

May 1, 2020

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Dear Colleagues:

Together, as your joint partners in the Housing Choice Voucher program, housing providers and tenant advocates write with hope you and yours are staying well and great appreciation for your work administering the Voucher program during this tumultuous time. We write today – May 1 – on the day that both housing providers and tenants across the county worry and wonder whether they will be able to pay or receive full rent payments.

The effect of Covid-19 and the stay-at-home orders on all of us – tenants, housing providers, other private industries, and government – will be long-lasting and painful, but, as always, we look forward to working with you to benefit our respective constituencies. In fact, we believe that many of the waivers that you have already adopted (such as self-certifications), are beneficial and efficient for dealing with the pandemic's effect on the housing community.

Additionally, however, we urge you to adopt a policy that makes tenant income recertification retroactive to the accurate date of their loss of income rather than the date that the tenant submits the request for reduction.

Tenants may have many reasons why they did not request interim recertification immediately. Everyone was confused in early March about stay-at-home orders and average residents had little idea that this would last so long. Tenants may have been ill, caring for a sick loved one, or at high risk for infection, so unable to leave their homes. Some tenants, including tenants with lower technology skills or people living with disabilities, may have been unable to use the tenant portal or email to submit requests.

Unfortunately, tenants who did not submit a request for an interim recertification immediately will be liable for a tenant portion in April and maybe May based on their employment income from February even if they have not been working or not yet receiving unemployment income.

Likewise, housing providers need to be paid the full contract rent for these months. Housing providers know that they may not file an eviction action against voucher tenants even if they

have been unable to pay any of the tenant portion for April until July. In fact, housing providers do not want to file evictions – most housing providers will want to work with their tenants and will not want to incur the additional expense. Many housing providers will face the same economic instability when they need to pay mortgages and other housing expenses.

Simply, housing authorities are in a better position to support the economic stability of the tenant and housing provider communities by paying the housing provider for the period where the tenant lost income but was unable to submit a request for a recertification.

We hope we can talk about this need as soon as possible. Please contact Sarah Delgado with the Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance if you would like to discuss this further (872.256.3707 or sdelgado@cafha.net). Thank you, as always, for your attention to our concerns.

Sincerely,

Access Living
Alliance to End Homelessness in Suburban Cook County
Cabrini Green Legal Aid
Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless
Chicagoland Apartment Association
Connections for the Homeless
Dearborn Real Estate Board
HOPE Fair Housing Center
Housing Action Illinois
Housing Choice Partners
Lawyer's Committee for Better Housing
Legal Aid Chicago
Legal Aid Society, Metropolitan Family Services
Metropolitan Planning Council
Northside Community Resources
Pangea Real Estate
Respond Now
Shriver Center on Poverty Law