

# OWNER NEWS

What You Need to Know

WINTER  
2013

For Property Owners and  
Managers participating  
in the Chicago Housing  
Authority's Housing Choice  
Voucher Program



## MEET OUR BOARD MEMBERS

### Deverra Beverly



*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 Deverra Beverly.*

A public servant in the City of Chicago's Department of Human Services (CDHS) for over 30 years, Commissioner Beverly stresses that great accomplishments require teamwork, relationship building and open communication. Mayor Richard M. Daley appointed Commissioner Beverly to the CHA Board of Commissioners in July 2009.

Since retiring from CDHS in 1997, Ms. Beverly has held numerous resident leadership positions, including president of ABLA Homes' Local Advisory Council, vice-chair of the Central Advisory Council (CAC) from 2002 to 2008, interim CAC chair from 2008 to 2009 and CAC treasurer in 2009.

Commissioner Beverly, a lifelong resident of ABLA Homes, has researched public housing infrastructure and private management across state lines and worked with the mayor and CHA leadership to implement progressive programs for residents.

Over the years, Ms. Beverly has received countless awards in recognition of her efforts to improve the quality of life in public housing. She is founder and chair of the National Public Housing Museum.

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## TENANT UTILITY PAYMENT DISCLOSURE ACT - WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU

Do you own or manage a multi-unit building in Illinois where some of the utilities are not metered separately unit-by-unit? If so, and your tenants are responsible for any of those shared utilities, you'll want to review the Tenant Utility Payment Disclosure Act (765 ILCS 740/1) that requires the disclosure to your tenants of the formula you use to calculate payment for their proportionate share.

Disclosure of the formula you use can be written into the lease or provided as a separate document and should take into account the usage of all of the units metered together. In addition, each tenant has the right to receive a copy of the utility bill in its entirety.

Condominium associations are also required to clarify how they are billing common utilities. In the case of most condominium associations, however, utilities are billed in accordance with the condominium declaration based on each unit's individual ownership share in the association.

For more information about the Tenant Utility Payment Disclosure Act, visit [www.ilga.gov](http://www.ilga.gov).

## STAY CURRENT – ATTEND AN OWNER BRIEFING

Attending an Owner Briefing is a great way to ensure that you have the most up-to-date information about the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. As the Chicago Housing Authority continues to enhance the program and respond to Owner needs, some changes have been made. It's important to stay abreast of these developments to make the most out of your participation in the program.

Property Owners and Managers are expected to attend an Owner Briefing at least once every year. Annual attendance at an Owner Briefing keeps you compliant with program requirements. Owner Briefings are free to anyone who wants to enhance their program knowledge or to novice Property Owners who want to learn more about providing housing to low income families. Each briefing is presented by experienced CHA staff that possess in-depth knowledge of the HCV Program and related processes and procedures.

These informative and insightful briefings cover an array of important topics including property management tips, HCV Program policies and procedures, your rights as a participating Property Owner, a walk-through of the new move process, inspections requirements and how to list your property online. Each attendee also receives complimentary copies of the most current Property Owner Reference Manual and HQS Inspection Guidebook to assist them throughout the rental process with HCV Program Voucher Holders.

Owner Briefings are held twice monthly at either the Central Office (60 E. Van Buren St.) or at the Charles Hayes Family Investment Center (4859 S. Wabash Ave). Nights and weekend dates have also been added to accommodate all owners. To review the briefing calendar and to register for an upcoming date, please visit:

[www.thecha.org/ownerbrief](http://www.thecha.org/ownerbrief).

## PROTECT YOUR TENANTS AND YOUR INVESTMENT : SMOKE-FREE HOUSING

*The following is a guest article from Matt Maloney, director of health policy at Respiratory Health Association ([www.lungchicago.org](http://www.lungchicago.org)).*

If someone smokes in your property, you know how serious the damage is. Your carpet is burned, your walls are stained, and your unit stinks. Second-hand smoke is hard on your investment, so imagine what it does to your tenants!

In a multi-unit building, 35 to 65 percent of the air in any given unit is shared air from other units and

common areas. That means if just one tenant smokes, all of your tenants suffer the consequences, including an increased risk of heart attacks, stroke and lung cancer. Plus, children exposed to second-hand smoke have an increased risk of asthma attacks, infections and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

You can protect your tenants' health and your investment by making your properties smoke-free. Going smoke-free doesn't mean that you don't lease-up with individuals that smoke. A smoke-free building is just one in which smoking is not permitted indoors, including in any units or common areas. Adopting a smoke-free policy is legal, profitable and easy.

