

# News Update

## Message from the Director

**T**he summer of 2011 is now in the past. It was memorable for the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) and its Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) for several reasons: Our move to the new CMHA Campus, the opening of the HCVP Waiting List with our first online lottery, and updates to our operations to ensure that families assisted through the HCVP have access to safe, decent housing.

On behalf of the HCVP staff, I want to thank the participants and landlords who work with us for their cooperation. We will continue to communicate with you on a monthly basis to keep you apprised of changes that we are making. Be assured, however, that those changes are made for one (or more) of four reasons: to serve the maximum number of eligible households in our community; to better ensure the quality of the housing available to HCVP participants; to responsibly utilize the public funds that support this Program and to follow the federal regulations that govern it.

This issue of the **HCVP News Update** spotlights another change: our transition from paper checks to debit cards. But there are also many reminders of existing opportunities and Program requirements. Please read through all the information enclosed. If you have questions, contact us through the Landlord Portal or the Applicant/Participant Portal, and we will respond within 48 hours. Otherwise, you can always call 216-431-1471 to speak with Customer Service.

Have a peaceful autumn and an enjoyable holiday season!



## Inspections Reminders:

**F**or Landlords and participants, alike, it is a federal requirement that all units assisted by the HCVP pass inspection before a contract is signed. Every unit must also be re-inspected within 12 months of each passed inspection.

Owners, movers and new participants are reminded **never** to submit an RFTA to CMHA for a new unit unless the utilities are on and the unit is ready to be occupied **immediately**. The unit cannot be occupied by another tenant who is planning to move out; it cannot be full of debris, and it cannot be in need of repair. These circumstances will result in a failed inspection with only one more opportunity for the unit to pass and go under contract.

When it's time for an annual inspection, both the owner and the tenant are responsible for providing the HCVP Inspector with access to the unit. **Failure to do so, may result in the contract cancelling and the voucher being taken from the participant.** Tenants should communicate with their landlords if they are not available to be home for the scheduled inspection. Someone over the age of 18 yrs old must be available to allow the HCVP Inspector access. Remember, the unit will fail if no one is at the home.



## Family-Self Sufficiency—Using the HCVP to Achieve your Dreams!

**H**ave you been thinking of future plans such as going back to school, finding a better paying job, getting bills under control, improving your credit, or becoming a homeowner? The Family-Self Sufficiency (FSS) program can help you make your dreams become a reality.

FSS is about setting goals for you and your family. It is about making plans to reach these goals. It is about having financial security. It is about saving money while you are making plans for the future. It is about starting NOW! All a Housing Choice Voucher Program participant needs to do is make the choice to enroll. The program is voluntary and does not affect a family's eligibility for continued assistance under the HCVP. Please contact Lita Prestamo at 216-271-2533, [prestamo@cmha.net](mailto:prestamo@cmha.net) or visit [www.cmha.net/apportal](http://www.cmha.net/apportal).

## Reporting Changes in the Household

**A**ll participants are required to keep the HCVP informed of any changes in their household composition. The HCVP staff is encountering an increasing number of situations where participants have not met this requirement— especially in the case of marriages. It's easy to keep the HCVP up-to-date. To report a new spouse, a new baby or another family member, participants just need to complete an Interim Form. These can be obtained through the Applicant/Participant Portal at [www.cmha.net/apportal/index.aspx](http://www.cmha.net/apportal/index.aspx). Just log in, complete the form and return it through the portal. Supporting documents must be faxed to the number listed on the portal within 48 hours.

## Reservations still open for the October Brown Bag Workshop:

The last **Brown Bag Lunch Workshop** of the year is scheduled Friday, October 21, 2011 from Noon-to 2:00 P.M. at the Euclid Public Library, 631 E.222<sup>nd</sup> St, Euclid 44123.

This installment of the HCVP's training series will focus on Rent Determination. All property owners/managers are encouraged to attend. The HCVP staff will provide information about payment standards, utility allowances, rent reasonableness, affordability, and how they all factor into determining contract rents.

This workshop will also highlight the importance of the Rent Affordability Calculator. Available on the HCVP page of the CMHA website, owners should

use this interactive tool during the screening process to determine if a potential renter from the HCVP can afford the unit. All general questions and concerns are welcome.

