
Issuing Vouchers and Leasing Virtually

6/7/22

Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Best practices for briefings in a virtual environment
3. Best practices for collecting and executing documents related to leasing virtually
4. Best practices for working with landlords in a virtual environment

Learning Objective



The goal of this training is to discuss best practices for virtual voucher issuance and the unit leasing process for PHAs who wish to move some program functions to a remote environment

Including ensuring equal opportunity for persons with disabilities and those with limited English proficiency (LEP)

Introduction

As PHAs return to normal operations, they should consider the sustainability of the virtual model and what may work for the PHA long-term

This training will explore how thoughtful implementation of virtual operations in the areas of voucher issuance and unit leasing can improve PHA operations, increase customer service, and benefit applicants and HCV owners

Accessing the Recording

The recording and materials may be accessed here:

- https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/program_trainings_and_resources

Steps in the Leasing Process



Best Practices for Briefings in a Virtual Environment



PIH

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Requirements for Remote Briefings

Requirements: Briefings

Prior to issuance of a voucher, the PHA must give the family an oral briefing as well as an information packet outlining HCV program requirements



24 CFR § 982.301

Requirements: Remote Briefings

Absent a request by an applicant for an in-person briefing, there is no requirement to conduct in-person briefings



In-Person vs Remote Briefings

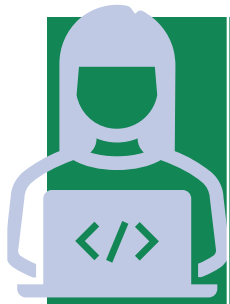
Provided remote briefings meet minimum requirements outlined in Notice PIH 2020-32, briefings may be conducted:



In-person



Telephonically



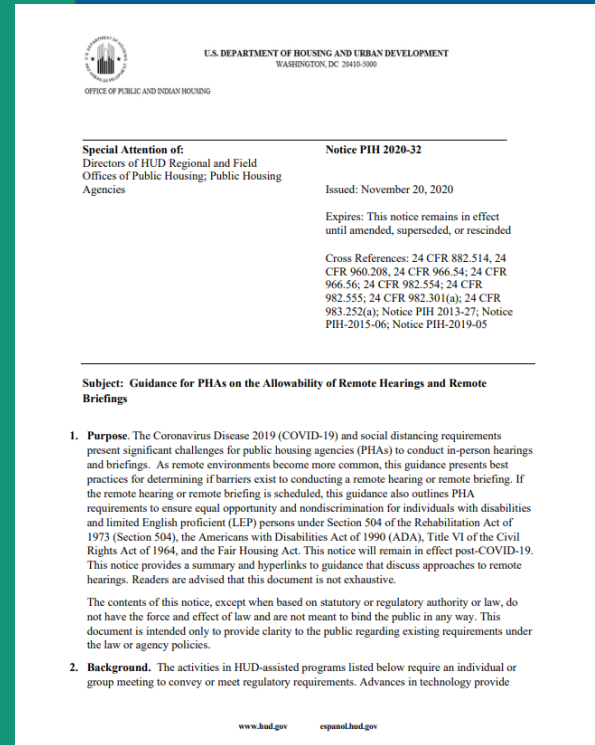
Via video-teleconferencing



Through other virtual platforms

Notice PIH 2020-32

- *Guidance for PHAs on the Allowability of Remote Hearings and Remote Briefings*
- Issued November 20, 2020
- Presents best practices for determining if barriers exist to conducting a remote hearing or remote briefing
- Outlines PHA requirements to ensure equal opportunity and nondiscrimination for individuals with disabilities and limited English proficient (LEP) persons



Administrative Plan Policies

- To implement remote briefings, the PHA must update its administrative plan
 - Include provisions to allow for use of mail, electronic mail, webcast, and video call, as appropriate
 - As described in Notice PIH 2020-32



Procedures

- The PHA must establish written procedures for all aspects of how the remote briefing will be conducted
- The procedures should:

Be readily available
to the public

Explain how
documents will be
presented prior to
a remote briefing

Considerations when Implementing Remote Briefings

How will the PHA ensure that briefings provide equal opportunity for persons with disabilities?

Who will be required to attend the remote briefing?

How will the PHA ensure that LEP requirements are met?

What will the PHA do if a family fails to attend a scheduled briefing?

How will families be notified about the briefing?

Who from the PHA will contact those families that need individual assistance after the group briefing?

How will requests for individual assistance after a group briefing be made by the family?

How will the PHA confirm required members have attended the entire briefing?



Requirements for Persons with Disabilities

Requirements for Ensuring Access for Persons with Disabilities

- Under Section 504, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Fair Housing Act, PHAs are required to:
 - Take appropriate steps to ensure effective communication with applicants, participants, and members of the public with disabilities
 - Make reasonable accommodations in policies, practices, and procedures to ensure persons with disabilities have equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, each of the PHA's services, programs, and activities

Effective Communication in Briefings

In briefing a family that includes any disabled person, the PHA must take appropriate steps to ensure effective communication

- Communications must be provided in the most integrated setting appropriate for the individual with a disability
- The PHA must give primary consideration to the means of communication preferred by the individual with a disability

Effective Communication

PHAs must ensure that notices and communications during all briefing sessions and meetings are provided in a manner that is effective for persons with hearing, visual, and other disabilities



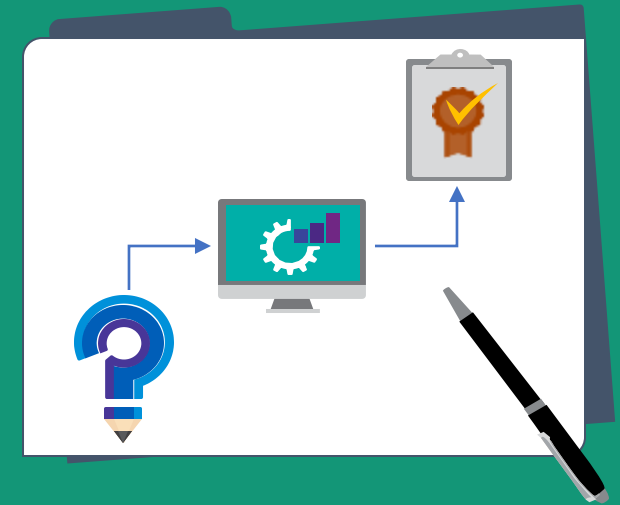
Training Materials Used in Briefings

This includes ensuring that training materials are in appropriate alternative formats as needed to ensure effective communication

e.g., Braille, audio, large type, sign language or other types of interpreters, accessible electronic communications, transcription services, and assistive listening devices, etc.

