
Chapter 13

OWNERS

INTRODUCTION

Owners play a central role in the HCV program by supplying decent, safe, and sanitary housing for participating families.

The term “owner” refers to any person or entity with the legal right to lease or sublease a unit to a participant in the HCV program [24 CFR 982.4(b)]. The term “owner” includes a principal or other interested party [24 CFR 982.453; 24 CFR 982.306(f)], such as a designated agent of the owner.

Owners have numerous responsibilities under the program, including screening and leasing to families, maintaining the dwelling unit, enforcing the lease, and complying with various contractual obligations. However, this chapter is not meant to be an overview of all aspects of owner participation in the HCV program.

The chapter is organized in two parts:

Part I: Owners in the HCV Program. This part discusses the role of an owner in the WMHA’s HCV program and highlights key owner rights and responsibilities.

Part II: HAP Contracts. This part explains provisions of the HAP contract and the relationship between the WMHA and the owner as expressed in the HAP contract.

For detailed information about HCV program responsibilities and processes, including WMHA policies in key areas, owners will need to refer to several other chapters in this plan. Where appropriate, Chapter 13 will reference the other chapters.

PART I. OWNERS IN THE HCV PROGRAM

13-I.A. OWNER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION [HCV GB, pp. 2-4 to 2-6]

Recruitment

WMHA is responsible for ensuring that very low-income families have access to all types and ranges of affordable housing in the WMHA’s jurisdiction, particularly housing outside areas of poverty or minority concentration. A critical element in fulfilling this responsibility is for the WMHA to ensure that a sufficient number of owners, representing all types and ranges of affordable housing in the WMHA’s jurisdiction, are willing to participate in the HCV program.

To accomplish this objective, WMHA must identify and recruit new owners to participate in the program.

WMHA Policy

The WMHA will conduct owner outreach to ensure that owners are familiar with the program and its advantages. The WMHA will actively recruit property owners with property located outside areas of poverty and minority concentration. These outreach strategies will include:

- Distributing printed material about the program to property owners and managers
- Contacting property owners and managers by phone or in-person
- Holding owner recruitment/information meetings at least once a year
- Participating in community based organizations comprised of private property and apartment owners and managers
- Developing working relationships with owners and real estate brokers associations

Outreach strategies will be monitored for effectiveness, and adapted accordingly.

Retention

In addition to recruiting owners to participate in the HCV program, the WMHA must also provide the kind of customer service that will encourage participating owners to remain active in the program.

WMHA Policy

All WMHA activities that may affect an owner's ability to lease a unit will be processed as rapidly as possible, in order to minimize vacancy losses for owners.

The WMHA will provide owners with a handbook that explains the program, including HUD and WMHA policies and procedures, in easy-to-understand language.

The WMHA will give special attention to helping new owners succeed through activities such as:

- Providing the owner with a designated WMHA contact person.
- Coordinating inspection and leasing activities among the WMHA, the owner, and the family.
- Initiating telephone contact with the owner to explain the inspection process, and providing an inspection booklet and other resource materials about HUD housing quality standards.
- Providing other written information about how the program operates, including answers to frequently asked questions.

Additional services may be undertaken on an as-needed basis, and as resources permit.

13-I.B. BASIC HCV PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

HUD requires the WMHA to aid families in their housing search by providing the family with a list of landlords or other parties known to the WMHA who may be willing to lease a unit to the family, or to help the family find a unit. Although the WMHA cannot maintain a list of owners that are pre-qualified to participate in the program, owners may indicate to the WMHA their willingness to lease a unit to an eligible HCV family, or to help the HCV family find a unit [24 CFR 982.301(b)(11)].

WMHA Policy

Owners that wish to indicate their willingness to lease a unit to an eligible HCV family or to help the HCV family find a unit must notify the WMHA. The WMHA will maintain a listing of such owners and provide this listing to the HCV family as part of the informational briefing packet

When a family approaches an owner to apply for tenancy, the owner is responsible for screening the family and deciding whether to lease to the family, just as the owner would with any potential tenant. The WMHA has no liability or responsibility to the owner or other persons for the family's behavior or suitability for tenancy. See chapters 3 and 9 for more detail on tenant family screening policies and process.

