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COVID-19 Waivers Related to Housing Choice Voucher Program

Introduction:

On April 10, 2020, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released a series of waivers and program updates, 44 in total, for the Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) programs. The waivers were issued by HUD’s Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) in [Notice PIH 2020-05, COVID-19 Statutory and Regulatory Waivers for the Public Housing, Housing Choice Voucher, Indian Housing Block Grant and Indian Community Development Block Grant programs, Suspension of Public Housing Assessment System and Section Eight Management Assessment Program.](#)

Below is a list of waivers Housing Works has decided to implement for its Housing Choice Voucher Program.

HUD Waiver Type	Description of Waiver	Timeline
Family Income and Composition; Annual Examination – Income Verification requirements	<p>HUD is waiving the requirement that PHAs must use the income hierarchy described by PIH Notice 2018-18. HUD will allow PHAs to forgo third-party income verification requirements for annual reexaminations, including the use of EIV, if a PHA opts to conduct annual recertifications rather than delaying them. PHAs may consider self-certification as the highest form of income verification to process annual reexaminations. This may occur over the telephone (but must be documented for the written record by PHA staff), through an email or postal mail with a self-certification form by the tenant, or through other electronic communication. Income and family composition examinations and recertifications do not have to be conducted in-person.</p> <p>Housing Works has elected to accept self-certifications for income changes by fax, mail, email, hand delivered to drop box or over the phone. HCV voucher holders are asked to continue to report changes in writing.</p>	<p>Starting: April 10, 2020</p> <p>Ending: July 31, 2020</p>
Family Income and Composition; Interim Examinations	<p>HUD is waiving the requirements to use the income hierarchy described by PIH Notice 2018-18 and will allow PHAs to forgo third-party income verifications, including EIV. PHAs may consider self-certification as the highest form of income verification for interim reexaminations. Interim reexaminations are not required to be held in-person.</p> <p>Housing Works has elected to accept self-certifications for income changes by fax, mail, email, hand delivered to drop box or over the phone. HCV voucher holders are asked to continue to report changes in writing.</p>	<p>Starting: April 10, 2020</p> <p>Ending: July 31, 2020</p>
Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Contract of Participation; Contract Extension	<p>HUD will consider the circumstances surrounding COVID-19 to qualify as “good cause” to extend a family’s contract of participation in the FSS program.</p> <p>This waiver only applies to individuals participating in the FSS program.</p>	<p>Starting: April 10, 2020</p> <p>Ending: July 31, 2020</p>

