Important Information about Program Changes

The March 2013 federal budget cuts, known as the Sequester, reduced the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles’ (HACoLA) funding. To help manage this funding cut, the HACoLA has reviewed and made the following changes to its Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program.

Effective immediately: the HACoLA will deny moves to a “higher cost rental unit” within its jurisdiction. A higher cost unit is a rental property in which the HACoLA would have to pay a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) amount due to a higher gross rent for the new unit. Jurisdiction refers to the areas in which the HACoLA is authorized by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administer its Section 8 HCV Program.

The HACoLA will also deny moves for families who attempt to relocate to a “higher cost area” outside of its jurisdiction via portability. A higher cost area is a neighborhood or city where a higher HAP will be paid by the HACoLA because of more generous subsidy standards or higher payment standards in the jurisdiction of the receiving Housing Authority. Subsidy and payment standards differ for each Housing Authority. Before you request to have your case transferred to another Housing Authority’s jurisdiction, you may want to contact that Housing Authority to inquire about portability and their subsidy and payment standards.

The HACoLA does not want you and your family unnecessarily displaced if your unit cannot be approved. If you are planning to move, ensure that your move is indeed necessary at this time. Before you submit your lease termination notice, inform your landlord that you will require more time to secure a new unit if the HACoLA is unable to approve your request. Keep in mind that your landlord reserves the right to hold you to your vacate date stated in your lease termination notice. If you have submitted a Lease Termination Notice and have any questions regarding these changes and how they may affect you, please contact your case manager.

The HACoLA remains committed to serving as many families as possible with the limited funding available. At this time, we ask for your patience as the HACoLA looks for ways to cut costs and avoid abruptly terminating families from the program.

Requesting a Voucher to Move

The HACoLA no longer issues participants a voucher without first receiving a Lease Termination Notice.

Participants that now request a Voucher to search for rental housing must first submit a proper “Notice to Vacate” to both the HACoLA and the landlord.

If you are interested in moving from your current unit, you must submit a proper notice to both your landlord and the HACoLA. The notice must state the actual date you will be vacating your unit. California law requires that tenants give a landlord at least a 30-day notice to move. The HACoLA recommends you give at least a 60-day notice to move to allow for processing time. Once received, the HACoLA will review your file, and if needed, update your income and family composition. If you are found eligible to receive a Voucher, you will be scheduled for an appointment.

Don’t risk being homeless! If you vacate your assisted unit without proper notice to your landlord and the HACoLA, you will be in program violation, which may lead to the termination of your rental assistance.

Utility Reimbursement Payments

Utility Reimbursement Payments (URP) are only issued to eligible families to assist in covering utility expenses such as power, water, and trash services. If you are currently receiving URP in the form of a check from the HACoLA, you will soon be receiving your payment via a Government Prepaid Card that is similar to a bank debit card. The card will be issued by Bank of America along with instructions for activation. You may contact the bank directly if you have questions regarding the bank card. Any questions regarding the URP should be directed to your case manager.
Fair Housing Notice

If You Believe You Are A Victim Of Housing Discrimination Please Read Below

The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program is a federal program—administered by local public housing agencies—through which individuals with very low incomes, as well as the elderly and disabled, are provided with a Voucher that allows them to rent residences on the private market. The purpose of the Section 8 housing program is to provide housing to people who would otherwise not be able to afford it.

Under the federal Fair Housing Act and the California Fair Employment and Housing Act, a Section 8 participant is able to choose where to live. It is unlawful to discriminate in housing based on these factors: race, color, national origin, religion, family status, sex, or disability. If you rent or have been trying to rent a home or apartment and you believe your rights have been violated by a landlord, the city or county in which you live, or by an employee at HACoLA, you can file a complaint with the HACoLA, HUD, Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO), or the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH).

There are several ways to file a complaint:

1. To file a complaint with the HACoLA, you can write a letter including your name and address, the name and address of the person you are complaining about, the address of the house or apartment you were trying to rent or buy, the date when this incident occurred, and a short description of what happened, and mail it to:

   The Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles
   Assisted Housing Division
   PO Box 1510, Alhambra, CA 91802   OR

   Call the HACoLA at (626) 586-1966 and be prepared to provide the information requested above.

