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NOTICE

COVID-19 HCV Program Changes

To: Participants, Landlords, and File - Harris County Housing Authority – Housing Choice Voucher Program

Subject: **UPDATE** - HCHA's Temporary Housing Choice Voucher Program Waivers – Effective April 10, 2020

In accordance with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development - COVID-19 Temporary Waivers issued for Public and Indian Housing (**Notice PIH 2020-13, REV-1**), the Harris County Housing Authority (HCHA) has implemented certain Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCV) temporary waivers to aid our residents in seeking, obtaining and maintaining housing during the operational challenges we all face due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Therefore, HCHA is exercising the flexibility afforded under the HUD temporary waivers to modify HCHA - HCV program practices and operations to prioritize mission-critical functions, to provide rental assistance, as we continue to assist our clients in addressing their housing needs. HCHA requests your patience as we implement these changes and modify our office operations, as we all do our parts to minimize the spread of and mitigate the health risks posed by COVID-19 to HCHA staff, families, landlords, and the communities at large.

Attached is the list of adopted HCHA waivers. Additional details regarding each adopted HCHA - HCV program waiver can be found on the HCHA website (www.hchatexas.org) under “**Temporary Changes to HCV program Administrative Plan – COVID-19**”.

Thank you for your cooperation. **HCHA's office will remain closed to visitation by the public until further notice.** HCHA staff is available to assist you. Please contact us by phone, fax or e-mail.

Sincerely,

Horace Allison, AIA
Harris County Housing Authority

Cc: Gerald Womack, HCHA Board Chairman
Debra McCray, HCV Director

Attachment



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Revised - COVID-19 Waivers adopted by the Harris County Housing Authority (HCHA)

Page #	Item	Summary	Effective	ending
4-10 (HCV-12)	Family Unification Program: Timeframe for Referral	HCHA is waiving the requirement that an eligible youth who has attained the age of 18 and not more than 2 years of age, who left foster care within 90 day. HCHA will accept referrals from the HAY Center of youths who will leave foster care within 120 days.	7/2/2020	12/31/2020
4-9 (HCV-10)	Family Unification Program (FUP) Youth Age Eligibility to Enter HAP Contract	HCHA is waiving the requirement that FUP youth cannot be more than 24 years of age and have not reached their 25th birthday. HCHA is replacing this requirement with "FUP youth cannot be more than 25 years of age and have not reached their 26th birthday". No extension needed	04/10/2020	12/31/2020
5-2 (HCV-2)	Information When Family Is Selected – PHA Oral Briefing	HCHA will conduct briefings by other means such as webcast, video call, expanded information packet. HCHA must ensure that the method of communication for the briefing is effective in communicating with each family member, including those with vision, hearing, and other communication-related disabilities, and those with persons with limited English proficiency requirements of the HVC Program. (extended to December 31, 2020)	04/10/2020	12/31/2020
7-2, 3 (HCV-5)	Enterprise Income Verification (EIV) Monitoring	HCHA is waiving mandatory Earned Income Verification (EIV) monitoring requirements. EIV data is overwritten, monthly or quarterly reports must be downloaded to preserve the data for a month or quarter. (extended to December 31, 2020)	04/10/2020	12/31/2020
7-2 (HCV-3)	Family Income and Composition; Annual Examination – Income Verification requirements	HCHA will forgo third-party income verification requirements for annual re-examinations, HCHA will consider self-certification as the highest form of income verification to process annual re-examinations. The Participant must complete a self-certification form. (extended to December 31, 2020)	04/10/2020	12/31/2020
7-2 (HCV-4)	Family Income and Composition; Interim Examinations	HCHA will forgo third-party income verifications and will consider self-certification as the highest form of income verification for interim re-examinations. The Participant must complete a self-certification form. (extended to December 31, 2020)	04/10/2020	12/31/2020
8-7 (HQS-10)	HQS Space and Security	HCHA is waiving the regulation requiring one bedroom for every two people where the HCHA wishes to assist a current participant that needs to add a member or members to the assisted household as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. This waiver does not apply to an initial or new lease. <i>The waiver will be in effect for the duration of the current lease term or one year from the date of this notice, whichever period is longer.</i> No extension needed.	Remains in effect one year from lease term or date of notice, whichever is longer	
8-11 - 12 (HQS-5)	Biennial Inspections	HCHA will temporarily delay Biennial Inspections for both HCV and PBV units; but will complete the inspection as soon as reasonably possible, but no later than 1 year after the biennial would have been required. No extension needed.	04/10/2020	12/31/2020
8-11 - 12 (HCV-8)	Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspections	HCHA will delay Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspections temporarily. HCHA must inspect the units as soon as reasonably possible when it is safe to do so. HCHA retains the right to conduct an inspection, and the use of the waivers does not relieve owners of their responsibility to maintain the unit in accordance with HQS. (extended to December 31, 2020)	04/10/2020	12/31/2020



