



CHICAGO HOUSING
AUTHORITY™

Conducting Business with the HCV Program during COVID-19

Frequently Asked Questions | Revised July 1, 2021

PAYMENTS

As a HCV participant, am I still required to pay my rent portion during COVID-19?

Yes, HCV participants should continue to pay their rent portion to the property owner.

If you cannot afford to pay your rent portion due to a decrease in your family's income, report the change to CHA immediately. Please see the **REPORTING & REQUESTING CHANGES** section of this document for instructions on how to submit an Interim Re-Examination.

Note: It is imperative that participants submit an Interim Re-Examination request as soon as possible after experiencing a decrease in income in order to prevent an unnecessary financial burden. Participants who are not able to report a decrease in income in a timely manner due to extenuating circumstances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Additionally, CHA recommends that participants notify the property owner when they have submitted an Interim Re-Examination request due to a decrease in income as part of a larger conversation to discuss options for payment of any outstanding rent.

What Emergency Rental Assistance is available to HCV participant families?

There are no Emergency Rental Assistance programs currently open to HCV participant families. Unfortunately, the application period for the Chicago Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) closed on June 15, 2021.

Note: If you cannot afford to pay your rent portion due to a decrease in your family's income, report the change to CHA immediately. Please see the **REPORTING & REQUESTING CHANGES** section of this document for instructions on how to submit an Interim Re-Examination.

What eviction protections are in place?

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control, the State of Illinois and the City of Chicago have enacted protections for renters facing eviction for non-payment of rent during the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, as a HCV participant, you should immediately contact CHA if you are unable to pay your rent portion, as your level of assistance is based on your reported income. Please see the **REPORTING & REQUESTING CHANGES** section of this document for instructions on how to request an Interim.

If you have additional questions about how these eviction protections impact your specific circumstance, CHA recommends that you seek legal counsel.

REPORTING AND REQUESTING CHANGES

I received a Child Tax Credit payment from the IRS. Do I need to report that money as income?

No, you do not need to report monthly Child Tax Credit payments from the IRS as income.

Note: Eligible families without bank account information on file with the IRS will receive their tax credit payments via U.S. Mail (either by check or on a reloadable pre-paid debit card). For more information, visit www.childtaxcredit.gov.

I received a stimulus payment from the IRS. Do I need to report that money as income?

No, you do not need to report stimulus payments from the IRS as income.

Note: Eligible families without bank account information on file with the IRS may receive their stimulus payment via U.S. Mail as a pre-paid VISA debit card, issued by MetaBank, instead of a check. For more information, visit www.eipcard.com.

I need to report a change in my income. How can I do that?

To report a change in your income, you must submit an Interim Re-Examination request. For income changes, CHA prefers documentation such as check stubs, a letter from your employer or a benefit letter, but if needed, will accept written self-certification or oral third-party verification of the change. For convenience, CHA will accept scans or photos of these documents.

There are four (4) ways you can submit your Interim Re-Examination request:

1. Log in to RENTCafé®, CHA's new online account management tool for Re-Examinations and Interim Re-Examinations, at res-par.thecha.org.

In order to request an Interim Re-Examination through RENTCafé, you must first set up an account using the personalized registration code included in your RENTCafé welcome letter.

If you have yet to receive or cannot find your welcome letter or registration code, please contact the CHA Customer Call Center by email at hcv@thecha.org or by phone at **312-935-2600**.

Note: For security, the Call Center requires callers with account-specific questions to verify account information such as the voucher number, Social Security number or current address.

2. Email the Interim Re-Examination request and supporting documents to hcv@thecha.org and include "INTERIM" and your voucher number in the subject line.
3. Drop off the Interim Re-Examination request and supporting documents at a "no contact" drop box, located at the HCV Central Office (60 E. Van Buren St.), HCV South Office (3617 S. State St.) and HCV West Office (1852 S. Albany Ave.).
4. Mail the Interim Re-Examination request and supporting documents to any of our HCV Regional Offices, listed above.

Note: U.S. Mail has been experiencing delays, and so this option is least preferred.

The Interim Re-Examination request is available on the Participant Portal at cha.participantportal.org under FORMS.

I submitted an Interim Re-Examination request to CHA. How long will my request take to process?

COVID-19 has not impacted CHA's ability to process Interim Re-Examination requests. CHA will approve or deny your Interim request within 30 days of receiving the request and supporting documents.

Approved Interim requests are effective starting the first of the month following the submitted request, regardless of processing time. For example, if an Interim request is received on March 25th, but not processed until April 10th, the effective date will be backdated to April 1st. Similarly, if an Interim request is received on April 2nd and processed on April 10th, the change will be effective on May 1st.