2. To file a complaint with HUD, you can log onto HUD's website at:
   http://www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/online-complaint.cfm;   OR

   You can call HUD toll-free at 1 (800) 669-9777; OR

   You can print out a form obtained from HUD's website at www.hud.gov and click on the File a Housing Discrimination Complaint link, complete it, and mail it to:

   Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity
   U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
   Room 5204, 451 Seventh St. SW
   Washington, D.C. 20410-2000; OR

   You can write a letter with the information requested above and mail it to the Fair Housing Hub for the Los Angeles County region:

   San Francisco Regional Office of FHEO
   U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
   600 Harrison Street, 3 Floor
   San Francisco, CA 94107-1387
   (415) 489-6524  1 (800) 347-3739  TTY (415) 436-6594

3. To file a complaint with the DFEH, you may call DFEH's Communication Center at 1 (800) 884-1684.
Section 8 Policy Changes: 2013 Administrative Plan

The HACoLA’s Administrative Plan outlines the policies that govern the administration of the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. The following policy changes were approved by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and became effective July 1, 2013.

1. Annual/Interim Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspection – Owner Self-Certification of Corrected Deficiencies

Each year, the HACoLA conducts an HQS Inspection of your unit to ensure that it is in compliance with minimum health and safety standards. The HACoLA now permits owners the option to clear owner related unit deficiencies by submitting a certification along with proof that confirms the deficiencies have been corrected rather than have an “in-person” follow up inspection. Please note that this option is only available for owner related deficiencies. The HACoLA will continue to conduct “in-person” follow up inspections to clear tenant related deficiencies. Examples of proof that should be submitted include picture(s) of the corrected item and/or an invoice or receipt detailing the repair. The certification and proof must be submitted before the date of the scheduled follow-up inspection. Once received, a supervisor will review the certification and proof to determine if no in-person follow up inspection is needed to clear the owner deficiencies. Owners will be contacted to discuss the outcome of the clearance submitted.

2. Carbon Monoxide Detectors

In 2009, the State of California passed the Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention Act (Senate Bill - SB 183), which is a law requiring owners to install carbon monoxide detectors in housing units that have attached garages, or appliances, fireplaces, or furnaces that burn fossil fuel, which includes gas. The HACoLA now requires owners to be in compliance with the State of California Carbon Monoxide law to pass an HQS inspection. For more information visit: http://www.fire.ca.gov/communications/communications_firesafety_carbonmonoxide.php

3. Registered Sex Offenders

In accordance with HUD regulations, the HACoLA does not admit people that are subject to a lifetime sex offender registration. If the HACoLA determines that a person subject to a lifetime sex offender registration was admitted to the program any time after June 25, 2001, the HACoLA will terminate the rental assistance of that person. If the persons is part of a family, the HACoLA will offer the family a chance to remove the person from their household composition. If the family is not willing to remove the person, the HACoLA will terminate the assistance of the entire family.

4. Shelter Plus Care (S+C) Program Transitions

The HACoLA administers the Shelter Plus Care (S+C) Program, which is a grant-funded rental assistance program that is designed to provide housing and supportive services on a long-term basis for homeless persons with disabilities.

Effective July 1, 2013, families assisted through the S+C Program that prove to no longer have a need for Supportive Services will be transitioned to the Section 8 (HCV) Program, if vouchers are available. Families will be required to meet Section 8 HCV Program eligibility requirements.

(continued on next page)
5. Changing the Head of Household designation for Applicants

When families register on a HACoLA waiting list, one member of the family is designated as the “Head of Household.” The Head of Household is the person responsible for the family and for making decisions on behalf of the family.

Effective July 1, 2013, families that are on the waiting list or are going through the application process may only transfer the “Head of Household” designation to a member of the family already listed as a “Spouse” (the marriage partner of the Head of Household) or “Co-Head” (an individual in the household who is equally responsible for the lease). Please note: this policy does not affect families that are already assisted through the HACoLA.

Families wanting to change their Head of Household designation must submit a written letter stating that they wish to transfer the status to their Spouse or Co-Head. If the original Head of Household is not available due to death or other absence from the household, the Spouse or Co-Head may submit a written request along with a death certificate or legal documents proving their right to the application.

Seeking Section 8 Volunteers!
2014 Annual Plan

Have you ever wondered why the HACoLA operates the way it does? Why it has so many rules and policies? Do you wish you could share your concerns or ideas about them? Here is your opportunity to learn the answers to these questions and have your input heard.

The HACoLA is recruiting Section 8 program volunteers for its Resident Advisory Board (RAB) Committee that will assist with the 2014 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?

All you have to do as a RAB Committee member is attended a minimum of one meeting each year that takes place in October/November. Should you wish to volunteer in this year’s Committee, you may email AssistedHousingCompliance@hacola.org or call (626) 586-1654 and express your interest. Be sure to provide your name and a contact phone number and any questions you may have. A HACoLA representative will contact you with details of your role as a RAB Committee member.