



March 20, 2020

A Message from Executive Director Jon Gutzmann:

In accordance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Minnesota Department of Health, the PHA is adjusting its services and operations to protect staff and the individuals and families it serves from further spread of COVID-19. The PHA will continue to update its action plan. Any additions or changes to the PHA's March 16, 2020, COVID-19 Action Plan are highlighted below.

In an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19, effective immediately all public facing PHA offices and facilities are temporarily closed to all residents and visitors. This closure includes the Central Administrative Office at 555 Wabasha Street and all property management offices at PHA owned housing sites. The PHA will be suspending all internal and external meetings with very few exceptions. As much business as possible will be conducted by telephone and other electronic means. The PHA will continue to respond as needed to emergency situations.

Closing our offices does not mean the PHA is closed. We remain committed to our mission and the individuals and families we serve. Property offices will have signs posted with contact information so residents can easily reach staff by telephone in lieu of a walk-in meeting. Section 8/Housing Choice Voucher staff will conduct as much business as possible via U.S. Mail and electronic means. PHA staff are still available to provide the emergency services and essential duties that arise in managing PHA owned properties.

COVID-19 Action Plan

1. PHA-Owned and Managed Affordable Housing (Public Housing, Scattered Sites, PBRA); Resident Services

Applicant Interviews:

- All in-person intake appointments are cancelled and all applicants with interviews already scheduled will be mailed an intake packet and be given a phone interview.

Approving/Denying Files

- Applications recommended for approval or denial will be submitted electronically by rental technicians and specialists to the appropriate supervisor for review.

Resident Hearings:

- All in-person denial hearings are cancelled.
- Applicants may appeal their denial by submitting via fax, email or U.S. Mail, a written explanation of why their denial should be overturned, along with supporting documentation, and two community references.

Lease Signings for New Tenants:

- Lease signings and initial unit assignments will continue as usual.

Inspections and Accessing of Units:

- All routine annual inspections will be postponed until further notice.
- Life and Safety inspections will be conducted by staff as needed.
- Housing Managers (HM's) will have gloves, masks and shoe covers available.

Transfers:

- Reasonable Accommodations/Emergency Transfers will continue as usual.

Rent Calculations/Certifications:

- Interim recertifications will be conducted for income decreases only. Households should immediately report any income decrease to their re-exam technician so that rent can be adjusted accordingly.
- Income changes reported by the resident must now be done via U.S. Mail, email, fax or phone.
- With supporting documentation, a resident may request a financial hardship exemption (Minimum Rent Emergency Waivers).

Resident Work Orders:

- Administrative Support Technician's (AST) will continue to process maintenance requests.
- Maintenance requests may be made only via phone, fax, email.

Hi-rise Resident Council:

- All meetings, executive committee and resident council meetings will be held either remotely, cancelled or postponed.

Congregate Housing Services Program (CHSP):

- Presbyterian Homes will continue to provide a noon meal to enrolled (senior) participants.
- Congregate in-person dining will be suspended and all meals will be delivered to each participant's apartment.
- Meal delivery will serve as the daily wellness checks for CHSP participants.

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2. PHA-Owned and Managed Affordable Housing (Public Housing, Scattered Sites, PBRA); Maintenance

Work orders:

- All non-emergency work orders are suspended until further notice.
- Community rooms and community recreation centers are closed in order to support social distancing as recommended by the CDC and the Minnesota Department of Health. This closure also allows maintenance staff to focus on providing additional cleaning measures to the common areas of buildings.

PHA Maintenance staff will continue regular operations and implement a series of enhanced cleaning and sanitization operations:

- Staff will disinfect shared surfaces in hi-rises, community centers and the Central Administrative Office front desk twice daily.
- Supervisory staff will prepare a common checklist for maintenance staff to follow.
- Office staff will contribute to the effort by monitoring their own office environments.
- All Preventative Maintenance inspections are postponed until further notice.

Cleaning and Sanitation supplies:

- Waterless anti-bacterial hand soap is available in PHA public spaces so residents can be encouraged to use in an attempt to insure they are not unintentionally transferring the virus.
- As supplies become more difficult to obtain, emergency purchasing procedures will be utilized to obtain cleaning supplies and personal protection equipment.

