



COVID- 19 Statutory and Regulatory Waivers for Housing Choice Voucher

Reference- PIH Notice 2020-05

Issued: April 10, 2020

**Waivers implemented and adopted by Sacramento Housing and
Redevelopment Agency, Housing Choice Voucher Department**

Effective: April 15, 2020

PH & HCV -2 Family Income and Composition: Delayed Annual Examinations

Statutory Authority: Section 3(a)(1) of the USHA of 1937 Regulatory Authority: 24 CFR § 982.516(a)(1) - HCV Regulatory Authority: 24 CFR § 960.257(a) - Public Housing

Description: PHAs are required to conduct a reexamination of family income and composition at least annually. Recognizing the foreseeable difficulties in complying with this requirement in light of the COVID-19 emergency, HUD is waiving this statutory and regulatory requirement to permit PHAs to delay annual reexaminations of HCV and public housing families. However, if the PHA delays annual reexaminations for HCV families under this authority, it must also comply with the alternative requirement regarding the application of an increase in the payment standard amount during the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract term (see HCV-7 below) if applicable, so as not to delay the application of the increased payment standard amount to the family's HAP calculation.

Period of Availability: All annual recertifications due in Calendar Year (CY) 2020 must be completed by December 31, 2020.

PH & HCV-3 Family Income and Composition: Annual Examination - Income Verification requirements

Regulatory Authority: 24 CFR § 5.233(a)(2) Sub-regulatory Guidance: PIH Notice 2018-18

Description: PHAs are required to use the Enterprise Income Verification (EIV) System for verification of family income at the annual examination. 24 CFR § 5.233(a)(2) requires PHAs to use EIV as a third-party source to verify tenant employment and income information during mandatory reexaminations or recertifications of family composition and income in accordance with §5.236 and administrative guidance issued by HUD. PIH Notice 2018-18 describes the required verification hierarchy process PHAs must follow. HUD understands that documentation may be difficult to obtain as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency. PHAs are also facing challenges with securely accessing HUD systems while many if not all staff are working remotely.

To address these challenges, HUD is waiving the requirements to use the income hierarchy described by PIH Notice 2018-18 and will allow PHAs to forgo third-party income verification requirements for annual reexaminations, including the use of EIV, if the PHA wishes to conduct the annual recertification rather than delaying the family's annual recertification (as permitted under PH and HCV-2 above).

During the allowable period of availability, PHAs may consider self-certification as the highest form of income verification to process annual reexaminations. This may occur over the telephone (but must be documented by PHA staff with a contemporaneous written record), through an email or postal mail with a self-certification form by the tenant, or through other electronic communications. PHAs are encouraged to incorporate procedures to remind families of the obligation to provide true and complete information when adopting these flexibilities.

PHAs are further reminded that there is no HUD requirement that income and family composition examinations and recertifications must be conducted in-person unless determined necessary as a reasonable accommodation as long as applicable public health guidelines are followed (e.g., social distancing) and any state or local ordinance is followed.

PHAs that conduct annual examinations under this waiver/alternative requirement will be responsible for addressing any material discrepancies that may arise later. For example, if a tenant self-certified that the tenant lost their job, but later the EIV Income Validation Tool (IVT) shows the tenant's employment continued, the PHA must take enforcement action in accordance with their policies and procedures.

Period of Availability: The period of availability to conduct annual reexaminations using these modified verification requirements ends on July 31, 2020.

PH & HCV-4 Family Income and Composition: Interim Examinations

Statutory Authority: Section 3(a)(1) of the USHA of 1937 Regulatory Authority: 24 CFR § 5.233(a)(2) - HCV and Public Housing Regulatory Authority: 24 CFR § 982.516(c)(2) - HCV Regulatory Authority: 24 CFR § 960.257(b) and (d) - Public Housing Sub-regulatory Guidance: PIH Notice 2018-18

Description: For the HCV and public housing programs, PHAs are required to adopt policies (in their Administrative Plans and Admissions and Continued Occupancy Plans (ACOPs), respectively) prescribing when and under what conditions the family must report a change in family income or composition. However, at any time that a family requests an interim determination of family income or composition because of any changes since the last determination, the PHA must make the interim determination within a reasonable time after the family's request. In most cases, the reason a family requests an interim determination is due to a loss in income or a change in family composition.

PHAs are required to use EIV for verification of family income at interim reexamination. 24 CFR § 5.233(a)(2) requires PHAs to use EIV as a third-party source to verify tenant employment and income information during mandatory reexaminations or recertifications of family composition and income in accordance with §5.236 and administrative guidance issued by HUD. PIH Notice 2018-18 further describes the required verification hierarchy process PHAs must follow.