If the owner is willing, the family and the owner must jointly complete a Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA, Form HUD 52517), which constitutes the family's request for assistance in the specified unit, and which documents the owner's willingness to lease to the family and to follow the program's requirements. When submitted to the WMHA, this document is the first step in the process of obtaining approval for the family to receive the financial assistance it will need in order to occupy the unit. Also submitted with the RFTA is a copy of the owner's proposed dwelling lease, including the HUD-required Tenancy Addendum (Form HUD-52641-A). See Chapter 9 for more detail on request for tenancy approval policies and process.

HUD regulations stipulate that an assisted tenancy can be approved only under certain conditions.

The owner must be qualified to participate in the program [24 CFR 982.306]. Some owners are precluded from participating in the program, or from renting to a particular family, either because of their past history with this or another federal housing program, or because of certain conflicts of interest. Owner qualifications are discussed later in this chapter.

The selected unit must be of a type that is eligible for the program [24 CFR 982.305(a)]. Certain types of dwelling units cannot be assisted under the HCV program. Other types may be assisted under certain conditions. In addition, the owner must document legal ownership of the specified unit. See chapter 9 for more detail on unit eligibility policies and process.

The selected unit must meet HUD's Housing Quality Standards (HQS) and/or equivalent state or local standards approved by HUD [24 CFR 982.305(a)]. The WMHA will inspect the owner's dwelling unit at various stages of HCV program participation, to ensure that the unit continues to meet HQS requirements. See chapter 8 for a discussion of the HQS standards, as well as the process for HQS inspections at initial lease-up and throughout the family's tenancy.

The WMHA must determine that the cost of the unit is reasonable [24 CFR 982.305(a)]. The rent must be reasonable in relation to comparable unassisted units in the area and must not be in excess of rents charged by the owner for comparable, unassisted units on the premises. See chapter 8 for a discussion of requirements and policies on rent reasonableness, rent comparability and the rent reasonableness determination process.

At initial lease-up of a unit, the WMHA must determine that the share of rent to be paid by the family does not exceed 40 percent of the family's monthly-adjusted income [24 CFR 982.305(a)]. See chapter 6 for a discussion of the calculation of family income, family share of rent and HAP.

The dwelling lease must comply with all program requirements [24 CFR 982.308]. Owners are encouraged to use their standard leases when renting to an assisted family. However, the HCV program requires that the Tenancy Addendum, which helps standardize the tenancy requirements for all assisted families, be added word-for-word to that lease. See chapter 9 for a discussion of the dwelling lease and tenancy addendum, including lease terms and provisions.

The WMHA and the owner enter into a formal contractual relationship by executing the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract (Form HUD-52641). The HAP contract format is prescribed by HUD. See chapter 9 for a discussion of the HAP contract execution process. Specific HAP contract provisions and responsibilities are discussed later in this chapter 13.

13-I.C. OWNER RESPONSIBILITIES [24 CFR 982.452]

The basic owner responsibilities in the HCV program are outlined in the regulations as follows:

- Performing all of the owner's obligations under the Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) contract and the lease
- Performing all management and rental functions for the assisted unit, including selecting a voucher-holder to lease the unit, and deciding if the family is suitable for tenancy of the unit
- Maintaining the unit in accordance with the Housing Quality Standards (HQS), including performance of ordinary and extraordinary maintenance
- Complying with equal opportunity requirements
- Preparing and furnishing to the WMHA information required under the HAP contract
- Collecting from the family any security deposit, the tenant's contribution to rent (that part of rent to owner not covered by the housing assistance payment from the WMHA), and any charges for unit damage by the family.
- Enforcing tenant obligations under the dwelling lease
- Paying for utilities and services (unless paid by the family under the lease)
- Making or allowing modifications to a dwelling unit occupied or to be occupied by a disabled person [24 CFR 100.203]

13-I.D. OWNER QUALIFICATIONS

The WMHA does not formally approve an owner to participate in the HCV program. However, there are a number of criteria where the WMHA may deny approval of an assisted tenancy based on past owner behavior, conflict of interest, or other owner-related issues. No owner has a right to participate in the HCV program [24 CFR 982.306(e)].

