with CHA, you **must** sign up no later than March 15, 2011.

Beginning **April 1, 2011**, CHA will make all payments to Property Owners via direct deposit.

Register Today!

Download and complete the Direct Deposit Authorization form available at

www.thecha.org/forms.

PASS INSPECTIONS THE FIRST TIME

Avoid the hassle of re-scheduling HQS inspections and paying CHA's new \$40 fee for a third inspection (second re-inspection) by passing your inspection the first time.

Follow these key tips to prepare for an HQS inspection:

1. Look over the new HQS Inspections Guidebook (attend an Owner Briefing to pick one up along with a new Property Owner Reference Manual)
2. Review the list below of the top ten reasons a unit fails an HQS inspection
3. Walk through and evaluate the unit before the inspection

Top 10 Reasons Units Fail HQS Inspections

1. Inoperable light fixtures and electrical outlets
2. Lead-based paint as seen in visual assessments made for units built prior to January 1, 1978 or where children under the age of six are present
3. Missing or inoperable smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
4. Utilities (i.e. gas, electric or water) not in service
5. Inoperable windows and broken or missing window locks
6. Exposed wiring
7. Discharge pipe missing from hot water heaters
8. Evidence of infestation
9. Damaged, loose or missing handrails which are required when there are four or more consecutive steps (not including the landing)
10. Cracked or missing electrical cover plates

CHA now charges Property Owners a \$40 fee if the Owner is at fault for a failed HQS re-inspection.

Please note the following:

- If the **original HQS inspection** is **failed** (regardless of whether it is the Owner's or tenant's fault), **no fee** is charged and a re-inspection will be performed
- If the **HQS re-inspection** is **failed** (and the failure is the **fault of the tenant**), **no fee** is charged
- If the **HQS re-inspection** is **failed** (and the failure is the **fault of the Owner**), the **\$40 fee** will be charged and must be paid before any subsequent re-inspection will be scheduled

The Owner must pay the fee online via PayPal at www.thecha.org/inspections before CHA will schedule a second re-inspection.

THIRD ANNUAL OWNER SYMPOSIUM

Attendees seemed to agree, CHA's Third Annual Owner Symposium held at beautiful Navy Pier on Oct. 2 was the can't-miss educational event of the season for HCV Program Property Owners and Managers. If you couldn't attend this year, we hope you'll make it next year.

More than 700 Property Owners/Managers and their staff participated in this year's event. Attendees heard from such leaders in housing as CHA CEO Lewis A. Jordan and Director of HUD's Illinois Office of Public Housing Steve Meiss. In addition, attendees enjoyed a continental breakfast, sit-down luncheon and multiple educational sessions on topics such as inspections, bedbugs, property management and rent determination (some sessions were so popular that only standing room was available).

third annual

- owner
- symposium

Thank you to our Sponsors/Exhibitors

Access Living

BATH FITTER

Beautiful Finishes

Chicagoland Apartment Association

Community Investment Corporation

Fields Insurance Services

Manage Chicago

National Apartment Association/NAAEI

Prudential Rubloff

Safer Pest Control Project

Screening Reports

Socialserve.com

Spanish Coalition for Housing

Trustwave

Windows of Opportunity

YES Conservation



To check out this year's highlights and view pictures from the event, visit the official Owner Symposium website at www.CHAOwnerSymposium.org. Plus, make sure that you check back frequently for updates and registration information for the 2011 Owner Symposium. You won't want to miss it!

FEAR AND LOATHING IN BED: BEDBUGS

Throughout the nation, cities have experienced an increase in reports of bedbug infestations – and Chicago is no exception.

Despite their name, they don't just gather in, around and under mattresses and box springs. They will hide any place that is near a bed: in the cracks of furniture, behind picture frames, inside electric appliances, in between the pages of books and even within a clock radio.



Photo Courtesy of the Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Public Health Image Library

The adult bugs are about the size of an apple seed and will hide anywhere they can until it's time to feed – on human blood. They feed by inserting their beak-like structure – called a stylet – into a

human's skin and sucking the blood into their body.

The bug swells as it ingests the blood and, once it's full, returns to its hiding place until it needs to feed again.

Some people mistakenly associate bedbugs with bad housekeeping. This is a myth. A website about bedbugs provided by the EPA, www.epa.gov/bedbugs, states that bedbugs are not attracted to dirt and grime. Bedbugs can be found anywhere there is a place to hide. In fact, bedbugs have turned up in some surprising places: a New York District Attorney's office, a Times Square Movie Theater, Elle Magazine offices, Goldman Sachs offices and the Empire State Building.

Bedbugs travel by hitching a ride on items like clothing, furniture and bedding, as well as, backpacks, briefcases and other luggage. To prevent bringing the bugs into your home, experts recommend that people not take in discarded furniture, thoroughly examine any furniture they do bring in and inspect clothing and luggage for evidence of the bugs after a trip.

While bedbugs are not known to carry any diseases, victims of an infestation may have an allergic reaction to their bites resulting in itching and blisters or red bumps. In addition, the stress from an infestation may prevent a victim from sleeping well which can result in mood changes and reduced alertness.

A number of indicators might alert you to a bedbug infestation at one of your properties. One may be residents complaining of unexplained bites, although not all people react to the bites in the same way. Another is stains. Light brown to black stains from the bedbug colony's excrement might soil mattresses, sheets and other bedding. In some cases, the bedbugs' bites may result in blood stains on pillows or sheets.

Responding quickly and efficiently to an infestation is crucial to protecting your property investment.

The Safer Pest Control Project, an organization dedicated to reducing the impact of pesticides on human health, provides response checklists for Property Owners/Managers and tenants that suspect a bedbug infestation at www.spcpweb.org/resources.

If you have reason to believe one of your units may have a bedbug infestation, you should contact a pest management professional immediately. The EPA provides tips on choosing a pest control company in its Citizen's Guide to Pest Control and Pesticide Safety. To view, visit www.epa.gov/bedbugs/#hiring. The National Center for Healthy Housing, a nonprofit corporation dedicated to creating healthy and safe homes for children, has also developed a guide about bedbug control methods and their effectiveness. You can find the report "What's Working for Bed Bug Control in Multifamily Housing?" at www.nchh.org.



When is the best time to call the CHA Customer Call Center?

You will experience the shortest wait time when you call on **Wednesday, Thursday or Friday**.

However, if your matter is urgent, you should call immediately.

CHA Customer Call Center: **312-935-2600**

CHA NEEDS YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS

In a continuing effort to reduce its impact on the environment, CHA is looking to send more HCV Program correspondence via e-mail. To do this, however, we need your help.

Please send an e-mail to OwnerInfo@thecha.org from your e-mail address to update your account.

If you don't have an e-mail address, there are a number of companies such as Google, Yahoo and Microsoft that offer e-mail services for free. To sign up, simply visit www.mail.google.com, www.mail.yahoo.com or www.hotmail.com. Don't have Internet access? Visit your local library or the Resource Center at any one of the HCV Program Regional Offices).

OWNER NEWS

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