



Housing Choice Voucher E-Newsletter

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Effectively Communicate System Maintenance Schedules and Downtimes



Secretary Shaun Donovan launched the Delivering Together effort to identify ways in which the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) could improve its customer

service. A Delivering Together team was formed to investigate ways to reduce Public Housing Authority (PHA) burden while improving HUD's PHA oversight. PHAs indicated to the Delivering Together team that they wanted more information regarding when Public and Indian Housing (PIH) systems were unavailable so they could modify staff schedules accordingly. Representatives from PIH reached out to the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) and the two offices have made several changes to facilitate better communication.

What Every PHA Should Know

The following information will be helpful to any PHA that wants to understand how PIH system maintenance works:

- Routine system maintenance occurs every Sunday morning between 6:00 am and 12:00 pm EST for all HUD systems.
- All scheduled system outages beyond those required for routine maintenance are announced to HUD staff at least 24 hours prior to the outage through the internal National Help Desk. These outages are also announced through an email notification to all HUD Program Office Points of Contact. In turn, Program Offices are to communicate outages to their external business partners.
- System status messages are also posted on the WASS Welcome/Message of the Day webpage, which is available to all users once they successfully access Secure Systems.
- PIH posts its system release schedule six to eight months in advance. PIH system downtimes are posted on the Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) website at any of the following links:
 - o http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/reac/online
 - o http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/reac
- All system backups and scheduled production jobs are executed daily between 8:00 pm and 6:00 am EST. HUD program areas responsible for systems can request a waiver to the nightly backup in the event PHAs need access to meet critical deadlines. Waiver requests can be initiated by HUD staff through the National Help Desk at 888-297-8689. Those requesting a waiver will need to

provide: (1) application name, (2) application owner, and (3) a detailed justification for the waiver request. Waiver requests must be received by OCIO at least 72 hours prior to the date associated with the request. OCIO will respond to the request within 12 hours by stating whether the request can be approved. OCIO is also working to put new technology in place to shorten the time needed for system backups in the future, so that PHAS will have more access each day to HUD systems.

Improvements Implemented

PIH and OCIO are making every effort to improve communication and enhance the convenience associated with using PIH systems for PHAs. OCIO will continue to post system status messages on the WASS Welcome/Message of the Day webpage so that PHAs can plan employee schedules around planned system downtimes.

What You Can Expect

Improving communication regarding system maintenance schedules and downtimes is part of HUD's Delivering Together initiative, which is aimed at making it easier for PHAs to do what they do best—help families. Rather than worry about whether PIH systems will be up and running when they need them, PHAs now have the tools they need to be aware of scheduled system maintenance and downtimes. Keep your eyes open for many other Delivering Together customer service improvements being implemented in the near future!

Brought to you by the Delivering Together team: Kevin Cooke, Jr., Mike Milazzo, and Nathan Merritt from OCIO Headquarters; Juan Garcia from PIH Headquarters; and Nathan George from PIH Denver.

Streamline the Process for HUD Systems Access



In accordance with Secretary Shaun Donovan's HUD Strategic Plan Transformation Initiatives, the Office of the Assistant Chief Financial Officer for Systems (OACFOS) and the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCIO) have worked with the Delivering Together Project team to improve the Office of the Chief Financial Officers' (OCFO's) systems access process for both internal and external HUD users. The Delivering Together

effort is focused on reducing the administrative burden of Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) while improving PHA oversight. The Line of Credit Control System (LOCCS) access process was identified by PHAs and HUD staff as a time-consuming effort that could be improved. Former OCFO systems applicants reported that it often took several months to a year to receive access to LOCCS, so the HUD staff did not have prompt access to the system to approve grantees drawdowns if necessary. For PHAs, the LOCCS access process was confusing. Therefore, the team approached LOCCS access from both PHA and HUD perspectives.

The Solution for PHAs

Based on interviews with multiple PHAs, it was recommended that external LOCCS users be given clearer guidance regarding the LOCCS access process. In response, the OACFOS worked with senior PIH officials, Headquarters senior management, Field Offices, and PHAs to identify bottlenecks and streamline the LOCCS guidelines for external users. The OACFOS drafted and finalized guidelines that would allow grantees to gain access to the OCFO's LOCCS in an efficient manner. These updated [**LOCCS Access Guidelines for Grantees**](#) are now available on HUD.gov. The OACFOS also redesigned the LOCCS Access Authorization Form to integrate the Program Offices into the LOCCS access process in order to improve internal control and accountability. The LOCCS Access Authorization (Form HUD-27054) now requires Program Office signature and validation.

The Solution for HUD Staff

Based on users' comments, the OACFOS reviewed and identified bottlenecks in the current systems access process. In order to resolve the bottlenecks, the systems access process for internal HUD users was re-engineered to incorporate new technologies to eliminate and streamline unnecessary processes. Also, to comply with an OMB Memo directing agencies to eliminate the use of Personally Identifiable Information (PII), the Social Security Number (SSN) fields within the systems access forms for internal users were eliminated. As a result, the Guidelines for Obtaining Access to Office of the Chief Financial Officer Systems and systems access forms were overhauled on HUD@work.

