

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



MEET OUR BOARD MEMBERS

Dr. Mildred C. Harris



The Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) Board of Commissioners makes decisions about CHA policies and programs to guide CHA and its future. In this series we introduce you to new and sitting board members. For this issue, we present Commissioner Mildred C. Harris.

Commissioner Dr. Mildred C. Harris is a retired schoolteacher, mentor and ordained minister. She was appointed to the board on July 7, 1999 and has been re-appointed three times due to her leadership and commitment to improving the CHA.

As a commissioner, Dr. Harris created the award-winning "Adopt-A-Senior Building" program, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars to refurbish the sitting areas in more than 57 CHA senior buildings. Dr. Harris is also founder, president and CEO of God First Church and Ministries, which has contributed more than \$40,000 in scholarships for CHA students. She also started a food pantry for CHA senior residents.

Dr. Harris serves a number of leadership roles in civic and religious organizations such as: Advisory Board for Illinois Attorney Lisa Madigan, Advisory Council for Illinois State Treasurer Dan Rutherford, Women's Board of the Goodman Theater, National Council of Negro Women and Windows of Opportunity Board.

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THE SOUTH REGIONAL OFFICE HAS MOVED

To more efficiently serve our clients, CHA's South Regional Office for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program has relocated to:

IIT Tower*
10 W. 35th St., Fifth Floor
Chicago, IL 60616

***Valid photo ID required for entry**

Beginning Monday, December 3, 2012, all HCV Program Participants and Property Owners/Managers that used to visit the South Regional office will now conduct business at the 35th Street location. The move affects Participants that live and Property Owners/Managers that own/manage units in ZIP codes 60615, 60637, 60649 and 60637.

Please note that you must have a valid photo ID in order to enter the 35th Street office location. You will need to show a government-issued, non-expired, photo ID to security staff in order to access the office. For more information, visit our website at www.thecha.org/hcv or contact the CHA Customer Call Center at 312-935-2600.

ADJUSTING RENT FOR CHANGING MARKETS

If you're considering asking for a rent increase for one of your HCV Program units, this article comes highly recommended. Below you'll find tips on the rent increase process that will help you make a good decision about whether or not to request an increase.

First, before you request an increase, CHA recommends that you do some market research for the geographic area where your unit is located. If you find in your research that the rents for comparable, leased, unsubsidized units do not support the increase or actually support a decrease, you may decide against submitting the request. It's also important to keep in mind that in many cases the brunt of a rent increase will fall on the Participant. If the Participant cannot afford the increase in their portion, they may request to move to a more affordable unit.

Taxpayers fund the HCV Program, and the CHA has a duty to the nation to spend taxpayers' money responsibly (and not only that, it's also a statutory requirement). Part of that responsibility involves making sure the HCV Program and its Participants pay a fair price for rental units.

As you know, periods of high and low demand for housing shift back-and-forth over time. As a result, depending on when you leased up with a Participant, the rent for your unit may be different than it is for other comparable units nearby.

Because of these regular changes in rental prices, CHA must periodically evaluate rents for HCV Program units to make sure they are comparable to other market-rate rents in that same community. Part of those evaluations may result in changes to the Payment Standard and ultimately the units that are affordable for Participants.

A changing rental market can also affect rent increase requests. Many Property Owners/Managers continually seek ways to maximize the returns on their property assets. In many cases, that may involve requesting a rent increase on a unit that they lease to an HCV Program Participant.

If you ever request a rent increase, CHA examines rents for comparable market-rate units within the proximity of the subject unit. If your requested amount exceeds the rents for nearby comparable, market-rate units, CHA will likely deny the request. In addition, if as a result of your request CHA finds that the current rent you receive (not including the increase) exceeds current market rates for comparable units, CHA may not only deny the increase request but also decrease the rent amount for your unit.

To close, remember that even if the market supports your increase request, it may not be a savvy business decision to move forward with the request because it could affect your occupancy rates as a family may not be able to afford the unit and may request to move.

