



Message From the CEO:



Dear Housing Choice Voucher Participants:

As the effect of winter slowly makes its exit in Chicago, it is easy to see neighborhoods becoming a little more vibrant as people finally go outside to take in spring. For many of us, it's the first time in several months that we have finally been able to enjoy the outdoors and get reacquainted with our neighbors and the community-at-large.

Similarly, we at the Chicago Housing Authority go to great lengths to ensure that our communication with both owners and participants is clear, concise and consistent. Whether we are working to increase knowledge and awareness of a particular program, or to help facilitate a harmonious relationship that benefits everyone, the agency leaves no stone unturned when it comes to transparency.

To do that, CHA utilizes a variety of forums to get the word out about a range of topics. They include:

The Housing Expo: CHA hosted its first Housing Expo on March 5 to connect families with recently-issued vouchers to quality housing. It featured workshops for new participants on topics such as “How to navigate the HCV process,” “Fair Housing” and “Tenant Rights.” The purpose of the Housing Expo was to not only educate new Voucher Holders, but also assist those who had yet to locate a unit and submit their moving papers to CHA for approval. At the Housing Expo, more than 60 available units were represented by Owner Excellence Program (OEP) Property Owners and Managers. OEP Property Owners attended the Housing Expo and met directly with Voucher Holders, discussed their available units as well as setup appointments for prospective tenants to view units and begin the application process. Other OEP Property Owners who were unable to attend the Housing Expo provided apartment listings and other informational flyers for HCV Participants to take home.

Educational workshops: The CHA HCV Program takes pride in the tenant-focused workshops it has hosted in the past. This year, CHA delved a little deeper, trying to increase an understanding of housing-related topics with an emphasis on the Family Obligations. Again, the feedback for these in-depth sessions was tremendous and CHA will continue getting out the word about future workshops.

CHA also provides regular information on safety, enforcement, policies and opportunities such as scholarships in a variety of ways, including: Instagram @chicagohousingauthority, YouTube (youtube.com/chihousingauthority), Twitter (@theCHAtweets) and Facebook (facebook.com/CHAonFB). CHA sincerely believes that communication is the key.

As always, we invite you to share in the conversation and provide us feedback on our website at www.thecha.org. We thank you for your continued support of the HCV Program.

Sincerely,
Michael R. Merchant

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Q1 Tenant Workshop Recap

The CHA HCV Program has hosted educational workshops for participants in the past, covering various housing-related topics. The workshop series was continued in 2015 with a focus on increasing participant program knowledge and understanding, along with increasing communication between CHA, the owners and the participants.

During the first quarter of this year, HCV staff presented the topic, “Navigating the HCV Program: Information You Should Know”. The presentation focused on the HCV family obligations – more specifically, the top ten family obligations with which participants need the most assistance and clarification.

Additionally, Matt Niezgodka from the Office of the Inspector General for the Department of Homeland Security gave a brief presentation on Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) fraud cases. Additional topics such as fair housing, understanding the lease agreement, and lease violations were also covered by HCV staff.



Overall, HCV Participants found the information to be extremely helpful, and several attendees were able to receive assistance with more personal issues regarding the HCV Program, with the help of staff on-hand for participant resolution.

CHA will continue to hold these workshops throughout the year, and participants are advised to keep an eye out in the postal mail, email inbox, and signage in the regional offices for more information about future workshops.

Neighborhood Safety Tips

HCV participants play an important role in helping CHA build vibrant communities and improve the quality of life in Chicago. As warmer weather approaches and people spend more time outside of their homes, residents are encouraged to do their part to ensure safe neighborhoods.

Below are some tips to keep themselves and their families out of harm’s way:

- **Get to know the neighbors.** Building good relationships with neighbors not only helps to recognize strangers, but can also provide a great security system when away from home.
- **Be alert on the street.** Residents should walk on well-lit sidewalks at night and with friends or family members if possible. Women should wear purses in a

way that they cannot be easily grabbed, such as across the chest or underneath the arm.