In addition, the OACFOS improved customer service for internal users by making internal organizational changes and collaborating with the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer/Personnel Security Division. As a result, the average access request time has been reduced by 88%, from 65 days to 8 days.

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The OACFOS implemented the following in order to re-engineer the internal systems access process:

- Established a central point of contact for background investigation process with the ACFO Systems Quality Assurance Division (SQAD)
- Automated the background investigation process to safeguard users' PII
- Developed new, clear, and concise guidelines for gaining access to OCFO systems for HUD internal users and posted it to HUD@work
- Redesigned the systems access forms for internal HUD users to limit the use of SSN to comply with OMB guidelines
- Created a central mailbox for OCFO Background Investigations (OCFOBackgroundInvestigations@hud.gov) to ensure transparency and efficiency

What You Can Expect

Streamlining the process for gaining access to HUD systems is part of HUD's Delivering Together initiative, which is aimed at making it easier for PHAs to do what they do best—help families. Rather than labor over the most efficient way to get LOCCS access, PHAs can now rely on clear, easily-accessible guidance to gain access to LOCCS. Keep your eyes open for many other Delivering Together customer service improvements being implemented in the near future!

Brought to you by the Office of the Financial Systems Quality Assurance Division, Office of the Chief Financial Officer: Simin Narins and Jane S. Lee in Headquarters.

PIH Notices

PIH 2012-20, “Revocation of Notice PIH 2012-19 (Implementation of Funding for Tenant-Protection Vouchers for Certain At-Risk Households in Low-Vacancy Areas)” issued May 2, 2012. This Notice revokes Notice PIH 2012-19, “Implementation of Funding for Tenant-Protection Vouchers for Certain At-Risk Households in Low-Vacancy Areas.” A new notice will be forthcoming which will describe the funding process for tenant protection vouchers for certain at-risk households in low-vacancy areas, as provided for in the “Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2012” (PL 112-55).

PIH 2012-19, “Implementation of Funding for Tenant-Protection Vouchers for Certain At-Risk Households in Low-Vacancy Areas” issued March 16, 2012. This Notice provides information and instructions on the funding process for tenant protection vouchers for certain at-risk households in low-vacancy areas, as provided for in the “Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2012” (PL 112-55), referred to hereafter as “the 2012 Appropriations Act,” enacted on November 18, 2011.

PIH 2012-18, “Rental Assistance Demonstration – Partial Implementation and Request for Comments” issued March 8, 2012. This notice (Notice) provides program instructions for the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD or Demonstration), including eligibility and selection criteria, and seeks public comment on these instructions and criteria. While this Notice seeks public comment on all instructions and criteria provided in this Notice, the instructions and criteria applicable to the Section III of this Notice are effective upon issuance of this Notice. Following receipt and consideration of public comment, a second notice (Final Notice) will be issued with final program instructions and eligibility and selection criteria, which may include revisions to the Section III instructions and criteria.

PIH 2012-16, “Request for Applications under the Moving to Work Demonstration Program for Fiscal Year 2011.” issued February 27, 2012. This notice offers eligible public housing agencies (PHAs) the opportunity to apply for admission to the Moving to Work (MTW) demonstration program. MTW allows PHAs to design and test innovative, locally designed housing and self-sufficiency strategies for low-income families by permitting PHAs to combine assistance received under Sections 8 and 9 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (1937 Act) into a single agency-wide funding source and by allowing certain exemptions from existing public housing and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program rules, as approved by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

PIH 2012-15, “Streamlining Administrative Practices in the Housing Choice Voucher Program” issued February 27, 2012. This Notice provides guidance on actions public housing agencies (PHAs) administering the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program may take to streamline administrative practices and reduce administrative costs. PHA administrative fees must only be used for HCV program expenses. These include but are not limited to: (1) waiting list management and updates; (2) preference verifications; (3) eligibility determinations; (4) intake and briefings; (5) voucher issuances; (6) owner outreach efforts; (7) unit inspections; (8) rent negotiations and reasonableness determinations; (9) annual and interim income reexaminations; (10) tenant fraud investigations and hearings; (11) processing subsequent moves, including portability moves outside the PHA jurisdiction; (12) the costs associated with making housing assistance payments to owners; and (13) monthly reporting in HUD systems (VMS, PIC, FASS, SEMAP).

