

News Update

Message from the Director

In behalf of the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) I would like to first wish everyone a Happy New Year! Secondly, I would like to thank all HCVP owners and participants for helping to make 2010 one of the most successful years to date.

The HCVP has been working hard over the past year to use technological innovation to help improve customer service for participating landlords and voucher holders. The HCVP Landlord Portal has grown in popularity since its launch in 2009, and new features are continually being added to make this resource even more useful.

In October, 2010, a complementary website, the Applicant/Participant Portal, was added to help voucher holders manage their program responsibilities. Both portals, which are discussed later in this edition of the newsletter, allow owners and participants to have greater control and flexibility in doing business with the HCVP.

Another new system is the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) Customer Service line that went live this past fall. The system is able to communicate information such as inspection dates, recertification appointment dates, and HAP or UAP status to callers without speaking to an actual employee. The Customer Service Department is still available to answer more complex questions, but the IVR system reduces holding time and allows questions to be answered outside of normal business hours.

The last thing I would like to highlight is the HCVP Direct Deposit program. 90% of all landlords are now enrolled for this service, which automatically deposits HAP money directly into a designated bank account. The money is then available for immediate use. We would like to thank all of the owners who have already signed up, and also encourage that last 10% to contact the HCVP Finance Department to get enrolled at 216.431.1471.

The HCVP is excited about the advances made in the past year, and we hope that these new initiatives continue to grow in the future. Not only does technology help improve the quality of business for the HCVP, but it also helps everyone be more environmentally friendly by wasting fewer resources. Please join us in our efforts, and as always, have a safe and happy New Year!

The HCVP Portal System

2010 was an exciting year for the HCVP. Along with the continued expansion of the Landlord Portal, a new Applicant/Participant Portal was launched. The two portals work together to help owners, voucher holders and participants better manage their HCVP accounts. Read on for more information.

APPLICANT/PARTICIPANT PORTAL

The Applicant/Participant Portal has been available since October, 2010. The site is available to all program participants and people currently on the HCVP wait list. This valuable resource allows program participants to keep track of appointment dates, and submit documentation electronically. Participants can also view voucher details and receive e-mail and text message reminders about appointments.

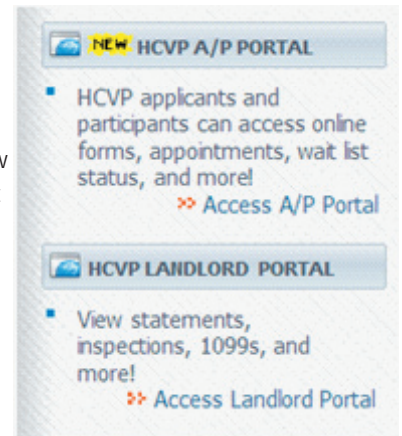
Wait list applicants can use the site to view their position on the HCVP wait list and get notifications if there are any changes.

The HCVP office is now equipped with computer kiosks to allow those without internet access to use the portal. Staff is available to assist participants with getting registered during normal business hours. Visit www.cmha.net/APportal to sign up.

LANDLORD PORTAL

Registration has surpassed 2,200 for the Landlord Portal launched in October, 2009. Registered owners have access to beneficial features like electronic payment statements, the ability to view failed inspection items, and receive e-mailed inspection dates. CMHA has taken feedback and suggestions and added new features that allow owners to submit Inspection Extension Requests online, receive text message alerts, and download copies of existing HAP contracts.

Owners are also able to streamline their communications with the HCVP by referring all questions to landlordportal@cmha.net. This account is monitored daily, and a response will be generated within two business days. All participating landlords are encouraged to register on the Landlord Portal. Registration is fast and simple at www.cmha.net/LLportal.





NLHA Education Scholarships

The National Leased Housing Association (NLHA) operates an education fund dedicated to providing education scholarships to voucher program families. HCVP participants are eligible to apply for one of four scholarship funds managed by that agency. Awards are available for graduating seniors, continuing education, and graduate level studies.

Please contact 202.785.8888 with any questions regarding funding opportunities. Funding applications are available online at www.hudnlha.com. Applications must be turned in by February 25, 2011.