Accessible Technology Platform

- For a remote briefing, steps for an accessible platform include ensuring any:
 - Information
 - Websites
 - Emails
 - Digital notifications
 - Platforms
- Are accessible for persons with vision, hearing, and other disabilities



Resources: Accessible Technology



- [Section508.gov](https://www.section508.gov)
- Free and low-cost accessibility checkers available online
- Microsoft PowerPoint accessibility check
- Work with local advocacy groups and state assistive technology groups
- Include language about accessibility requirements when procuring new technology

Using AA/S for Effective Communication

- Effective communication may generally be provided through the use of appropriate auxiliary aids/services (AA/S)
- PHAs must furnish appropriate AA/S where necessary as a reasonable accommodation
- Citation: 24 CFR § 8.6(a)(1)



AA/S Used During Briefings

- Individualized AA/S used during a remote briefing may include:
 - Audio descriptions
 - Captioning
 - Sign language and other types of interpreters
 - Keyboard accessibility
 - Accessible documents
 - Screen reader support
 - Transcripts



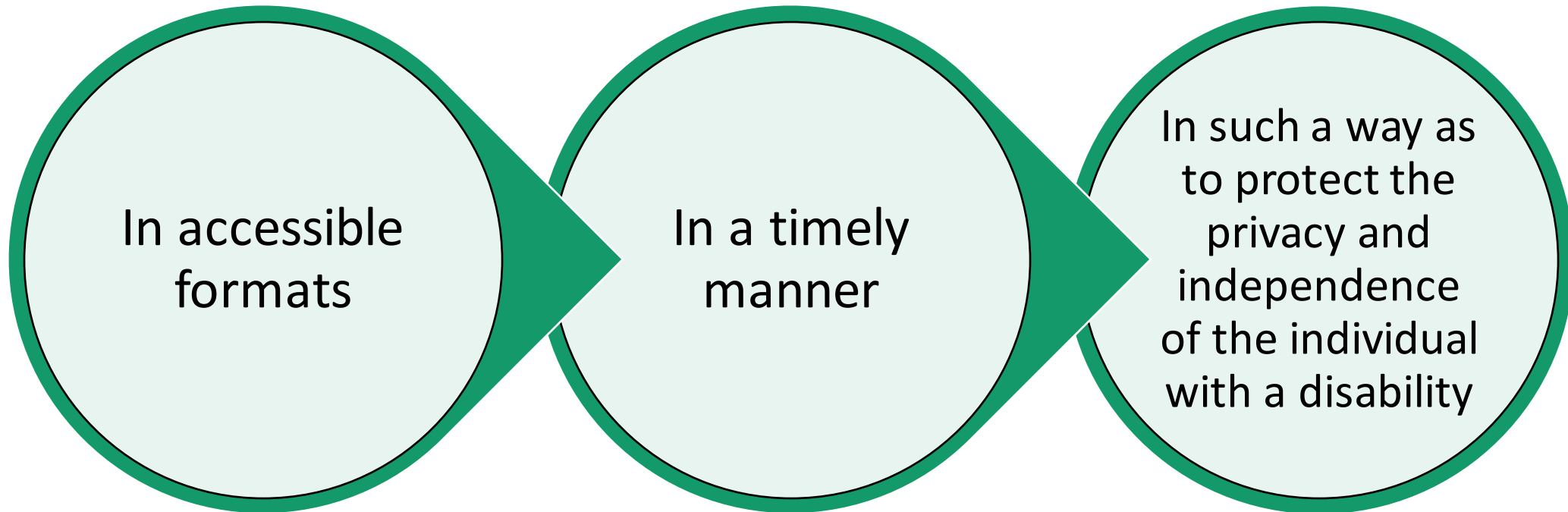
PHA Obligation to Provide

PHAs may never request or require that individuals provide their own AA/S



Provision of AA/S

In order to be effective, AA/S must be provided:



Appropriate AA/S for Effective Communication

The type of AA/S necessary to ensure effective communication will vary in accordance with:

The method of communication used by the individual

The nature, length, and complexity of the communication involved

The context in which the communication is taking place

Interpretation Requirements

PHAs may not rely on an adult or minor child accompanying a person with a disability to interpret or facilitate communication for such person



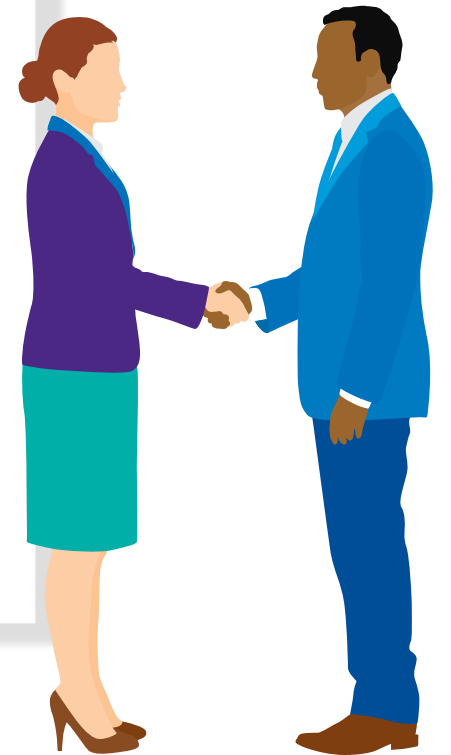
Exceptions

- In an emergency involving an imminent threat to the safety or welfare of an individual or the public where there is no interpreter available
- Or where the individual with a disability specifically requests that the accompanying adult interpret or facilitate communication, the accompanying adult agrees to provide such assistance, and reliance on that adult for such assistance is appropriate under the circumstances



Reasonable Accommodation

If no method of conducting a remote briefing is available that appropriately accommodates an individual's disability, the PHA may not hold against the individual his or her inability to participate in the remote briefing



Postponing Briefings

The PHA should consider whether postponing the remote briefing to a later date is appropriate or whether there is a suitable alternative to meet the participant's satisfaction more expeditiously



Reasonable Accommodation Limitations

- PHAs are not required to take any actions that would result in:
 - A fundamental alteration in the nature of the program or activity; or
 - An undue financial and administrative burden

Things to Consider



- Disabilities are individualized
- To ensure equal opportunity, the appropriate AA/S or reasonable accommodation depends on specific circumstances and individual requirements

Individual Needs for Reasonable Accommodation

Individuals with cognitive or learning disabilities may require assistance from an advocate who may not be in the same location as that individual



Individuals may request captioning



Individuals may have difficulty with transportation to PHA offices



Individuals may be unable to meet with PHA staff in person





Requirements for LEP

Requirements: LEP

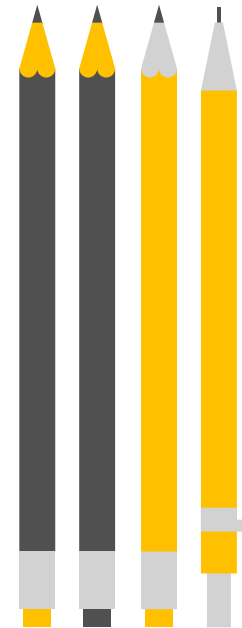
PHAs must take reasonable steps to ensure full and meaningful access to the remote hearing or remote briefing for limited English proficient (LEP) persons



Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

LEP in a Remote Environment

Even in a remote environment, PHAs are required to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP individuals



