



THE RESIDENT NEWSLETTER

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HUD Encourages Non-Smoking Policies in Public Housing



HUD and PHAs are committed to improving indoor air quality and giving residents a healthy, safe living environment. Towards this end, HUD issued a notice (PIH 2009-21) in 2009 that encouraged PHAs to put smoke-free policies in place, which it still supports today. As of last year, more than 225 PHAs have smoke-free policies.

Because PHAs have broad flexibility in shaping their smoke-free policies, HUD encourages PHAs to work with their residents to figure out the **right** policy for their community and to publicize any policy that is adopted. Ultimately, many PHAs have established smoke-free buildings, because this is the best way to stop secondhand smoke from migrating between units and affecting the health of non-smokers and children. It also lowers the risk of fire and fire-related deaths and injuries.

Residents should check with their housing authority to see if there is a smoke-free policy in place at their development. Policies vary widely, and can range from establishing smoke-free common areas to smoke-free buildings. Some policies may allow for eviction of a resident who smokes in his or her unit, so it is **very important** for residents to understand the specifics of their policy.

Because smoking is an addictive behavior that is hard to stop, HUD also encourages PHAs to help connect residents who smoke to local smoking cessation resources. More information about smoking cessation can be found at <http://www.lungusa2.org/cessation2> or by calling 877-44U-QUIT (877-448-7848). For information about the effects of smoking, see: <http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/index.htm>.

Residents who are interested in having a smoke-free policy at their housing authority should work with their resident council, housing authority, and neighbors to develop a smoke-free policy that works for your community.



New Language Line Connects Residents to HUD in 175 Languages

Public Housing serves a wide variety of communities across the nation; now HUD has developed a better way to communicate with them all. On December 22, 2011, the Department announced that it would be offering a new service, the HUD language line, which provides one-on-one translation in 175 languages via telephone, 24 hours a day. The HUD language line allows HUD to better serve those who speak little or no English.

Here is how the service works: when a person with limited English skills contacts a HUD staff member, that staff member can immediately connect the call with the HUD language line. The operator from the HUD language line will connect the caller to a translator to participate in the call. Through this 3-way call, people with limited or no English skills can directly communicate with HUD.

“Access to government should not be determined by how well a person speaks English,” said John Trasviña, HUD Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. “The HUD Language Line is another example of HUD’s efforts to ensure that persons with limited English proficiency have equal access to HUD programs and services.”

This service is not the only way HUD is reaching out to people with limited English skills seeking information or assistance. The Department offers official documents in up to 18 languages, including the following: Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, Creole, Farsi, French, Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. These documents include brochures, fact sheets, and HUD forms.

The HUD Language Line is a pilot program and will be offered through September of this year. However, the language initiative is part of a larger Limited English Proficiency project in response to an Executive Order from the White House. The Order requires all federal, state, and local agencies that receive funding from the government to ensure that people with limited language skills have helpful access to government programs and services.

To learn more about HUD’s outreach to people speaking little or no English visit: <http://1.usa.gov/qAXmSo>.

TIPS:

If You Have to Drive, Be Safe This Winter

It is February and winter has already given us some crazy weather. Here are some suggestions for safe driving during inclement winter weather.

- It all starts from the ground up, have good tires on your car. Make sure they are properly inflated and the same style.
- Avoid using cruise control.
- Drive slowly. Snow and ice covered roads are dangerous cause a will make accelerating, turning, and stopping difficult.
- Give yourself plenty of room to come to a stop. Allow for several car lengths of space between you and the car ahead. When braking, make sure to use steady even pressure while keeping the heel of your foot on the floor.
- Keep your head lights on while driving. Adverse weather generally means decreased visibility.
- When possible, let the snow plows and salt or sand trucks lead the way.
- Don’t use your cell phone while driving. In many states now it is illegal to do one or both at any time while driving but during bad weather it is just a bad choice. Though it is a good idea to have a cell phone with in case you become stranded.
- Keep the following emergency supplies in your vehicle at all times in case you ever have to wait for emergency help:
 - o Flashlight with extra batteries should the event occur during the night.
 - o Ice scraper or snow brush to keep window and light clear.
 - o Non-perishable foods like canned nuts, hard candy, or energy bars. Things that are easily opened with your hands.
 - o Matches in a water proof container.
 - o Reflective triangles or road flares.
 - o Stay in your vehicle until help arrives!

More information on winter driving tips, go to: <http://bit.ly/bBEWBv>.

Contact us:

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HELP CORNER

Educating Parents Leads to Better Children’s Education

HUD has teamed up with GreatSchools to provide a free web-based tool that will help parents make more informed decisions about where to send their children to school. Information on more than 200,000 pre-K-12 public, charter, magnet and private schools across the U.S., and information on how parents can choose the best school for their children is available at <http://www.GreatSchools.org>.