

Itasca County/Grand Rapids HRAs

COVID-19 Action Plan

In accordance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Minnesota Department of Health, the HRAs are adjusting their services and operations to protect staff and the individuals and families it serves from further spread of COVID-19. The HRA will continue to update its action plan.

In an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19, effective March 19th the HRA offices are temporarily closed to all residents and visitors. All staff will be working remotely with scheduled access to the HRA offices. The HRA has suspended all internal and external meetings with very few exceptions. As much business as possible will be conducted by telephone and other electronic means. The HRA will continue to respond as needed to emergency situations.

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

COVID-19 Action Plan

1. HRA-Owned and Managed Affordable Housing (Public Housing, Scattered Sites, PBRA) – Administrative Staff

Applicant Interviews:

- All applicants will be mailed an intake packet and be given a phone interview.

Denying Files:

- Applications recommended for denial will be submitted by the Housing 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.

Initial Meeting and Lease Signings for New Tenants:

- Initial meetings will be done via telephone and Lease signings conducted via mail whenever possible.

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 Specialists will have gloves, masks and shoe covers available.

Transfers:

- Reasonable Accommodations/Emergency Transfers will continue as usual.

Rent Calculations/Certifications:

- Interim recertifications will continue as outlined in each program policy. Income decreases will be prioritized by staff for processing 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.

Resident Work Orders:

- Maintenance requests may be made via phone, fax, email.

2. HRA-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 any lockable community area 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.

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

- Staff will disinfect shared surfaces in multi-family buildings as instructed by their supervisor.
- Office staff will contribute to the effort by monitoring their own office environments when they are scheduled to access the offices. No maintenance staff will be required to clean at the HRA offices.

Construction Projects and Public Bidding:

- Scheduled public bids will continue and be conducted outside, weather permitting. If a public bid is scheduled during inclement weather, the bid opening will occur where social distancing can be practiced.
- Construction work will proceed based upon the scope of the work and availability of supplies.

3. Privately-owned HRA assisted affordable housing (Housing Choice Voucher HCV, Project Based Voucher PBV, and other rental assistance)

Actions affecting people new to HCV or other rental assistance program:

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

Rent Calculations/Certifications:

- Interim recertifications will continue as outlined in each program policy. Income decreases will be prioritized by staff for processing 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.
- Annual recertification will continue as outlined in each program policy. Annual interviews will be conducted via telephone.

Participant 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.

Inspections of assisted units:

- Inspections for participants moving to a new unit and/or entering our program for the first time will cease. The HRA will obtain the required Landlord certification for the file. The inspection will be completed at a later date but no later than 10/31/2020 in accordance with PIH 2020-05.
- At staff discretion, a move-in inspection may be conducted in a vacant unit provided the unit has been properly cleaned.
- Biennial inspections will be delayed to 10/31/2020.
- Interim inspections will be waived and repairs will be verified by alternative methods.

4. HRA employees:

- The HRA has no plans to lay-off or furlough any staff. There remains an abundance of HRA work that must be done.
- Administrative staff will be working from home, be allowed flexible hours, and have staggered staffing schedules to work from the office. Weekend and night hours will be offered but not required.
- Maintenance staff is encouraged to work with their supervisor to make arrangements that promote social distancing which could include flexible hours, weekend, and night hours as needed. These staff should

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).

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 be eligible for additional sick leave. Inquire with your supervisor.

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). You may be eligible for additional sick leave. Inquire with your supervisor.

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.
- Please be aware that our services are considered essential and we may need to replace your position.
- You may use your accrued leave time (any leave).

*Administrative staff should refer to the Waiver Chart, in accordance with PIH 2020-05, for further guidance on revised administrative procedures.