Providing Language Assistance

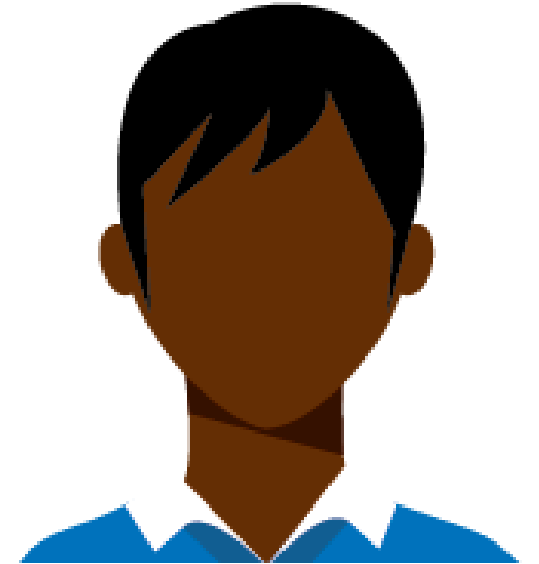
The PHA is not required to provide the language assistance itself and may partner with other organizations to provide the services



Local community resources may be used if language services are competently provided

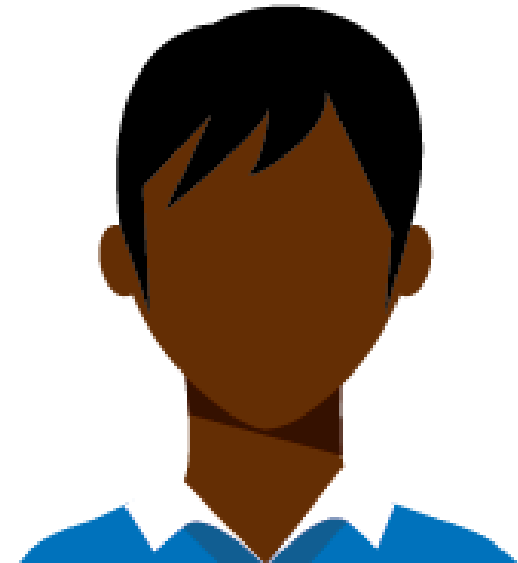
Informal Interpreters

Generally, PHAs should not rely on family members, friends of the LEP person, or other informal interpreters



Exceptions: Informal Interpreters

- However, when LEP persons choose not to utilize the free language assistance services expressly offered to them by the PHA and rely upon an interpreter of their own choosing, LEP persons should be permitted to do so
 - ✓ At their own expense
 - ✓ Whether a professional, family member, or friend



Language Interpretation

- The obligation to provide meaningful access for LEP persons is particularly important for remote briefings
- The PHA will generally need to coordinate with a remote language interpretation service prior to the briefing
- Conferencing technology may provide for remote interpretation
 - If video technology is available, remote interpretation using video is generally preferred over voice-only because of the additional visual cues

Written Materials

- PHAs should engage with a language translation service
- All written materials related to the remote briefing, whether paper or electronic, and whether provided before, during, or after the hearing, may need to be provided in translated format





Identifying and Resolving Barriers

Lack of Technology/Inability to Use Technology

The lack of technology or inability to use technology for a remote hearing or remote briefing can impose a disadvantage for individuals or families that may not be apparent to the PHA



The PHA should determine if barriers exist prior to scheduling the remote briefing

Technology Access

- If the participant does not have proper technology access which will allow the individual to fully participate:
 - The remote briefing should be postponed
 - or-
 - An in-person alternative must be provided

The PHA may not hold against the individual his or her inability to participate in the remote briefing

Survey the Family

To determine if there are technology barriers, the PHA should survey what technology resources the family has.

- Does the applicant have a computer, phone, tablet or laptop that has a camera?
- Does the applicant have internet access?
- Can the applicant go to a place with sufficient privacy and internet access (family, friend or neighbor's home)?
- Can technology be borrowed?

Best Practices

Assess applicant's personal resources for technology access, such as supportive services, family, or friends who could lend a phone or computer

Use video conferencing platforms that are available as smartphone apps for families who do not have computers

Smartphone apps can operate on Wi-Fi, and this may be advantageous for individuals with restricted data plans

Provide toll-free numbers for call ins

Deliver or otherwise make available devices to applicants

Research community resources for free or low-cost phones or computers

Resources: ConnectHome USA



In 2015, HUD and nonprofit partners *EveryoneOn* and *Us Ignite* launched the *ConnectHome* pilot program

ConnectHome is a public-private collaboration to narrow the digital divide for families with school-aged children who live in HUD-assisted housing

ConnectHomeUSA

- The federal government, local governments, PHAs, Internet Service Providers (ISPs), nonprofits, and other stakeholders collaborate on a common platform to develop locally-tailored solutions to narrow the digital divide
- Stakeholders provide free or low-cost internet access, computing devices, and digital literacy training
- The *ConnectHomeUSA Playbook* can be accessed [here](#)



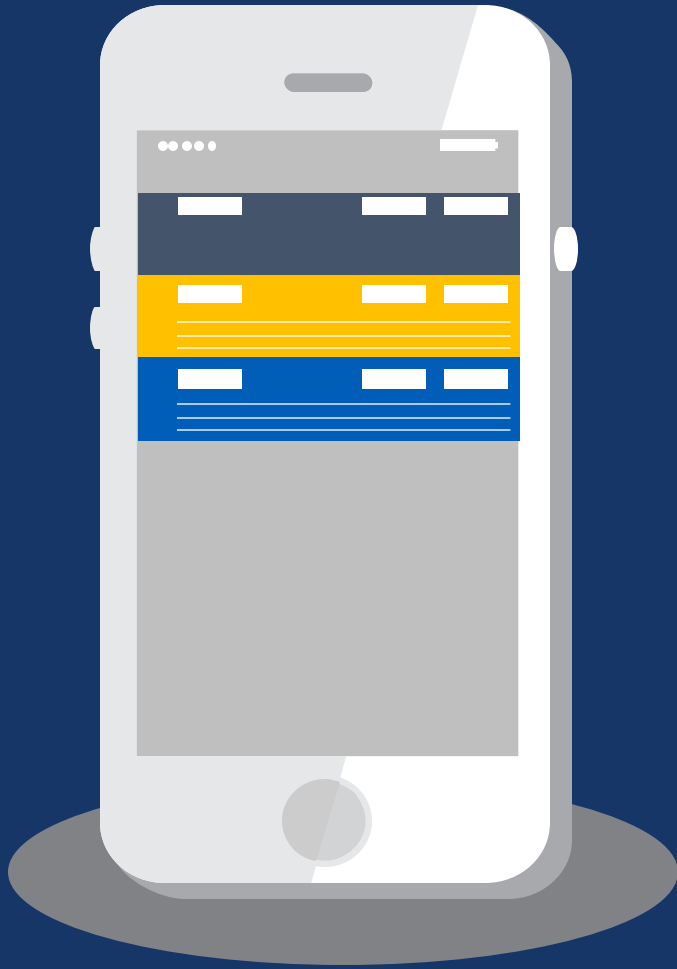
Voice Only Options

Attending Remote Briefings

Applicants should not feel pressured to attend a remote briefing by telephone



Voice-Only Options



- Most individuals have, or can use, a telephone
- However, conducting a remote briefing by telephone is the least preferred option
- Challenges may include:
 - Not being able to view documents being presented
 - Not being able to identify who is speaking during a phone call with multiple attendees

