

# HUDSON HOUSING AUTHORITY

## CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE PLAN

JULY 2020

Introduction:

The Hudson Housing Authority is monitoring the current viral outbreak formally known as the Coronavirus, or COVID 19. This is a constantly changing situation that we are taking very seriously. We have developed a Response Plan should this health crisis impact delivery of services to residents and participants of our housing programs. There are many sources of information concerning the virus that can be found at these websites:

Columbia County Department of Health

[www.columbiacountynyhealth.com/home/coronavirus-covid-19/](http://www.columbiacountynyhealth.com/home/coronavirus-covid-19/)

The Center for Disease Control:

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

The New York Center for Disease Control:

[www.NYS.gov/dhhs/mecdc](http://www.NYS.gov/dhhs/mecdc)

The World Health Organization:

[www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus](http://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus)

The National Institutes of Health:

[www.nih.gov/health-information/coronavirus](http://www.nih.gov/health-information/coronavirus)

It is human nature during times like this to want to be overly cautious and react in a manner we feel is justified to protect ourselves and our families. We should be cautious and take prudent measures to protect ourselves, our residents and those we work with every day. This plan provides guidance as to how the HHA can continue our work while also being cautious and respectful of this serious health issue facing our community. Our goal is to limit exposure to the virus amongst our employees and residents and to prevent further spread of the virus.

### **Section 1**

#### **Chain of Command:**

In the event the Executive Director is incapacitated or unavailable to perform his duties, the Administrative Assistant is hereby designated to act in his capacity during his absence. Should the Administrative Assistant be unable to perform these duties, the Board Chairperson is hereby designated to serve in this capacity. The person designated to act in the capacity during the absence of the Executive Director shall immediately contact the Vice-Chair and Commissioners of the

duties, the Board Chairperson is hereby designated to serve in this capacity. The person designated to act in the capacity during the absence of the Executive Director shall immediately contact the Vice-Chair and Commissioners of the agency to inform them of the circumstances necessitating this change and to maintain communication with the Board.

## **Section 2**

### **Communication:**

The best way to combat a serious health issue like COVID19 is to communicate clearly and effectively with employees, residents, government officials, vendors and the public. Accurate and timely communication will be critical in order to provide a proactive response rather than a reactive one. Use of multiple forms of communication will be important to spread the message as widely as possible to those who will rely on us now and in the future. This will include letters, emails, the HHA website, flyers, meetings and, when possible, text messaging.

#### **A. Employees:**

When it is necessary to communicate with staff, the preferred method will be to call for a mandatory staff meeting to review information and any course of action that may be required. If the situation calls for immediate notification, use of texting and emails will be used to get information to employees quickly. In the event there are changes in policies and procedures or there are work stoppages, this information shall be provided in writing to eliminate any confusion or to limit misinterpretations.

Areas that may need to be addressed:

- Protocols for completing work orders in residents' homes;
- Responding to emergency calls;
- Inspections;
- New lease ups;
- Use of outside vendors;

Employees are advised to monitor their health and report any symptoms to the health care provider and local public health officials as necessary. If employees believe they may have been exposed or are experiencing symptoms, they are asked to stay home and monitor their situation while keeping the HHA informed of their status. Employees must not be concerned with the status of their Earned Benefit Time account as we will work with employees to ensure that they are paid while we manage this epidemic.

#### **B. Residents/Participants:**

The HHA currently serves 135 households and therefore communication may be limited to letters, use of the website and our text messaging service, for those who participate. It will be important to provide our residents with helpful information that is reliable and effective. Written communication will include basic information about the virus, about protections against the virus, including how to stop its spread and where residents can find additional information about the virus. Residents will be encouraged to contact health officials if they believe they have contracted the virus or are showing signs of the symptoms. They will be asked to self-quarantine themselves to protect their neighbors and others for as long as may be required due

virus or are showing signs of the symptoms. They will be asked to self-quarantine themselves to protect their neighbors and others for as long as may be required due to governmental action. We ask all of our residents and participants to continue to live their lives in a manner as normal as possible and to stay alert as the conditions change. We must all be prepared to respond in an appropriate manner and not panic or act in a frenzied manner that will not be beneficial to ourselves or others.

### **C. Vendors:**

For our partners who work with us to provide goods and services, we will keep them informed via emails and/or phone calls of any changes to our work environment. If buildings are quarantined, we will make them aware of the situation so that they may determine if they can or will provide services if needed. Emergency work items requiring immediate attention in an area of concern will be disclosed and a plan to deal with the emergency will be developed in a timely fashion subject to the nature of the emergency. For emergencies dealing with fire or police services, residents shall continue to use 911 services.