Owners Barred from Participation [24 CFR 982.306(a) and (b)]

The WMHA must not approve the assisted tenancy if the WMHA has been informed that the owner has been debarred, suspended, or subject to a limited denial of participation under 24 CFR part 24. HUD may direct the WMHA not to approve a tenancy request if a court or administrative agency has determined that the owner violated the Fair Housing Act or other federal equal opportunity requirements, or if such an action is pending.

Leasing to Relatives [24 CFR 982.306(d), HCV GB p. 11-2]

The WMHA must not approve an RFTA if the owner is the parent, child, grandparent, grandchild, sister, or brother or immediate relative of any member of the family. The WMHA may make an exception as a reasonable accommodation for a family member with a disability. The owner is required to certify that no such relationship exists. This restriction applies at the time that the family receives assistance under the HCV program for occupancy of a particular unit. Current contracts on behalf of owners and families that are related may continue, but any new leases or contracts for these families may not be approved.

Conflict of Interest [24 CFR 982.161; HCV GB p. 8-19]

The WMHA must not approve a tenancy in which any of the following classes of persons has any interest, direct or indirect, during tenure or for one year thereafter:

- Any present or former member or officer of the WMHA (except a participant commissioner)
- Any employee of the WMHA, or any contractor, subcontractor or agent of the WMHA, who formulates policy or who influences decisions with respect to the programs
- Any public official, member of a governing body, or State or local legislator, who exercises functions or responsibilities with respect to the programs
- Any member of the Congress of the United States

HUD may waive the conflict-of-interest requirements, except for members of Congress, for good cause. The WMHA must submit a waiver request to the appropriate HUD Field Office for determination.

Any waiver request submitted by the WMHA must include [HCV Guidebook pp.11-2 and 11-3]:

- Complete statement of the facts of the case;

- Analysis of the specific conflict of interest provision of the HAP contract and justification as to why the provision should be waived;
- Analysis of and statement of consistency with state and local laws. The local HUD office, the WMHA, or both parties may conduct this analysis. Where appropriate, an opinion by the state's attorney general should be obtained;
- Opinion by the local HUD office as to whether there would be an appearance of impropriety if the waiver were granted;
- Statement regarding alternative existing housing available for lease under the HCV program or other assisted housing if the waiver is denied;
- If the case involves a hardship for a particular family, statement of the circumstances and discussion of possible alternatives;
- If the case involves a public official or member of the governing body, explanation of his/her duties under state or local law, including reference to any responsibilities involving the HCV program;
- If the case involves employment of a family member by the WMHA or assistance under the HCV program for an eligible WMHA employee, explanation of the responsibilities and duties of the position, including any related to the HCV program;
- If the case involves an investment on the part of a member, officer, or employee of the WMHA, description of the nature of the investment, including disclosure/divestiture plans.

Where the WMHA has requested a conflict-of-interest waiver, the WMHA may not execute the HAP contract until HUD has made a decision on the waiver request.

WMHA Policy

In considering whether to request a conflict of interest waiver from HUD, the WMHA will consider factors the reasons for waiving the requirement; consistency with state and local laws; the existence of alternative housing available to families; the individual circumstances of a particular family; the specific duties of individuals whose positions present a possible conflict of interest; the nature of any financial investment in the property and plans for disclosure/divestiture; and the possible appearance of impropriety.

Owner Actions That May Result in Disapproval of a Tenancy Request [24 CFR 982.306(c)]

HUD regulations permit the WMHA, at the WMHA's discretion, to refuse to approve a request for tenancy if the owner has committed any of a number of different actions.

The WMHA will review the owner's eligibility to participate if there has been a complaint (whether public or private) or the WMHA receives information that is available through the public domain. WMHA may further screen and review information once a year to determine approval or disapproval of an owner.

If the WMHA disapproves a request for tenancy because an owner is not qualified, it may not terminate the HAP contract for any assisted families that are already living in the owner's properties unless the owner has violated the HAP contract for those units [HCV GB p. 11-4].