Use of Voice-Only Options

- If the applicant chooses to proceed with a telephone briefing, the PHA should provide them with a consent form



Gives applicant complete knowledge of their rights, as well as the risks and benefits, of conducting the briefing by phone

To obtain valid consent, it may be necessary for the PHA to verbally inform the applicant of the content of the consent form prior to signing, or the PHA may need to get consent from the applicant's appointed representative or guardian

Best Practices: Resolving Barriers

Applicants may have restricted cell phone data plans or a limited number of minutes

Some cell phone carriers charge differently for incoming and outgoing calls

The PHA could use voice-only participation through a toll-free phone number

The PHA could consider calling the resident to minimize cost



Presenting Documents

Requirements: Briefing Packets

- When a family is selected to participate in the program, the PHA must give the family a packet that includes information listed in 24 CFR § 982.301(b)



1: Required Briefing Packet Materials

Voucher term

The term of the voucher, and the PHA's policies on any extensions or suspensions of the term
If the PHA allows extensions, the packet must explain how the family can request an extension

HAP Information

A description of the method used to calculate the housing assistance payment for a family, including how the PHA determines the payment standard

Max rent

An explanation of how the PHA determines the maximum allowable rent for an assisted unit

Where a family may lease

Where the family may lease a unit
For a family that qualifies to lease a unit outside the PHA jurisdiction under portability, the information must include an explanation of how portability works

2: Required Briefing Packet Materials

Tenancy Addendum

The HUD-required tenancy addendum, which must be included in the lease

RTA

The form the family must use to request approval of tenancy, and an explanation of how to request such approval

Subsidy Standards

The PHA subsidy standards including when the PHA will consider making exceptions

3: Required Briefing Packet Materials

HUD
brochure

The HUD brochure on how to select a unit

LBP

The HUD pamphlet on lead-based paint entitled Protect Your Family from Lead in Your Home

Information
to Owners

A statement of the PHA policy on providing information about families to prospective owners

4: Required Briefing Packet Materials

Discrimination Complaint

Information on federal, state, and local equal opportunity laws and a copy of the housing discrimination complaint form (form HUD-903.1), including information on how to fill out the form/file a fair housing complaint

Accessible Units

If the family includes a person with disabilities, a current list of available accessible units known to the PHA

Family Obligations

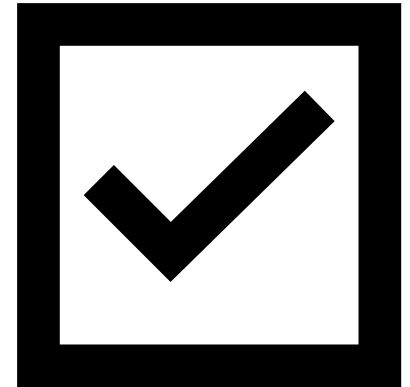
Family obligations under the program, including any obligations of other special programs (VASH, Homeownership, Family Unification Program (FUP), Welfare to Work, etc.) if the family is participating in one of those programs

Areas w/out high concentration of LI families

The advantages of areas that do not have a high concentration of low-income families

Supplemental Materials

In addition to items required by the regulations, PHAs may wish to include supplemental materials to help explain the program to both participants and owners



1: Supplemental Briefing Packet Materials

Summary

A summary of items included in the briefing packet

Owner Brochure

Brochures to explain the HCV program to owners

HAP Contract

Form HUD-52641, Housing Assistance Payments Contract for the HCV Program

Security Deposits

Description of the PHA's security deposit policy, if the PHA has one

2: Supplemental Briefing Packet Materials

Utilities

Information on service organizations and utility companies

RR

Explanation of rent reasonableness

Unit List

List of units known to be available for rent

Special Programs

Explanation of any special programs or services offered by the PHA

3: Supplemental Briefing Packet Materials

Checklist

Checklist of items to consider before signing a lease

Contact
Information

Contact information for PHA staff, local social service agencies

HQS

A list of items that commonly fail HQS

Terminations
Information

Grounds on which PHA may terminate assistance for a family because of family action or failure to act

4: Supplemental Briefing Packet Materials

RA

Information on the PHA's reasonable accommodation policies

Rent
Calculation

Information on how disability-related expenses are treated in the rent calculation

VAWA

Notice of Occupancy Rights under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and Certification Form

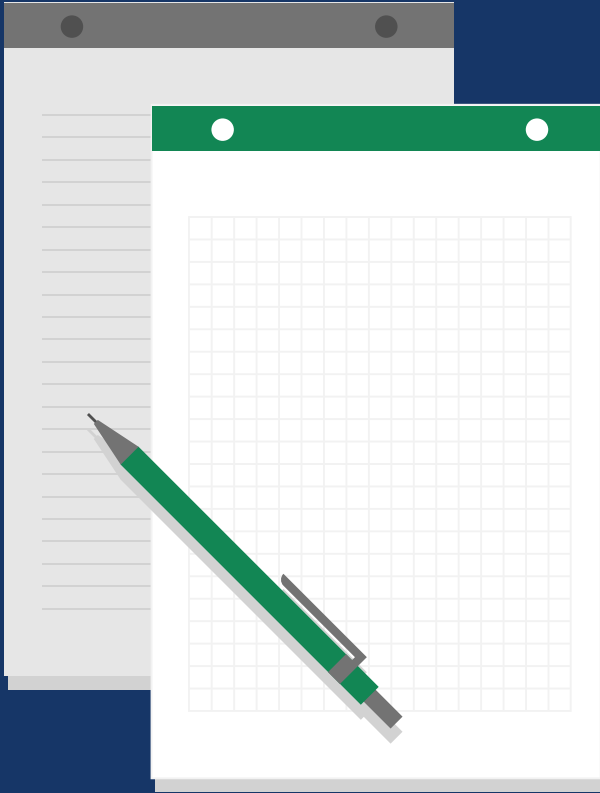
Presenting Documents Prior to the Briefing

All materials to be presented during the remote briefing, whether paper or electronic, must be provided to the individual or family prior to the remote briefing

Any materials made available to the individual or family must meet the requirements for accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with LEP



Providing Paper Printouts



- Individuals or families may prefer paper printouts over electronic documents, due to:
 - A lack of access to printers
 - Difficulty viewing detailed documents on a cell phone
 - Difficulty viewing screen sharing on an app

Considerations for Providing Written Materials

How will the PHA ensure that written materials ensure equal opportunity for persons with disabilities?

How will the PHA ensure that LEP requirements are met?

How will the PHA provide written briefing materials?

How far in advance of the briefing will materials be provided?

What if the family does not receive the packet in time for the briefing?

If the PHA provides digital briefing packets, will the PHA mail a paper copies to families upon request?