Initial Inspection	<p>A PHA may rely on the owner’s certification that the owner has no reasonable basis to have knowledge that life-threatening conditions exist in the unit instead of conducting an initial inspection. A PHA may add other requirements or conditions to the owner’s certification. The PHA is required to conduct an HQS inspection on the units as soon as reasonably possible, but no later than October 31, 2020. The waiver may also apply to PHA-owned units.</p> <p>Housing Works has elected to accept self-certifications from an owner certifying that unit does not have any life-threatening conditions. The HQS Inspector will confirm with tenant over the phone. Self-certifications will be accepted by fax, mail, email, or hand delivered to drop box.</p>	<p>Starting: April 10, 2020</p> <p>Ending: July 31, 2020</p> <p>Physical Inspections must be completed by: Oct. 31, 2020</p>
Project-Based Voucher (PBV) Pre-HAP Contract Inspections, PHA Acceptance of Complete Units	<p>A PHA may rely on the owner’s certification that the owner that has no reasonable basis to have knowledge that life-threatening conditions exist in the unit. A PHA may add other requirements. The PHA must conduct an HQS inspection no later than October 31, 2020 but must do so as soon as reasonably possible. If there’s a requirement under the Agreement to enter into a Housing Assistance Payment (AHAP) contract for newly constructed or rehabilitated projects, the PHA may choose to allow the owner to certify that the PHA requirement has been met. The waiver may also apply to PHA-owned units, if the independent entity is unable to perform the inspection.</p> <p>Housing Works has elected to accept self-certifications from an owner certifying that unit does not have any life-threatening conditions. The HQS Inspector will confirm with tenant over the phone. Self-certifications will be accepted by fax, mail, email, or hand delivered to drop box.</p>	<p>Starting: April 10, 2020</p> <p>Ending: July 31, 2020</p> <p>Physical Inspections must be completed by: Oct. 31, 2020</p>
Biennial Inspections	<p>The Department is waiving the requirement that PHAs inspect the unit not less than biennially (certain small, rural PHAs may inspect units triennially). All delayed biennial inspections must be completed as soon as reasonably possible, but no later than October 31, 2020. This waiver may be applied to PHA-owned units if the independent entity is unable to perform the inspection.</p> <p>Housing Works has elected to temporarily postpone biennial inspections until local government removes social distancing measures. Inspections will be delayed until July 31, 2020. The HQS Inspector must complete any inspections delayed by October 31, 2020.</p>	<p>Starting: April 10, 2020</p> <p>Ending: July 31, 2020</p> <p>Physical Inspections must be completed by: Oct. 31, 2020</p>
Interim Inspections	<p>This waiver states that if an HQS reported deficiency is life-threatening, the PHA must notify the owner of the reported life-threatening deficiency and the owner must correct it within 24 hours of the PHA notification or provide documentation that the deficiency does not exist. For non-life-threatening deficiencies, the PHA must notify the owner within 30 days and the owner must either make the repair or document that the deficiency does not exist within 30 days of the PHA notification. The PHA may add other requirements. The PHA is not required to conduct an on-site inspection to verify the repairs have been made, but may rely on alternative verification methods (photos, tenant certification, etc.). This waiver may apply to PHA-owned units where the independent entity is unable to perform the inspection.</p> <p>Housing Works has elected to rely on alternative verification methods to confirm that life-threatening conditions have been corrected within 24 hours of notification to owner of deficiencies.</p>	<p>Starting: April 10, 2020</p> <p>Ending: July 31, 2020</p>

<p>PBV Turnover Unit Inspections</p>	<p>The Department is waiving the regulation that requires a PBV unit inspection before the unit is leased to a new family. The PHA may rely on the owner’s certification that the owner has no reasonable basis to have knowledge that life-threatening conditions exist in the unit. The PHA may add other requirements. The waiver may be applied to PHA-owned units if the independent entity is unable to complete inspections.</p> <p>Housing Works has elected to accept self-certifications from an owner certifying that unit does not have any life-threatening conditions. The HQS Inspector will confirm with tenant over the phone. Self-certifications will be accepted by fax, mail, email, or hand delivered to drop box.</p>	<p>Starting: April 10, 2020</p> <p>Ending: July 31, 2020</p> <p>Physical Inspections must be completed by: Oct. 31, 2020</p>
<p>HQS Quality Control Inspections (QCI)</p>	<p>The Department is waiving its supervisory quality control inspections until October 31, 2020.</p> <p>Housing Works has elected to delay QC Inspections until October 31, 2020.</p>	<p>Starting: April 10, 2020</p> <p>Ending: July 31, 2020</p>
<p>Homeownership Option – Initial HQS Inspection</p>	<p>The Department is waiving the requirement for an initial HQS inspection before commencing monthly homeownership assistance payments. The family is still required to obtain an independent professional inspector and the PHA is still required to review the independent inspection and has discretion to disapprove the unit because of the contents of the inspection report.</p> <p>Housing Works has elected to use the inspection conducted by an independent professional inspector.</p>	<p>Starting: April 10, 2020</p> <p>Ending: July 31, 2020</p>
<p>Information When Family Is Selected – PHA Oral Briefing</p>	<p>The Department is waiving the requirement that the PHA must give an oral briefing to families in the HCV and PBV programs. The PHA must instead conduct the briefing by other means such as webcast, video call, ex expanded information packet. The PHA must ensure that the method of communication for the briefing effectively communicates with each family member, including those with vision, hearing, and other communication-related disabilities and those with persons with limited English proficiency.</p> <p>For families selected from the waitlist, Housing Works has elected to complete oral briefings over the phone or video call. We will continue to comply with LEP requirements and grant reasonable accommodations requested.</p>	<p>Starting: April 10, 2020</p> <p>Ending: July 31, 2020</p>
<p>Term of Voucher – Extensions of Term</p>	<p>The Department is waiving the requirement the voucher term extensions must be in accordance with the PHA administrative plan.</p> <p>Currently Housing Works issues voucher for 120 days with an additional 30-day extension as a reasonable accommodation. With the new waiver, Housing Works has elected to issue an additional one-time 120-day voucher for clients that request an extension. Client is required to request extension in writing but can also do so over the phone with proper documentation from Housing Specialist. Request for an extension must be received by July 31, 2020.</p>	<p>Starting: April 10, 2020</p> <p>Ending: July 31, 2020</p>
<p>PHA Approval of Assisted Tenancy – When HAP Contract is Executed</p>	<p>The Department is waiving the requirement that the HAP contract may not be executed 60 days after the lease term begins. A PHA may now execute a HAP contract after 60 days after the beginning of a lease and make HAP back to the beginning of the lease term. The HAP contract must be executed no later than 120 days from the beginning of the lease term.</p> <p>Housing Works has elected to grant an additional 60 days extension on execution of HAP contract. Execution of HAP contract must happen no later than 120 days from beginning date of lease.</p>	<p>Starting: April 10, 2020</p> <p>Ending: July 31, 2020</p>