### Smoke-Free Policies Are Legal

Just like your policies regarding noise and pets, you can enact policies to prohibit smoking to create a better, safer living environment for your tenants. In fact, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has strongly encouraged Property Owners and Managers to adopt smoke-free policies.

### Smoke-Free Policies Are Profitable

Compared with a unit where smoking is allowed, smoke-free units cost significantly less to turn over. Plus, a poll commissioned by Respiratory Health Association found that more than 40 percent of Chicago renters would be willing to pay more to live in smoke-free housing.

### Smoke-Free Policies Are Easy

Developing and implementing a smoke-free policy takes minimal effort and produces maximum results for you and your tenants. And once implemented, smoke-free policies are generally self-enforcing and require little staff time.

When you're ready to get started, Respiratory Health Association is here to help. We've worked with multiple public housing agencies, private developers and community organizations to transition properties to being smoke-free. We can help you with sample lease language, resident surveys, free smoking cessation resources and fact sheets.

For more information, contact Matt Maloney at Respiratory Health Association:

MMaloney@lungchicago.org or (312) 628-0233.

*Be recognized for your excellence.  
Become a member of the exclusive...*



**Owner Excellence Program members  
enjoy the following at no cost:**

- Payments for vacant units
- One HQS Inspection every two years
- Dedicated staff for HCV Program business
- And more

**Apply today! [www.thecha.org/excellence](http://www.thecha.org/excellence)**



## OWNER EXCELLENCE PROGRAM- DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

If you consider yourself an excellent Owner and are not already a member of CHA's Owner Excellence Program, you are missing out on a number of great benefits that reward you for your excellence. The Owner Excellence Program is only for the best Property Owners and Managers in Chicago. Read below to find out if you have what it takes to be called a member.

### What is the Owner Excellence Program (OEP)?

In an effort to recognize and reward Property Owners and Managers who have exceptional property management skills and show a high level of dedication to both their property and their tenants, CHA launched the Owner Excellence Program in 2011.

#### *Extraordinary Customer Service*

Owner Excellence Program staff is solely dedicated to serving members. Staff is available via e-mail, phone, or walk-in visits to the Owner Excellence Business Center.

#### *Retail Discounts*

CHA's partnerships with local and national organizations, such as Community Investment Corporation (CIC), Lowe's, the National Apartment Association (NAA) and The Home Depot, give members access to valuable resources and discounts to further develop their business. Members receive discounted property management training and certification and discounts of up to 20 percent on home improvement purchases and delivery.

#### *Unit-Based Benefits*

Members that become a part of the Unit Excellence Program (UEP) receive additional benefits that improve the appeal of their HCV Program properties and their bottom line (such as vacancy payments). Unit-based benefits include biennial inspections, self-certification of minor Housing Quality Standards (HQS) fail items, HQS inspection results remaining valid for 90 days, vacancy payments and premium property listings on CHA's housing search website.

#### *Who Can Apply?*

If you are a current HCV Program Property Owner (and have been for at least 12 months), all of your subsidized units have passed HQS inspection and your payments have not been abated in the last 12 months, you may qualify for membership. If any of your units are currently in the inspection/re-inspection cycle, your application will be accepted but not processed until any outstanding fail items are resolved.

#### *How Do I Apply?*

Apply for free at:

[www.chaownerexcellence.org/ApplyToday](http://www.chaownerexcellence.org/ApplyToday)

## SIGN UP FOR THE OWNER PORTAL AND TAKE ADVANTAGE: NEW MOVE TRACKER

Did you know that the Owner Portal is your own personal HCV Program office at your fingertips? On any day and at any time, you can log-in to the Owner Portal to view remittances, inspections appointments, inspections results, and NOW, track any in-progress moves with the new Move Tracker!

Move Tracker allows you to view the status of your in-progress moves without having to pick up the phone or leave your office. From Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA) submission through to contract execution, you'll know exactly where your moves are in the process. The Move Tracker feature displays a color-coded timeline for each step in the process and a listing of all your moves including icons that coincide with the timeline display.