To assist PHAs that may be prioritizing the processing of interim reexaminations due to decreases in family income and mitigate the challenges of transferring documentation during periods of shelter-in-place/stay-at-home efforts in response to the COVID-19 emergency, HUD is waiving the requirements to use the income verification hierarchy as described by PIH Notice 2018-18. HUD will allow PHAs to forgo third-party income verification requirements for interim reexaminations, including the required use of EIV. During the allowable period of eligibility, PHAs may consider self-certification as the highest form of income verification to process interim reexaminations. This may occur over the telephone (with a contemporaneous written record by the PHA staff person), through an email with a self-certification form by the family, or through other electronic communications.

As noted in the previous waiver description, there is no HUD requirement that income and family composition examinations and recertifications must be conducted in-person unless it may be necessary as a reasonable accommodation for a person with a disability as long as applicable public health guidelines are followed (e.g., social distancing) and any local and state ordinances is followed.

PHAs that conduct interim reexaminations under this waiver/alternative requirement will be responsible for addressing any material discrepancies that may arise later. For example, if a tenant self-certified that the tenant lost their job, but later the EIV IVT Report shows the tenant's employment continued, the PHA must take enforcement action that is consistent with its policies and procedures.

PHAs may wish to review and adjust their interim reexamination policies (e.g., revising the PHA requirements when families must report increases in income between annual reexaminations or revising the policy regarding how to determine the effective date of an interim examination). PHAs should see HCV-1 and PH-4 for information on how these types of changes can be expedited.

Period of Availability: The period of availability ends on July 31, 2020.

HCV-5: Absence from Unit

Regulatory Authority: 24 CFR § 982.312

Description: The regulation requires that a family may not be absent from the unit for a period of more than 180 consecutive calendar days for any reason. HUD is waiving this regulatory requirement to allow the PHA at its discretion to continue housing assistance payments and not terminate the HAP contract due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., hospitalization, extended stays at nursing homes, caring for family members).

Period of Availability: The period of availability for the PHA to choose to continue making HAP payments despite the family's absence of more than 180 consecutive days ends on December 31, 2020. The PHA may not make payments beyond December 31, 2020, and the HAP contract will terminate on that date if the family is still absent from the unit.

HCV-6: Automatic Termination of HAP contract

Regulatory Authority: 24 CFR § 982.455

Description: When an HCV family's income increases to the extent that the housing assistance payment is reduced to \$0, PHAs are required by this regulation to automatically terminate HAP contracts 180 days after the last housing assistance payment to the owner. In recognition that the COVID-19 emergency is creating economic and employment instability for many families, as well as situations where families may on a temporary basis be adding members whose additional income may result in a \$0 HAP subsidy calculation, HUD is waiving this requirement. As an alternative requirement, the PHA, upon written notice to the owner and family, may extend the period of time following the last payment to the owner that triggers the automatic termination of the HAP contract. The extension beyond the normally applicable 180 days is determined by the PHA but may not extend beyond December 31, 2020.

Period of Availability: The period of availability for the extension ends December 31, 2020. The PHA may not extend the HAP contract beyond December 31, 2020.

HCV-7: Increase in payment standard under HAP contract term

Regulatory Authority: 24 CFR § 982.505(c)(4)

Description: The regulation requires that if the payment standard amount is increased during the term of the HAP contract, the increased payment standard amount shall be used to calculate the monthly housing assistance payment for the family beginning at the effective date of the family's first regular reexamination on or after the effective date of the increase in the payment standard amount.

HUD is waiving this requirement and as an alternative requirement allowing the PHAs to apply the increased payment standard at any time (e.g., interim reexamination, owner rent increase) after the effective date of the increase in the payment standard amount, provided the increased payment standard is used to calculate the HAP no later than the effective date of the family's first regular reexamination following the change.

Note that if the PHA has delayed the family's annual recertification under the waiver authority described earlier in this notice (see PH and HCV-2), the PHA must use the increased payment standard amount to calculate the family's HAP beginning the date that the family's first regular examination would have been effective in the absence of the waiver. Alternatively, the PHA may conduct an interim reexamination where the only change is the increased payment standard amount. Regardless of the method used, the participant must receive the increased payment standard no later than the effective date of the family's first regular reexamination following the increased payment standard.

Period of Availability: The waiver period of availability ends on December 31, 2020