WMHA Policy

The WMHA will refuse to approve a request for tenancy if the WMHA becomes aware that any of the following are true:

The owner has violated obligations under a HAP contract under Section 8 of the 1937 Act (42 U.S.C. 1437f);

The owner has committed fraud, bribery or any other corrupt or criminal act in connection with any federal housing program;

The owner has engaged in any drug-related criminal activity or any violent criminal activity;

The owner has a history or practice of non-compliance with the HQS for units leased under the tenant-based programs, or with applicable housing standards for units leased with project-based Section 8 assistance or leased under any other federal housing program;

The owner has a history or practice of failing to terminate tenancy of tenants of units assisted under Section 8 or any other federally assisted housing program for activity engaged in by the tenant, any member of the household, a guest or another person under the control of any member of the household that: (i) Threatens the right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises by other residents; (ii) Threatens the health or safety of other residents, of employees of the WMHA, or of owner employees or other persons engaged in management of the housing; (iii) Threatens the health or safety of, or the right to peaceful enjoyment of their residences, by persons residing in the immediate vicinity of the premises; or (iv) Is drug-related criminal activity or violent criminal activity;

The owner has a history or practice of renting units that fail to meet state or local housing codes; or

The owner has not paid state or local real estate taxes, fines, or assessment.

The owner is in default of the mortgage payment on an assisted unit.

In considering whether to disapprove owners for any of the discretionary reasons listed above, the WMHA will consider any mitigating factors. Such factors may include, but are not limited to, the seriousness of the violation in relation to program requirements, the impact on the ability of families to lease units under the program, health and safety of participating families, among others. Upon consideration of such circumstances, the WMHA may, on a case-by-case basis, choose to approve an owner.

Legal Ownership of Unit

The following represents WMHA policy on legal ownership of a dwelling unit to be assisted under the HCV program.

WMHA Policy

The WMHA will only enter into a contractual relationship with the legal owner of a qualified unit. No tenancy will be approved without acceptable documentation of legal ownership (e.g., deed of trust, proof of taxes for most recent year). For a land contract, acceptable documentation of legal ownership includes a copy of the contract that permits the property to be leased. In addition, the contract must be recorded with the county recorders office.

A copy of any management agreement is required for those units being managed on behalf of an owner.

13-I.E. NON-DISCRIMINATION [HAP Contract – Form HUD-52641]

The owner must not discriminate against any person because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, familial status, sexual orientation, or disability, in connection with any actions or responsibilities under the HCV program and the HAP contract with the WMHA.

The owner must cooperate with the WMHA and with HUD in conducting any equal opportunity compliance reviews and complaint investigations in connection with the HCV program and the HAP contract with the WMHA.

See Chapter 2 for a more thorough discussion of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity requirements in the HCV program.

PART II. HAP CONTRACTS

13-II.A. OVERVIEW

The HAP contract represents a written agreement between the WMHA and the owner of the dwelling unit occupied by a HCV assisted family. The contract spells out the owner's responsibilities under the program, as well as the WMHA's obligations. Under the HAP contract, the WMHA agrees to make housing assistance payments to the owner on behalf of a specific family occupying a specific unit.

The HAP contract is used for all HCV program tenancies except for assistance under the Section 8 homeownership program, and assistance to families that own a manufactured home and lease the space. See chapter 15 for a discussion of any special housing types included in the WMHA's HCV program.

If the WMHA has given approval for the family of the assisted tenancy, the owner and the WMHA execute the HAP contract. See chapter 9 for a discussion of the leasing process, including provisions for execution of the HAP contract.

13-II.B. HAP CONTRACT CONTENTS

The HAP contract format is required by HUD, specifically Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Contract, Form HUD-52641.

The HAP contract contains three parts.

Part A of the contract includes basic **contract information** about the name of the tenant family, address of the contract unit, names of all household members, first and last dates of initial lease term, amount of initial monthly rent to owner, amount of initial housing assistance payment, utilities and appliances to be supplied by owner and tenant, signatures of WMHA and owner [HCV Guidebook, pp 11-10 and 11-11].

In general, the HAP contract cannot be modified. However, WMHA does have the discretion to add language to Part A of the HAP contract which prohibits the owner from collecting a security deposit in excess of private market practices or in excess of amounts charged to unassisted tenants. WMHA policy on the amount of security deposit an owner may collect is found in Chapter 9.