Conducting Remote Briefings

Importance of Oral Briefings

- The oral briefing is the first event in the overall voucher issuance process
- It provides the PHA with a unique and important opportunity to set the tone for the relationship between the PHA and the participating family
- The PHA should strive for a clear, concise presentation of information and helpful instructions

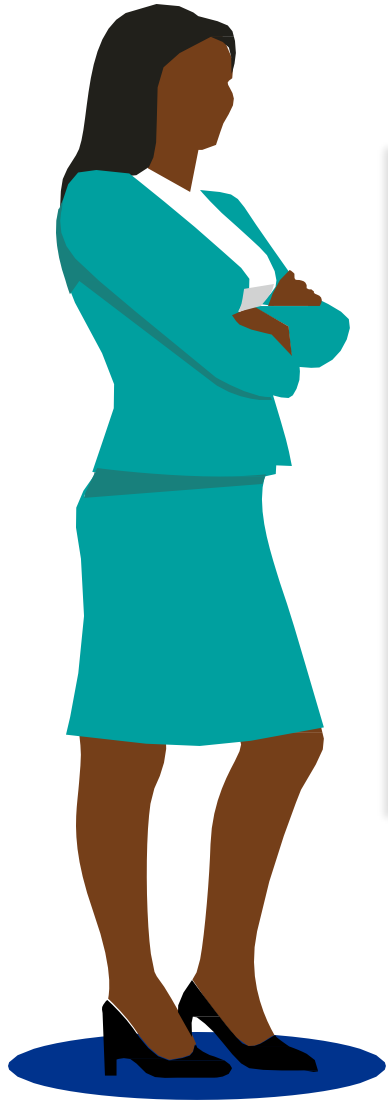


Individual vs Group Briefings

Briefings may be conducted individually or as group meetings

There are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches

Group Briefings



Should a group briefing be held, families should be presented with the opportunity to speak to an agency representative one-on-one so that sensitive questions may be asked and answered

Providing Login Information

Login information and the briefing packet must be provided to the family prior to the remote briefing

- This may present challenges since families may be unfamiliar with how to access the videoconferencing platform used by the PHA



The PHA should consider offering support to families around the time of each remote briefing to ensure that applicants are able to log into the videoconferencing system

Who will be required to attend?

Some PHAs require all adults in each household attend the briefing

Other PHAs require attendance only by the head of household

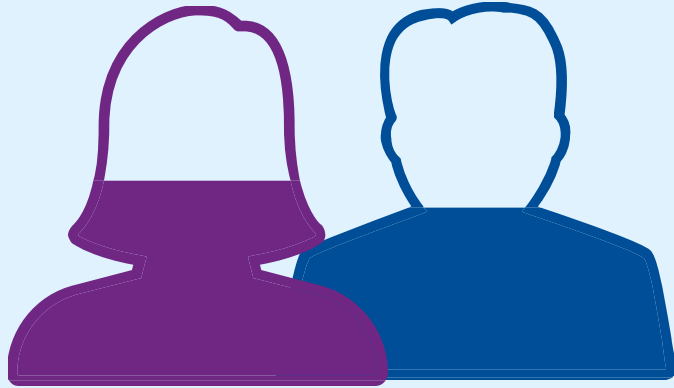
Benefits of Having All Adults Attend

- The benefit of requiring all adult household members to attend is that it is the best guarantee that everyone is informed about the program
 - Particularly the family obligations and grounds for termination of assistance



The likelihood of misreporting income, fraud, and lease violations decreases when all adult members are successfully briefed

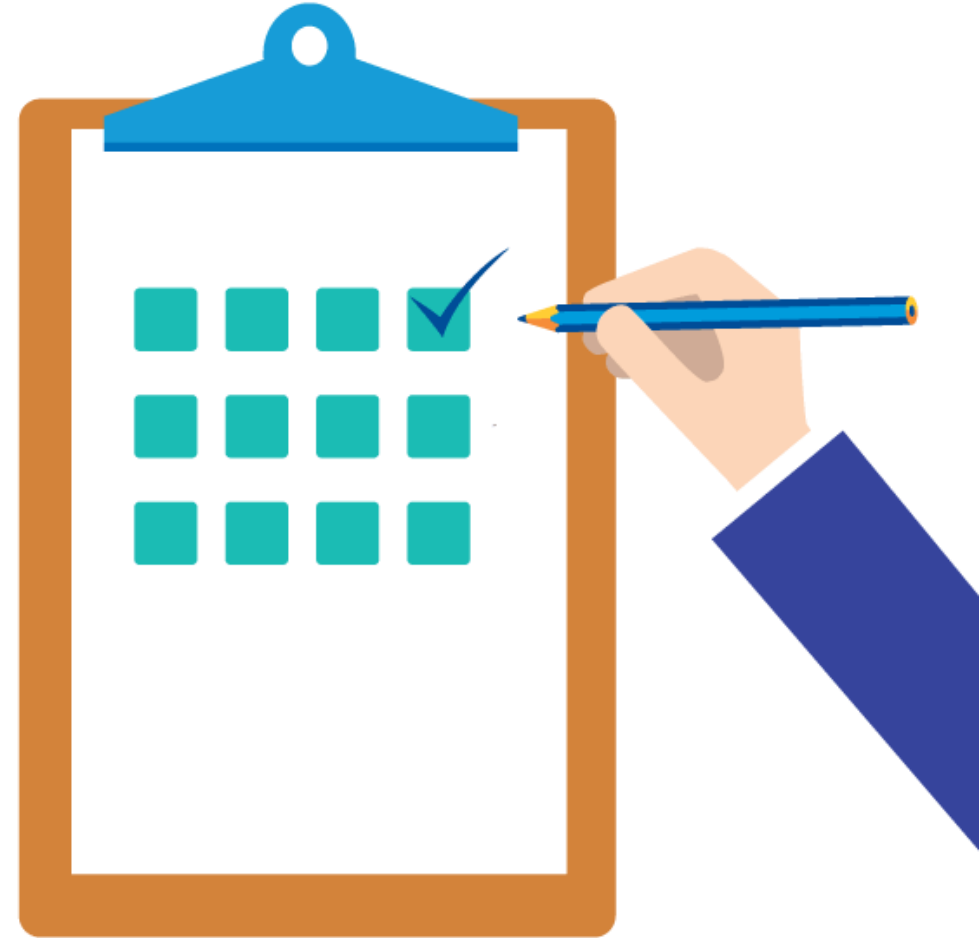
Disadvantages of Having All Adults Attend



- One disadvantage of this approach is that it can create scheduling problems for both the PHA and the family
- When an adult household member misses the briefing and it cannot be rescheduled promptly, costly delays in issuance and leasing can occur

Considering Who Will Attend

The PHA will want to determine a policy that best meets its needs and should describe this policy in the Administrative Plan



Verifying Attendance in a Remote Environment

- The PHA will need to verify that required members have attended the remote briefing