- **Be ready when arriving home.** Residents should have their keys in hand so that they are ready to open the door when they walk up to the entrance of their apartment or house.
- **Keep lights on.** Especially at night, residents are encouraged to keep a light on to avoid suspicious persons lurking around the property scouting for easy targets of theft.

For more tips on public and neighborhood safety, interested residents can visit the Chicago Police Department’s website at www.chicagopolice.org.

Guest Policy and Criminal Activity

CHA encourages HCV participants to be proactive members of their communities, with a strong advocacy for the “if you see something, say something” principal. While HCV participants are required to follow the rules and regulations as set forth by the family obligations listed on the voucher and the Participant Guidebook, they should also extend these rules to guests who visit their home as well.

CHA Family Obligations

Below is a list of the family obligations that specifically address guest policy and criminal activity:

- **Family Obligation #20** – HCV participants and families MUST NOT engage in or allow guests to engage in drug-related criminal activity, violent criminal activity, or other criminal activity that threatens the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of other residents and persons residing in the immediate vicinity of the premises. *Bottom line: arrests related to drugs, violence/assault, or other illegal activity are a violation of this rule, whether the person being arrested is a household member or a guest.*
- **Family Obligation #23** – HCV participants and families MUST NOT damage the unit or premises or permit any guest to damage the unit or premises. *Bottom line: any damages to the unit, besides normal wear and tear, caused by household members and/or guests are a violation of this rule.*

- **Family Obligation #26** – HCV participants and families MUST NOT engage in or allow guests to engage in any behavior that disturbs the peaceful and quiet enjoyment of others of the premises and the neighborhood. *Bottom line: noise complaints from neighbors or community members may be a violation of this rule. This includes disturbances caused by household members and guests.*
- **Family Obligation #27** – HCV participants and families MUST NOT threaten or engage in or allow guests to threaten or engage in abusive or violent behavior toward CHA personnel or its representatives. *Bottom line: if an HCV Participant threatens an HQS Inspector or becomes aggressive towards CHA staff while visiting one of the regional offices, this is considered a violation of this rule. Guests in the residence or accompanying the participant during on appointment are included in this rule as well.*

Lease Agreement with the Property Owner

Not only must HCV participants follow the rules set forth by the CHA family obligations, but they must also make sure they are following the terms of the lease agreement signed by them and the property owner/manager. For example, if a property owner enforces a lease that states no guests are allowed after 10 p.m. on weeknights, then the HCV participant must follow that rule.



**Need 24-hour Customer Service
with the HCV Program?**

Email Us!

hcv@thecha.org

Housing Expo Recap

The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) hosted an informational HCV Housing Expo on March 5, 2015 for new Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) participants. The purpose of the Housing Expo was to not only educate new voucher holders, but also to assist those who had yet to locate a unit and submit their moving papers to CHA for approval.

Owner Excellence Program (OEP) property owners attended the Housing Expo to meet directly with voucher holders, discuss their available units, and set up appointments for prospective tenants to view units and begin the application process. Other OEP property owners who were unable to attend the Housing Expo provided apartment listings and other informational flyers for HCV participants to take home.

In addition to face-to-face interaction with property owners, attendees also enjoyed presentations throughout the day. HCV-related topics included the moves and voucher extensions process, CHA special programs, mobility counseling, and the Family Self-Sufficiency program. CHA partner organizations, Heartland Alliance and Housing Choice Partners, spoke directly with attendees and provided resources for HCV Participants interested in the organizations' services.

Community organizations, Metropolitan Tenant Organization and Community Investment Corporation,



gave presentations on "Understanding Your Lease Agreement" and "How to Find a Unit," respectively. Furthermore, Citizens Utility Board (CUB) and Sinai Urban Health Institute (SUHI) met with HCV participants and provided many useful resources as well. CUB provided energy-efficient lightbulbs, and SUHI provided information regarding common household chemicals that are harmful to children, lead-based paint, and information for people dealing with asthma.

During the Housing Expo, CHA staff was on-site to directly assist voucher holders. HCV participants who were in need of a voucher extension or needed a resolution for other issues were able to receive immediate assistance at the Housing Expo. Overall, all parties were satisfied with the success of the event and CHA looks forward to planning similar events for HCV participants in the future.