Note: It is imperative that participants submit an Interim Re-Examination request as soon as possible after experiencing a change, especially a decrease in income, in order to prevent an unnecessary financial burden. Participants who are not able to report a decrease in income in a timely manner due to extenuating circumstances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Additionally, CHA recommends that participants notify the property owner when they have submitted an Interim Re-Examination request due to a decrease in income as part of a larger conversation to discuss options for payment of any outstanding rent.

APPOINTMENTS

I was scheduled for a remote Re-Examination appointment. How does this process work?

CHA is primarily conducting Re-Examination interviews with participants by email, phone, U.S. Mail, and/or through RENTCafé®, CHA's new online account management tool for Re-Examinations and Interim Re-Examinations.

When you are due for a Re-Examination, a letter will be sent via email or U.S. Mail instructing you to complete your Re-Examination using RENTCafé by a certain date.

- In order to complete a Re-Examination through RENTCafé, you must first set up an account using the personalized registration code included in a RENTCafé welcome letter.
- If you have yet to receive or cannot find your welcome letter or registration code, please contact the CHA Customer Call Center by email at hcv@thecha.org or by phone at **312-935-2600**.

Note: For security, the Call Center requires callers with account-specific questions to verify account information such as the voucher number, Social Security number or current address.

If you are unable to use RENTCafé, please contact CHA to be scheduled for a Re-Examination appointment with a housing specialist.

Appointment notices are issued by email or U.S. Mail and will list the date, time and information you will need to successfully complete the appointment.

- If your appointment is listed as “remote”, it will be conducted over the phone.
- At the appointed time, a housing specialist will call and guide you through the Re-Examination. The phone number CHA has on file for you will be listed on the appointment notice – if this number is not correct, please contact CHA to update it as soon as possible.
- Calls will come from the CHA Customer Call Center number, **312-935-2600**. If the housing specialist cannot reach you, they will leave a message with call back information and try to call again.
- During the appointment, you will be required to sign documents. If you have access to your email, the specialist will have you sign documents digitally. If not, the housing specialist will send documents for you to sign and return via U.S. Mail.

Note: As U.S. Mail has been experiencing delays, CHA is encouraging participants to provide an email address to facilitate important account transactions. If you do not have an email address, you can create one for free through [Google](#), [Yahoo](#) or [Microsoft](#).

Finally, if you have experienced a change and are unable to pay your rent portion, do not wait until

your next Re-Examination appointment — contact CHA immediately. Please see the **REPORTING & REQUESTING CHANGES** section of this document for instructions on how to request an Interim.

I missed a call from a housing specialist for a remote appointment. How do I reach them?

If the housing specialist cannot reach you by phone for your remote appointment, they will leave a message with call back information and try to call again. You can also connect with them by calling the CHA Customer Call Center at **312-935-2600**.

Note: For security, the Call Center requires callers with account-specific questions to verify account information such as the voucher number, Social Security number or current address.

INSPECTIONS

The unit is scheduled for an inspection. How has CHA updated its inspection protocols to ensure the safety of the tenants residing in the units?

As of June 1, 2021, CHA is conducting most inspections in person. Rest assured that CHA Inspectors are conducting all inspections with local health and safety guidance in mind:

- Participants will be asked to verify their health status when the Inspector arrives at the unit. If any evidence indicates that conducting the in-person inspection that day would endanger the participant family and/or Inspector, the inspection will be rescheduled.
- During the inspection, as few people as possible should gather in the unit.
- CHA asks that any persons present for the inspection over the age of 2 wear a face covering and maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from the Inspector wherever possible.
- The Inspector will wear a mask and gloves during the inspection. Gloves will be changed between each inspection.

Virtual inspections will remain available on a case-by-case basis and property owners and participants have the option to self-certify select minor fail items in place of a Re-Inspection.

I have been scheduled for a virtual inspection. How does this process work?

Virtual inspections are scheduled on a case-by-case basis and must meet specific eligibility criteria. To learn more about the process, see below or visit bit.ly/3v2yWn9 to watch a 5-minute explainer video (captions and auto translation available).

CHA conducts virtual inspections via Zoom, with the participant or property owner walking through the unit/property to allow the Inspector to check for hazards. As such, it is critical that the person “conducting” the virtual inspection has access to every room in the unit as well as the basement, boiler room, etc.

- Participants who refuse to grant access to any area in the unit for a virtual inspection will be referred to the Program Integrity department for appropriate enforcement action.
- Participants and property owners are still accountable for their respective failed items, regardless of whether they are present for the virtual inspection.

