

PENDER LANDLORD LINK

Information for Landlords Working with the Housing Choice Voucher Program



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Compliance Corner: What does it mean when a tenant goes to “Zero HAP”?

As you know, the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program is not designed to pay all of the rent for families, but rather to pay a portion of the rent based on each family’s income.

The goal for most families is to become independent. While some families struggle to reach the goal of independence, most families in this program are working to better themselves and get on their feet thereby moving off rental assistance programs and into permanent **unassisted** housing.

Yes, there are a few families who may be abusing the program. Those few families can give an entire program a bad name. This is addressed in another part of this newsletter, but we remind you that this is why your enforcement of your lease is so important.

For families who do well in their goals, there will be a day when rental assistance drops to zero. We send notices to both the families and their landlords to let them know that this is happening.

It is important to know that when a family is successful and goes to “zero HAP”, they are not immediately terminated from the program.

From the time a family reaches its goal of being able to pay rent without assistance, the family remains a participant in the program for up to six (6) months. This is a safety net for families, so that if they have a drastic income change during that six month period, they can access rental assistance by simply re-certifying their eligibility for assistance. They do not have to go on a Waiting List.

The HAP Contract and all program requirements remain in force during the “Zero HAP” time period.

After six months, or if a family chooses to terminate earlier, their participation in the program comes to an end. At that point, families are considered to be on their own in unassisted housing.

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Quality Assurance Inspection Notice

The Housing Director will be conducting Quality Assurance inspections quarterly as part of our required inspection and reporting process for HUD. Do not be surprised if your unit gets chosen for a QA inspection soon after its regular annual inspection or a recent move-in inspection.

We will send notices to tenants and landlords for those properties that are chosen for the QA inspection.

Accountability: When you wait it can be too late...

We regularly hear complaints from landlords at the end of lease terms similar to this: “My tenant didn’t pay rent like he/she was supposed to, but I felt sorry for him/her. I tried to give him/her a break...”

We all know that we are working with families who are having a tough time financially. However, it is still important for families to respect agreements they make and be held accountable for contracts they sign. For programs to work, everyone has to do their part.

Unfortunately, telling us about problems when a tenant is moving out is the same as

telling us that you, the landlord, did not do your job. Usually, it is too late for us to take any action to help the situation.

Being a landlord is a business and good business habits are necessary. Good landlords invest money into maintaining their property. They inspect units regularly because they know the law says they responsible for ensuring units are kept in good repair. They also hold tenants accountable for lease violations because they know that not doing it can make things worse.

We all have to be good stewards of the tax dollars invested this program. If you do

your job, it helps us to do our job. Doing your job will keep a good tenant good, make a so-so tenant better and help you remove a bad tenant before too much damage is done.

Families receiving rental assistance are often stereotyped as bad housekeepers or as irresponsible. While that is true for some families that have been in the program, just as it is true for a percentage of all tenants, that perception also results from landlords who did not do their job as landlords and then complained about their experience after the fact.

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The Pender County Housing Authority provides rental assistance to low-income families based on household income. The program assists eligible families renting in the private rental market from private owners who have available units and who are willing to work with the program.

The goal of any rental assistance program is not to pay all of the families rent, but rather to help eligible families afford better quality housing than the family could afford without assistance.

PCHA is not a property management company and does not manage property for private landlords.

*Do you have a question about
the program rules?*

Please call 910.259.1370 for help

Our Inspector's Observations

Chad Hartwell, who recently retired as our Housing Inspector, left these observations to be shared with participating landlords.

Smoke Detectors:

One of the most common fail items is non-working smoke detectors. It is a simple matter to replace dead batteries or a non-working smoke detector.

However, the potential liabilities when a smoke detector fails are huge. Especially since State law makes maintaining the smoke detectors the landlord responsibility.

Do not wait until the Housing Inspector is on site to find out the smoke detector doesn't work. Make sure you test them at least quarterly to ensure it works correctly. Encourage your tenants to test them monthly and to report any non-working or faulty smoke detectors to you immediately.

Inspections that Pass with Comments:

Treat inspections that pass with comments as **near fails**. If the inspector gives you comments, you need to correct the findings and report back to the inspector that the issues have been resolved within a reasonable period of time.

It is concerning to see the number of comments that go unaddressed. The comments are a way that we give you the benefit of the doubt. However, if we continue to see landlords ignore the comments and not resolve issues, we will opt to be stricter in the future in order to ensure we are not passing units that really should fail.

Habitual Fails:

We have a number of landlords whose units habitually fail the initial and annual inspections. Habitual fails are grounds for debarring landlords from participating in the rental



al assistance program.

Habitual fails show a lack of concern on the part of landlords who, we presume, have put money into acquiring units to be rentals. The choice to ignore issues, and to not educate oneself on the expectations that the State and some Federal programs have of landlords are simply bad business.

Landlords who fail to pay attention to their investments end up losing more money than they make over time and can make themselves liable when neglect becomes an issue under State law.

We wish Chat well in his retirement and hope that his comments help you be more successful in 2016.