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8-13 (HQS-6)	Interim Inspections	If an HQS reported deficiency is life-threatening, the HCHA must notify the owner of the reported life-threatening deficiency, and the owner must correct it within 24 hours of the HCHA notification or provide documentation that the deficiency does not exist. For non-life-threatening deficiencies, the HCHA must notify the owner within 30 days, and the owner must either make the repair or document that the deficiency does not exist within 30 days of the HCHA notification. The HCHA is not required to conduct an on-site inspection to verify the repairs have been made but may rely on alternative verification methods (photos, tenant certification, etc.). No extension needed.	04/10/2020	12/31/2020
8-11,12 (HQS-9)	HQS Quality Control Inspections	HCHA is temporarily waiving its supervisory quality control inspections. (extended to December 31, 2020)	04/10/2020	12/31/2020
9-9, 10 (HCV-4)	PHA Approval of Assisted Tenancy – When HAP Contract is Executed	HCHA may now execute a HAP contract after 60 days after the beginning of a lease and make payment back to the beginning of the lease term. The HAP contract must be executed no later than 120 days from the beginning of the lease term. No extension needed	04/10/2020	12/31/2020
11-2 (HCV-2)	Family Income and Composition; Delayed and Annual Examinations	HCHA will temporarily delay annual re-examinations of HCV families. HCHA will comply with the alternative requirement regarding increases in payment standards under the HAP contract terms. HCHA will forgo third-party income verification requirements. HCHA will consider self-certification as the highest form of income verification to process annual re-examinations. No extension needed	04/10/2020	12/31/2020
11-11 (HCV-7)	Increase in Payment Standard under HAP contract term	HCHA is waiving the requirement that if the payment standard is increased during the term of a HAP contract, the increased payment standard shall not be effective until the family's first regular re-examination. Instead, the increased payment standard may be effective at any time (e.g., interim re-examination, owner rent increase) after the effective date if it is not later than then family's first regular re-examination. No extension needed.	04/10/2020	12/31/2020
11-11 (HCV-8)	Utility Allowance Schedule – Required Review and Revision	HCHA is waiving the requirement to review the schedule of utility allowances and revise the allowances if there has been a change of 10 percent or more in the utility rate since the last time the utility allowance schedule was revised. PHAs may delay the review and update of utility allowances. No extension needed.	04/10/2020	12/31/2020
15-16 (HCV-9)	Homeownership Option – Homeownership Counseling	HCHA is waiving briefing and counseling sessions to permit families to purchase a home without fulfilling the normally applicable pre-assistance homeownership counseling requirements. However, HCHA encourages families to continue the sessions that can be accomplished in accordance with social distancing directives. (extended to December 31, 2020).	04/10/2020	12/31/2020
15-16 (HQS-11)	Homeownership Option – Initial HQS Inspection	HCHA is waiving the requirement for an initial HQS inspection before commencing monthly homeownership assistance payments. The family is still required to obtain an independent professional inspector, and the HCHA is still required to review the independent inspection and has the discretion to disapprove the unit because of the contents of the inspection report. (extended to December 31, 2020).	04/10/2020	12/31/2020
15- (HCV-13)	Homeownership: Maximum Term of Assistance	HUD is waiving the requirement that maximum term of the homeownership assistance is 15 years if the initial mortgage incurred to finance the purchase of the home has a term of 20 years or longer; or Ten years, in all other cases. For any family that is in the last year of their homeownership assistance and is currently experiencing financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, may extend homeownership assistance for 1 extra year. <i>This waiver ends on December 31, 2020.</i>	7/2/2020	12/31/2020



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17-12, 13 (HQS-2)	Project-Based Voucher (PBV) Pre-HAP Contract Inspections, PHA Acceptance of Complete Units	HCHA will rely temporarily on the owner's certification, that the owner has no reasonable basis to have knowledge that life-threatening conditions exist in the unit. However, HCHA will conduct an HQS inspection as soon as reasonably possible. If there's a requirement under the Agreement to enter a Housing Assistance Payment (AHAP) contract for newly constructed or rehabilitated projects, the HCHA may choose to allow the owner to certify that the HCHA requirement has been met. The waiver may also apply to HCHA-owned units if the independent entity is unable to perform the inspection. (extended to December 31, 2020)	04/10/2020	12/31/2020
17-13 (HQS-3)	Initial Inspection: Non-Life-Threatening Deficiencies (NLT) Option	HCHA will provide 60 days to correct non-life-threatening failing conditions. (extended to December 31, 2020)	04/10/2020	12/31/2020
17- 13 (HQS-7)	PBV Turnover Unit Inspections	HCHA may rely on the owner's certification that the owner has no reasonable basis to have knowledge that life-threatening conditions exist in the unit. (extended to December 31, 2020)	04/10/2020	12/31/2020
17-20, 21 (HQS-8)	PBV HAP Contract – HQS Inspections to Add or Substitute Units	HCHA may rely on the owner's certification that the owner has no reasonable basis to have knowledge that life-threatening conditions exist in the unit (extended to December 31, 2020)	04/10/2020	12/31/2020
17-29 (HCV-14)	Mandatory Removal of Unit from PBV HAP Contract	HCHA will resume housing assistance payments on behalf of a family where HCHA has not paid out any housing assistant payments on their behalf for at least 180 days. The extension does not exceed past December 31, 2020. HUD is waiving the requirement that if a participating family receiving zero assistance experiences a change in circumstances that would result in a HAP payment to the owner, the family must notify the PHA of the change and request an interim reexamination before the expiration of the 180-day period. The period of availability ends on December 31, 2020.	7/2/2020	12/31/2020
www.hchatexas.org	Administrative Plan	HCHA is waiving the requirement that a PHA's Administrative Plan revision must be formally adopted by a PHA's board. A PHA may revise an administrative plan without board approval though any revisions must be officially adopted as practicable no later than September 30, 2020. (extended to December 31, 2020)	04/10/2020	12/31/2020
(11c)	Uniform Financial Reporting Standards: Filing for Financial Reports: Reporting Compliance Data	HCHA is waiving the requirement that states "PHA's submit their audited financial statements not later than 9 months after the end of their fiscal year". HCHA will exercise their right to submit their audited financial information by June 30, 2021	4/10/2020	6/30/2021