



# Owner News

A newsletter for property owners & managers participating in the Chicago Housing Authority's Housing Choice Voucher Program

Q2 2020

## Message from the Chief Officer



It is my hope that you are safe and healthy during these times of unrest and uncertainty. As difficult as it is to bear witness to the challenges facing Chicago businesses and residents, we must forge ahead in our shared commitment to build up our communities and provide affordable housing for our families.

As part of Chicago's comprehensive response to the COVID-19 pandemic, CHA stands with Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot in continuing to offer life-saving information and support. We have been adapting to the changing environment in a variety of ways to help ensure the safety of residents and staff. For instance, CHA adopted HUD waivers that allow more flexibility; proactively extended deadlines; created comprehensive FAQs to address pressing issues; moved HCV events online; and, increased communications with partners and families via email, phone, CHA's website and the HCV Portals.

In this time, it is important that we also highlight the positive actions of people. From using their sewing skills to make masks for neighbors to providing seniors the opportunity to enjoy virtual bingo sessions, CHA residents, partners and service organizations alike have stepped up to help others. We truly appreciate the many acts of kindness seen throughout all of our 77 communities!

In this issue of *Owner News*, I am pleased to introduce CHA's new CEO, Tracey Scott. In addition, you'll find tips on how to be a proactive property owner, guidance from the CDC on face coverings, updates on HCV operations, information on CHA's language assistance services and a schedule of HCV webinars.

As we move forward, please remember ... we are all in this together.

Regards,

Cheryl L. Burns  
Chief Housing Choice Voucher Officer

## Meet the New CEO

On May 4th, the CHA gave a warm welcome to Tracey Scott as she began her first day as CEO.

"Mayor Lightfoot has provided me an opportunity to lead the second-largest housing authority in the nation, and I look forward to working with the CHA Board of Commissioners, CHA staff and our community partners to build on CHA's legacy of innovation in housing. Together, we can strengthen CHA's role in creating more affordable housing opportunities and programs that help our families thrive in their pursuit of self-sufficiency," Scott said.



Ms. Scott previously served as Interim Executive Director/CEO for the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority. She brings with her more than two decades of experience and will lead CHA into its next chapter as a principal developer and provider of affordable housing for communities across Chicago.

To read more, visit:

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

## How to be a Proactive Property Owner

Positive landlord-tenant relations are important for successful property management. As such, CHA encourages all HCV property owners and tenants to build constructive relationships. Here are some tips on how to begin on positive terms and become a more proactive property owner:

**Screen Your Tenants** — Start off on the right foot and make sure to properly screen any potential tenants. You should use the same diligence in screening a potential HCV Program tenant as you would any other tenant.

**Have a Strong Lease** — Make sure the terms and conditions are clearly outlined, including the consequences for lease violations. Take some time to review the lease with any prospective tenant,

giving them enough time to read through the lease and ask any questions they may have.

**Be Positive** — Never assume the tenant is deliberately trying to cause conflict. Hear them out so you can advance toward finding a solution.

**Communicate** — Listen and keep an open mind. Let the tenant know your availability and how best to reach you. Make sure you maintain the most up-to-date contact information for the tenant as well.

**Stay Organized** — Keep records of all documents and paperwork, including signed lease agreements, check stubs, payment receipts, etc. Being organized will allow you to access important documents and records in a timely manner.

### CDC Guidance on Face Coverings

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) continues to study the spread and effects of the novel coronavirus across the United States, and provide guidance based on the findings.

Studies have shown the virus can spread between people interacting in close proximity — through speaking, coughing or sneezing — even if those people are not exhibiting symptoms. In light of this evidence, the CDC continues to recommend 6-foot social distancing but adds that people should also be wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies), **especially** in areas of significant community-based transmission.

Cloth face coverings can be fashioned using personal items, such as bandanas and hair ties, or made at home from common materials, such as old t-shirts or leggings, at minimal cost. Several community-based organizations have also provided opportunities for residents to receive free face masks throughout Chicago since early May.

For more information or to get the latest guidance from the CDC, please visit [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).

### A Message from the Office of the Inspector General (OIG)

The Office of the Inspector General is an independent body within the Chicago Housing Authority whose purpose is to investigate and audit matters concerning fraud, theft, waste, abuse and misconduct within or affecting CHA.

