

Public Notice

Proposed Changes to Administrative Plan and Admissions and Continued Occupancy Plan (ACOP)

The Housing Authority of the Hagerstown Housing Authority (HHA) has reviewed and made changes to its Administrative Plan and Admissions and Continued Occupancy Plan (ACOP). These policies govern the initial and continued occupancy of residents of our Affordable Housing. The changes made to these policies are to ensure compliance with federal regulations and state and local laws, as well as to allow HHA to adopt or change management practices and policies.

Change:

Administrative Plan

Recertification (Section 15)

Removal of Requirement for Participants to Provide at Annual Recertification that Rent is Up to Date

The current Administrative Plan requires HCV Specialist to verify whether those engaging in an annual recertification are up to date with their rent. This provision places the resident at risk of losing their voucher when, in most instances, the resident will be paying the rent (albeit late) or is utilizing a sister-agency to assist with their rent. Additionally, many rents are now paid online, thus making the customer have to find a computer and a printer to provide proof of rent status.

Admissions and Continued Occupancy Plan

1. **Tenant Snow Removal Provisions added to Lease in addition to Property Standards Exhibit** – It had been noted by an HHA attorney that it would be of a benefit to HHA to duplicate the language provided in the Property Standards Exhibit portion of the lease to be included in the Tenant Responsibilities portion of the lease, too.

Tenant Lease (Part II (G)) Tenant Obligations

2. **Clarify Entry of Unit Can be Rear Door if Front Door is Blocked/Locked** – There are times that, for a multitude of reasons, a front entry door cannot be accessed. This can be due to situations such as screen doors being locked or a resident placing items inside the front door that prevents entry into the unit. Historically, HHA staff have not used rear entrances as points of entry. This point of clarification provides staff with the ability to use the rear door as an entrance if, after first trying the front door, entry cannot occur.

Tenant Lease (Part II(I)) Entry of Dwelling Unit During Residency

3. **Serving Citations Electronically** – Due to the advances in technology and many customers using email as a primary form of communication with our agency, we have been using email to provide notification of citations to those residents that respond better to email versus regular mail notification systems. We have found

the response from those tenants using email to be faster and more efficient for documentation of issues and resolution of issues. During a conversation with Legal Aid about issuing a citation electronically, Additionally, we have created an additional sign-off for residents that acknowledges whether we can communicate with them on lease questions/concerns electronically.

Tenant Lease (Part II(J)) Notice Procedures

4. **Allow for Use of Electric Space Heaters** – The issue of using electric space heaters has been an ongoing debate at HHA. Upon investigation into the use of electronic space heaters in rental units, in conjunction with checking with HHA’s insurance carrier, it was decided that the use of electric heaters would be allowed; but there would be many rules regarding the use of these heaters. *Please note that the use of Kerosene heaters is still prohibited.

Tenant Lease (Exhibit G (Part IV)) Property Standards

5. **Provide Additional Clarification for Transfer Unit Key Return** – When a resident transfers units due to family size, medical requests, etc., the agency has a lease provision that allows the resident five (5) days to move into the new unit and return their old keys to maintenance. The reason that HHA must set parameters on the amount of time to transfer is because a resident cannot receive subsidy for two units at the same time; and time is of the essence when a resident is moving between units. This lease clarification now allows maintenance to change the locks on the old unit and charge the tenant if the tenant fails to work with the agency to return the keys to the old unit in the prescribed time period.

Tenant Lease (Exhibit C (Part I)) Transfer Policy

6. **Provide Additional Clarification of Solicitation and Trespassing Signage** – Our agency has recently had issue of residents placing signage, such as no trespassing signs, that contain pictures of guns and/or allude to the fact that the resident might inflict harm against a trespasser. HHA finds this signage to be instigative and affects the harmony of the community. We have added language to the lease to restrict certain aspects of solicitation and trespassing signage on subjects such as graphics, language, size, and placement of signs.

Tenant Lease (Part II (G)) Tenant Obligations

Residents of or applicants for Affordable Housing, HCV, and any member of the Public may submit comments on the Proposed Administrative Plan and ACOP changes during the public comment period. The 30-day comment period begins August 16, 2024 and ends September 18, 2024 (4:30 p.m.). All comments must be received by 4:30 p.m. on September 18, 2024 to be considered and must be in writing. The proposed changes will be posted for review on HHA’s website at www.hagerstownha.com

Mail comments to: Hagerstown Housing Authority
David Kump
Re: Amended Administrative Plan and ACOP
35 W Baltimore Street
Hagerstown, MD 21740

Email comments to:
dkump@hagerstownha.com

Subject: Amended Admissions and Continued Occupancy Plan proposed changes

Fax comments to:
(301) 733-7298

Attention: Amended Admissions and Continued Occupancy Plan proposed changes