



Waivers Available to Help PHAs Cope with Coronavirus Crisis

PIH Notice 20-5 issued on Friday, April 10, 2020 provides waivers and alternative requirements to help PHAs to continue Housing Choice Voucher and public housing operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. *The items can be adopted at a PHA's discretion based on local circumstances.*

Most program flexibilities are short-term through July 31, although some run through Dec. 31. HUD may extend them at a later date if needed.

The notice temporarily suspends PHAS and SEMAP scores and will resume these evaluations for housing authorities with fiscal years ending March 31. Public housing physical inspections are suspended. As an alternative, owner certification is allowed for HQS inspections.

Tenant Certifications

For public housing and HCVs, tenant self-certification of income can be accepted for both annual and interim reexams. Annual reexams may be delayed but must be completed by Dec. 31. A reminder: these reviews do not have to be conducted in person except as a reasonable accommodation. PHA monitoring of Enterprise Income Verification (EIV) reports and required use of EIV is suspended.

Many residents have lost income during this emergency. However, there is no waiver authority that allows tenants to stop paying their portion of rent, which makes it important for PHAs to have revised procedures for timely completion of PH/HCV interim reexams for decreases in family income.

PHAs that increase the voucher payment standard may apply the increase at any time after the effective date, provided it is used to calculate the HAP no later than the effective date of the family's first regular reexam following the change. This also applies when a PHA has delayed a family's annual recertification past the reexam date. A PHA may conduct an interim reexam where the only change is a HAP based on the increased payment standard amount.

For opening or closing PH/HCV waiting lists, an alternative requirement allows public notice via voicemail message on the main or general information phone number and website, if available.

HQS

HQS inspections may be delayed but must be conducted as soon as reasonably possible and no later than Oct. 31. A PHA may rely on the owner's certification there is no life-threatening condition in a rental unit until an HQS inspection can be completed. These waivers and alternative requirements are available for the initial HQS inspection, a project-based voucher pre-HAP contract inspection, a PBV turnover unit inspection, or to add or substitute units. The requirement for PHAs to conduct quality control inspections is waived until Oct. 31.

For HQS nonlife threatening deficiencies (NLT) deficiencies, HUD waives the requirement that a PHA must withhold payment if the repairs are not made in 30 days. Instead, the PHA may provide an extension of up to an additional 30 days to the owner to make repairs and continue payments during that time. If repairs are not made by the end of the extension period, the PHA must withhold payments. This option is available for tenant-based and project-based units. The extension period may run past July 31.

Also, PHAs using the alternative standards option for initial inspections may also accept the owner's certification that there is no life-threatening condition. The PHA must conduct the alternative standard inspection as soon as possible or no later than Oct. 31.

HUD waives the requirements for HQS interim inspections conducted due to a complaint. An owner must either correct the life-threatening deficiency within 24 hours of notification or document that the reported deficiency does not exist. For NLT deficiencies, repairs must be made or the owner must document they do not exist within 30 days of notification. Verification may be done through photos and email as is currently allowed. This applies to HCV and PBV units.

The HQS requirement space requirement of one bedroom for each two persons is waived to allow an HCV or PBV-assisted family to add a member to the household as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. This provision does not apply. This waiver is in effect during the current lease term or one year after the date of the notice, whichever is longer.

Several other HCV and public housing waivers are available during the COVID-19 national emergency. More details and a chart are available in **PIH Notice 20-5**.

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