

going places

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

Winter 2011/2012

Meet Our New CEO



On Sept. 22, 2011, Charles Woodyard was appointed CEO of the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), effective Oct. 24, 2011.

Before being confirmed by the CHA Board of Commissioners on Oct. 18, 2011, Mr. Woodyard was president and CEO of the Charlotte Housing Authority since 2002, where he led a change process in

both the business and administration of the agency. In Charlotte, Mr. Woodyard proved particularly effective in his ability to integrate public housing into the fabric of the overall community, through mixed-income housing development.

Having spent 30 years in the public sector with a focus on housing, Mr. Woodyard has a wealth of experience in municipal government and the unique challenges facing public housing. In Chicago, he will utilize his experience of engaging the private sector in the real estate components of public housing, as well as integration through mixed-income development, to further the progress of CHA's Plan for Transformation, which is now in its twelfth year.

Mr. Woodyard has held board positions on numerous local, regional and national boards, including Leadership Charlotte, Public Housing Authorities Directors Association (PHADA), National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) and Partners in Out of School Time (POST).

Mr. Woodyard is a graduate of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, with a master's degree in public administration.

Inside: What You Need to Know

- CHA hosts Participant Listening Forums throughout Chicago – [Page 2](#)
- Find out how a request from your Property Owner/Manager for a rent increase can affect you – [Page 2](#)
- Learn how you can stamp out smoking in your home – [Page 2](#)
- Don't miss out on CHA communications ... make sure your contact information is correct – [Page 3](#)
- The CHA Customer Call Center is at your service – [Page 4](#)

Effective
December 2011,
CHA's Housing Choice
Voucher (HCV) Program
Offices are closed on
Saturdays.

*We apologize for
any inconvenience...*

Our regular business hours are Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. If you require an appointment during non-business hours to accommodate work, class or other special needs, please contact the CHA Customer Call Center at 312-935-2600 or hcv@thecha.org.

CHA Hosts Participant Listening Forums

Did you know that as a Participant in the HCV Program, you have a group of fellow Participants that communicate with CHA on your behalf? This group is called CHA's HCV Program Participant Council and they meet with CHA every three months. The council is made up of HCV Program Participants that live in neighborhoods all over the city.



In partnership with the Participant Council members and to give all Participants a chance to meet in person to discuss their experiences, CHA hosted several Participant Listening Forums across the city. On Wednesday, Aug. 3rd, Participants talked to members of the Participant Council and CHA staff at the Southwest Regional Office about Fair Housing laws, foreclosures, inspections, the moving process and other topics. On Tuesday, Nov. 15th, Wednesday, Dec. 7th and Thursday, Jan. 12th, CHA staff met with Participants at the West Regional, Central and Southwest Regional Offices, respectively, helping many with specific issues.

Thank you to all who were involved in helping to make these meetings such a success. Look for announcements of more Participant Listening Forums throughout 2012 at a location near you.

How a Rent Increase Request Can Affect You

It's important for HCV Program Participants to know that when a Property Owner requests a rent increase, the Participant may have to pay part, if not all, of that increase. HCV Program rules don't allow an Owner to ask for a rent increase during the first year of your lease, but once a year has passed, the Property Owner can ask for an increase. They can ask for additional increases every 12 months.

To request an increase, the Property Owner or Manager will fill out CHA's Rent Increase Request form at least 60 days prior to the anniversary date of the HAP Contract. Once completed, they will bring the form to you for your signature prior to submitting to CHA. If you don't think you can afford an increase in your portion of the rent, do not sign the Rent Increase Request form and let the Property Owner/Manager know that an increase may force you to find another place to live that you can afford.

When CHA receives a request for a rent increase on your unit, staff makes sure that at least a year has passed since your last increase (or since you moved in) and that your unit passed its annual Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspection. Then, staff compares the rent requested by the Owner to the rent of other units in the same area. If the requested amount is about the same or less than the other comparable units, staff can approve the request.

If CHA approves the increase, you and the Owner will receive a letter in the mail with the new rent amount and any change in your portion. The new rent amount will be effective 60 days after CHA received the request.

Useful Tips about the Rent Increase Process:

- During your next re-examination, ask about how your rent is calculated. This will help you understand how a rent increase may change your part of the rent.
- If your unit has more bedrooms than allowed by your voucher and CHA approves a rent increase, you will most likely be responsible for at least part, if not all, of the increase (for example, if you live in a three-bedroom unit, but you have a voucher for a two-bedroom unit, CHA will only pay two-bedroom subsidy).
- Always make sure you have a good relationship with the Owner and/or Property Manager of your unit. If you tell the Owner that you can't afford the increase, they may allow you to stay in the unit at the same rent if you're a good tenant.
- Make sure that the Rent Increase Request form the Owner asks you to sign correctly lists the utilities that you pay. If they are not correct, have the Owner change the form before signing it because the utilities you pay for will affect the amount of rent you pay. If the Owner wants to change the utility responsibility, CHA will require the Owner to sign a new HAP Contract.
- You don't have to agree to a rent increase, but the Owner can decide not to renew the lease with you and find another tenant that will pay the increased rent instead.

