Important Updates for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program

As of April 11, 2017, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has determined the Housing Authority's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program to be in a financial shortfall as a result of forthcoming funding reductions in Housing Assistance Payments (HAP). This designation has impacted the Housing Authority's HCV funding and mandated the implementation of cost-saving measures to manage this latest round of funding cuts accordingly.

Effective as of that date, the Housing Authority is denying a family's request to move to a "higher cost unit" or "higher cost area." A "higher cost unit" is a rental property in which the Housing Authority would have to pay a higher HAP amount due to a higher gross rent for the new unit. A "higher cost area" is where a higher HAP will be paid by the Housing Authority because more generous subsidy standards or higher payment standards are set in the jurisdiction of the receiving Public Housing Agency (PHA). Families that must move from their current unit as a result of a failed Housing Quality Standards inspection, or an owner's decision not to renew the lease, are not subject to this restriction. Reasonable Accommodations and victims of violence under the Violence Against Women Act will be assessed on a case by case basis. If you are planning to move, please ensure that it is necessary at this time. Inform your existing landlord that you may require more time in your current unit because of the Housing Authority's inability to approve a move with a higher cost HAP.

The Housing Authority remains committed to serve as many families as possible and does not want to displace families currently receiving assistance. At this time, the Housing Authority is working with existing HCV voucher holders to address federal funding reductions. If you have concerns about how this may affect you directly, please contact your Section 8 Housing Authority caseworker.

Every year, the Housing Authority submits an Administrative Plan to HUD for approval as an attachment to its Annual Plan. The Administrative Plan outlines the policies and operating procedures that govern the Housing Authority's administration of its Section 8 HCV rental assistance program.

Please take a moment to read the new Administrative Plan policy changes for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017-18 to stay informed as a Section 8 tenant. The Administrative Plan can be found at www.hacola.org.

1 Homeless Waiting List Preference
In accordance with the Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative action plan adopted on February 9, 2016, the Housing Authority’s homeless waiting list preference for expected voucher turnover will be increased to fifty percent in FY 2017-18, up from thirty-five percent in FY 2016-17.

2 Reduced Criminal Background Screening Standards and Terminations
When screening for program participation, the Housing Authority has reduced certain prohibitions related to criminal activity and will now only screen for the mandatory HUD standards related to admissions and continued occupancy. This policy change is in line with the County of Los Angeles Homeless Initiative plan, specifically Strategy B8, which aims at maximizing housing success rates for the chronically homeless. The Housing Authority will re-evaluate this policy to be consistent with Board adopted revisions to the Housing Authority’s homeless preference.

As such, HUD requires the Housing Authority to DENY assistance to applicants, new members being added to the household, and families porting into the Housing Authority in the following cases [24 CFR 982.553(a)]:

• Any member of the household has been evicted from federally-assisted housing in the last 3 years for drug-related criminal activity. HUD permits, but does not require, the Housing Authority to admit an otherwise-eligible family if the household member has completed a PHA-approved drug rehabilitation program or the circumstances which led to eviction no longer exist (e.g., the person involved in the criminal activity no longer lives in the household).
• The Housing Authority determines that any household member is currently engaged in the use of illegal drugs.
• The Housing Authority has reasonable cause to believe that any household member’s current use or pattern of use of illegal drugs, or current abuse or pattern of abuse of alcohol, may threaten the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises by other residents.

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Zero-Income Family Interim Re-examination

The Housing Authority is required to follow up with families reporting zero income until they establish monthly income to cover housing costs. An interim re-examination will be scheduled for families with zero income every 3 months until income has been established, up to once per quarter. After verification documentation is submitted, the Housing Authority will re-assess the tenant’s monthly rental portion to reflect this change in income. Families claiming to have zero income may undergo a credit review. The information contained in the credit report will be used to confirm the information provided by the family. Additionally, the Housing Authority may utilize records provided by other departments and agencies that have information about income sources of participants to confirm information provided by a family claiming to have zero income.

Seeking Section 8 Volunteers! 2018 Annual Plan

Have you ever wondered why the Housing Authority operates the way it does? Do you wish you could share your concerns or ideas about their rules and policies? Here is your opportunity to learn the answers to these questions and have your input heard. The Housing Authority is recruiting Section 8 program volunteers for its Resident Advisory Board (RAB) Committee that will assist with the 2018 Annual Plan process. The RAB provides the opportunity for Section 8 participants to present input on matters that affect them, including new policies and plans. After all, who knows better what you need, what you want, and what will assist you and your family the most? As a RAB Committee member, all you have to do is attend a minimum of one meeting each year that takes place in October/November. Should you wish to volunteer for this year’s committee, you may email AssistedHousingCompliance@hacola.org, or call (626) 586-1991 and express your interest. Be sure you provide your name, a contact phone number, and any questions you may have. A Housing Authority representative will contact you with details of about your role as a RAB Committee member.

TENANT TALK is a publication of the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles, which is dedicated to Building Better Lives & Better Neighborhoods. For questions regarding this newsletter, please contact TENANT TALK editor, at the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles, Assisted Housing Division, P.O. Box 1510, Alhambra, CA 91802 or at jazmin.faccuseh@hacola.org.