

PHILADELPHIA HOUSING AUTHORITY
COVID-19 BRIEFING UPDATE
March 13, 2020

With growing concerns regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19), we understand that there is a lot of uncertainty and stress surrounding these ever-changing circumstances.

Please be assured that we are monitoring this rapidly evolving situation so that we are prepared to handle any potential impact to our organization and to ensure the safety of our residents, especially our seniors who are among the most vulnerable. To help avoid the potential spread of the virus, we are taking the following proactive measures.

INFORMATION FOR PHA PUBLIC HOUSING AND PAPMC RESIDENTS

Evictions

Effective immediately, PHA has suspended all evictions for thirty (30) days. PHA will be postponing all court appointments where residents have failed to pay rent. Residents are still required to pay rent.

Hardship Rent Abatement

If a resident has experienced a financial hardship, such as the loss of a job or decrease in hours or pay, they can apply for a hardship waiver of their rent that will be made retroactive from the date of the hardship event.

Cleaning and Safety

On Wednesday, March 11, 2020, PHA distributed over 6,000 letters to all residents residing at our senior developments communicating the safety precautions we are taking on their behalf. These efforts include:

- The installation of new hand sanitizer dispensers containing hand sanitizers at all senior locations.
- PHA has implemented a specialized weekly deep cleaning procedure at all senior facilities, which is expected to continue indefinitely.

Additional Operational and Administrative Changes

A letter to all our residents will be distributed, communicating procedures that will be taken to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Rental Payments

- All rent payments are to be dropped off at secure site office mailbox. Rent receipts will be mailed to you once payment is received and processed and such payment will also be reflected in your rent statement.

Recertifications

- Effective immediately, all recertification and interim recertification appointments will no longer be held in person. Recertification appointment letters will include the recertification packet that residents will be required to complete, sign and return with the required income and verification documents for their household.
 - Residents can mail or drop of their completed recertification packets at the secure mailbox at their respective management offices. Property Managers will follow-up with residents via telephone if any additional items are needed.
- Residents with questions are encouraged to contact their assigned Property Manager with any questions or to discuss issues regarding the tenancy, and refrain from in person visits to PHA offices.
- For maintenance related issues, residents should continue to call **PHA's Call Center at 215-684-8920**.

Maintenance

- Effective immediately, all annual unit inspections are suspended until further notice.
- PHA will only be conducting emergency service repairs until further notice.

INFORMATION FOR HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER CLIENTS AND OWNERS

Hardship Rent Abatement

Housing Choice Voucher (formerly Section 8) clients who have experienced a financial hardship due to COVID-19 virus, such as the loss of a job or decrease in wages, can apply for a hardship waiver of rent, which will be made retroactive from the date of the hardship event.

Recertifications

- All HCV recertification and interim appointments will be conducted by mail. Recertification appointment letters will include the recertification packet that clients will be required to complete, sign and return with the required income and verification documents for their household.
- Clients can mail their recertification packet in the self-addressed envelope included in their packets to: **PHA, 2013 Ridge Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19121** or by email clientservices@pha.phila.gov
- HCV clients can contact their PHA Representative or submit electronic requests and documents via email at clientservices@pha.phila.gov or by contacting the **HCV Call Center at (215) 684-4300**.
- Until further notice, HCV Inspections Department will continue to conduct HQS inspections. Clients can reach the HCV Inspections Department via email at HCVinspections@pha.phila.gov; or by phone at **(215) 684-3860** to schedule, reschedule or request an inspection.

HQS Inspections

- HCV Leases and HAP Contracts will be sent to owners and property managers via e-mail or U.S. mail for execution and signature with the prospective tenant. The Leasing Department can be reached via email at HCVleasing@pha.phila.gov or by phone at **(215) 684-3109**.

HCV Owner Services

- Owners can continue to contact the Owner Services Department for payment questions, Owner Form submissions and tenant questions via email at HCVlandlords@pha.phila.gov or by phone at **(215) 684-5596 or (215) 684-4329**. Owners can view all the information they need to manage their HCV properties through the [Landlord Data Center](#), 24 hours a day 7 days a week including detailed HAP payment records by tenant, status and schedule of inspections and re-inspections and schedule of upcoming tenant re-certifications. To access the Landlord Data Center visit the PHA website www.pha.phila.gov

INFORMATION FOR PHA EMPLOYEE

Employees should continue to use an abundance of caution when feeling under the weather or caring for an immediate family member who is ill. Anyone with symptoms of respiratory disease (coughing, sneezing, runny nose, etc.), including staff and visitors, will be asked to stay home. Anyone who shows up with apparent symptoms or becomes sick during their time in the building will be sent home immediately.

PHA requests that employees need to be free from fever, vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours before returning to work. If an employee is sent home for one of these reasons, they are not able to return the next day, and instead need to wait until the following day. As a reminder, if you are away from work for three consecutive days due illness or injury, you must have a doctor's note to return to work.

If you or an immediate family member tests positive for COVID-19, please let Joshua McQuoid or Stacey Collins in Human Resources know as soon as possible. If you test positive for COVID-19, you must stay home for a period of no less than **14 calendar days**, and not until you are recovered [as defined by the CDC](#). If an immediate family member tests positive, you must stay at home until cleared to return to work by your primary care provider or by local health authorities.

Please remember that medical information is protected by law. Do not discuss another person's medical conditions with anyone else.

If you have exhausted all of your available leave time, PHA will provide you with advanced paid leave time.

We also encourage all employees to take their own precautions to minimize any potential health risks. Per the memo sent on March 11, 2020 and the CDC issued guidelines:

- Avoid close contact with people, i.e. shaking hands, hugging, etc.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.

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- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces with approved products. The list of products from the CDC, can be found here: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list_03-03-2020.pdf
- Thoroughly wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid sharing drinks and eating utensils like forks and spoons.
- Call your doctor if you or anyone in your household experiences fever, coughing, and/or shortness of breath.

For those of you covered under the PHA medical insurance program, the link to the recent response on Coronavirus from Independence Blue Cross (“IBC”) is <https://news.ibx.com/coronavirus-2/>. Two important things of note:

1. Independence will cover and waive cost-sharing (such as co-pays and coinsurance) for the COVID-19 test when performed at a hospital or an approved laboratory.
2. To help reduce potential exposure, Independence encourages members to utilize telemedicine services, and has **waived** cost-sharing on these visits for a period of ninety (90) days.
 - a. In order to access telemedicine services, please visit https://members.mdlive.com/ibx/landing_home

Remote Work Policy

At this time, PHA is not instituting a remote work policy. It is the responsibility of department heads to determine the needs for such arrangements in the event of an emergency.

Cleaning

We have ramped up our efforts to disinfect the most common touchpoints in our offices, such as door handles, handrails, tabletops, desks, etc.

We also encourage you to monitor the spread of the virus via your local news, your local health department or equivalent agency, and the CDC 2019 Novel Coronavirus website: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov

Thank you for your focus and attention to these important matters. We will continue to stay in close contact with federal, state, and local health officials regarding COVID-19, and will keep you informed as events warrant.

Please visit www.pha.phila.gov or call (215) 684-4300 for the latest information.