DISPUTES AND PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR

In their day-to-day work, CHA staff members are required to conduct themselves in a professional manner in all interactions with clients. One of CHA's priorities is to continue to improve its customer service. We understand the importance of fostering positive business relationships with HCV Program Property Owners and Managers. If an inspector or other CHA employee acts unprofessionally, please report it to CHA immediately.

A good partnership requires respectful behavior from both partners and so CHA also asks that Property Owners/Managers extend the same professional demeanor to CHA staff that they would to any other business contact.

If you have a complaint about a CHA employee or dispute a staff member's decision, rather than confront the issue in the heat of the moment, please contact the CHA Customer Call Center at 312-935-2600 for information about filing a report. Again, we appreciate your partnership and commit ourselves to continuing to improve it.

CHA OWNER PORTAL: ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS IN SECONDS

Have you signed up for a free HCV Program Owner Portal account yet? A couple of our owners recently raved about how much time the portal saves them.

"HCV Program-related tasks that used to take me or my staff a half-hour to complete now take just seconds," Chris Amatore of Manage Chicago Property Management said. "I manage a lot of properties, and with the Owner Portal I can check the history of my payments and inspections in one place."

Another Property Owner, Kimberly Morgan of K-LO Real Estate, loves the fact that she can access the portal via her smart-phone, "The Owner Portal is like my own personal HCV Program Regional Office at my fingertips." Morgan added, "When one of my tenants has a question about their portion, I log-in to the portal on the spot to clear up any confusion. I love that I don't have to wait on hold. I have real-time access to the same systems as the Call Center so I can answer my own question in seconds."

Visit www.thecha.org/hcvportal to sign-up and start saving time today.

5TH ANNUAL OWNER SYMPOSIUM: RECAP



The view from the back of the Navy Pier's Grand Ballroom at the 5th Annual Owner Symposium.

On Saturday, September 29, 2012, more than 900 people including Property Owners/Managers, vendors, exhibitors and CHA staff convened upon Navy Pier for CHA's 5th Annual Owner Symposium—the most highly attended yet!

At 9:00 a.m., attendees participated in educational seminars as a part of the first of three breakout sessions. A total of 27 educational seminars were available to Property Owners and Managers throughout the day discussing topics such as improving a building's energy efficiency, Chicago's Residential Landlord and Tenant Ordinance, property taxes, bed bug prevention and treatment, evictions, cost-effective renovations and more.

After a second educational session that morning, attendees gathered in Navy Pier's Grand Ballroom to enjoy a networking luncheon and listen to keynote speaker Commissioner Larry R. Rogers, Jr. of the Cook County Board of Review.

After the luncheon, a number of the 38 vendors and exhibitors at the event held raffle drawings prior to the final educational session of the day that afternoon.

Thank you to all attendees, vendors, exhibitors, speakers and staff that attended the event this year. We hope to see you again at next year's 6th Annual Owner Symposium.

Visit www.chaownersymposium.org for more photos, video and presentations from this year's event as well as updates about CHA's 6th Annual Owner Symposium in the fall of 2013.

INSPECTIONS CORNER

Welcome to this new section of Owner News where, in each issue, you'll find tips about HQS inspections.

Heat Requirements

Housing Quality Standards (HQS) require that living areas within your units maintain a minimum temperature of 68 degrees Fahrenheit between September 15th and June 1st. In addition, the living areas within your unit failing to maintain a minimum temperature of 55 degrees Fahrenheit between September 15th and June 1st will result in an emergency HQS failure which must be remediated within 24 hours.

Inspections Extensions

With wintry weather returning to Chicago, it's a good time to remind yourself of the differences between the two types of HQS inspections extensions: weather-related and non-weather-related.