HCV Updates for Participants

URP Card Updates

Effective July 1, 2015, the provider of the Utility Reimbursement Payment (URP) card is changing. Participants who previously had a Chase bank card will no longer receive URP deposits on this card after June 30, 2015.

Remaining Chase card balances must be spent by December 31, 2015. Beginning July 1, 2015, monthly URP will be deposited on a new card issued by KeyBank. KeyBank will send the new bank card to

participants via postal mail. For more information, contact the CHA Customer Service Call Center at (312) 935-2600.

Upcoming CEO Forum

The next CEO Forum will take place on Wednesday, June 24, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. The location has not been determined at this time, however CHA will notify all HCV participants with an update when more details become available.

Activities for Children in Chicago

After School Matters (ASM)

Apprentice or intern with ASM in sports, the arts, technology, and much more. All info and application is available online at www.afterschoolmatters.org. For more information, call 312-742-4182.

Chicago Public Art Group

Paid internships to paint murals in low-income communities. For more information, visit www.cpag.net or call 312-427-2724.

Youth Service Project

YSP has many youth focused programs and job placements. Contact 773-772-6270. Youth programs for west side residents of Chicago. For more information, visit www.chicagoareaproject.org or call 312-666-9552.

South Chicago Art Center

The Art center provides free quality arts programs and experiences to youth in south Chicago. Please visit www.happyartcenter.org or call 773-731-9287.

After-School All-Stars (ASAS, Chicago Public Schools)

Provides schools with tools and resources to improve K-8th grade students' sense of school belonging and cultivate engaged learners and leaders. For more information, please visit www.asaschicago.org or call 773-553-3590.

TechCrew (Chicago Public Schools)

TechCrew is designed to enrich students' educational experience and job readiness skills. For more information, contact Victor Herrera at TechCrew@cps.k12.il.us.

Athletics and Sports

Chicago Public Schools Athletics and Sports Programs provide all students, regardless of race, gender or ethnicity, opportunities to develop physically, mentally, and emotionally in controlled, safe activities outside of the traditional classroom. Contact Sports Administration and Facilities Management at (773) 534-0700 or the Athletic Director at the child's school for more information.

Chicago Park Districts

HCV Participants are encouraged to take advantage of the Spring and Summer Park District Vouchers now available at the CHA regional offices.

Summer Park District Vouchers

Registration begins April 18, 2015.

Session runs June 29 – August 7, 2015. Cost is \$15 per child age 5-12.

Extended day camp runs from August 10-14, August 17-21, 2015 at select locations. Cost of extended day camp is \$5 per child age 5-12.

Choose-To-Own Program

The CHA Choose- To-Own (CTO) Homeownership Program provides qualified and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) families with the opportunity to own a home. CTO has helped over 400 CHA families make the transition from renting to owning.

Interested HCV participants should attend a CTO orientation session to find out more about the program and steps to achieving homeownership. Refer to the orientation calendar on the right for upcoming sessions.

Sessions listed in green are in Spanish and English.

Participants and families can learn more about the CTO Homeownership Program by calling the CHA Customer Service Call Center at (312) 935-2600.

South W. Regional Satellite Office, 10 W. 35th St.

| | | | | |
|----------|-----------|---------|----|---------|
| Tuesday, | Apr 14th, | 4:00 PM | to | 5:00 PM |
| Tuesday, | May 12th, | 4:00 PM | to | 5:00 PM |
| Tuesday, | Jun 9th, | 4:00 PM | to | 5:00 PM |

West Regional Satellite Office, 2750 W. Roosevelt Rd

| | | | | |
|------------|-----------|---------|----|---------|
| Wednesday, | Apr 29th, | 4:00 PM | to | 5:00 PM |
| Thursday, | May 28th, | 4:00 PM | to | 5:00 PM |

Central Office, 60 E. Van Buren

| | | | | |
|------------|-----------|----------|----|---------|
| Wednesday, | Apr 22nd, | 12:00 PM | to | 1:00 PM |
| Wednesday, | May 6th, | 6:00 PM | to | 7:00 PM |
| Wednesday, | Jun 17th, | 4:00 PM | to | 5:00 PM |