Landlords planning to attend this free event, should pre-register by contacting Samantha Stewart, Government Marketing Specialist, at 216-271-2442 or [stewarts@cmha.net](mailto:stewarts@cmha.net). Attendees should plan to bring their own lunch; however, light refreshments will be available. Landlords can learn more about this and other training opportunities by going to [www.cmha.net](http://www.cmha.net) and clicking on Housing Choice Voucher Program.



## Moving Promptly Protects Your Voucher

When owners default on their agreement with the HCVP, the contract cancels, and the family living in the affected unit must move as soon as possible. This can be inconvenient and costly, but it is necessary if the family wants to keep their voucher.

When the contract cancels, the participant is notified to come to a movers session for a new voucher. That voucher is good for 120 days. That is plenty of time to find a unit that will pass HQS, but the household should start looking for a unit right away. A family that fails to go under lease within the term of the voucher will be withdrawn from the HCVP and lose their rental assistance.

For additional questions, please contact Velmarie Peoples at [peoplesv@cmha.net](mailto:peoplesv@cmha.net).

## Debit Card Update:

Soon, JP Morgan Chase Bank will begin issuing debit cards to all landlords who currently receive Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) by paper check and participants who receive Utility Allowance Payments (UAP). The HCVP will begin this transition with landlords who do not have direct deposit, effective today. They will soon begin receiving HAP via debit card. In coming months, HCVP participants will be issued a debit card if they receive UAP but are not registered for direct deposit.

There is still time for participants to sign up for direct deposit instead of receiving their UAP by

debit card. For added convenience, an Automatic Deposit Form is included with this newsletter. Complete it, attach a voided check, and return it to the Attention of the HCVP Finance Department at 8120 Kinsman Road, Cleveland, OH 44104. If you need another copy of the form, please visit the CMHA website at [www.cmha.net](http://www.cmha.net) and click on Housing Choice Voucher Program or contact Customer Service at (216) 431-1471. The completed and signed Automatic Deposit Form, along with the voided check, must be received by October 31, 2011. (Landlords who are issued debit cards can sign-up for direct deposit anytime in the future.)

## Calendar of Events

At 8120 Kinsman Road  
Please arrive on time; late arrivals will not be accommodated

## Mover's Session Schedule

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

Saturdays Mover's Session: 10:00 to Noon  
October 8<sup>th</sup>, November 12<sup>th</sup>, and December 10<sup>th</sup>

## Landlord Briefings

(Required for new landlords before signing an HCVP contract, attendance is limited to 45 persons per Briefing)

Friday, October 7	3-4:30 pm
Saturday, October 22 *	10-11:30 am
Friday, October 28	8:30-10 am
Saturday, November 5*	10-11:30 am
Wednesday, November 23	8:30-10 am
Monday, November 28	3-4:30 pm
Friday, December 9	3-4:30 pm
Saturday, December 17*	10-11:30 am
Wednesday, December 28	8:30-10 am

\*Reservations are required for Saturday classes only, contact Samantha Stewart, 216.271.2442 or [stewarts@cmha.net](mailto:stewarts@cmha.net) to pre-register.

## Landlord Briefings on the Road at Cuyahoga County Libraries:

Tuesday, October 11	Warrensville Heights	22035 Clarkwood
Tuesday, November 15	Fairview Park	21255 Lorain Road
Monday, December 12	Independence	6361 Selig Drive

All off-site Landlord Briefings are from noon to 1:30 p.m.  
No reservations are required.

## Contract Signing Sessions:

After accepting the final rent offer, the Contract Specialist will advise a landlord of the date, time and location to sign the Contract. (Please bring a current photo ID and two copies of the signed lease agreement).



**Board of Commissioners:** Ronald V. Johnson Jr., Chairman; Doris V. Jones, Vice-Chairperson; Robert E. Davis, Ronnie A. Dunn, Ph.D., Natoya Walker Minor  
**Acting Chief Executive Officer:** Jeffery K. Patterson  
**HCVP Director:** Priscilla Pointer-Hicks  
**Housing Choice Voucher Program:** (216) 431-1471 [www.cmha.net](http://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).