In addition, WMHA does have the discretion to add language to Part A of the HAP contract that defines when the housing assistance payment by the WMHA is deemed received by the owner (e.g., upon mailing by the WMHA or actual receipt by the owner).

WMHA Policy

Security deposits cannot exceed 1-month of rent.

Part B is the body of the contract. It describes in detail program requirements affecting the owner and owner roles and responsibilities under the HCV program. Most of the requirements contained in Part B of the HAP contract are outlined elsewhere in this plan. Topics addressed in Part B include:

- Purpose
- Lease of Contract Unit
- Maintenance, Utilities, and Other Services
- Term of HAP Contract
- Provision and Payment of Utilities and Appliances
- Rent to Owner: Reasonable Rent
- WMHA Payment to Owner
- Owner Certification
- Prohibition of Discrimination
- Owner's Breach of HAP Contract
- WMHA and HUD Access to Premises and Owner's Records
- Exclusion of Third Party Rights
- Conflict of Interest
- Assignment of the HAP Contract

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- Written Notices
 - Entire Agreement Interpretation

Part C of the contract includes the Tenancy Addendum (Form HUD-52641-A). The addendum sets forth the tenancy requirements for the program and the composition of the household, as approved by the WMHA. The owner must sign the HUD Tenancy Addendum with the prospective tenant, and the tenant has the right to enforce the Tenancy Addendum against the owner. The terms of the Tenancy Addendum prevail over any other provisions of the lease.

13-II.C. HAP CONTRACT PAYMENTS

General

During the term of the HAP contract, and subject to the provisions of the HAP contract, the WMHA must make monthly HAP payments to the owner on behalf of the family, at the beginning of each month. If a lease term begins after the first of the month, the HAP payment for the first month is prorated for a partial month.

The amount of the HAP payment is determined according to the policies described in Chapter 6, and is subject to change during the term of the HAP contract. The WMHA must notify the owner and the family in writing of any changes in the HAP payment.

HAP payments can be made only during the lease term, and only while the family is residing in the unit.

The monthly HAP payment by the WMHA is credited toward the monthly rent to owner under the family's lease. The total of the rent paid by the tenant, plus the WMHA HAP payment, should be equal to the rent specified in the lease (the rent to owner).

The family is not responsible for payment of the HAP payment, and the WMHA is not responsible for payment of the family share of rent.

The family's share of the rent cannot be more than the difference between the total rent to the owner and the HAP payment. The owner may not demand or accept any rent payment from the tenant in excess of this maximum [24 CFR 982.451(b)(4)]. The owner may not charge the tenant extra amounts for items customarily included in rent in the locality, or provided at no additional cost to unsubsidized tenants in the premises [24 CFR 982.510(c)]. See chapter 9 for a discussion of separate, non-lease agreements for services, appliances and other items that are not included in the lease.

If the owner receives any excess HAP from the WMHA, the excess amount must be returned immediately. If the WMHA determines that the owner is not entitled to all or a portion of the HAP, the WMHA may deduct the amount of overpayment from any amounts due to the owner, including amounts due under any other Section 8 HCV contract. See Chapter 16 for additional detail on owner reimbursement of HAP overpayments.

Owner Certification of Compliance

Unless the owner complies with all provisions of the HAP contract, the owner is not entitled to receive housing assistance payments under the HAP contract [HAP Contract – Form HUD-52641].

By endorsing the monthly check from the WMHA, the owner certifies to compliance with the terms of the HAP contract. This includes certification that the owner is maintaining the unit and premises in accordance with HQS; that the contract unit is leased to the tenant family and, to the best of the owner's knowledge, the family resides in the unit as the family's only residence; the rent to owner does not exceed rents charged by the owner for comparable unassisted units on the premises; and that the owner does not receive (other than rent to owner) any additional payments or other consideration for rent of the contract unit during the HAP term.

Late HAP Payments [24 CFR 982.451(a)(5)]

The WMHA is responsible for making HAP payments promptly when due to the owner, in accordance with the terms of the HAP contract. After the first two calendar months of the HAP contract term, the HAP contract provides for penalties if the WMHA fails to make the HAP payment on time.