To conduct a virtual inspection, the participant or property owner must have the following available:

- A smart phone, tablet or other portable internet-connected device with a fully charged battery, a camera and the ability to run a Zoom meeting.

- A strong, reliable internet connection that supports video conferencing.
- Tools to verify the repaired items such as a step stool, flashlight, measuring tape, level, laser temperature reader and outlet tester.

The same Housing Quality Standards (HQS) criteria will be used to verify repairs, regardless of whether the inspection is virtual or in-person. You can learn more about HQS in the HQS Inspection Guidebook, which is available on the CHA website at www.thecha.org/forms as well as the Owner Portal at chahcvportal.org and the Participant Portal at cha.participantportal.org under RESOURCES.

If you have additional questions about virtual inspections, please contact the Inspections Department via the Owner Portal at chahcvportal.org, via the Participant Portal at cha.participantportal.org, by email at hcvinspections@thecha.org or by phone at **312-935-2600**. For fastest processing, please include “VIRTUAL INSPECTION” in the subject line of your email.

Note: For security, the Call Center requires callers with account-specific questions to verify account information such as the voucher number, Social Security number or current address.

The unit should have been scheduled for a Regular (annual or biennial) Inspection, but it was delayed. When will it be conducted?

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued multiple waivers in 2020 granting housing authorities some administrative flexibilities in providing assistance to families during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of these waivers granted CHA the flexibility to delay Regular (annual or biennial) Inspections that have come due during the COVID-19 pandemic, by having the property owner complete a form, certifying that no life-threatening (emergency) conditions exist at the property.

If a unit qualifies under this waiver, the property owner will receive an email with instructions to complete the SELF-CERTIFICATION OF HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS (HQS) COMPLIANCE – COVID-19 form. Property owners who have an inspection delayed can expect CHA to conduct a full Regular Inspection (virtual or in-person) of the property to confirm HQS compliance as soon as reasonably possible, but no later than December 31, 2021.

MOVING

I want to move. How can I request moving papers?

There are three (3) ways you can request moving papers:

1. Visit the Participant Portal at cha.participantportal.org. Under the MOVES menu, click on “Request a Move”, then follow the prompts to submit your request.
2. Contact the CHA Customer Call Center at **312-935-2600**.

Note: For security, the Call Center requires callers with account-specific questions to verify account information such as the voucher number, Social Security number or current address.

3. Email hcv@thecha.org. For fastest processing, please include “MOVE REQUEST” and your voucher number in the subject line of your email.

Note: In order to request moving papers, you must be eligible to move. To learn more about eligibility to move and the moving process, visit the Participant Portal at cha.participantportal.org and browse the resources under the MOVES menu.

I requested (or am required to receive) moving papers. How will I receive them?

Once your family is deemed eligible to move by request, or is required to move, CHA will contact you by phone or email with instructions on how to sign the voucher and receive moving papers remotely.

Note: As U.S. Mail has been experiencing delays, CHA is encouraging participants to provide an email address to facilitate important account transactions. If you do not have an email address, you can create one for free through **Google, Yahoo** or **Microsoft**.

Moving papers are primarily issued via email using DocuSign, an online tool to collect signatures and send documents securely. Receiving your moving papers remotely is a multi-step process:

1. A housing specialist will send the family an email via DocuSign with multiple documents to sign: The Voucher, Addendum to the Family Obligations, Rent Burden Worksheet and Lead Education Initiative Checklist.

Note: CHA will not appear in the email sender's name; it will come from a housing specialist via a **@docusign.net** email address with the subject "Please DocuSign". The body of the email will be branded with CHA's logo.

If you can't find this email, please check your spam or junk folder and/or add DocuSign to your safe senders list to ensure you receive your documents.

2. Open the DocuSign email, follow the instructions to set your digital signature, digitally sign the documents and click Finish. DocuSign may prompt you to make an account to save a copy of your documents, but this is not required.
3. Within 3 business days, CHA will countersign the documents, and you will receive an automated confirmation email from DocuSign and a link to download a copy of the signed documents.

A housing specialist will also directly email you with your Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA) packet, attached as a PDF. At this point, you may print or email the RTA packet to a prospective property owner to start the move.

If you have questions about receiving your moving papers, please contact the CHA Customer Call Center via the Participant Portal at **cha.participantportal.org**, by email at **hcv@thecha.org** or by phone at **312-935-2600**. For fastest processing, please include "MOVING PAPERS" and your voucher number in the subject line of your email.

