

PENDER LANDLORD LINK

Information for Landlords Working with the Housing Choice Voucher Program



Compliance Corner: Possible Re-inspection Fees for HQS Fails

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In March 2016, HUD issued new rules that allow Housing Authorities to charge reasonable fees to landlords when units continually fail Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspection. We have implemented a fee of \$20.

Fees are **not charged** for a unit that initially fails its annual inspection. However, the fee may be charged under two circumstances.

First, if an owner reports that a deficiency has been fixed, but the deficiency is found to still exist at re-inspection, then PCHD will charge a re-inspection fee.

Second, if a re-inspection conducted after the expiration of the timeframe for repairs shows that the deficiency persists, then PCHD will charge a re-inspection fee.

Units are supposed to pass HQS Inspection 24/7. Every time you accept a check from us, you are guaranteeing that your unit passes HQS.

If the inspector fails a unit, the landlord has 24 hours to correct certain deficiencies. Other-

wise, landlords are generally have 30 days to correct non-life threatening fail items.

Extensions for repairs, up to an additional 30 days, are possible. However, it is the *landlord's responsibility* to request the extension and to show that the reason repairs are not complete are beyond his/her control. Procrastination is not an approvable reason.

Landlords are responsible for making re-inspection appointments with us when repairs are complete. However, if we do not hear from you, we may schedule a re-inspection to determine if repairs have been made.

The goal of the fees is to encourage landlords to be proactive and take better care of units so that we cut down on the number of failed inspections. Fees are less drastic than abating assistance payments. However, we will still abate payments for noncompliance when required.

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Quality Assurance Inspection Notice

The Housing Director will conduct 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.

Communication: Don't forget we are your business partner

When you have a problem with an assisted tenant, we are often the last to find out. While your tenant should be the first business partner you notify when you are having a problem with them. We should be the *second* partner you notify when serious lease violations occur and you should be notifying us at the time the violation occurs.

Though it may seem tedious, written communication (hard copy or e-mail) is best to communicate concerns with a tenant. Verbal warnings are usually ineffective and can make problems worse in the long run because you have no "paper trail" to back you up if/when drastic action is needed.

Don't forget to send a courtesy copy of your communication to us. This keeps us in the loop and lets us know if a program violation has also occurred. If we see that the tenant is also violating the program requirements, we will also communicate with your tenant (and you) about the violation.

Unfortunately, use of text between tenants and landlords is increasing. It appears to us to be causing as many problems as it is being used to solve.

We recommend against use text communication with a tenant. Do not encourage

tenants to text you. What works for personal relationships is not necessarily good for business relationships.

Remember, families sign a contract with our program that requires them to comply with the lease as well as be compliant with program requirements. If you don't tell us about issues, we cannot enforce our contract with assisted families.

By working as a team, we may be able to stop problem behaviors and help you and your tenant have a more successful tenancy.

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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

What is the difference between assisted and unassisted tenants?

What is the difference between assisted tenants and those that pay rent with no help? Essentially, the answer is nothing. However, some landlords believe and perpetuate stereotypes about assisted families. So, the difference between assisted and non-assisted tenants may be you.

Assisted families are not all alike. They come from a variety of circumstances. The only thing they have in common is being unable to afford decent, safe housing without help.

Income is **not** a deciding factor when it comes to whether a tenant is "good" or "bad". There are tenants in luxury apartments with six-figure incomes who leave apartments trashed and failed to pay charges. There are low-income families who have great rental histories and are wonderful housekeepers.

It is essential that landlords enforce their

leases and maintain their properties. Involved landlords usually have better outcomes with their tenants. "Good" tenants appreciate "good" landlords.

If there is a problem, involved landlords are more likely to spot it quickly and have a chance to address it before becomes costly.

ALL landlords have management, enforcement and maintenance responsibilities for ALL tenants regardless of income level or income source. So it makes sense that assisted tenants must be treated like any other tenant in terms of lease enforcement. Consistency is key to success.

While there are a few added steps when working with an assisted tenant, those steps are largely about communication. The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract outlines the landlord requirements for the program and most are common sense.

Make sure you have a GOOD lease and that it covers all of the issues that may concern you or your tenant about the rental relationship. A good lease is guidance and protection for both the tenant and the landlord. A poor lease leaves a lot of questions.

Make sure you know the difference between lease termination and eviction.

Make sure all notices are given *in writing* and that the notice is consistent with YOUR lease as well as the HAP Contract.

Finally, whenever you send a lease violation notice (late rent, unauthorized occupants, damages) to a tenant, don't forget to send a copy to us.

In the end, the relationships only work if everyone does their part. If you have concerns, please make sure to keep us in "the loop".