### **D. Government Officials:**

The HHA will work closely with state and local officials to monitor the situation and report any known instances of the virus affecting our staff or residents. We will cooperate fully with any request for information as health officials determine the status of the virus in our communities. If and when government decrees are issued, we will work to communicate these directives to our residents and staff. The Executive Director, or his/her designee of the HHA, shall be the point of contact for all communication with public officials.

## **Section 3**

### **Incident Response:**

In the event an employee or resident has contracted the virus, administrative staff shall immediately convene to develop a response. If contact with public health officials has not yet occurred, such contact will be made immediately. We will coordinate our response with them and ensure that our efforts do not duplicate or in any way impede in their ability to respond to the incident. Administrative staff working with public officials will help to determine the source of the virus, take steps to ensure that the spread of the virus is halted or limited and make recommendations on how to proceed with our daily operations. Administrative staff shall familiarize itself with the current issues, identify resources to assist and recommend next steps. The Executive Director shall keep the Board of Commissioners informed at all times. Decisions as to ceasing operations or limiting operations shall be at the direction of the Board of Commissioners. If it is recommended that the office be closed, administrative staff shall provide a plan as to how the Authority will continue to provide services under such conditions.

If it is necessary to cease operations of the HHA, we will communicate this via our website, emails and the media. Our phone lines will continue to operate and receive messages, which will be forwarded to staff monitoring these messages.

## **Section 4**

### **Prevention Efforts:**

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The HHA will make reasonable efforts to control the spread of the virus through commonly known personal practices and work practices. Information will be disseminated to staff and residents about coughing/sneezing etiquette, washing of hands and staying home when sick. As a part of normal janitorial services, we will make additional efforts to sanitize those areas frequented by staff and residents such as the lobbies, bathrooms, waiting room, meeting space and elevators. An emphasis will be placed on those areas most frequently contacted by hands. We will utilize appropriate disinfectants as identified by health officials and, whenever possible, use green cleaning products that serve as a qualified disinfectant.

The success of any prevention effort relies upon the good judgement of individuals in our environments. If an individual is sick, has symptoms or is known to have the virus, he/she must stay home and prevent the spread to others. Employees will be asked to stay at home, while residents will be asked to remain in their homes and seek assistance from family members or others to provide for their basic necessities. If a State of Emergency is declared by an act of the government, we must all follow the instructions provided regardless of any inconveniences it may cause in our lives.

## **Section 5**

### **Operational Protocols:**

Leasing/Voucher Issuance:

In the event that service delivery is curtailed due to community health concerns, HHA shall endeavor to assist clients, to the extent feasible, through electronic or written means (mail), or office drop box. Applications can be downloaded from the HHA website: [www.Hudsonhousing.com](http://www.Hudsonhousing.com) and emailed to [tmayo@hudsonhousingauthority.com](mailto:tmayo@hudsonhousingauthority.com).

**A. Property Management.** Leases will be sent electronically or by mail, followed up with phone conversations to review the lease and other pertinent documents. Showing of units will take place in person when possible. In the event a lock down is ordered by the government, and if possible, photos will be taken and sent electronically to potential renters. Move in/move out inspections will be waived during any lock down or if staff is unavailable. If a move out inspection cannot occur, security deposits shall be returned minus any unpaid rent. Lease enforcement will continue to the extent complaints can be addressed via emails, texts or phone calls. HHA shall continue to comply with state and federal regulations as it relates to the enforcement of lease provisions.

**B. HCV.** Voucher lease ups shall continue to the extent possible. Paperwork shall continue to be processed, subject to staff availability, via email or regular mail or office drop box. Phone conversations shall be documented. Lease up inspections shall continue to the extent possible subject to additional regulatory guidance from the U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development and availability of staff. Voucher issuance may be suspended if a quarantine or lock down is ordered and if staffing is limited or unavailable, subject to governmental action.

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- C. **Occupancy Issues:** Program eligibility, Annual/interim Recertifications: HHA shall continue to process program eligibility and recerts subject to staffing and further regulatory guidance. Whereas income verifications are subject to third party review, processing of eligibility/recertifications may be delayed and or suspended until such time conditions will allow.
- D. **Inspections:** In order to comply with virus containment protocols, inspections may continue if conditions allow. HHA will adopt a Biennial Inspection protocol for all HCV units during this crisis. Conditions which may affect inspections include, but are not limited to: availability of staff; additional regulatory guidance; known conditions of occupants of the units to be inspected (HHA will not allow inspection of units where a known COVID19 case exists.); and government restrictions. HHA will use outside inspectors when possible.
- E. **Maintenance:** HHA will use extreme caution when required to perform work in common areas and individual units. If sick, personnel will be asked to remain home and refrain from performing any work on behalf of HHA. If residents are infected by the virus, work will be limited to emergency work orders only and staff will take additional measures to protect themselves from exposure. This includes use of proper protective clothing, respirators, gloves, face masks and other protective gear as needed.