Automatic Termination of HAP Contract	<p>The Department is waiving the requirement to terminate a HAP contract 180 days after a housing assistance payment is reduced to \$0. This is in recognition that the COVID-19 emergency may cause the temporary addition of household members which causes the calculation of HAP to reach \$0. As an alternative requirement, the PHA, following a written notice to the owner and family, may extend the period of time following the last payment to the owner that triggers the automatic termination.</p> <p>Housing Works has elected to extend the 180 day “grace period” for families on Zero HAP. The extension beyond the 180 days may not extend beyond December 31, 2020.</p>	<p>Starting: April 10, 2020</p> <p>Ending: Dec. 31, 2020</p>
Increase in Payment Standard under HAP contract term	<p>The Department is waiving the requirement that if a payment standard is increased during the term of a HAP contract, the increased payment standard shall not be effective until the family’s first regular reexamination. Instead, the increased payment standard may be effective at any time (e.g., interim reexamination, owner rent increase) after the effective date as long as it is not later than then family’s first regular reexamination.</p> <p>Housing Works has elected to apply new payments standards that became effective on January 1st with a family’s Interim re-examination starting on June 1, 2020. This waiver is applicable until December 31, 2020.</p>	<p>Starting: June 1, 2020</p> <p>Ending: Dec. 31, 2020</p>
Homeownership Option – Homeownership Counseling	<p>The Department is waiving briefing and counseling sessions to permit families to purchase a home without fulfilling the normally applicable pre-assistance homeownership counseling requirements, though HUD encourages families to continue the sessions that can be accomplished in accordance with social distancing directives.</p> <p>Housing Works has elected to permit a family to purchase a home under the HCV program without homeownership counseling until July 31, 2020.</p>	<p>Starting: April 10, 2020</p> <p>Ending: July 31, 2020</p>
Family Unification Program (FUP) Youth Age Eligibility to Enter HAP Contract	<p>The Department is waiving the requirement that FUP youth must be not more than 24 years of age (not yet reached their 25th birthday) and is replacing it with the requirement that FUP youth be not more than 25 years of age (not yet reached their 26th birthday).</p> <p>Housing Works has elected to enter into a HAP contract for a FUP Eligible Youth before their 26th birthday.</p>	<p>Starting: April 10, 2020</p> <p>Ending: Dec. 31, 2020</p>
SEMAP (Section Eight Management Assessment Program)	<p>HUD will not issue SEMAP scores that are pending or for fiscal years ending in 2020 unless a PHA requests a SEMAP score. HUD will carry forward the PHAs most recent SEMAP score on record.</p> <p>New SEMAP scores will issued by HUD beginning with PHAs that have a fiscal year end date of March 31, 2021.</p> <p>Housing Works has elected to not request a new SEMAP score for FYE 2020.</p>	<p>Starting: April 10, 2020</p> <p>Ending: Mar. 31, 2021</p>