April 24, 2020

**NOTICE REGARDING HUD WAIVERS TO BE ADOPTED BY THE**

**HOUSING AUTHORITY OF BALTIMORE CITY (HABC)**

**HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM (HCVP)**

**To: HABC Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8) Participating Owners, Landlords and Property Managers**

The Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) is providing notice to Housing Choice Voucher Program (“HCVP” or “Section 8”) owners, landlords and property managers regarding the HUD waivers to statutory and regulatory requirements that HCVP is using, and the alternative requirements that may affect owners, landlords and property managers in the Program.

HCVP plans on using the waivers described below; however, implementation of some waivers may be pending as of the date of this notice. Implementation dates are provided for those in effect.

This notice does not require any additional action by owners, landlords or property managers and is only being sent as notification of these temporary changes to HCVP policy and practices. HCVP owners, landlords and property managers may email ***S8Landlord@habc.org*** if you have questions. Offices remain closed to the public until further notice.

**The following HUD waivers are being implemented by HCVP:**

* **When a Participant is Selected – Oral Briefing** – HCVP is planning to use this waiver; implementation is pending. Once implemented, this waiver will allow the HCVP Office to conduct voucher briefings online through a webcast, video call, or expanded information packets. This waiver expires on July 30, 2020 at which time the HCVP Office must resume giving oral briefings until or unless the Board of Commissioners approves the continuation of online briefing presentations.
* **Absence from the Unit –** The HCVP Office is using this waiver, effective April 10, 2020, allowing the HCVP Office to continue Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) and not terminate HAP Contracts to address prolonged absences because of extenuating circumstances (e.g. hospitalization, extended stays at nursing homes, caring for family members). This waiver expires on December 31, 2020; the HCVP Office may not make payments beyond December 31, 2020 and the HAP Contract will terminate on that date if a family is still absent from the unit.
* **Automatic Termination of the HAP Contract –** The HCVP Office is using this waiver, effective April 10, 2020, allowing the HCVP Office to continue providing subsidies on behalf of participants with a $0 HAP portion beyond the regulatory six-month period. Upon written notice to owners and participants, the HCVP Office may extend the period of time following the last payment to the owner, before the HAP Contract terminates automatically. The extension beyond the normally applicable 180 days will be determined by the HCVP Office but may not extend beyond December 31, 2020.
* **Family Unification Program (FUP) – Youth Eligibility to Enter HAP Contract –** The HCVP Office is using this waiver, effective April 10, 2020, allowing the HCVP Office to execute a HAP Contract on behalf of an otherwise eligible FUP youth not more than 25 years of age (has not reached their 26th birthday). This waiver expires on December 31, 2020 at which time HCVP will revert back to HUD policy where 24 is the age limit.

The following waivers pertain to Housing Quality Standards (HQS) and Inspections. The HCVP Office is not using the waiver on Initial Inspections with Self-Certification of Non-Life-Threatening (NLT) violations because 60% of units submitted for HCV occupancy fail on the first inspection with multiple NLT violations. However, it is important to note that the HCVP Office continues conducting inspections for emergencies (defined as any voucher holder experiencing homelessness, at risk of homelessness, or currently living in situations affecting life, health and safety) and will resume all initial inspections starting April 27, 2020.

HCVP will also be temporarily lifting restrictions on the owner self-certification process, allowing owners who have already had an initial inspection to self-certify on less than five minor violations. Owners pending re-inspection on their regularly scheduled annual or biennial inspections remain eligible to self-certify on less than five minor violations.

Please continue reading for information on the HQS waivers that the HCVP Office is using.

* **Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Biennial Inspections** – HCVP is using this waiver, effective April 10, 2020, allowing the HCVP Office to delay annual and biennial inspections for all units. However, any inspections that were due in Calendar Year 2020 must be completed as soon as reasonably possible, but no later than October 31, 2020.
* **HQS Interim Inspections –** HCVP is using this waiver, effective April 10, 2020. Upon the HCVP Office receiving notification from a family that the assisted unit does not comply with HQS (i.e. special inspections), HCVP is authorized to, in lieu of an inspection, notify the owner of the deficiency and the owner may self-certify that the deficiency has been repaired or no longer exists. See below for timeframes on owners’ self-certifications. This waiver expires on July 31, 2020, at which time the HCVP Office will resume physical inspections.
	1. For life-threatening deficiencies, the HCVP Office must notify the owner and the owner must either repair the deficiency within 24-hours or provide documentation that the life-threatening deficiency no longer exists.
	2. For non-life-threatening deficiencies, the HCVP Office must notify the owner and the owner must repair the deficiency within 30-days or else provide documentation that the deficiency no longer exists.
* **HQS Quality Control Inspections –** The HCVP Office has is using this wavier, effective April 10, 2020, allowing the HCVP Office to suspend supervisory quality control inspections on a sample of units under contract until October 31, 2020 when this waiver expires.

Sincerely,

Janet Abrahams,

President and Chief Executive Officer

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