Neighborhood Housing Services, 1279 N. Milwaukee

| | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|---------|----|---------|
| Thursday, | Apr 9th, | 4:00 PM | to | 5:00 PM |
| Thursday, | Jun 11th, | 4:00 PM | to | 5:00 PM |

Spanish Coalition for Housing, 1922 N. Pulaski

| | | | | |
|----------|-----------|---------|----|---------|
| Tuesday, | Apr 28th, | 4:00 PM | to | 5:00 PM |
| Tuesday, | Jun 30th, | 4:00 PM | to | 5:00 PM |

The Enforcement Corner

From time to time, *Going Places* will feature information regarding criminal prosecution matters that were investigated by the CHA Office of the Inspector General (OIG), which resulted in criminal indictments against individuals who have committed fraud against CHA. CHA wants to continue to educate HCV participants regarding their rights and responsibilities as agreed to by the HCV family obligations, in an effort to prevent violations and empower participants to be successful in the HCV Program.

OIG Case #1

A CHA OIG investigation of an HCV participant determined that she and the property owner were married. The property owner received a monthly Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) of \$1,218 for the participant's unit. The investigation results indicated that the participant rented the unit to a third party and did not occupy the unit. The investigation led to a 2013 four-count indictment by a Cook County Grand Jury of both the participant and the property owner for felony theft of CHA funds. Both were arrested and released on bond.

OIG Case #2

A CHA OIG fraud investigation that was initiated in October 2013 revealed that the HCV participant was married to her property owner and he resided jointly in the subsidized unit. From April 2007 until November 2012, the CHA paid a total of \$61,028 in Housing Assistance Payments. In June 2014, the Cook County Grand Jury returned a multiple count felony indictment, charging the participant and the property owner with Continuing Financial Crime Enterprise, Fraudulently Obtaining Money from a Financial Institution, and two separate counts of Theft from the CHA. Both were arraigned that month. The property owner pled guilty to one count of Theft by Deception – Greater than \$10,000.00 and was sentenced to two years probation. The participant pled guilty to Continuing Financial Crimes Enterprise and was sentenced to two years probation.

OIG Case #3

An OIG fraud investigation was initiated in December 2013 revealed that the HCV participant resided in a unit owned by her mother, the property owner since 1999. During at least part of that time, the participant jointly owned the property and was the sole owner of an additional home. From February 1999 until December 2013, the CHA paid the property owner \$164,190.00 in Housing Assistance Payments. In early June 2014, the

Cook County Grand Jury returned a multiple felony count indictment, charging both the participant and the property owner with Theft and Fraudulently Obtaining Money from a Financial Institution as a result of a scheme to illegally obtain benefits from the CHA. Both were arraigned in late June 2014. The next court date for both was scheduled for early February 2015.

OIG Case #4

A CHA OIG fraud investigation was initiated in February 2014 based upon an allegation that the HCV participant benefited from Housing Assistance Payments for over ten years while residing in a different property, which he owned. The participant also failed to disclose a marriage and a not-for-profit business operated from the residence he owned. From December 2002 until June 2014, the CHA paid \$102,070 in Housing Assistance Payments. In August 2014, the Cook County Grand Jury returned a multiple felony count indictment, charging the participant with Continuing Financial Crime Enterprise, Fraudulently Obtaining Money from a Financial Institution, and two separate counts of Theft. The participant was arraigned in August 2014. The next court date was scheduled for January 2015.

Overview

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and CHA OIG Joint Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Fraud Initiative

In 2013, the OIG partnered with DHS. As of December 2014, 119 CHA Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) recipients had been identified by DHS OIG as having submitted fraudulent claims to FEMA for storm-related housing assistance. CHA OIG acted on this information and investigated the fraudulent claims. As a result, 32 vouchers were terminated and 15 HCV participants have been charged with fraud. Three of the indicted have pled guilty to Theft by Deception (Class 2 Felony) and received two years' probation. Additionally, based upon information supplied by DHS, the CHA OIG initiated three investigations of HCV participants. The results of the investigations determined that participants defrauded the CHA, independent of the FEMA fraud. One of those investigations resulted in the prosecution of the HCV participant and another in the prosecution of both the HCV participant and the property owner. Those two cases are pending in the Circuit Court of Cook County.

