

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM (HCVP) NEWS

Lorain Metropolitan Housing Authority

March 2017

Inside this issue:

Direct Deposit	2
Fair Housing Info	2
Bed Bugs	3
Contact Info	4
Highlights	4

Helpful Info:

- *Families—Don't forget to report all changes within 14 days. This includes changes in income, household members, employment and school status.*
- *Landlords—you must advise us before selling a property rented to a voucher holder. There is paperwork that must be done to adjust ownership & rental assistance.*
- *If you have questions about the program, don't guess. Email us for clarification.*

Message from the Manager

As we approach the spring season, I can't help but to think about what spring represents. Temperatures begin to rise, transformations occur and we begin to see new growth. It is a time of renewal and rebirth. We look forward to new things with LMHA. We are working towards going paperless, looking into debit cards for utility reimbursement payments, a Tenant Portal that is similar to the Landlord Access.

Looking back to 2016, the HCV Program provided rental assistance to over 3,000 participants throughout Lorain County. Participants chose to live anywhere in Lorain County, with 65% of the vouchers in the city of Lorain.

12% of the vouchers are in Amherst, Avon, Avon Lake, Columbia Station, North Ridgeville, Grafton, La-Grange, Sheffield, Oberlin, Vermilion and Wellington. 23% of the vouchers are in Elyria.

We also provided over \$18 million dollars in rental subsidy for the year, with a monthly average of \$1,533,749 in rental assistance in Lorain County.

We began issuing vouchers in December 2016. Prior to that, we hadn't issued vouchers from our waiting list since April 2015. We anticipate issuing vouchers throughout 2017 as long as we receive funding to do so.

Since we are issuing vouchers and depleting our current waiting list, we opened the HCVP waiting list in January for one week and received over 5,000 applications. Of those 5,000 applications, 1,500 were randomly chosen for placement on the HCVP waiting list.

We welcome all new voucher holders and landlords participating in the HCV Program. All newcomers are encouraged to visit our website at www.lmha.org for program information and to sign up for email blasts for program updates. Please feel free to contact me with suggestions on how we can improve your involvement with LMHA.

Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH)

The LMHA has 117 VASH vouchers to house homeless veterans in Lorain County. The HUD-VASH program combines Housing Choice Voucher rental assistance for homeless veterans with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). VA provides these services for participating veterans

at VA medical centers and community-based outreach clinics.

Every year since 2008, HUD and VA have awarded HUD-VASH vouchers to housing agencies, based on need and administrative performance.

HUD has awarded funding for approximately 10,000 HUD-VASH vouchers each

year in 2008-2010 and 2012-2015. Congress appropriated \$60 million in 2016 to serve approximately 8,000 families.

If you know of any homeless veterans that could utilize this program or if you are a landlord interested in renting to a VASH voucher holder, please contact dcarter@lmha.org.



Landlords: If you are entering into a new lease at the annual renewal, you must provide a copy of the lease to the occupancy specialist at LMHA.

Direct Deposit Payments for Landlords

A few years ago, LMHA went to mandatory direct deposit. Since then, we have modified the direct deposit form in the Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) Packet. We have developed a new form for landlords who do not want to complete a new direct deposit form each time a new RFTA is submitted. This form is the “Permanent” direct deposit form.

The LMHA cannot pay on a HAP account without a current direct deposit form on

file. When submitting a direct deposit form, please make sure the form you submit has the word “PERMANENT” written at the top. That way, you will only be required to submit this form ONCE and the banking information you list will be used for ALL your clients.

This does not apply to landlords managing units on behalf of MULTIPLE owners unless ALL payments for ALL owner’s clients are going to be deposited into ONE bank

account.

Blank direct deposit forms may be picked up at the LMHA office or printed directly off our website by visiting www.lmha.org. Click on “For Landlords”. Then choose “Landlord Resource Library”. For more information, please contact Carol L a n g h a m a t clangha@lmha.org.



Fair Housing: Reasonable Accommodations & Modifications

Fair Housing is a person’s right to choose where to live without unlawful discrimination. An applicant, participant or resident with a disability may request a reasonable accommodation.

A reasonable accommodation is a change, exception or adjustment to a rule, policy, practice or service that may be necessary for a person with a disability to have an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling.

The Act makes it unlawful to refuse to make reasonable accommodations to rules, policies, practice or services when such accommodations may be necessary to afford persons with disabilities and equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling.

Requests must be (1) reasonable and (2) have an identifiable relationship (or nexus) between the requested accommodation and the individual’s

disability.