To check out the Move Tracker, just log into your Owner Portal account and click on the Move Tracker button in the left-hand menu. If you don't have an Owner Portal account, register today at [www.thecha.org/hcvportal](http://www.thecha.org/hcvportal).

## RAISING THE RENT: REVENUE VS. VACANCIES

As a Property Owner/Manager, you're probably always on the lookout for ways to increase profits. One strategy for maximizing the return on your property assets is increasing the rent.

When you consider increasing the rent on a unit, you need to also be prepared for tenants to move out. A tenant may decide to move because they can't afford the increase or believe they can find another unit at a better price. In the end, raising the rent could negatively affect your revenue because of the vacancies that may result.

Before you consider raising the rent, it's important to study the market to see whether it supports your request. If the increase exceeds rent amounts for other comparable units in the market, your tenant may decide to move on.

When you request a rent increase for a unit inhabited by an HCV Program Participant, you must make that request through CHA. It's important to remember that requesting a rent increase through CHA could result in one of three outcomes: 1. A denial of your request; 2. A decrease in the current rent; or 3. An approval of your request.

Federal requirements mandate that CHA ensure that any rent paid for an HCV Program-subsidized unit does not exceed rents charged for comparable, unsubsidized units

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within the vicinity of the subject unit that have been leased within the last 12 months. CHA pays Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) to Property Owners out of federal funds and so has a responsibility to be a good steward of those monies.

Before you submit a rent increase request to CHA, make sure that you have comparable market data for leased units—such as a rent roll (for a multi-family property) or Multiple Listing Service (MLS) listings—supporting your request. Acceptable comparable units must have been rented in the last 12 months, not be subsidized and be within a 1-mile radius (or in some cases a 1.5-mile radius) of the subject unit.

## CONTRACT TERMINATIONS AND NEW MOVES

If a Property Owner has three or more HAP contracts that are terminated within a one year period, beginning in 2014 CHA will refuse Requests for Tenancy Approval (RTAs)—also known as moving papers—for units owned or managed by that Owner/Manager. CHA may terminate a HAP contract for many reasons (see the terms of the HAP contract or CHA Administrative Plan section 13-I.C—[www.thecha.org/adminplan](http://www.thecha.org/adminplan)). A Property Owner that shows a pattern of not enforcing their lease or not abiding by their HAP contracts with CHA is not the type of Property Owner with whom CHA wants a partnership.

One of the more common reasons that CHA must terminate a HAP contract is due to a unit being abated for 60 days or more due to Housing Quality Standards (HQS) failures. Part of HUD and CHA's mission is to help families pay for quality housing in Chicago. A unit that does not pass HQS inspection does not fit CHA's standards for quality and therefore HCV Program Participants cannot move into such a unit and receive subsidy assistance. Or, if the Participant is already living in a unit that does not maintain compliance with HQS, the Participant will be required to move to a unit that is decent, safe and sanitary in accordance with inspection criteria.

## OWNER NEWS

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### E-mail

[OwnerInfo@thecha.org](mailto:OwnerInfo@thecha.org)

## INSPECTIONS CORNER

### New HQS Inspections Guidebook Available Online

Do you have a question about a specific HQS requirement? Check out the HQS Inspection Guidebook at any time by visiting: [www.thecha.org/forms](http://www.thecha.org/forms).

### We Want Your Feedback

CHA continually evaluates its systems and processes to make them more efficient for Property Owners, and we need your input about inspections. Please visit [www.chainspections.org](http://www.chainspections.org) and take a one-minute survey about your most recent inspection.

### Inspection Dates Available Via Text

Remember that you can find out the date and timeframe of your next inspection by text message. All you need is your inspection ID. Simply text your 6-digit inspection ID to 312-544-0302.

### Weather-Related Extensions Expire March 31

If CHA granted you a weather-related extension for an HQS deficiency at one of your units, remember that the extension expires on March 31. The notice you received from CHA approving the extension included your inspection appointment date. To double-check your appointment date, please visit [www.chainspections.org](http://www.chainspections.org) and search by Inspection ID, Tenant ID or Vendor ID.

**Owner Portal**  
*HCVP Office at your fingertips*

Access and update your account information online 24/7.

OWNER PROFILE	FORMS
PAYMENT/FINANCE	PROGRAM KNOWLEDGE
INSPECTIONS	MOVE TRACKER

And More!  
**SIGN UP TODAY!**