

SUMMER 2013

A newsletter for participants in the Chicago Housing Authority Housing Choice Voucher Program

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Message From the CEO: Introducing CHA's Plan Forward



Dear Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program Families,

In April, Mayor Rahm Emanuel and I announced the Chicago Housing Authority's new strategic plan—Plan Forward: Communities That Work.

The Plan details how CHA is committed to building quality housing in vibrant neighborhoods and helping create opportunities for low-income residents to enter the global economy. CHA facilitated 32 Stakeholder input sessions that gave more than 160 organizations, 800 CHA residents and 300 community members an opportunity to contribute to the development of Plan Forward. Plan Forward builds on the Plan for Transformation established in 2000 and will continue CHA's commitment to revitalizing Chicago communities.

Three key goals of Plan Forward are:

- Re-imagine the final phase of the Plan for Transformation to develop vibrant communities
- Ensure that CHA housing is safe, decent and sustainable
- Expand services to more residents and make sure those services meet their needs

You may also notice that we have introduced a new logo and look, as a part of *Plan Forward: Communities that Work*; you will see more in the coming months. For more details about *Plan Forward*, visit www.thecha.org.

We, at CHA, look forward to continuing to work with all of our partners as we implement *Plan Forward*.

Sincerely,

Charles Woodyard

**GET THE SKILLS.
GET THE JOB.**

CHA residents are eligible for training and educational opportunities at low or no cost.

City Colleges of Chicago representatives will be available **every month** to answer your educational questions:

South Office - 1st Wednesday
West Office - 2nd Thursday
Central Office - 3rd Thursday



Meet Our Board Members: Commissioner Adela Cepeda



The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) Board of Commissioners makes decisions about CHA policies and programs to guide CHA's current and future programs. In this series we introduce you to new and sitting board members. For this issue, we present Commissioner Adela Cepeda.

Adela Cepeda is President of A.C. Advisory, Inc. and has led the company to a national leadership position in municipal financial advisory services. In 2005, Cepeda founded a full-service broker dealer, Alta Capital Group, LLC, focused on the municipal markets. Cepeda serves on the boards of Window to the World Communications, Inc. (PBS Channel 11 WTTW); Ravinia Festival Association; and The Chicago Community Trust. Cepeda also has 12 years of service as a commissioner for the Public Building Commission of Chicago. Cepeda received her bachelor's degree from Harvard College and earned her MBA from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

South Regional Office Redesign Improves Customer Service and Efficiencies

In March, CHA made several upgrades to the recently named South Regional Office, formerly known as the Southwest Regional Office, located at 10 W. 35th Street. Participants who were previously served at the CHA's Office on East 75th St. as well as the existing location will notice the major improvements, both cosmetic and service related.

Some of the updates include:

- A newly designed reception software that ensures reduced wait times and prompt notification of CHA staff upon Participant arrival.
- A waiting area and Resource Center dedicated to walk-ins, transfers, and interim requests.
- New computers available for Participant use with access to CHA's website, apartment searches and other resources.
- A new children's book borrowing program that allows Participant families to take books home after enjoying them in the office. There are also now Kid's Corners in both waiting areas with some toys and games.
- Freshly painted bright colors, Chicago-inspired wall art, plants, and comfortable seating options in the waiting rooms.

So far the feedback regarding the updates has been extremely positive. A Participant that visited in February commented about the office, *"I would give everyone a five [points out of five - for customer service]. I've never experienced this level of customer service, and the office looks really nice."*

*{ "...I've never experienced this
level of customer service..." }*



Blue Cart Recycling Program

In February, Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced that the City's Blue Cart Recycling program would grow to include 131,000 more Chicago households in March and April of 2013. As part of the program, single family homes and buildings with four units or less receive blue carts for recyclable materials. Recyclable materials are then collected every

two weeks.

The Chicago Department of Sanitation is delivering the carts in phases and not all single family homes and buildings with four units or less have received the carts. By recycling regularly, you can help reduce the need for landfills, lower disposal costs, reduce pollution and conserve natural resources.



For more information about how to obtain blue carts or what items can be placed in blue carts or how to recycle please Call 311 or visit www.chicagorecycles.org.

Building Bridges: Creating Sustainable Owner/Tenant Relationships

According to HUD and the Chicago Housing Authority, HCV participants have a right to the "quiet and peaceful enjoyment" of their homes and premises. Unfortunately, issues commonly surface, both on the Owner and Tenant side, that prevent the participant's ability to quietly and peacefully enjoy their home. These issues usually stem from a lack of information and, as a result, can put a significant strain on the important relationship between the Owner and Tenant.

In order to promote understanding between Owners and Participants, CHA has teamed up with the Community Investment Corporation (CIC) and the Metropolitan Tenants Organization (MTO) and developed a series of landlord tenant relationship workshops. Subject matter experts include MTO's Associate Director, Maria Ayala, and CIC's Director of Property Management Training, Taft West, as well as officials from the Chicago Housing Authority.

The workshops will cover topics such as understanding the lease agreement, maintaining utilities and your unit, handling and reporting maintenance requests, being a good tenant and neighbor, and how to create a long lasting tenant and landlord relationship. The workshops will take place from June - August. Please check the mail for your invite to attend.

To find out more details about the upcoming workshops, please contact CHA at 312.935.2600.

Low-Cost Internet Access and Training

More and more, the internet is becoming an essential part of everyday life. If you are looking for low-cost internet service, thanks to the City of Chicago and Connect2Compete, a non-profit organization, you may be eligible for high-speed internet services for just \$9.95 a month and/or low-cost computers to help you get online.

Connect2Compete's goal is to help all Americans understand and access the Internet to help them compete in a world that has forever changed because of the Internet and technology. They offer low-cost computers and Internet service as well as "free" online and in-person training.

To find out what discounts and services you may be eligible for, visit www.connect2compete.org today. To find out about Internet training opportunities online or near you, visit www.everyoneon.org.



Visit
mycricket.com/locations
to find a store near you

Customer Service Call Center Upgrades

Have you called into CHA lately? If not, you may not be aware of the significant enhancements to CHA's Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System. You no longer need to wait for the Call Center to open each day to get the information you need. This upgraded system can be accessed 24/7. Highlights of CHA's recent IVR upgrade include:



- **Voice Continuity:** Callers will now hear the same, easy-to-understand voice throughout all parts of the system.
- **Dual Language Functionality:** Callers will be given the option to speak with a Spanish-speaking representative much sooner than the prior system allowed. Once the language is selected, the entire call will continue in Spanish from that point on.
- **System Organization:** The Caller will be prompted to identify if they are an Applicant, Participant, Owner or other type of caller at a much earlier point in the call, than with the prior system. This feature directs the call to the appropriate line.
- **Automation and Self-Service:** Information such as Next Inspection Date, Moving Papers request status, next Re-examination date, Owner HAP payment information, and much more can be gathered at any time, without the need to speak to a Call Center Specialist.
- **System Integration:** When a caller enters their specific information (SSN/Tax ID AND the voucher number), the account information will be automatically viewable to the Call Center Specialist, allowing the specialist the ability to review your account before answering the call, this eliminates the need for you to give these details over the phone.

These Customer Service Call Center upgrades are just some of the many ways CHA will continue to Plan Forward.

GOING PLACES

Chicago Housing Authority
HCV Program Communications, Going Places
60 E. Van Buren, 8th Floor
Chicago, IL 60605

Contact Us:

Phone: 312-935-2600 • E-mail: hcv@thecha.org