

# Schuylkill County Housing Authority

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April 27, 2020

TO: All Public Housing Residents and Section 8 Participants

On April 10, 2020, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released a series of COVID-19 related waivers and program updates for the Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Programs. The purpose of these waivers is for HUD to assist public housing authorities (PHAs) in continuing to operate and provide critical housing services to their local communities. The following are waivers which the Schuylkill County Housing Authority (SCHA) is adopting:

HUD will allow PHAs to delay annual reexaminations of HCV and public housing families; however, all annual recertifications due in 2020 must be completed by December 31, 2020. SCHA will continue to conduct annual reexaminations through telephone interviews. Paperwork needing signatures will be obtained at a later date.

HUD will allow PHAs to forgo third-party income verification requirements for annual reexaminations and interim examinations. SCHA will accept self-certifications of income until July 31, 2020. 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.

HUD is waiving the requirement that the PHA must give an oral briefing to families in the HCV Program, which waiver ends July 31, 2020. The PHA must instead conduct the briefing by other means such as webcast, video call, etc. SCHA will conduct the briefing by teleconference and will provide the information packet to participants prior to the teleconference.

HQS Inspections for HCV Program – 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. The owner's certification will be on an SCHA form and require an owner's signature. SCHA will conduct an HQS inspection as soon as reasonably possible but no later than October 31, 2020. Self-certifications may be accepted until July 31, 2020.

A PHA has the option to approve an assisted tenancy for units that fail HQS with non-life-threatening conditions, as long as PHAs withhold housing assistance payments (HAP) from the owner if the non-life-threatening failing conditions are not corrected within 30 days. A PHA may now provide 60 days to correct non-life-threatening failing conditions. This option is available for both tenant-based, project-based units and PHA-owned units.

Interim Inspections – 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. This waiver extends until July 31, 2020.

HUD is waiving the supervisory quality control inspections until October 31, 2020.

HUD is waiving the regulation requiring one bedroom for every two people where the PHA wishes to assist a current participant that needs to add a member or members to the assisted household as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. This waiver does not apply to an initial or new lease. The waiver will be in effect for the duration of the current lease term or one year from the date of this notice, whichever period of time is longer.

HUD is waiving the requirement the voucher term extensions must be in accordance with the PHA administrative plan. The waiver is available until July 31, 2020.

HUD 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. The period of availability to execute the HAP contract after the 60-day term ends on July 31, 2020.

HUD is waiving the requirement that a voucher family may not be absent from a unit for a period of more than 180 consecutive calendar days. The PHA has discretion whether to continue the HAP contract in this situation and not terminate due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., hospitalization, extended stays at nursing homes or caring for family members).

HUD 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. The extension beyond the 180 days may not extend beyond December 31, 2020.

HUD 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 the family's first regular reexamination. This waiver ends on December 31, 2020.

HUD is waiving the requirement that PHAs submit Actual Development Cost Certificates (ADCC) and Actual Modernization Cost Certifications (AMCC) that fall between March 1, 2020 and September 30, 2020 by six months.

HUD is waiving the requirement that PHA policies in the Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP) must be duly adopted and implemented with formal board approval. However, any informally adopted revisions under this waiver authority must be formally adopted as soon as practicable after June 30, 2020, but not later than July 31, 2020.

HUD is waiving and suspending the Community Service and Self-Sufficiency Requirement (CSSR). IF a PHA adopts this waiver, a family will remain exempt from the CSSR until their first reexamination after March 31, 2021.

HUD is allowing PHAs to delay the review and update of utility allowances. Any review and update of utility allowances that were due at some point in time in 2020 must be completed by the end of 2020.

HUD is waiving the requirement to provide 30-day notices to impacted families for changes to policies, rules and special charges to families, except for notices related to tenant charges, through July 31, 2020. Although HUD is waiving the advanced notice, PHAs must still provide adequate notification to families within 30 days of making such changes.

HUD is waiving the inspection requirement of the Public Housing Assessment System (PHAS) and postponing physical inspections (except for threat to life or property inspection) for all PHAs until further notice. HUD will not issue PHAS scores that are pending or for fiscal years ending in 2020 unless a PHA requests a PHAS score. HUD will carry forward the PHAs most recent PHAS score on record.

HUD will not issue Section 8 Management Assessment Program (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. New SEMAP scores will be issued by HUD beginning with PHAs that have a fiscal year end date of March 31, 2021.

HUD is waiving the unaudited and audited financial submission requirements and adopting an alternative requirement. Unaudited Financials: Submission of unaudited financials have been extended for six months for PHAs with a fiscal year end of March 31, 2020. March 31, 2020 fiscal year end PHAs now must submit their unaudited financials by November 30, 2020. Audited Financials: Submission of audited financials have been extended for 6 months for PHAs with fiscal year end of March 31, 2020. March 31, 2020 fiscal year end PHAs now must submitted their audited financials by June 30, 2021.

HUD is waiving the requirement that PHAs must submit form HUD-50058 60 calendar days after any action recorded on line 2b for transactions impacted by implemented waivers and alternative requirements. Through December 31, 2020, PHAs will have 90 days to submit their form HUD-50058 after the effective date of action to HUD. Although the waiver provided up to 90 days to submit form HUD-50058, HUD encourages PHAs that have operational capacity to continue submitting form HUD-50058 within the normal 60-day timeframe.

HUD is extending both the Capital Fund Program obligation end date and the Capital Fund Program expenditure date for all open Capital Fund Program grants by one year from the current obligation and expenditure end date. No programmatic expenditure end date shall be extended beyond one month prior to the closure of the relevant appropriation account.