Note: For security, the Call Center requires callers with account-specific questions to verify account information such as the voucher number, Social Security number or current address.

I was already issued moving papers, but I need a duplicate set. How can I request those?

If you were issued your moving papers via email, you are able to download or print duplicate copies of your moving papers as needed from the email that you received from the housing specialist. However, do not reuse your old moving papers if CHA is already processing a RTA packet for a move! In this scenario, you must contact CHA to cancel the RTA packet in process and be issued a new set of moving papers with a new expiration date.

If you received your moving papers by mail or are having difficulty downloading a duplicate set from your email, please contact the Moves Team via the Participant Portal at **cha.participantportal.org**, by email at **hcv@thecha.org** or by phone at **312-935-2600**. For fastest processing, please include "DUPLICATE PAPERS" and your voucher number in the subject line of your email.

Note: For security, the Call Center requires callers with account-specific questions to verify account information such as the voucher number, Social Security number or current address.

I would like to move outside of the city of Chicago. Can I move with my voucher during COVID-19?

In order to move outside of Chicago, you must complete the “Porting” process to transfer your voucher to the Housing Authority that manages the area where you wish to live – you would “port out” of Chicago and “port in” to the new Housing Authority.

For more information, please refer to the Participant Guidebook which is available on the CHA website at www.thecha.org/forms as well as the Participant Portal at cha.participantportal.org under RESOURCES.

Note: Many Housing Authorities are operating differently due to COVID-19. Before submitting a request, CHA highly recommends that participants first contact the new Housing Authority to learn how that agency is currently processing “Port Ins”.

How do I submit a completed Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA) packet to CHA?

There are three (3) ways a property owner can submit a completed RTA packet:

1. **Current HCV Property Owners Only:** Visit the Owner Portal at chahcvportal.org, log in and click “Upload My RTA” under the MOVES menu.

Note: Step-by-step instructions for how to create an account and navigate the Owner Portal are available on the login page at chahcvportal.org.

2. Email the RTA packet to ownerinfo@thecha.org and include “RTA” and the voucher number in the subject line.
3. Drop off the RTA packet at a “no contact” drop box, located at the HCV Central Office (60 E. Van Buren St.), HCV South Office (3617 S. State St.) and HCV West Office (1852 S. Albany Ave.).

Note: Before submitting your RTA packet, please double check your work for accuracy and confirm that you have included all required information. Missing or inaccurate information can lead to processing delays! If you have questions about how to complete a RTA packet, contact the Owner Services Department by email at ownerinfo@thecha.org.

SUPPORT SERVICES

What support services does CHA provide in response to COVID-19?

CHA continues to offer a variety of support services to HCV participant families, including job training, employment placement, youth activities, asset building and homeownership. Most services are offered remotely however some partners continue to offer in-person assistance.

For more information, please visit www.thecha.org/residents/services.

I think I am experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. Who should I contact for help?

If you believe you are experiencing an emergency, call 911.

For non-emergencies, the Chi COVID Coach app assists Chicagoans who think they have been exposed to COVID-19 or are experiencing symptoms. Visit covidcoach.chicago.gov or call **312-745-4835**.

You’ll be asked to provide information about your symptoms and may receive follow up calls or texts

from the Chicago Department of Public Health with day-by-day guidance.

Remember, even if your symptoms are mild, by law in Chicago, you must stay home except to get medical care. If you are living with someone who is sick or have been in close contact with a person with COVID-19, you must also stay home and monitor for symptoms.

Where can I find a COVID-19 vaccine?

As of May 10, 2021, anyone 12 years and older is eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Chicagoans can find vaccine appointments or walk-in opportunities in many ways, including:

- Through your normal healthcare provider, such as your primary care provider, health clinic or hospital where you have received medical care in the past.
- Through your local pharmacy, such as **Walgreens, CVS, Mariano's, Jewel-Osco, Walmart, Sam's Club** or **Costco**.
- Through **vaccines.gov**, which connects individuals to local pharmacies or clinics
- Through **Zocdoc**, which manages appointments for the City's remaining vaccination sites at Malcolm X College, Kennedy-King College, Richard J. Daley College and Wilbur Wright College.
- Through **pop-up vaccination events** and **CDPH immunization clinics** organized by the City.
- Through the recently expanded **Protect Chicago At Home Program**.

For more information on how to find a vaccine, vaccine safety data, and Chicago's equitable distribution plan, visit **chicago.gov/COVIDvax** or call **312-746-4835**.

