

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



## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Ask any number of Chicagoans about the origin of our fair city's "Windy City," moniker, and you're bound to hear at least a couple different answers. I think that in 2011, our nickname has been especially relevant with the "winds of change" affecting a number of our city agencies.

The old adage "Change is the only constant," certainly applies to the city of Chicago over the last few months. We have witnessed not only the election of a new Mayor for the first time in two decades, but the appointment of a new Board Chairman at the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), the swearing-in of a new Cook County Board President, several close aldermanic races that resulted in run-off elections and the resignation of our police superintendent.

In January, you may have also noticed the changes in the names and faces of people you work with everyday as a part of the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. We made a number of changes to the organization of our HCV Program operations in an effort to make the HCV Program better, more efficient and, in the end, more mutually beneficial to Participants and Owners in the Program.

As you read on, you'll see that we've also developed a number of important updates and revisions to the HCV Program Administrative Plan. We've based these changes on feedback we've received from Owners like you and the families we both serve—changes such as new qualifications for current and prospective Owners, initiatives to improve your properties and guidance on who can be added to the household as a family member.

To find out how these changes will affect your business, I encourage you to continue reading this issue.

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**Reminder:** Be sure to save the date for the 4th Annual Owner Symposium on Saturday, Oct. 1, 2011. Mark your calendar now and be sure to register early for this exclusive event – space is limited and we're expecting a full house. We hope to see you there.

Sincerely,

**Lewis A. Jordan**, President and CEO, CHA

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Don't have an e-mail address or access to the Internet? **We can help.** Visit any one of our Regional Offices to get started.

## WHAT THE HCV PROGRAM ADMINISTRATIVE PLAN CHANGES MEAN TO YOU

### Changes Will Go into Effect June 1, 2011

As we strive to meet the needs of all involved in the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) continuously gathers feedback from Owners, Participants and other community members and uses these comments to update the HCV Program Administrative Plan. The Administrative Plan explains CHA policy for rules and regulations set by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The partners in the HCV Program – HUD, CHA, the Owner and the Participant – must abide by this policy.

In mid-May 2011, CHA will be presenting the revised Administrative Plan to the Board of Commissioners for final approval. The changes are effective June 1, 2011.

Below, we've summarized some of the changes that will have the most impact on Property Owners/Managers. For the full list of updates, please visit [www.thecha.org/adminplan](http://www.thecha.org/adminplan) and reference the chapter number listed in parentheses.

#### 1. Owner Qualifications (13-I.D)

Upon receipt of a Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA) Packet (to include a signed consent form), CHA will now conduct an enhanced screening of new and current (if not screened within the last 90 days) Property Owners for multiple items, such as:

- Property Taxes
- Criminal Activity
- Foreclosures
- Credit Checks – *Applicable to Owner Excellence Program members only at this time*

In addition, Owners must be signed up to receive their Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) via direct deposit. To avoid delays in payment or fees/penalties for non-compliance, Owners must immediately notify CHA of any changes to bank account information.

Finally, if an RTA is denied due to Owner qualifications, Owners may request a review of this decision.

#### 2. Heating Systems – Local Requirements (8-I.B)

This policy now states that as long as there is documented proof on file that an HQS inspection of the heating system within a multi-unit (4+) building passed within the last 12 months, further inspection of the heating system is not necessary for the remaining units in the building.

#### 3. Initial Inspection (8-II.B)

CHA is now authorized to use the previous “pass” result for a unit, if received within the last 90 days, when processing an RTA for a family to move. *This provision applies to Owner Excellence Program members only.*

#### 4. Self-Certification for Non-Life Threatening Emergencies (8-II.F)

In lieu of conducting a re-inspection and in accordance with the HQS Inspection Guidebook, CHA may accept written certification for non-life threatening emergencies as proof that the required repairs have been made. *This provision applies to Owner Excellence Program members only.*

#### 5. Moving Process Eligibility (10-I.C)

The HCV Program Administrative Plan now makes it explicit that CHA may deny a family permission to move if the next regularly scheduled re-examination is within 120 days. Participants may be required to complete the re-examination process before they are eligible to move to another unit. As always, Participants must give CHA and the Owner proper notice if they intend to move.

#### 6. Approved Family Members (3-I.B)

As of June 1, 2011, CHA will limit eligible family additions to include only:

- Birth, adoption or court-awarded custody/legal guardianship of a child
- Marriage, civil union or domestic partnership
- Reasonable accommodation
- Elderly parent(s)

## BE FIRST IN LINE FOR THE OWNER EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

Planning is complete! The Owner Excellence Program is expected to officially launch June 1, 2011. E-mail us at [excellence@thecha.org](mailto:excellence@thecha.org) to make sure you are first in line to apply for membership.

HCV Program Property Owners who qualify will reap the many rewards of membership including:

- Extended office hours
- An exclusive business center
- Dedicated staff
- Inspections privileges
- And more

Don't miss your chance to be recognized as an extraordinary partner in the HCV Program.

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE

We thank you for your patience and understanding over the past couple of months as we streamlined and improved a number of our HCV Program processes. Any significant change presents short-term challenges, and we appreciate the feedback and suggestions many of you provided during this time.

We know that these recent changes have already resulted in a more responsive and efficient HCV Program and we are confident that you too will realize the benefits of these new processes in the coming months, if you haven't already.