Penalties for late HAP payments can only be imposed if 1) the penalties are in accordance with generally accepted local rental market practices and law governing penalties for late payment by tenants; 2) it is the owner's normal business practice to charge late payment penalties for both assisted and unassisted families; and 3) the owner charges the assisted family for late payment of the family's share of the rent.

The WMHA is not required to pay a late payment penalty if HUD determines that the payment is late for reasons beyond the WMHA's control. In addition, late payment penalties are not required if the WMHA intentionally delays or denies payment as a remedy to an owner breach of the HAP contract [HCV Guidebook p. 11-7].

Termination of HAP Payments [24 CFR 982.311(b)]

The WMHA must continue making housing assistance payments to the owner in accordance with the HAP contract as long as the tenant continues to occupy the unit and the HAP contract is not violated.

HAP payments terminate when the HAP contract terminates or when the tenancy is terminated in accordance with the terms of the lease.

If the owner has initiated eviction proceedings against the family and the family continues to reside in the unit, the WMHA must continue to make housing assistance payments to the owner until the owner has obtained a court judgment or other process allowing the owner to evict the tenant.

WMHA Policy

The owner must inform the WMHA when the owner has initiated eviction proceedings against the family and the family continues to reside in the unit.

The owner must inform the WMHA when the owner has obtained a court judgment or other process allowing the owner to evict the tenant, and provide the WMHA with a copy of such judgment or determination.

After the owner has obtained a court judgment or other process allowing the owner to evict the tenant, the WMHA will continue to make HAP payments to the owner until the family actually moves from the unit or until the family is physically evicted from the unit, whichever is earlier. The owner must inform the WMHA of the date when the family actually moves from the unit or the family is physically evicted from the unit.

13-II.D. BREACH OF HAP CONTRACT [24 CFR 982.453]

Any of the following actions by the owner constitutes a breach of the HAP contract:

- If the owner violates any obligations under the HAP contract including failure to maintain the unit in accordance with HQS
- If the owner has violated any obligation under any other HAP contract under Section 8
- If the owner has committed fraud, bribery or any other corrupt or criminal act in connection with any federal housing program
- For projects with mortgages insured by HUD or loans made by HUD, if the owner has failed to comply with the regulations for the applicable program; or if the owner has committed fraud, bribery or any other corrupt or criminal act in connection with the mortgage or loan
- If the owner has engaged in drug-related criminal activity
- If the owner has committed any violent criminal activity

If the WMHA determines that a breach of the HAP contract has occurred, it may exercise any of its rights and remedies under the HAP contract.

The WMHA rights and remedies against the owner under the HAP contract include recovery of any HAP overpayment, suspension of housing assistance payments, abatement or reduction of the housing assistance payment, termination of the payment or termination the HAP contract. The WMHA may also obtain additional relief by judicial order or action.

The WMHA must notify the owner of its determination and provide in writing the reasons for the determination. The notice may require the owner to take corrective action by an established deadline. The WMHA must provide the owner with written notice of any reduction in housing assistance payments or the termination of the HAP contract.

WMHA Policy

Before the WMHA invokes a remedy against an owner, the WMHA will evaluate all information and documents available to determine if the contract has been breached.

If relevant, the WMHA will conduct an audit of the owner's records pertaining to the tenancy or unit.

If it is determined that the owner has breached the contract, the WMHA will consider all of the relevant factors including the seriousness of the breach, the effect on the family, the owner's record of compliance and the number and seriousness of any prior HAP contract violations.

13-II.E. HAP CONTRACT TERM AND TERMINATIONS

The term of the HAP contract runs concurrently with the term of the dwelling lease [24 CFR 982.451(a)(2)], beginning on the first day of the initial term of the lease and terminating on the last day of the term of the lease, including any lease term extensions.

The HAP contract and the housing assistance payments made under the HAP contract terminate if [HCV Guidebook pp.11-4 and 11-5, pg. 15-3]:

- The owner or the family terminates the lease;
- The lease expires;
- The WMHA terminates the HAP contract;
- The WMHA terminates assistance for the family;
- The family moves from the assisted unit. In this situation, the owner is entitled to keep the housing assistance payment for the month when the family moves out of the unit.
- 180 calendar days have elapsed since the WMHA made the last housing assistance payment to the owner;
- The family is absent from the unit for longer than the maximum period permitted by the WMHA;
- The Annual Contributions Contract (ACC) between the WMHA and HUD expires
- The WMHA elects to terminate the HAP contract.