PIH 2012-14, “Guidance on Public Housing salary restrictions in HUD’s Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2012 Appropriations Act (P.L. 112-55)” issued February 24, 2012. This notice provides guidance on implementing the provision in HUD’s FFY 2012 Appropriations, P.L. 112-55, that limits the use of FFY 2012 Section 8 Tenant-Based Rental Assistance and Section 9 appropriations to pay salaries to public housing agency (PHA) employees. This limitation applies to all PHA employees, including chief executive officers, other officials, and any other employees. This notice applies to all PHAs, including low rent only, Section 8 only and Moving to Work (MTW) PHAs that: (1)

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receive FFY 2012 appropriations for one or more of the following programs during their 2012 fiscal year (FY): Section 8 (Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV)), Section 9 Capital Fund, and Section 9 Operating Fund; and (2) pay any annual salary to a covered individual (as defined in Paragraph 4, Section B) during the PHA's 2012 FY that exceeds \$155,500.

PIH 2012-11, "Process for Public Housing Agency Voluntary Transfers and Consolidations of Housing Choice Vouchers, Five-Year Mainstream Vouchers, Project-Based Vouchers and Project-Based Certificates" issued February 15, 2012. This notice applies to public housing agencies (PHAs) that administer the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV), Project-Based Vouchers (PBV) and/or Project-Based Certificates (PBC) and Five-Year Mainstream (MS5) programs. This notice does not cover the public housing program or the Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation program. Please note that MS5 vouchers have not been included in prior notices; however, these vouchers are now included in HCV funding appropriations, but are still reported separately under section 14.879 (Mainstream Vouchers) of the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance. This notice also explains the process and procedures associated with such a transfer or consolidation. Sections 3 through 14 address the HCV and MS5 programs. Special additional provisions for transfers of PBVs and PBCs are addressed in Section 15.

PIH 2012-10, "Verification of Social Security Numbers (SSNs), Social Security (SS) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Benefits; and Effective Use of the Enterprise Income Verification (EIV) System's Identity Verification Report" issued February 14, 2012. This notice explains the procedures public housing agencies (PHAs) are required to use for verifying social security numbers, social security benefits of applicants, participants and household members at the time of application for rental housing assistance programs and during mandatory reexamination of household income, as well as the procedures for effective use of EIV's Identity Verification Report to reduce subsidy payment and administrative errors. Similar guidance was issued under notice PIH-2010-03. This notice supersedes the aforementioned notice. This notice also provides guidance related to the recent changes made to 24 CFR §5.216, 24 CFR §5.218, and new verification requirements at 24 CFR §5.233, in accordance with the Final Rule: Refinement of Income and Rent Determination in Public and Assisted Housing Programs: Implementation of the Enterprise Income Verification System-Amendments, effective January 31, 2010, as published at 74 FR 68924, on December 29, 2009. In accordance with the directions of the Office of the Federal Register, the December 29, 2009, final rule, because it is the later published rule, supersedes the January 27, 2009, final rule, which was also effective on January 31, 2010. Accordingly, only the regulatory amendments of the December 29, 2009, final rule are effective and applicable.

PIH 2012-9, "Implementation of the Federal Fiscal Year 2012 Funding Provisions for the Housing Choice Voucher Program" issued February 8, 2012. This Notice implements the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program funding provisions of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2012 (PL 112-55), referred to hereafter as the 2012 Act, enacted on November 18, 2011. The 2012 Act establishes the allocation methodology for calculating housing assistance payments (HAP) renewal funds, new incremental vouchers and administrative fees. This Notice is organized into sections designed to address the funding of both vouchers and administrative fees (Sections 3 through 8) and other policy issues (Sections 9 through 14). Additionally, Appendix A provides the text of the 2012 Appropriations Act as it relates to HCV funding.

HUD's PIH Notices can be viewed online at: <http://1.usa.gov/uBAGLE>

HUD Wants Your Input!

Please be on the lookout for a HUD survey on PHA's Engagement with Homeless Households. HUD will soon launch a web-based survey of all public housing agencies (PHAs) nation-wide. This survey will support research that will explore and document how PHAs currently serve and interact with homeless households, to achieve the following:

- Establish a baseline level of PHAs' current engagement in serving homeless households;
- Document the practices of PHAs that have an explicit preference for homeless households;
- Explore PHA perceptions of barriers to, or concerns about, increasing the number of homeless households served or targeting homeless households for priority housing assistance; and
- Identify mechanisms to address or eliminate barriers to serving homeless households in mainstream housing assistance, with a focus on the housing choice voucher (HCV) program and public housing.

Findings of this study will enable HUD to develop strategies to expand access to mainstream housing opportunities for homeless households that are rooted in evidence and informed by the PHAs themselves. **HUD wants your input!** It is important that all PHAs complete and submit the survey. It is estimated that the survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Please look for an email with a link to the web-based survey in mid-June.

Contact us:

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Resource Center (PIH IRC)
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Gambrills, MD 21054

Toll free number: 1-800-955-2232
Fax number: 1-443-302-2084
E-mail: pihirc@firstpic.org
(Put "Housing Choice Voucher
E-Newsletter" in the subject line)