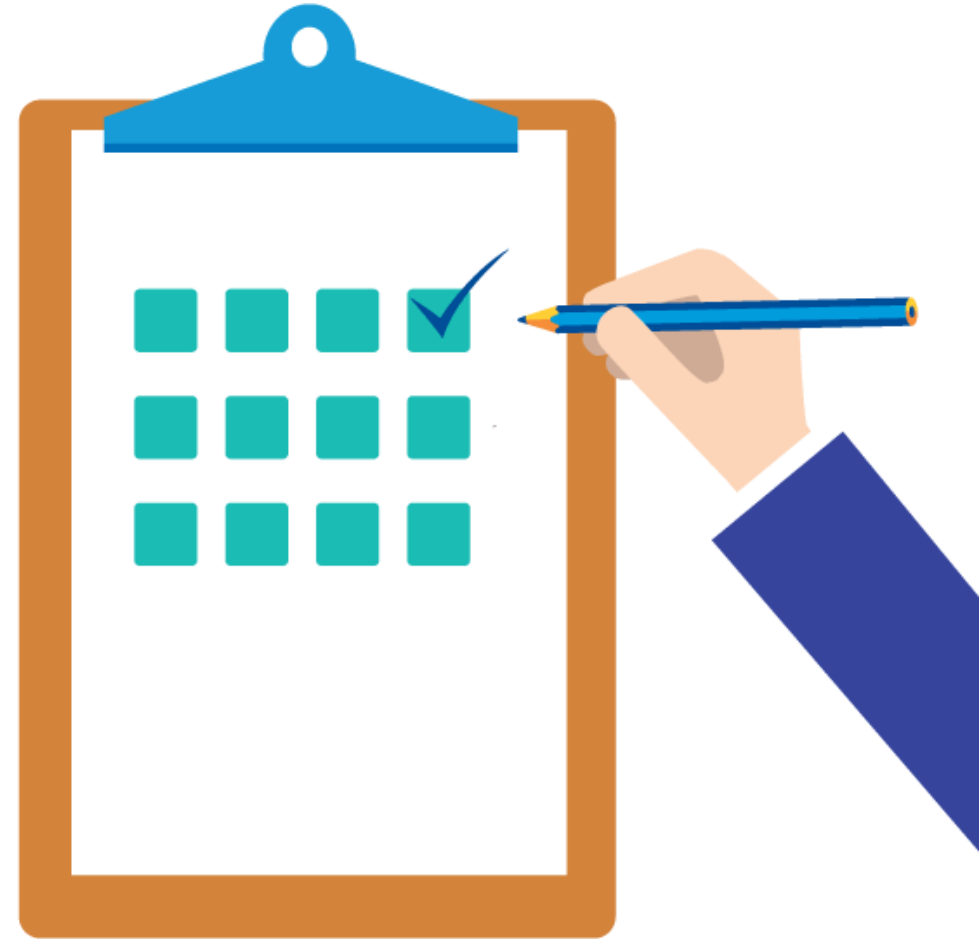
If a remote meeting platform is used to give a live briefing, as a best practice, the PHA should take roll at the beginning and end of the briefing

If the PHA uses a pre-recorded online briefing, the PHA should ensure that the platform includes a method for verifying attendance and completion of the briefing



Policy: Failure to Attend

PHA policy in the administrative plan should outline the PHA's policies on families who fail to attend the briefing



Requirements: Failure to Attend

The inability of all adult family members to attend the briefing cannot be considered grounds for denial of assistance



Notice PIH 2020-32

Best Practices for Reinforcing Briefing Information

Review voucher obligations with families at reexam

- Use other opportunities, such as the regularly scheduled reexams with the family to remind them of their program obligations to help avoid termination

Have PHA staff reach out directly to participants by phone after the briefing

- Particularly if the briefing is not interactive, have staff reach out directly to families by phone to make sure their questions have been answered

Consider the impact of families attending briefings remotely on other program functions

- For PHAs that already conduct their reexams by mail, conducting remote briefings may mean that families never meet face-to-face with the housing authority
- PHAs need to consider if this change impacts any other program functions and plan accordingly

Briefing Videos

Some PHAs use a pre-recorded briefing video as part of the briefing to ensure consistency in information presented

Some PHA make briefings videos available on-demand via the PHA's website or YouTube

Some PHAs use a completely online briefing video courses with built-in knowledge checks





Case Study

A medium sized PHA conducts its briefings online using a self-paced, briefing course video. The PHA emails a link to the course to applicants who are given 5 business days to log into a system where they watch the briefing course video at their own pace. Intermittently throughout the video knowledge checks are presented, which the applicants are required to answer.

Once the video course is viewed in its entirety, a certification form appears where the applicant certifies they have watched the entire video. This section also provides contact information for a PHA staff person in case the family has any questions.

Once the “submit” button is clicked on the certification, an email is automatically generated to the applicant with a link to an electronic voucher. The participant e-signs the voucher using an electronic signature application and clicks the “submit” button to send the signed voucher to the PHA. The PHA then signs the voucher and emails a copy back to the family.

Opportunity to Ask Questions

PHAs must provide an opportunity for remote briefing participants to ask questions



Notice PIH 2020-32

Opportunity to Ask Questions



- The PHA should consider how this will be accomplished, particularly if group briefings are conducted
 - Office hours
 - Dedicated email addresses
 - Live Q & A sessions after the briefing

Best Practices for Allowing Families to Ask Questions

The PHA should share information in both the written and oral briefing about how families may contact PHA staff members directly to ask questions about information presented

The PHA should ensure that staff members respond to questions in a timely manner

Best Practices for Collecting and Executing Documents Related to Leasing Virtually



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Documents Used During the Leasing Process

Voucher

Once the family has been determined eligible and the PHA has conducted the briefing, the PHA issues the family a voucher (Form HUD-52646)

RFTA

During the term of the voucher, the family must submit a request for approval of tenancy (form HUD-52517) and a copy of the lease

Lease

Once the PHA has approved tenancy, the owner and tenant must enter and execute a written lease for the unit

HAP Contract

The HAP contract (form HUD-52641) must be executed no later than 60 calendar days from the beginning of the lease term

Voucher Issuance

The PHA decides whether to issue the voucher independently or in conjunction with the briefing session



Signing Vouchers

The voucher requires a signature by a family representative and a PHA representative

- Families should be made aware during the briefing how they will receive their voucher and the method they must use to return it to the PHA

Sending Vouchers in a Remote Environment

- The PHA may email, fax, or mail the voucher to the family
- The PHA may request the family return the voucher via email, through an e-signature application, through the mail, or to PHA offices



Signing Vouchers in a Remote Environment

- If vouchers are emailed, the family may be unable to print the voucher in order to sign it and return it to the PHA
- The PHA may implement an electronic signature system to allow families to sign the voucher and immediately submit it back to the PHA