WMHA Policy

The WMHA may elect to terminate the HAP contract in each of the following situations:

Available program funding is not sufficient to support continued assistance for families in the program [24 CFR 982.454];

The unit does not meet HQS size requirements due to change in family composition [24 CFR 982.403] – see chapter 8;

The unit does not meet HQS [24 CFR 982.404] – see chapter 8;

The family breaks up [HUD Form 52641] – see chapter 3;

The owner breaches the HAP contract [24 CFR 982.453(b)] – see Section 13-II.D.

If the WMHA terminates the HAP contract, the WMHA must give the owner and the family written notice. The notice must specify the reasons for the termination and the effective date of the termination. Once a HAP contract is terminated, no further HAP payments may be made under that contract [HCV Guidebook pg.15-4].

WMHA Policy

In all cases, the HAP contract terminates at the end of the calendar month that follows the calendar month in which the WMHA gives written notice to the owner. The owner is not entitled to any housing assistance payment after this period, and must return to the WMHA any housing assistance payment received after this period.

If the family moves from the assisted unit into a new unit, even if the new unit is in the same building or complex as the assisted unit, the HAP contract for the assisted unit terminates. A new HAP contract would be required [HCV GB, p. 11-17].

When the family moves from an assisted unit into a new unit, the term of the HAP contract for the new unit may begin in the same month in which the family moves out of its old unit. This is not considered a duplicative subsidy [HCV GB, p. 8-22].

13-ILF. CHANGE IN OWNERSHIP / ASSIGNMENT OF THE HAP CONTRACT [HUD-52641]

The HAP contract cannot be assigned to a new owner without the prior written consent of the WMHA.

An owner under a HAP contract must notify the WMHA in writing prior to a change in the legal ownership of the unit. The owner must supply all information as requested by the WMHA.

Prior to approval of assignment to a new owner, the new owner must agree to be bound by and comply with the HAP contract. The agreement between the new owner and the former owner must be in writing and in a form that the WMHA finds acceptable. The new owner must provide the WMHA with a copy of the executed agreement.

WMHA Policy

Assignment of the HAP contract will be approved only if the new owner is qualified to become an owner under the HCV program according to the policies in Section 13-I.D. of this chapter.

The WMHA must receive a signed, written request from the existing owner stating the name and address of the new HAP payee and the effective date of the assignment in order to change the HAP payee under an outstanding HAP contract. The WMHA reserves the right to request closing documents, tax receipts, or any other relevant documentation necessary to validate the transfer of name.

The WMHA will inform the current owner in writing whether the assignment may take place.

The new owner must provide a written certification to the WMHA that includes:

A copy of the escrow statement or other document showing the transfer of title and recorded deed;

A copy of the owner's IRS Form W-9, Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification, or the social security number of the new owner;

The effective date of the HAP contract assignment;

A written agreement to comply with the terms of the HAP contract; and

Confirmation that the new owner is not a prohibited relative.

If the new owner does not agree to an assignment of the HAP contract, or fails to provide the necessary documents, the WMHA will terminate the HAP contract with the old owner. If the new owner wants to offer the family a new lease, and the family elects to stay with continued assistance, the WMHA will process the leasing in accordance with the policies in chapter 9.

13-II.G. PROTECTING HCV TENANT AT FORECLOSURE ACTION [PIH 2010-44]

Section 703 of the PTFA amends the statute governing the Section 8 program (Section 8(o) of the U.S. Housing Act of 1937, 42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)), by revising section 8(o)(7)(C) (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(7)(C)) to require that each HAP contract include the following additional requirements on the owner:

- Shall provide that during the term of the lease, the owner shall not terminate the tenancy except for serious or repeated violation of the terms and conditions of the lease, for violation of applicable Federal, State, or local law, or for other good cause, ... and in the case of an owner who is an immediate successor in interest pursuant to foreclosure during the term of the lease vacating the property prior to sale shall not constitute other good cause, except that the owner may terminate the tenancy effective on the date of transfer of the unit to the owner if the owner—
 - will occupy the unit as a primary residence; and
 - has provided the tenant a notice to vacate at least 90 days before the effective date of such notice.

