

# News Update



## Message from the Director

**I**t is hard to believe that the last quarter of 2008 is already underway. We've accomplished a great deal this year, and in the spirit of this time of year, I'd like to extend my thanks and that of the entire Housing Choice Voucher Program staff to all of the property owners, program participants and community officials who have helped make this year such a success.

Throughout 2008, the Voucher Program was more than fully utilized. In other words, we provided housing assistance for the maximum number of eligible families in Cuyahoga County, based on the funding we receive from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. In order to ensure that we did not overspend our available subsidy resources, we stopped issuing new vouchers mid-summer, and we do not expect to resume issuing them again until after the first of the year. Clearly the need for affordable housing is greater than our available resources.

We also adopted a strict enforcement policy regarding program rules. Families who fail to follow these rules forfeit their right to maintain vouchers, and owners who fail to follow these rules forfeit the right to participate in the Voucher Program.

In spite of this, the majority of HCVP participants and the owners from whom they rent are meeting their responsibilities to this program and the communities in which their housing is located. In meetings this year with various municipal officials, we have repeatedly heard this fact echoed.

Thank you for doing your part to use this program to benefit the families who need assistance and to make our Cuyahoga County neighborhoods good places to live. May the rest of this year and the holidays it brings be joyful for you and your families.

## The Cost of Fraud in the Voucher Program

**T**he Housing Choice Voucher Program, working in conjunction with the CMHA Police Department and the HUD Inspector General, has had increasing success with investigating fraud cases and bringing those who are guilty to justice.

Participants who engage in fraud are putting their housing assistance payment at risk. Some examples of cases which resulted in the loss of housing vouchers and severe fines include:

- Moving boyfriends or other family members into the household
- Not reporting income for all family members
- Subletting housing units under contract to the Voucher Program

Property owners have faced repaying HAP, stiff fines and ineligibility for future contracts for becoming involved in fraudulent activities such as the following:

- Requiring side payments from the tenant
- Offering inspectors money to pass a unit
- Moving in with their tenant, while collecting HAP for the housing unit

In any of these cases, the guilty parties were stealing from this program and effectively keeping another family from receiving housing assistance that they needed. Such actions are and will not be tolerated.

**Fraudulent activity can be reported 24-hours a day by calling 216 426-2900.**

## Rent Portions are Changing for Some HCVP Contracts

HCVP participants and landlords received notification in August of adjustments to the HCVP utility allowances that became effective on October 1<sup>st</sup>. This was based on the standard annual review of these allowances as required by HUD.

For some contracts, this resulted in changes to the portion of the rent paid by CMHA and the portion paid by the participant. No changes have been made to the contract rent. The total of the two portions remains the same.

Participants should refer to the letter they received to ensure they pay the correct amount of rent to their landlords beginning this month. Participants, who have questions, should contact Customer Service at 216 - 431-1471.



Landlords are encouraged to contact their tenants as soon as possible if they detect a discrepancy in the amount they are expecting to receive from the tenant, just in case the letter was overlooked.

## Vouchers are generally not Transferable

**F**requently, participants of the HCVP “graduate” from the program because their incomes have grown, and they no longer need to receive housing assistance. This may seem like a great opportunity to pass the voucher on to another family member or friend in need of affordable housing. But the program does not give voucher holders the right to transfer their assistance to another family.



Vouchers can rarely be transferred out of one name and into another. This may happen occasionally within a household; a transfer outside of the household is approved even less frequently—usually only in the case of the death of a voucher holder with children for whom the court appoints a legal guardian from outside the home.

Voucher holders with questions about the restrictions governing the transfer of vouchers can call the HCVP Customer Service line at 216 431-1471.

## 2009 Landlord Training

**I**n recent years, landlords with properties under contract to the HCVP have had access to training as part of the annual HCVP Landlord Conference. In 2009, the HCVP plans to conduct some special topic training sessions to better meet the needs and busy schedules of the landlords we serve.

The sessions would be open to all current landlords (unlike the New Landlord Briefing Sessions). The length would run from 1 ½ - 2 hours and feature a combination of HCVP staff and outside speakers to provide the broadest perspective on the selected topic. Some topics under consideration are: passing inspections, community expectations of landlords, pricing rental properties, and how to make rental units healthy.

The HCVP would like to hear from property owners while in the planning stages in order to make this a valuable resource. Please contact Shawna Daugherty, Government Marketing Specialist by e-mail at [daughert@cmha.net](mailto:daughert@cmha.net) or at (216) 426-2808, with your suggestions for topics, days, times and locations. We look forward to hearing from you.

## Moving out of a Rental Unit

**A**t the time of moving out of a rental unit, all renters have the responsibility to leave their unit in the same condition they found it when they moved in. Failure to do so will probably result in their landlord keeping all or part of their security deposit to cover damages.

The HCVP does not conduct move out inspections and does not pay for damages. Assessing damages and providing documentation of the associated costs to the tenant is the responsibility of the landlord. Both landlords and tenants should seek legal counsel if there is a disagreement.



## Mover's Session Schedule

(Arrive on time with photo ID; latecomers will not be admitted past the quarter hour.)  
Every Tuesday and Thursday  
(except November 11<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>)  
10:00 to 11:30 a.m. and 3:00 to 4:30 p.m.

Plus the following Saturdays  
10:00 to 11:30 a.m.:  
October 18<sup>th</sup>  
November 8<sup>th</sup>  
December 13<sup>th</sup>

## Landlord Briefings

(Required for new landlords before signing an HCVP contract; latecomers will not be admitted.)

Saturday, Oct. 4 ..... 10 a.m.—Noon  
Wednesday, Oct. 15 ..... 2:00 p.m.—4:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, Oct. 21 ..... 12:30 p.m.—2:30 p.m.  
Wednesday, Oct. 29 ..... 2:00 p.m.—4:00 p.m.  
Thursday, Nov. 6 ..... 12:30 p.m.—2:30 p.m.  
Saturday, Nov. 15 ..... 10:00 a.m.—Noon  
Tuesday, Nov. 25 ..... 12:30 p.m.—2:30 p.m.  
Thursday, Dec. 4 ..... 12:30 p.m.—2:30 p.m.  
Saturday, Dec. 13 ..... 1:30 p.m.—3:30p.m.  
Tuesday, Dec. 30 ..... 12:30 p.m.—2:30 p.m.

## Contract Signing Sessions

Contract Signing Sessions for Property Owners and Agents will take place  
8:30–11:30 a.m. and 1:30–4:30 p.m.  
at the HCVP Offices, 3400 Hamilton Avenue,  
Entrance B on the following dates:

Wednesday, October 8, 2008  
Wednesday, October 22, 2008  
Thursday, November 6, 2008  
Tuesday, November 18, 2008  
Thursday, December 4, 2008  
Wednesday, December 17, 2008