Under the Fair Housing Act, a reasonable modification is a structural change made to the premises. A person with a disability may need either both (an accommodation AND modification) in order to have an equal opportunity to use and enjoy the dwelling.

Under the HCV Program, the tenant is responsible for paying for the modifications (Section 504). Landlords must permit the modifications.

The tenant is responsible for upkeep and maintenance of a modification that is used exclusively by him/her. If a modification is made to a common area that is normally maintained by the housing provider, then the housing provider is responsible.

If a tenant requests a reasonable accommodation or modification, landlords should take the necessary steps:

- Document the request. Keep track of all requests. Acknowledge receipt and respond as quickly as possible.
- Speak with the tenant. Make sure you understand what they are requesting and why. Never ask for a diagnosis or any medical information. If the disability isn’t obvious, you may ask for additional information about how the requested accommodation will assist them. Feel free to consult with an attorney if you need help evaluating the request.
- Offer alternatives. If you cannot make the accommodation requested, don’t say “no”. Communicate with the tenant to see if there is anything else that can be done to allow them to use and enjoy the dwelling.



If you think your Fair Housing rights have been violated, contact the Chicago Regional Office:

US Department of Housing & Urban Development
Ralph H. Metcalfe Federal Building
77 West Jackson Blvd. Room 2101
Chicago IL 60604-3507
800-765-9372
FAX: 312-886-2837
TTY: 312-353-7143
Email:
complaints_office_05@hud.gov

Bed Bugs and Prevention

This story was included in the December 2016 Landlord Tenant Law Bulletin, Volume 37 Issue 12. I thought it would be helpful if we shared it with both participants and landlords.

About the bed bug. When fighting, it is good to know your enemy. Bed bugs are reddish-brown, flattened, oval and wingless. They feed exclusively on warm-blooded animals—like humans. Bed bugs are hardy insects: They are able to survive without feeding for a year. In humans, bed bugs bites may cause skin rashes, psychological effects and allergic symptoms.

Rental premises may become infested with bed bugs in a variety of ways, including: entering the premises on pets, clothing, luggage, furniture, or wild animals such as rodents, bats or birds; arriving via duct work or other routes from nearby dwellings. “Bed bugs” earned their name thanks to their proclivity for living in mattresses, box springs and bed frames. For this reason, reference to bed bugs are a common nighttime adage: “Sleep tight; don’t let the bed bugs bite!”. Nevertheless, bed bugs are not limited to bedrooms and may live anywhere in a home, including furniture, curtains and wallpaper. Frustratingly, bed bugs are known to be elusive and nocturnal. They are best detected by their bites as well as fecal spots and blood smears on bed sheets.

Landlord responsibility for bed bug eradication: the law.

The legal duty of a landlord to exterminate bed bugs is dependent on the law in the jurisdiction in which the rental premises are located. Many states and municipalities, under housing codes and health codes, require landlords to ensure the rental premises are free of pests—including rodents and insects—which, of course, includes bed bugs.

The Lease. Whether or not local law requires bed bug extermination, the lease language may require the landlord to exterminate pests. Pest control/bed bug addendums may set forth all of the expectations of the landlord and the tenant with regard to insect or vermin infestations. (Of course, the delegation of responsibility must be in compliance with the law governing the jurisdiction in which the rental premises are located.)

Preventing bed bug infestations. The best limit to landlord liability with regard to bed bugs is to prevent an infestation from starting or continuing. Landlords can do the following in furtherance of that effort:

- Landlords can **educate tenants** through the provisions of fact sheets that explain what bedbugs are, why the rise of infestations in the US raises concern and how tenants may help prevent an infestation of the rental premises. Tenants can be asked to help by inspecting—prior to entering the rental premises—their

newly acquired clothing or furniture, and any luggage following travel.

- **Lease terms** can require tenants to report sightings of bedbugs. A quick response may help limit the infestation. The lease can also include requirements that tenants’ mattresses and box springs be synthetically encased—to help prevent bedbug infestation. The lease can also specify that the tenant is obligated to allow entry to pest control exterminators and to cooperate fully in eradicating any pest infestations.
- Building maintenance staff can be trained to recognize bedbugs and signs of bedbug infestations. Early detection is best to limit damages and expenses.
- Every time a rental unit is vacant, a landlord can have it inspected by a licensed pest control company. This is a preventative expenditure which could potentially limit much larger expenses associated with infestations.
- When landlords become aware of a pest infestation, they may immediately seek to exterminate the pests. Be aware that state and municipal laws may require pest elimination be performed by licensed pest control companies.