Increased attention will be made to cleaning and disinfecting areas with heavy pedestrian traffic and surfaces which come into frequent contact of humans. Doors, handrails, elevator buttons and intercom panels, for example, will be cleaned at least three times per day, subject to staffing availability. Properties requiring attention shall be Bliss Towers and Columbia Apartments. This does not include properties with private access/single entry ingress. The office will be cleaned by office staff at the end of each business day.

Maintenance shall take stock of inventory to ensure adequate supplies are in place should there be a disruption of the supply chain. This should include adequate cleaning supplies as well as any material or equipment necessary for the safe operation of our facilities.

- F. **Financial:** Our objective during this crisis shall be to continue to receive and make payments for goods and services provided and or delivered. Residents are expected to continue to make rent payments in a timely fashion. We request that during this crisis, payments be made in the drop box by check, money order or use the credit card system over the phone. We will continue to accept payments in person at the office until such time as the HHA is required to cease operations or determines that it is best to discontinue direct payments.

Revenue: Staff, to the extent possible, shall make every effort to record revenues received and process deposits as needed. Should the HHA be

Revenue: Staff, to the extent possible, shall make every effort to record revenues received and process deposits as needed. Should the HHA be hampered in its ability to collect and record payments, no action will be made upon any household for non-payment of rent. Until such time as mail delivery is suspended, we will regularly check our mailbox to receive and record payments.

Accounts Payables will be processed if staff is available and proceeds are on hand to cover expenses. Every effort will be made to reach out to vendors and keep them informed as to when payments can be expected if we are unable to process them when they are due. Payments to landlords shall be processed provided funds are made available from the federal government. Priority will be given to direct deposits. Where a check is required, processing shall be completed subject to availability of staff and funds. If the HHA's ability to process payments to its landlords and vendors is impeded due to government action or the lack of staff due to this crisis, it is understood that all accrued payments shall be made on the earliest possible date. HHA is requesting patience and understanding during this difficult time.

**G. Landlords:** Communication will be made with all landlords to keep them informed and to ask that they not take any adverse action against participants in the Housing Choice Voucher Program, should payments be delayed. Such efforts will be made through written communication and our web site.

**H. Congregate services** shall remain available until such time as it is impossible to provide services on site. In the event that services are disrupted, we will work with state and local officials to make every effort to provide meals and services. All residents are encouraged to take appropriate measures to have sufficient food and supplies on hand in the event that a quarantine is instituted. HHA will work with Meals on Wheels and local food bank to coordinate delivery of food to those residents who regularly use those services.

## **Section 6**

### **Telework:**

Working from home shall be encouraged for those employees who are sick or have been in contact with someone who has the virus. Whereas not all employee duties can be performed at home, every effort will be made between employer and employee to identify work that can be performed electronically from home. HHA shall provide computer access through a remote connection and in accordance with prescribed protocols established by our IT partners. In the event proper access cannot be granted due to security concerns or connectivity issues, other means such as emails and phones shall be utilized to the greatest extent feasible.

Maintenance of HHA units obviously cannot be performed from employees' homes; therefore, maintenance staff shall be designated as standby if it is necessary to close the office for any period of time. Residents will continue to be asked to call into the emergency call line to report any issues requiring immediate attention. If the report does not require immediate attention (such as a water leak or dangerous electrical malfunction), a work order will be created and the item

call into the emergency call line to report any issues requiring immediate attention. If the report does not require immediate attention (such as a water leak or dangerous electrical malfunction), a work order will be created and the item addressed as soon as possible. Any staff required to perform work at any Authority property shall wear proper protection provided by HHA and utilize safe work practices at all times. We will communicate to residents the need for patience as we work to continue to provide safe housing while protecting our employees and their families.

## **Section 7**

### **Travel & Training:**

The HHA shall rely upon the decisions made by government officials and or sponsors of any training to determine whether or not travel is advised> Should a ban be enacted that restricts travel and gatherings of large groups; we shall follow these bans accordingly. In the event that trainings are not canceled but staff has decided it is in their best interest to forgo travel, the HHA shall respect these wishes and seek reimbursement of any fees paid. If travel and training has been scheduled in an area that is quarantined or restricted, HHA shall prohibit travel to these areas.

## **Section 8**

### **Social Gatherings:**

If cases involving COVID19 expand, causing concern for public health, all HHA social functions shall be suspended and or canceled. This would include all resident meetings and social activities on HHA properties. It is our intent to cooperate with containment efforts and not unnecessarily expose our residents and their guests.