Additionally, Section 703 of the PTFA revises section 8(o)(7)(F) (42 U.S.C. 1437f(o)(7)(F)), to add the language:

- May include any addenda required by the Secretary to set forth the provisions of this subsection. In the case of any foreclosure on any federally-related mortgage loan (as that term is defined in section 3 of

the Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act of 1974 (12 U.S.C. 2602)) or on any residential real property in which a recipient of assistance under this subsection resides, the immediate successor in interest in such property pursuant to the foreclosure shall assume such interest subject to the lease between the prior owner and the tenant and to the housing assistance payments contract between the prior owner and the public housing agency for the occupied unit, except that this provision and the provisions related to foreclosure in subparagraph (C) shall not affect any State or local law that provides longer time periods or other additional protections for tenants.

Under these new statutory provisions, the immediate successor in interest, which is the party gaining ownership through a foreclosure sale, becomes subject to the HAP contract, as also revised by statute, and there must be “good cause” other than vacating the property prior to sale in order to terminate the existing tenancy.

Foreclosed properties in which Section 8 voucher recipients reside must comply with Sections 702 and 703 of the PTFA. If the immediate successor-in-interest will use the unit as a primary residence, the lease can be terminated effective on the date of the sale. In such cases, the tenant is still entitled to a minimum of 90 days notice to vacate. Section 702 is discussed in more detail in PIH Notice 2009-17. These statutory provisions sunset on December 31, 2014.

If a WMHA learns that the property is in foreclosure, the WMHA must:

1. Make all reasonable efforts to determine the status of the foreclosure and ownership of the property. This information can most likely be obtained through information that has been sent to the tenant notifying them of the foreclosure, and possibly in a 90 day notice to vacate. Additionally, WMHA may review legal notices in the local newspaper or the local governments website to keep apprised of foreclosure actions initiated against owners of HCV assisted properties.
2. Continue to make payments to the original owner until ownership legally transfers in accordance with the HAP contract. With the exception of HUD-insured mortgages or loans, defaulting on a mortgage/loan is not a breach of the HAP contract.
3. Attempt to obtain a written acknowledgement of the assignment of the HAP contract from the successor in interest. The written agreement should include a request for owner information such as a Tax Identification Number, and payment instructions from the new owner. Even if the new owner does not acknowledge the assignment of the HAP contract in writing, the assignment is nevertheless effective by operation of law.
4. Inform the tenant that they must continue to pay rent in accordance with the lease, and if the successor in interest refuses to accept payment or cannot be identified, the tenant should pay the rent into escrow, because failure to pay rent may constitute an

independent ground for eviction.

5. If the WMHA is unable to make HAP payments to the successor in interest due to: (1) An action or inaction by the successor in interest that prevents such payments, including the rejection of payments or the failure of the successor to maintain the property in accordance with Housing Quality Standards (HQS); or (2) An inability to identify the successor, the WMHA should inform the family of this. In order to ensure adequate protection of the tenant's rights under the statutory authority as well as enforcing performance of the successor in interest under the HAP contract, the WMHA should refer tenants, as services are needed, to the local Legal Aid Office.

The WMHA must make reasonable inquiries to determine whether the unit, in addition to having a tenant receiving HCV assistance, will be (or has been) assisted under the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP). The PHA may inquire with the applicable units of local government to determine if properties occupied by Section 8 participants are under consideration for the NSP program.

In cases where the units have received assistance under the NSP, the WMHA may use the funds that would have been used to pay the rent for other purposes. These other purposes include:

1. To pay utilities that are the owner's responsibility under the lease or applicable law, after taking reasonable steps to notify the owner that it intends to pay utilities rather than make payments to the owner;
 - The WMHA is *not* required to notify the owner before making a utility payment if the unit has been or will be rendered uninhabitable by the termination or threat of termination of service. In that case, the WMHA will notify the owner within a reasonable time after making the payment.
2. To pay the families moving costs, including security deposit costs.
3. Any funds that remain after use for these authorized purposes must only be used for housing assistance payments.