Construction:

- Construction work will continue based upon the scope of the work.

3. Privately-owned PHA assisted affordable housing (Section 8, Housing Choice Voucher HCV) program

Actions affecting people new to PHA program and/or Housing Choice Voucher program:

- Intake appointments will now be conducted via U.S. Mail.
- Briefings will now be held via electronic means.

Actions affecting on going case management of current participants:

- All in-person appointments are suspended until further notice.
- Mailings will include a return checklist as a reminder of all the documents needed and will also encourage participants to return via email, mail, or fax to limit contact.
- Participants may request an in-person appointment if needed.
- Staff will contact existing appointments to cancel in-person appointment and to request return of documents by mail, fax, or email.

Inspections of assisted units:

- Inspections for participants moving to a new unit and/or entering our program for the first time will continue. These are needed in order to begin housing assistance.
- Inspectors will have gloves, shoe covers and masks available for each inspection.
- Annual inspections already scheduled (March through May), which cannot be delayed, will only receive initial inspection and landlords can self-certify repairs completed on any nonlife-threatening deficiencies items.
- Participants can request annual inspections if needed. Any annual inspection already scheduled during this time that can be delayed will be delayed for 30 days.
- All re-inspections will be completed via self-certifications.

4. PHA employees:

Operational Updates:

- The PHA has no plans to lay-off or furlough staff. There remains an abundance of PHA work that must be done.
- Staff is encouraged to work with their supervisor to make arrangements that promote social distancing, including working from home, flexible hours, staggered staffing schedules, and weekend and night hours. All PHA staff who are able to fulfill their duties from home should do so.
- Those employees whose positions do not allow for them to fulfill their duties from home should work with their supervisor to implement plans that reduce the amount of in-person contact with others, while still allowing for execution of essential services.

If you need to stay home to care for young children due to daycare and school closures:

- Inform your supervisor by phone or email.
- Work remotely, if approved to do so.
- If not approved to work remotely, you may use your accrued leave time (any leave).

If you have been advised to quarantine due to potential exposure to COVID-19:

- Inform your supervisor by phone or email and stay at home for 14 days.
- Work remotely, if approved to do so.
- If not approved to work remotely, you may use your accrued leave time (any leave).
- You may ask for Vacation Donation, which needs to be approved by the Human Resources Director, per current policy.

If you have COVID-19 and need to isolate:

- Inform your supervisor and HR by phone or email and stay at home until symptoms have cleared.
- Work remotely, if approved to do so.
- If not approved to work remotely, you may use your accrued leave time (any leave).
- You may ask for Vacation Donation, which needs to be approved by the Human Resources Director, per current policy.

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If you need to stay at home to care for a dependent or a family member who is sick with COVID-19:

- Inform your supervisor and HR by phone or email and stay home.
- Work remotely, if approved to do so.
- If not approved to work remotely, you may use your accrued leave time (any leave).

If you have a medical condition and your treating physician is recommending that you maintain social distancing:

- Inform your supervisor by phone or email and email your doctor's note if possible.
- Work remotely, if approved to do so.
- If not approved to work remotely, you may use your accrued leave time (any leave).

If you do not want to come to work because you are afraid that you may come in contact with COVID-19 through the workplace:

- Inform your supervisor by phone or email and request leave.
- You may use your accrued leave time (any leave).

5. Resident Informational Links and Community Resources:

MN Governor's Office: <https://mn.gov/governor/>

Mayor of the City of St. Paul: <https://www.stpaul.gov/>

HUD Page on COVID-19: <https://www.hud.gov/coronavirus>

Center for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/>

MN Department of Health: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/index.html>

**Governor's Executive Order on Veteran Housing:
<https://mn.gov/governor/news/#/detail/appId/1/id/423646>**

Minnesota Department of Health COVID-19 Hotlines:

School and childcare questions: 651-297-1304

Health questions: 651-201-3920 or 1-800-657-3903

This PHA COVID-19 Action Plan will be updated on a regular basis. Please visit the PHA's website at www.stpha.org.