Finally, we want to extend our appreciation to the numerous Owners who visited us at the Property Owner Listening Forums held at the Regional Offices throughout February and March. During these sessions, we worked with you to resolve issues that had surfaced since the beginning of the year. We thank you for your partnership and patience and look forward to providing even more efficient service and the responsive customer service that is necessary to your success in the property investment business.

## GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS START WITH YOU

A great neighborhood is only as strong as the connections between its residents. Neighbors and other community members build those connections through communication and respect. As the Property Owner, you play a vital role in setting the tone for positive activity within the neighborhood. And, with summer fast approaching, now is a great time to get started by reaching out to your HCV Program families:

- Talk to them—ask about what's going on in the neighborhood and what concerns they have
- Attend a Chicago Police CAPS or block club meeting with them—visit [www.chicagopolice.org](http://www.chicagopolice.org) for more information and meeting schedules
- Invite them to join you at a Chicago Park District event—visit [www.chicagoparkdistrict.com](http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com) for a schedule of events

Taking steps like these helps strengthen connections within a neighborhood. Start today to help build a strong, safe, supportive community.



## 4TH ANNUAL OWNER SYMPOSIUM

If you attended the 2010 event, you know that it is the can't-miss educational event of the season – bringing insightful property management solutions to HCV Program Property Owners/Managers and staff.

The 4th Annual Owner Symposium will take place on Saturday, Oct. 1, 2011 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Navy Pier. At this year's event, we will provide you with the tools necessary to not only advance your property management skills but increase the value of your property.

Recognized experts will be on board to discuss topics such as:

- Property Management
- Evictions
- Inspections
- Property Renovations
- Mortgages
- Real Estate Market Projections

Plus, you'll have an opportunity to learn from your peers as well as vendors throughout Chicago and beyond.

Register today at [www.CHAOwnerSymposium.org](http://www.CHAOwnerSymposium.org). Once you're signed up, we encourage you to check the website often for updates on speakers, sponsors and other news about this exciting event.

## CNT ENERGY SAVERS CUTS COSTS IN MULTIFAMILY BUILDINGS

Owners of multifamily buildings in Lake and Cook Counties are saving on natural gas and electricity bills with help from the Energy Savers program. A one-stop energy efficiency shop operated by CNT Energy and the Community Investment Corporation (CIC), the program makes it easy for building owners to invest in energy efficiency improvements – reducing operating costs and helping to maintain affordable housing.

Energy Savers has helped local building owners make improvements in more than 3,000 housing units, cutting energy costs by an average of 30 percent. This results in a savings of approximately \$10,000 per year.

The program provides energy assessments, financial guidance, financing options, construction oversight and annual performance monitoring. First, the Energy Savers team from CNT Energy evaluates each building and helps owners identify the most cost effective energy efficiency improvements. CIC offers low-cost financing options and CNT Energy helps to oversee construction. This approach makes it easy for building owners to invest in upgrades that will pay off in lower electricity and gas bills.

Lou Sopic worked with the program to make improvements to three buildings in Chicago. He said the one-stop shop approach made it easy to get the job done.

“I would recommend it very strongly,” said Sopic. “The fact that you have someone who comes in and analyses the building and says these are the things that need to be changed, then, in conjunction with a lender, they can set up an arrangement so that can be paid for over time – it’s a great option for any building owner,” he said.

Sopic said he also appreciates the fact that the Energy Savers team works with building owners to help oversee work on their buildings.

“You also get some oversight of everything that’s going on, so that can be helpful,” he said. “That could be very useful for building owners, especially those that don’t have the technical expertise.”

Finally, the program provides annual performance reports that help building owners track their energy savings. If a building is not performing as expected, the team follows up to perform a tune-up and check for issues that might need to be addressed.

With help from CNT Energy and CIC, building owners are finding that energy efficiency is a smart investment.

For more information about the Energy Savers program go to [www.cntenergy.org/energysavers](http://www.cntenergy.org/energysavers).

## INSPECTIONS DEPARTMENT NOW LOCATED IN CHICAGO

Beginning in January 2011, CHA created a Chicago-based Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspections Department, replacing the former group that had been managing this process. In addition, a new online Web portal – [www.chainspections.org](http://www.chainspections.org) – is now available to provide you with results.

### Top 5 Reasons Units Fail HQS Inspections

1. Inoperable light fixtures and electrical outlets
2. Lead-based paint for units built prior to 1978
3. Missing or inoperable smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
4. Utilities not in service
5. Inoperable windows and broken or missing window locks

## TIPS FOR LISTING YOUR PROPERTY

The new property listing service available through CHA’s partnership with ILHousingSearch.com has proven to be a great success for many HCVP Property Owners and Managers. We’ve received feedback that the enhanced listing service makes it easier and more convenient for you to list your available properties. When you register a property it remains in the system until the unit is filled, so you avoid the hassle of re-listing your units each month.

Don’t forget. By signing into your account online at [www.thecha.org/post](http://www.thecha.org/post) or calling 877-428-8844, you can list new vacancies, re-activate a listing, update current listings that have been filled and add photos to increase the appeal of your properties to prospective renters.

If you have yet to register for this service, visit the website today. Don’t miss out on the quickest and most efficient way to list and promote your available properties.

## OWNER NEWS

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