Utility Responsibility and the HCVP

HCVP participants preparing to sign a new lease agreement should be conscious of which utilities may fall under their responsibility. The most common utilities a voucher holder would be responsible for paying is electric and gas; however, some landlords require that tenants also pay the water and sewer.

It is important for every voucher holder to take utility responsibility into consideration when selecting a unit. While the HCVP does take utilities into consideration when determining rent portions, it is up to the voucher holder to make sure that they will be able to afford to pay the utilities under their responsibility. This means regulating utility consumption, and ensuring that the utilities are on at all times.

Participants who fail to maintain utilities as indicated in the lease agreement risk being proposed for termination from the voucher program. Voucher holders seeking assistance with utility payments can visit www.211Cleveland.org or simply dial 216.436.2000 to find more information on available programming.

Calendar of Events

(Please arrive on time; latecomers will not be admitted.)

Mover's Session Schedule

(Bring current photo ID)
Tuesdays and Thursdays
10:00 to Noon and 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Saturday Mover's Sessions: 10:00 to noon
January 8th, February 12th, March 12th

Landlord Briefings

(Required for new landlords before signing an HCVP contract; attendance is limited to 35 persons per Briefing)

Monday, January 3	3:00-4:30 p.m.
Wednesday, January 12	Noon-1:30 p.m.
Saturday, January 22	10:00-11:30 a.m.*
Wednesday, January 26	8:30-10:00 a.m.
Wednesday, February 2	8:30-10:00 a.m.
Monday, February 7	Noon-1:30 p.m.
Monday, February 14	3:00-4:30p.m.
Saturday, February 26	10:00-11:30 a.m.*
Friday, March 4	3:00-4:30 p.m.
Monday, March 14	Noon-1:30 p.m.
Saturday, March 26	10:00-11:30 a.m.*
Wednesday, March 30	8:30-10:00 a.m.

*Reservations are required for Saturday sessions: call (216) 426-2808 or e-mail daughert@cmha.net.

Landlord Briefings on the Road at Cuyahoga County Libraries:

January 13th in Bay Village, 502 Cahoon Rd.
February 9th in Beachwood, 25501 Shaker Blvd.
March 10th in North Royalton, 14600 State Rd.
All sessions are from noon to 1:30 p.m.
No reservations are required.

Contract Signing Sessions

HCVP Learning Center
(3400 Hamilton Avenue, Entrance B)
After accepting the final offer, the Contract Specialist will schedule a date and time for you to sign the contract. (Bring current photo ID and two copies of signed lease agreement)



Animal Control during an Inspection

Each year every unit under contract with the HCVP must undergo an annual inspection. During this time an HCVP Inspector will visit the unit and verify that it still meets all Housing Quality Standards. In order for this process to go as smoothly as possible, participants who own a pet will need to take steps to ensure the animal is properly restrained.

Inspectors visiting the unit will ask if there are any pets on the premises prior to entering the residence. If a pet is present the animal must be restrained in one of two ways:

1. Secured with a leash
2. Enclosed in a cage.

The HCVP would like each inspection to be safe and efficient. Participants are urged to take the proper precautions when an inspection is expected. Inspectors will be unable to complete the required inspection if an animal has not been properly secured. This can result in delays or failed inspections. The cooperation of each voucher family is greatly appreciated.



Board Of Commissioners: Ronald V. Johnson Jr., Chairman; Doris V. Jones, Vice-Chairperson; Robert E. Davis, Ronnie A. Dunn, Ph.D., Natoya Walker Minor
Chief Executive Officer: George Phillips-Olivier; **HCVP Director:** Priscilla Pointer-Hicks
Housing Choice Voucher Program: 3400 Hamilton Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44114, (216) 431-1471, TTY (216) 426-2903 or (216) 426-2904, www.cmha.net

CMHA's Housing Choice Voucher Program provides reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities so they may participate in our programs, services and activities. If you need an accommodation, including auxiliary aids and/or services, please contact Customer Service at (216) 431-1471 (voice) or 1-800-750-0750 (Ohio Relay Service).