The OIG ensures that violations, as they relate to CHA residents, employees, contractors, subcontractors or any entity receiving funds from CHA, are investigated and prosecuted. As a property owner, if you have any information regarding fraud in your dealings with tenants, CHA employees or CHA contractors, you are encouraged to report this information to the OIG. Immediate reporting, while facts are still fresh in your mind, is helpful. Complaints can be kept confidential.

If you have any information relating to fraud or unethical activity within or affecting the Chicago Housing Authority, contact the OIG by calling our Hotline at 800-544-7139 or send us an email at [fraud@thecha.org](mailto:fraud@thecha.org).

## Updates to HCV Program Operations during COVID-19

Although CHA's offices closed to the public in mid-March, CHA has been working tirelessly to operate and provide all essential services to CHA families and seniors during this time. On Friday, April 10th, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued waivers that offer Public Housing Authorities administrative flexibilities in providing assistance to families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Below are some of the adopted waivers that may impact HCV property owners:

- CHA will now allow property owners to self-certify non-emergency fail items identified during an Initial (new-move) Inspection.
- CHA will not require a family to move at this time if the addition of a new household member would violate Housing Quality Standards (HQS) regarding space and safety.
- CHA will not pursue Program termination for participants who have paid their full Contract Rent for more than 180 days (also known as zero HAP) or who have been away from the unit for an extended period of time.
- CHA internal processing deadlines have been extended allowing more time for staff to monitor and submit reports as well as execute HAP Contracts (with retroactive effective dates).

For the most up-to-date information regarding HCV Program operations during COVID-19, visit the Owner Portal at [chahcvportal.org](http://chahcvportal.org) or CHA's website at [www.thecha.org](http://www.thecha.org).

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## Do You Need Interpretation Services?

CHA offers free interpretation and translation services for individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). For Spanish, please call the CHA Customer Call Center at 312-935-2600 and press 2. For all other languages, a non-emergency hotline has been created and can be accessed using the following instructions:

1. Dial 1 (844) 948-1031.
2. Your call will be answered by an operator, who will ask you what language you need interpreted.
3. Inform the operator of the language you speak.
4. The operator will then connect you with an interpreter that speaks your requested language and you will be transferred to voicemail to leave a message.
5. Please provide the following information in your voicemail message:
  - a. Name
  - b. Tenant ID
  - c. Phone Number

- d. Building Name or Address
  - e. Program (HCV, PBV, Senior Housing, Family Housing, Homeownership)
  - f. Question/Concern
6. Instruct the interpreter to repeat your message to the voicemail in English.

**Note:** This is a non-emergency phone line. If you have an emergency, please dial 911.

CHA is working diligently to ensure everyone has meaningful access to CHA's programs and activities. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact [chala@thecha.org](mailto:chala@thecha.org).







As part of our mission to make valuable resources as accessible as possible to our partners and families, CHA has officially launched HCV webinars! Now you can view workshop material and stay updated on important HCV topics from the comfort of your own home or even on-the-go using a computer, tablet or smartphone.

For the full schedule or to register for any upcoming HCV sessions, visit [CHA-HCVevents.eventbrite.com](http://CHA-HCVevents.eventbrite.com).

## Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspections Workshop

How do the CHA inspectors review a unit for the HCV Program? They follow the HUD inspection form! Join the inspections team as they methodically walk through a typical HQS inspection, highlight common fail items, and discuss the HUD regulations that dictate inspection criteria.

*\*\*Suspended property owners are required to attend this workshop to regain good standing with the HCV Program. To receive credit, you must register with your vendor # and attend the full duration of the session.*

**Tuesday, July 28** 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.  
Your Phone, Tablet or Computer

**Tuesday, August 25** 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.  
Your Phone, Tablet or Computer

**Tuesday, September 22** 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.  
Your Phone, Tablet or Computer

## Property Owner Briefing: Get Started with the HCV Program

New to the HCV Program? Want to hear the latest updates? Have colleagues who own rental property in Chicago and would be interested in taking advantage of the many benefits offered to HCV property owners? Make the most of your partnership with the Chicago Housing Authority and learn how CHA can work with you to provide safe, decent and affordable housing to Chicago's families.

To find out more about what's covered or to register, visit [www.thecha.org/hcvownerbriefing](http://www.thecha.org/hcvownerbriefing).

**Tuesday, July 23** 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.  
Your Phone, Tablet or Computer

**Tuesday, August 20** 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.  
Your Phone, Tablet or Computer

**Tuesday, September 17** 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.  
Your Phone, Tablet or Computer