If you are a tenant and you use email, please supply your email address to your occupancy specialist.

We are working on a Tenant Portal to improve efficiency. You must have an email address in order to participate in the Tenant Portal. More information to come.

“Bed bugs are hardy insects: They are able to survive without feeding for a year”.



Don’t forget to call to schedule a re-inspection. We give you a due date but don’t automatically come out unless the landlord or tenant let us know repairs were done and the home is ready for re-inspection.



Lorain Metropolitan Housing Authority
1600 Kansas Ave
Lorain OH 44052

Phone: 440/288-1600
E-mail: dcarter@lmha.org

WWW.LMHA.ORG

HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM CONTACTS				
Clients Whose Last Names Begin With...	Occupancy Specialist	Direct Phone Line	Direct Fax Line	Email Address
E K L P	Elva Rivera	(440) 288-7448	(440) 288-7379	erivera@lmha.org
N O Q V X "Vash"	Janet O'Connell	(440) 288-7467	(440) 288-7376	joconne@lmha.org
A S U	Julie Davila	(440) 288-7446	(440) 288-7378	jdavila@lmha.org
CT	Leota Jordan	(440) 288-7443	(440) 288-7372	ljordan@lmha.org
R W Z	Melissa Pacheco	(440) 288-7449	(440) 288-7368	mpachec@lmha.org
DM	Kimberly Haskins	(440) 288-7450	(440) 288-7370	khaskin@lmha.org
G H I Y	Iliana Lopez	(440) 288-7447	(440) 288-7369	ilopez@lmha.org
B F J	Daniele Strozier	(440) 288-7444	(440) 288-7374	dstrozi@lmha.org
Homeownership & FSS	Dolly Justice	(440) 288-7433	(440) 288-7363	djustic@lmha.org
Clients Whose Last Names Begin With...	Inspection Scheduler	Direct Phone Line	Direct Fax Line	Email Address
A C D M R S T U W Z	Kristy Puckett	(440) 288-7452	(440) 288-7391	kpuckett@lmha.org
B E F G H I J K L N O P Q V X Y & VASH	Linda Webster	(440) 288-7453	(440) 288-7391	lwebste@lmha.org
Supervisors				
HCVP Manager	Debbie Carter	(440) 288-7425	(440) 288-7366	dcarter@lmha.org
HCVP Assistant Manager	Carol Langham	(440) 288-7454	(440) 288-7367	clangha@lmha.org
HCVP Administrative Asst	Carol Schaffer	(440) 288-7489		cschaff@lmha.org

HCVP HIGHLIGHT

This quarter's highlight is on the HCVP Inspectors. Whether you are a tenant or a landlord, at some point you may have encountered one of these gentlemen. Between the three of them, we have almost 50 years of experience performing inspections. These hardworking inspectors conduct an average of 100 Housing Quality Standards (HQS) every week. Regardless of the weather, you will see Bill, Don and Jerry out and about making sure HCVP homes meet HQS. Along with the inspections, they are also responsible for ensuring the rent that is requested is reasonable. They compare the subsidized home to unsubsidized homes in the area to ensure the rent that is being requested is within the market rent.

Don has been with LMHA for 21 years. Husband, father of 3 and grandfather of 5, he says the best thing about working here is the people because he truly cares about them. Jerry has been employed with LMHA for 16 years. He has been married to his wife for 46 years and has

four children and 13 grandchildren. He says he gets the opportunity to work with a united, compassionate and enthusiastic group of people everyday. Bill has been with LMHA for 12 years. He says he enjoys the fact that there is something different every day. I asked them to share with me what common fails they come across. Some of these include: ungrounded or improper wiring of outlets; missing screens; smoke detectors missing or batteries that need to be replaced. Some advice they would like to give to landlords and tenants preparing for a housing inspections include:

- Always repaint and clean the home between tenants so the unit is fresh for the next family;
- Check out the LMHA website at www.lmha.org for information on some of the common items that cause a home to fail HQS inspection;
- Whether it is your landlord briefing power point or your initial briefing packet for participants when coming on



From left to right: William (Bill) Loeb, Don Lysaght and Jerry Cheney.

the program, it's always good to review information to ensure you understand your obligations to the program.

Visit our website for Landlord and Tenant information to ensure your home meets Housing Quality Standards.

Feel free to contact us with questions!