Stamp Out Smoking In Your Home

Smoking can cause serious health problems whether you are a smoker or live with one. Exposure to secondhand smoke increases a person's risk of heart attack, stroke and lung cancer. Secondhand smoke puts children in danger as well. Studies suggest that secondhand smoke can cause Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), asthma attacks, respiratory infections and ear infections in children.

There is no safe way to smoke in your home. Even if you close doors, open windows or use air filters, the smoke still spreads. No air ventilation system or air purifier can remove every toxin found in cigarette smoke. Allowing smoking anywhere in your home could lead to you and your family inhaling more than 7,000 chemicals.

One way to protect yourself and your family from the dangerous effects of smoke is to ban smoking inside your home. Declare your home "Smoke Free." Make family members, friends and other guests smoke outside. Remove any ashtrays, lighters and matches from your home to make it clear that smoking is not allowed inside.

Once you make your home smoke-free, consider talking to your neighbors about making their homes smoke-free, too. As much as 65% of the air in any given unit is shared with other units in a building. If your neighbors smoke in their units, it's possible that you and your family are breathing their secondhand smoke. Think about asking your neighbors to smoke outside. You might also want to ask your Property Owner/Manager about making your building smoke-free.

CHICAGO TOBACCO PREVENTION PROJECT



**RESPIRATORY
HEALTH
ASSOCIATION®**
of Metropolitan Chicago

For more information (and resources) on how you can make your home smoke-free, visit the Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago's website at www.lungchicago.org/smoke-free-housing or call 1-888-880-LUNG (5864).

For support and free resources to help you quit smoking, visit the Illinois Tobacco Quitline's website at www.quityes.org or call the quitline at 1-866-QUIT YES.



To...

CHA HCV Program Participants

Send

Subject:

The HCV Program is Going Digital

CHA will be communicating with you more through e-mail messages and telephone reminders. If you don't have a valid e-mail address or telephone number on file, you may not receive important information.

Don't miss any HCV Program updates!

Contact the CHA Customer Call Center at **312-935-2600** or hcv@thecha.org to make sure your information is correct.



Don't Have An E-mail Address?

A number of companies such as Google, Yahoo and Microsoft offer free e-mail addresses.

Yahoo – visit mail.yahoo.com, find "Don't have a Yahoo ID?" and click on the "Create New Account" icon.

Google – visit mail.google.com, look in the upper right corner for "New to Gmail?" and click on the "Create an account" icon.

MSN Hotmail – visit login.live.com, look on the left side for "Don't have a Windows Live ID?" and click on the "Sign up" icon.

Once you've set up your new e-mail account, simply contact the CHA Customer Call Center at 312-935-2600 or hcv@thecha.org to update your file. Then, watch your e-mail for important updates from CHA.

Don't have Internet access? Visit your local library or the Resource Center at any of CHA's HCV Program offices.

Going Places

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

CHA Customer Call Center

Phone: 312-935-2600

E-mail: hcv@thecha.org

Website

www.thecha.org/hcv

The CHA Customer Call Center — At Your Service

When you have a question or concern about your voucher, unit or anything else related to the HCV Program, you should contact the CHA Customer Call Center at 312-935-2600 or hcv@thecha.org first. Call Center Specialists are available Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Taking care of you is our Call Center Specialists' top priority, and now we are more responsive than ever. We've added several knowledgeable, dedicated and friendly CHA Customer Call Center representatives to the team and increased training for all staff. We're ready and trained to serve you!

We ask that when you have a question or concern, you contact the CHA Customer Call Center first. We regularly receive compliments about our helpful CHA Customer Call Center staff from Participants just like you. Our knowledgeable specialists can usually answer your questions or address your concerns with just one call or e-mail. In the rare case that they can't, the representative will send your question or concern to a staff member that will respond to you within 24-48 hours. When you call the CHA Customer Call Center, remember to always ask for your case number and write it down in case you need to call back.

The CHA Customer Call Center can give you information about the following topics:

- A general overview of the HCV Program
- The status of your waiting list application
- The amount of rent you have to pay each month
- Moving papers
- Changes to your household
- Any CHA mailing you may have received
- Inspections
- Participant re-examination status
- Much more

Whenever you have a question about anything related to your participation in the HCV Program, save yourself a trip to one of the Regional Offices and contact the CHA Customer Call Center first at 312-935-2600 or by e-mail at hcv@thecha.org.

Did You Know...

You can now find out the date and timeframe of your next inspection on our website or through an automated call system or text message? All you need is your Event ID. Simply go online to www.chainspections.org or call or send a text message to **312-544-0302**. If texting, please make sure to **only** include your 6-digit Event ID. Anything more and you will receive an instruction message on how to use the system.