Requesting Approval of Tenancy

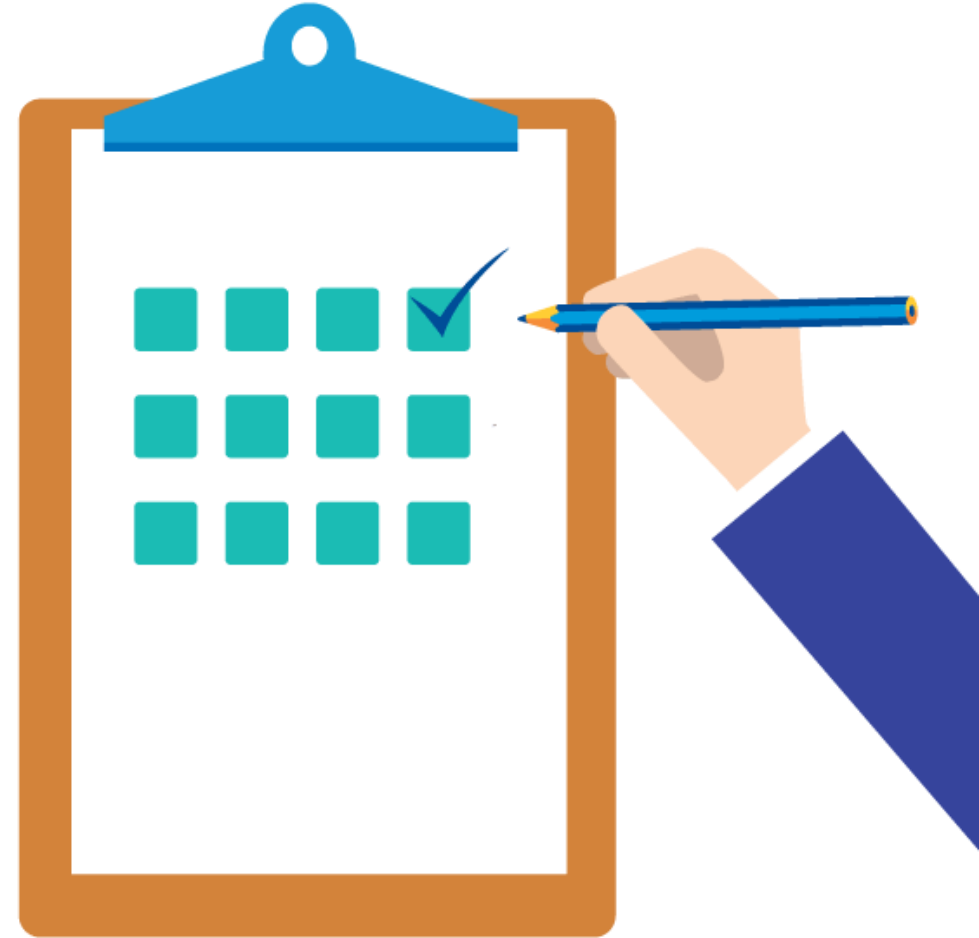
The family must submit the request for approval of the tenancy in the form and manner required by the PHA



24 CFR 982.302(d)

Policies: Request for Tenancy Approval

- The PHA should specify the procedures for requesting tenancy approval in the administrative plan
- The PHA has the discretion to permit a family to submit more than one request for tenancy approval at a time



Options for Submitting RFTAs and Leases

- Methods for submitting RFTAs and leases may include:
 - Submitting in-person at the PHA office through a drop box or at the front desk
 - Via traditional mail
 - Via email to designated PHA personnel or to a dedicated email address (i.e., RFTAsubmission@PHA.com)
 - Via fax
 - Uploading documents to an owner portal
 - Uploading documents to a family portal



Submitting Documents

Because the initial leasing process is time-sensitive, the PHA's policies and procedures for contact with the owner and family during this process may consider time sensitivity



If the process is too slow, the family may lose a unit because the owner refuses to wait for PHA processing

As a best practice, communication during the leasing process may occur by phone, email, through a PHA portal, or fax wherever possible rather than through the mail



Electronic Signatures

Accepting Electronic Signatures

PHAs may accept electronic signatures on certain documents

4.3 Reexaminations and Verification

OC15. Can we switch to electronic signatures for leases, procurement documents, and forms? Do we need a third-party verification software for validation?

A. This answer depends on your state or agency's own policies. There are no requirements for third-party verification for these documents in the public housing or HCV regulations.

Source: [COVID-19-Related Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) for Public Housing Agencies \(PHAs\)](#)

Electronic vs. “Wet” Signatures

What is an electronic signature?

- An electronic symbol or process, attached to or logically associated with a contract or other record and executed or adopted by a person with the intent to sign the record
- Electronic signatures are legally binding

What is a “wet” signature?

- Created when a person physically marks a document
- Also called manual signature, original signature

Creating Electronic Signatures

- Creating a valid and enforceable electronic signature requires satisfying the following signing requirements:
 1. A person (i.e., the signer) must use an acceptable electronic form of signature;
 2. The electronic form of signature must be executed or adopted by a person with the intent to sign the electronic record (e.g., to indicate the person's approval of the information contained in the electronic record);
 3. The electronic form of signature must be attached to or associated with the electronic record being signed;
 4. There must be a means to identify and authenticate a particular person as the signer; and
 5. There must be a means to preserve the integrity of the signed record.

Considerations for Electronic Signatures

How will the PHA ensure they maintain documents in appropriate formats?

PHAs are strongly encouraged to consult their legal counsel in determining the requirements for “wet” signatures

Some state or local laws require “wet” signatures on certain documents

Best Practices: Electronic Signatures

Include an electronic signature agreement for documents that are electronically signed to show the family consents to using an electronic signature and that states that the electronic signature is equivalent to a manual signature

Have the family show intent to sign

Distribute signed copies to all relevant parties

Allow the option to sign by hand



Transmission of Electronic Information

Requirements: Electronic Information

The PHA must ensure that it stores and transmits electronic information securely per Notice PIH-2015-06

This includes safeguarding Personally Identifiable Information (PII)



Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

Defined in OMB M-07-16 as “. . . information which can be used to distinguish or trace an individual’s identity, such as their name, social security number, biometric records, etc. alone, or when combined with other personal or identifying information which is linked or linkable to a specific individual, such as date and place of birth, mother’s maiden name, etc.” ii)

Sensitive Personally Identifiable Information

PII that when lost, compromised, or disclosed without authorization could substantially harm an individual

Examples include social security or driver’s license numbers, medical records, and financial account numbers such as credit or debit card numbers.

Requirements: Privacy Act

- Federal agencies maintain only such information about individuals that is relevant and necessary to accomplish its purpose
- Information be maintained in systems or records – electronic and paper – that have the appropriate administrative, technical, and physical safeguards to protect the information, however current



Privacy Act Requirements

PHAs must be aware of requirements under state and local law as well



Notice PIH 2015-06

- *U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Privacy Protection Guidance for Third Parties*
- Issued April 23, 2015
- Informs PHAs about their responsibilities for safeguarding PII required by HUD and preventing potential breaches of this sensitive data



U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Public and Indian Housing

SPECIAL ATTENTION OF:

Directors of HUD Regional and Field
Offices of Public Housing;
Public Housing Agencies that
Receive Funds under Any Public and
Indian Housing Program

NOTICE PIH-2015-06

Issued: April 23, 2015

Expires: Effective until
amended, superseded, or
rescinded

Cross References:
PIH 2014-10, PIH 2010-15

**Subject: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Privacy Protection
Guidance for Third Parties**

1) **Purpose:** This notice informs all public housing agencies (PHAs) about their responsibilities for safeguarding personally identifiable information (PII) required by HUD and preventing potential breaches of this sensitive data. HUD is committed to protecting the privacy of individuals' information stored electronically or in paper form, in accordance with federal privacy laws, guidance, and best practices. HUD expects its third party business partners, including Public Housing Authorities, who collect, use, maintain, or disseminate HUD information to protect the privacy of that information in accordance with applicable law.

