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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.

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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.

Smoke-Free Affordable Housing Meeting

Before this year's National Conference on Tobacco or Health, being held in Kansas City, August 15-17 (<http://www.tobaccocontrolconference.org/>), the American Lung Association is hosting a one-day ancillary meeting on August 14th smoke-free multi-unit housing, with an emphasis on affordable housing. HUD's Offices of Public Housing Programs and Healthy Homes, and the Center for Disease Control's Office on Smoking and Health will participate.

The meeting on August 14th will provide PHAs with information on approaches to curtailing tobacco use in multi-unit housing that have proven successful. The meeting will also offer opportunities to exchange experiences and lessons, learn about helpful resources, and network with peers.

The meeting on August 14th is free, and PHAs don't need to be attending the National Conference on Tobacco or Health to attend. Registration and a preliminary agenda is available at the following link:

<http://www.lung.org/associations/states/minnesota/events-programs/smoke-free-multi-unit.html>

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.

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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.

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 Notice

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 20, 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).

HUD's PIH Notices can be viewed online at:

<http://1.usa.gov/uBAGLE>.

Contact us:

Public and Indian Housing Information
Resource Center (PIH IRC)

2614 Chapel Lake Drive
Gambrills, MD 21054

Toll free number: 1-800-955-2232

Fax number: 1-443-302-2084

E-mail: pihirc@firstpic.org

(Put "HUD PHM Newsletter" in the subject line)

Upcoming Conferences

Doing More With Less

Presented by Alexandria Redevelopment
Housing Authority

July 12-13, 2012

Alexandria, VA

<http://registration.firstpic.org/ARHA/>

Energy Performance Contracting: Use Performance Contracting to Green Your Housing Authority

August 6 – 11, 2012

Chicago, IL

For more information regarding course
registration, course agenda, or lodging,
please visit: [http://www.cvent.com/d/
wcqp3p/1Q](http://www.cvent.com/d/wcqp3p/1Q).