Weather-Related Extensions: Because of inclement weather during fall and winter months, Property Owners/Managers may not be able to repair certain exterior HQS deficiencies. CHA will only accept requests for weather-related extensions from November 1st through February 28th. If CHA grants you a weather-related extension, the subject deficiencies must be repaired and ready for inspection no later than March 31st.

Non-Weather-Related Extensions: In some rare instances, CHA may grant a non-weather-related extension to a Property Owner/Manager. CHA approves non-weather-related extensions only when a Property Owner/Manager is prevented from making a repair due to circumstances beyond their control. If CHA approves a non-weather-related extension, the subject deficiency must be repaired and ready for inspection no later than 60 days after the date the deficiency was originally cited.

For more information about inspections extensions, visit/sign up for the HCV Program Owner Portal at www.thecha.org/hcvportal and in the forms download the "Request for Time Extension to Correct HQS Inspection Deficiencies".

*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

CHANGES TO CHA PAYMENT STANDARDS

CHA will change some of its Payment Standards effective December 1, 2012 for new contracts (moves) and for re-examinations effective February 1, 2013. Depending on a household's income, the Payment Standards set the maximum amount the HCV Program can pay toward rent and utilities for a subsidized unit (with exceptions for Opportunity Areas).

Housing authorities use Payment Standards to make a certain percentage of units in their jurisdiction affordable for HCV Program Families. CHA determines Payment Standards based on market-rent data collected by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Adjusting the standards keeps the rents subsidized by CHA in line with market-rate rents.

The Payment Standard is based on the number of bedrooms within a unit. If the rent and utilities for your unit add up to more than the Payment Standard for the number of bedrooms on a Participant's voucher, the tenant portion of the rent increases and may make your unit unaffordable.

A change in the Payment Standard may affect you because it could change your tenant's portion of the rent and could result in them having to move. Payment Standards for 0-bedroom, 1-bedroom and 7-bedroom units have decreased.

CHA's Payment Standards as of December 1, 2012

# of Bedrooms	2012 Payment Standard	2013 Payment Standard
0	\$857	\$784
1	\$981	\$980
2	\$1,102	\$1,139
3	\$1,347	\$1,372
4	\$1,522	\$1,561
5	\$1,639	\$1,732
6	\$1,854	\$1,917
7	\$2,067	\$2,048
8	\$2,282	\$2,378

MOVING HCV PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS TO GOOD NEIGHBORHOODS

To help Participants move to CHA-defined Opportunity Areas Chicago neighborhoods that offer quality housing and positive economic characteristics*), CHA created the Mobility Counseling Program in 2011. CHA partners with two agencies—Housing Choice Partners (HCP) and Housing Opportunities Unlimited (HOU)—to provide Mobility Counseling services.

HCP and HOU help HCV Program households find units in Opportunity Areas, offer workshops (including landlord/tenant rights, financial literacy and home maintenance) and support Participants' transition into their new community by helping locate local amenities and resources.

As a part of the Mobility Counseling Program, CHA can use higher payment standards for units in Opportunity Areas[†] to match market rate rents. Another advantage to Property Owners of units in these areas renting to HCV Participants is that they may qualify for property tax reductions (visit www.thecha.org/hcv for more information about the Tax Savings Program). HOU partnered with CHA in August of 2012 and has provided direct relocation assistance and services to public and subsidized housing families for 30-years. HOU is currently reaching out to landlords and owners with units in Opportunity Areas to help fill vacancies with eligible HCV households.

For more information about the Mobility Counseling Program, or to find out if you have units located in Opportunity Areas using CHA's web-based search tool, visit: www.thecha.org/mobility.

*Opportunity Areas are specifically identified neighborhoods with less than 20% of individuals with income below the poverty level and a low concentration of subsidized housing. These neighborhoods tend to offer positive economic characteristics such as higher performing schools, more job opportunities, and lower crime rates.

†Based on comparables, CHA can pay market rents up to 300% of Fair Market Rent (FMR).

OWNER NEWS

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