PIH 2014-14 is being revised to include guidance to assist PHA system administrators and users to fulfill their requirements for information technology security awareness training.

2) **Background:** Section 6 of the Housing Act of 1937, the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. § 552a (Privacy Act), The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552, and Section 208 of The E-Government Act are the primary federal statutes that limit the disclosure of information about public housing residents and recipients of the Housing Choice Voucher program. In addition, the Housing and Community Development Act of 1987, 42 U.S.C. § 1437d (q)(4), 42 U.S.C. § 1437d (t)(2), 42 U.S.C. § 3543, and the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1988, 42 U.S.C. § 3544, further regulate the treatment of this information.

a) General HUD program requirements are set forth in 24 C.F.R. Part 5, Subpart B, Disclosure and Verification of Social Security Numbers and Employer Identification Numbers: Procedures for Obtaining Income Information. Subpart B enables HUD and

Guidance on Limiting Collection of PII

01

Do not collect or maintain sensitive PII without proper authorization

02

Collect only the PII that is needed for the purposes for which it is collected

03

Do not place PII on shared drives, multi-access calendars, an Intranet, or the Internet

Guidance on Managing Access to Sensitive PII

01

Do not distribute or release sensitive PII to other employees, contractors, or other third parties unless you are first convinced that the release is authorized, proper and necessary

02

Only share or discuss sensitive PII with those personnel who have a need to know for purposes of their work. Challenge anyone who asks for access to sensitive PII for which you are responsible

03

When discussing sensitive PII on the telephone, confirm that you are speaking to the right person before discussing the information and inform him/her that the discussion will include sensitive PII

04

Never leave messages containing sensitive PII on voicemail

1: Guidance on Protecting Transmission of Sensitive PII via fax

01

Before faxing PII:
Coordinate with the recipient so that the PII will not be left unattended on the receiving end

02

After faxing PII: Ensure that none of the transmission is stored in memory on the fax machine, that the fax is in a controlled area, and that all paper waste is disposed of properly (e.g., shredded)

03

When possible, use a fax machine that uses a secure transmission line

2: Guidance on Protecting Transmission of Sensitive PII via fax

01

Use only individually-controlled fax machines, not central receiving centers

02

Use the date stamp function

03

Confirm the fax number

04

Verify that the intended recipient is available

05

Confirm that intended recipient has received the fax

Best Practices: Mailing PII

Double-wrap the documents (e.g., use two envelopes – one inside the other)

Mark only the inside envelope as confidential with the statement — *To Be Opened By Addressee Only*

Seal sensitive PII in an opaque envelope or container

Mail using First Class or Priority Mail or a traceable commercial delivery service (e.g., UPS or FedEx)

Resources: Notice PIH 2015-06



- The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) publishes templates and guides for what security awareness trainings should entail
- NIST provides publications for reference on Building an Information Technology Security Awareness and Training Program and Security and Privacy Controls for Federal Information Systems and Organizations

Best Practices for Working with Landlords in a Virtual Environment



PIH

OFFICE OF PUBLIC & INDIAN HOUSING

Use of Technology

- Technology facilitates multiple options for PHAs to:
 - ✓ Improve their relationships with landlords
 - ✓ Provide landlords with access to information previously only available by request or mail
 - ✓ Ease concerns and frustrations surrounding the inspections process

Technology Strategies



Technology-focused strategies can range from simple, low-cost options such as adding information to a PHA website to high-tech software applications that can optimally route inspections appointments and provide real-time arrival updates to landlords

Resources: Working with Landlords

For more information, see the [HCV Landlord Strategy Guidebook](#) and the [HUD HCV Landlord Resources](#) webpage



HCV Program Landlord Webpage

- Many PHAs have websites, but the typical audience is families



- PHAs may consider designing a section on their website specifically for landlord-related information
 - Content may focus on meeting the needs of new and prospective landlords and current landlords already participating on the program
 - Accessibility requirements also apply to landlord websites

Information on Landlord Website

- PHAs can make joining the HCV program easier by providing basic information about the HCV program, including:
 - ✓ How the program works
 - ✓ What to expect
 - ✓ What forms are required
 - ✓ Steps to participate



Benefits of an HCV Landlord Webpage



Addresses landlord questions upfront

Highlights the importance of the landlord's role in the HCV process

Builds the knowledge base of HCV landlords so they are more comfortable with the program and their role

Encourages landlord participation in the HCV program through readily available and easily digestible information

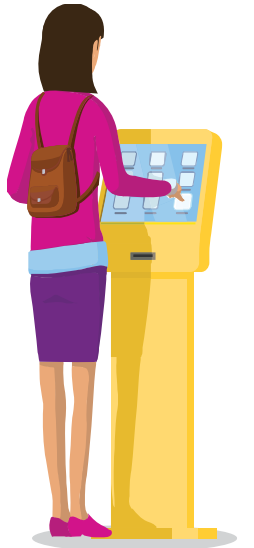
HCV Landlord Portal

- One of the major challenges facing PHAs is responding in a timely manner to landlords' requests for information
 - The volume of requests for information can be challenging
- In an online portal, current landlords log into a secure website where they can access a broad range of information specific to their HCV housing portfolio
- 24/7 access to information may decrease the volume of inquiries PHAs receive



HCV Landlord Portal Contents

- A landlord portal may include:
 - ❑ Useful payment information including the dates and amounts of payments broken out by tenants and units
 - ❑ Inspection appointment dates, inspection reports, and results
 - ❑ The ability for owners to submit photos of corrected HQS deficiencies
 - ❑ The ability to request rent increases
 - ❑ Forms and other paperwork such as 1099s
 - ❑ The ability to send messages between landlords and PHAs



Inspections Technology

- Technology may help improve the inspections process

Scheduling and tracking inspections using scheduling and notification apps and direct electronic communications

Providing inspection results quickly – sometimes in real time

Using photographs to verify corrected deficiencies to minimize physical re-inspections



Conducting Virtual Landlord Briefings and Outreach

- The PHA may host virtual events such as:
 - New landlord orientations
 - Informational workshops for potential landlords
 - Landlord listening sessions for existing landlords
 - Landlord appreciation events for existing landlords



The format might be a mix of formal presentation, information dissemination, Q&A, and open discussion

Best Practices for Working with Landlords

Landlord-oriented information can answer many questions, but it is still important to provide ways that landlords can contact someone at the PHA if there are further questions

Be sure that someone regularly monitors the landlord website, emails, and/or telephone messages to provide timely responses



Case Study

A medium sized housing authority hosted quarterly in-person HCV owner orientation sessions to inform potential landlords about the basics of the HCV program and to encourage landlord participation.

Because of the pandemic, the PHA switched to online webinars via an online meeting platform. The PHA advertised the events as free, helpful sessions for any interested parties.

The PHA found that by moving to an online platform, participation from potential landlords increased. When the PHA asked webinar participants about this, many responded that online webinars gave them more flexibility to attend and the ease of use of the online platform increased their willingness to participate.