Note: Updates are as of late January 2015 and further information regarding the results of such cases is not available at this time.

Community Resources

Each quarter, *Going Places* will share resource information from various communities throughout the City of Chicago, in hopes that HCV participants may find use in services that are offered to them in their own neighborhood.

This issue of the participant newsletter features resources from the Chicago neighborhood of Englewood.

Resident Association of Greater Englewood (RAGE)

www.ragenglewood.org
866-845-1032

The mission of RAGE is to mobilize people and resources to force a change in the community by breaking down barriers in communication and promoting positivity through solution-based approaches. Englewood residents are welcome to donate, support, or join RAGE based on interests in education issues, youth empowerment, economic development, or civic engagement.

Teamwork Englewood

www.teamworkenglewood.org
773-488-6600

Teamwork Englewood is focused on positive community change, safety, servicing the special needs community, and promoting healthy lifestyles. The organization initiates programs such as Re-Entry Resource Center, African American Male Initiative, Golden Nugget Girls Leadership Program, Smart Communities Program, and Hoops in the Hood.

Sustainable Englewood

www.sustainableenglewood.org
312-473-6557

Sustainable Englewood Initiatives (SEI) is a community-based, not-for-profit organization that works with residents, community organizations, government agencies, and business to improve the environmental condition in Englewood. SEI focuses on issues such as air quality, abandoned buildings, illegal dumping, transportation, recycling, and land use.

The Englewood Portal

Rashanah Baldwin, Portal Manager
rashanah@englewoodportal.org
773-488-6600

The Englewood Portal is a digital tool for residents and organizations to tell their own story and share the latest events and news happening in the Chicago neighborhood of Englewood. Organizations, schools, associations, government agencies, clubs, and businesses are encouraged to share information on The Englewood Portal.

Imagine Englewood If (IEI)

www.imagineenglewoodif.org
773-488-6704

The mission of IEI is to strengthen and empower the greater Englewood community through teaching local youth and their families about healthy living, environmental awareness, and positive communication skills.

Additional Programs for Residents

Family Self-Sufficiency Program

Enrollment for the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program is now OPEN! The FSS program is a goal setting and savings program available to all eligible HCV and PH families. For more information about the FSS program, contact Heartland Human Care Services at (773) 358-3854 or via email at fss@heartlandalliance.org.

Mobility Counseling Program

HCV families (with youth ages 0-18) that are interested in the Mobility Counseling program can learn more by contacting Housing Choice Partners (HCP). The Mobility Counseling program assists families in the HCV program to move into CHA-designated Opportunity Areas within Chicago. For more information, contact HCP at (773) 451-0203.



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www.thecha.org/hcv



Value of the Voucher

The Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program was created to provide low-income families with expanded housing options. By allowing them to use a subsidized voucher as rent payment, the program gives families the ability to be selective when searching for housing in the private market.

Families do not have to settle for units that do not meet their household needs. However, the terms of the voucher includes a firm time frame for families to locate a unit. For this reason, families should be selective, but also diligent when searching for a home. Voucher holders are encouraged to conduct a complete walk-through of the neighborhood and unit before agreeing to submit moving papers. CHA does not pick the housing unit – the power to choose a home is in the hands of the voucher holder.

In addition to housing options in the private market, voucher holders have access to resources to aid in

employment, education, and recreational needs. Families with children under the age of 12 can participate in the Chicago Park District's programs, including after-school programs and summer camp. Through CHA's special programs and partnerships with organizations such as City Colleges of Chicago, Housing Choice Partners, Catholic Charities, and Heartland Alliance, voucher holders have access to resources that can help them become more self-sufficient.

As a voucher holder, the participant and family is responsible to be compliant with the HCV Program regulations and uphold the Family Obligations. If a family does not comply with HCV regulations, they will be at risk of losing their voucher.

The HCV Program is a valuable resource to so many families - not only in Chicago, but throughout the nation.