Those around me (such as property owners, participants and/or neighbors) are not obeying the Chicago-area guidance regarding face covering, vaccinations and/or social distancing. What should I do?

It is up to all of us to do our part to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Remind them that doing this will protect their safety as well as yours. We must be "all in" to stay well.

The city of Chicago offers more information about the "Protecting Chicago" opening framework online at **www.chicago.gov/reopening**.

Who can I contact for food assistance?

If your family is experiencing food insecurity, contact the Greater Chicago Food Depository by phone at **773-247-FOOD (3663)** or visit **www.chicagosfoodbank.org** for information on nearby food pantries. The Food Depository's benefits outreach team is also available to help Chicagoans apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid benefits.

Who can I contact for crisis support?

HCV participants can contact CHA FamilyWorks providers for a variety of support services. For more information about FamilyWorks or for help locating your case management provider, please visit **www.thecha.org/familyworks**, call **312-935-2625** or email **familyworks@thecha.org**.

In addition, the following organizations offer free crisis counseling and mental health resources to all Chicago residents by phone and/or text:

- **Bright Star Community Outreach Trauma Counseling Helpline** | Call **833-TURN-123**
- **Call4Calm** | Text TALK or HABLAR to **552020**

- Chicago Department of Public Health Teletherapy | Call **312-747-1020**
- City of Chicago Domestic Violence Helpline | Call **877-863-6338** or visit **www.CHI.gov/dvhelp**
- Crisis Text Line | Text HELLO to **741741**
- NAMI Chicago Mental Health Helpline | Call **833-626-4244**
- U.S. Disaster Distress Helpline | Call **1-800-985-5990** or text TalkWithUs to **66746**

Where can I find additional COVID-19 resources for Chicago residents?

The city of Chicago has assembled a comprehensive list of resources to support all Chicago residents and provide information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. These resources include assistance related to health, mental health, food, housing, utilities, schools, employment, immigration and more. You can access all of these resources online at **www.chicago.gov/coronavirus**.

LEARN MORE

How do I speak to someone regarding my HCV Program account?

As of July 6, 2021, the HCV Regional Offices are open for document drop-off and appointments only (no walk-ins will be accepted). CHA staff continue to provide service to participants and property owners by phone, email, portal and U.S. Mail.

Note: As U.S. Mail has been experiencing delays, CHA is encouraging participants to provide an email address to facilitate important account transactions. If you do not have an email address, you can create one for free through **Google**, **Yahoo** or **Microsoft**.

You can reach CHA through the following means:

Online:

- RENTCafé | **res-par.thecha.org**
- Participant Portal | **cha.participantportal.org**
- Waiting List | **applyonline.thecha.org**
- Owner Portal | **chahcvportal.org**

By Email:

- General Inquiries | **hcv@thecha.org**
- Owner Services | **ownerinfo@thecha.org**
- Inspections | **hcvinspections@thecha.org**

By Phone:

- CHA Customer Call Center | **312-935-2600** (TTY: **312-461-0079**)

Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

How can I learn more about RENTCafé?

CHA offers many resources for participant families looking to learn more about RENTCafé including written step-by-step guides, instructional videos and live webinars. Written guides and videos are available for download by logging in to RENTCafé at **res-par.thecha.org** and on the Participant Portal at **cha.participantportal.org**.

Recordings of account management webinars are available on-demand in our HCV Webinar Library at gotostage.com/channel/chahcvparticipants. To view the schedule of upcoming account management webinars, visit cha-hcvevents.eventbrite.com.

How can I learn more about the HCV Owner Portal or Participant Portal?

CHA has recently updated Frequently Asked Questions documents for both the Owner and Participant Portals. They are available for download on the Owner Portal at chahcvportal.org or the Participant Portal at cha.participantportal.org by clicking on the “How to Navigate” link on the login page.

How can I learn more about HCV Program policies and initiatives?

CHA offers dozens of forms, flyers, videos, newsletters and guidebooks that you can download as well as helpful links to partner sites. These resources are updated regularly, so we encourage participants and property owners to always reference the latest online version when seeking information.

To find these resources, visit the CHA website at www.thecha.org, the Owner Portal at chahcvportal.org and the Participant Portal at cha.participantportal.org.

To view resources on either of the Portals, log in and click on RESOURCES in the menu bar. Resources are categorized by subject.

To view on-demand recordings of HCV Program webinars, visit our webinar libraries:

- Participant webinars: gotostage.com/channel/chahcvparticipants
- Property owner webinars: gotostage.com/channel/chahcvowners

To view the schedule of upcoming webinars, visit cha-hcvevents.eventbrite.com.