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CITY OF SANTA ANA

SANTA ANA HOUSING AUTHORITY

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May 20, 2021

EXTENSION OF COVID-19 WAIVERS AND ALTERNATIVE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to present significant challenges for the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Ana (CA093) (SAHA) to carry out our normal operations. In order to mitigate the health risks posed by COVID-19 to SAHA staff, families, landlords, and our community at large, SAHA is extending the waivers we previously adopted on April 21, 2020 and extended on July 20, 2020 and November 30, 2020. Specifically, pursuant to the authority provided under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, SAHA is extending the waivers for several statutory and regulatory requirements as authorized by HUD's Notice PIH 2021-14 dated May 4, 2021 for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. The waivers and alternative requirements previously established in Notices PIH 2020-05, PIH 2020-13, PIH 2020-20, PIH 2020-22 and PIH 2020-33 remain effective as of the date of publication of those notices. SAHA may adopt the use of any of these waivers at any time during the period of availability.

Relative to our previous notice published on November 30, 2020, SAHA is adopting four new waivers that have the following impacts: 1) third-party income verification requirements for applicants to the Housing Choice Voucher Program; 2) policy changes in the Administrative Plan; 3) initial lease terms for Mainstream the Mainstream Voucher Program; and 4) definition of a non-elderly family for the Mainstream Voucher Program. These waivers are highlighted for you below as **[NEW]**. SAHA is also amending four other waivers pertaining to our HQS Inspections. These waivers are highlighted for you below as **[AMENDED]**.

SAHA is required to notify affected residents of any impacts that the waiver and alternative requirement may have on them. The purpose of this notice is to advise you of the waivers and alternative requirements that we have adopted and its impact on you. The list of all waivers and alternative requirements we have adopted has also been posted publicly on our webpage at www.santa-ana.org/cd/housing-authority.

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**WAIVERS EXTENDED BY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF
THE CITY OF SANTA ANA (CA093)**

- 1. Family Income and Composition – Delayed Annual Reexaminations:**
 - a. All annual reexaminations due in CY 2021 must be completed by December 31, 2021.

- 2. Family Income and Composition: Annual Examination; Income Verification Requirements:**
 - a. SAHA is waiving the requirements to use the income verification hierarchy required by HUD for annual reexaminations. SAHA will accept self-certification as the highest form of income verification when 3rd party income verification for annual reexaminations is not available. However, SAHA will continue to use the Enterprise Income Verification system.
 - b. This waiver will be available through December 31, 2021.

- 3. Family Income and Composition – Interim Reexaminations:**
 - a. SAHA is waiving the requirements to use the income verification hierarchy required by HUD for interim reexaminations. SAHA will accept self-certification as the highest form of income verification when 3rd party income verification for interim reexaminations is not available.
 - b. This waiver will be available through December 31, 2021.

- 4. Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Contract of Participation - Contract Extension:**
 - a. SAHA will consider the circumstances surrounding COVID-19 to qualify as “good cause” to extend a family’s contract of participation in the FSS program through December 31, 2021.

- 5. [NEW] Eligibility Determination - Income Verification:**
 - a. SAHA is waiving the requirements to use the income verification hierarchy required by HUD for applicants who are being determined eligible for assistance. As a last resort, SAHA will accept self-certification as the highest form of income verification when 3rd party income verification for an applicant is not available.
 - b. This waiver will be available through December 31, 2021.

- 6. [AMENDED] Initial Inspection Requirements:**
 - a. For occupied/lease-in-place units, SAHA will begin conducting in-person physical inspections on July 1, 2021, but may conduct a Remote Video Inspection until December 31, 2021, only if a tenant states in writing that s/he is unwilling to allow SAHA to conduct an in-person physical inspection.
 - b. For vacant units – SAHA will conduct a physical inspection.

- 7. [AMENDED] HQS Inspection Requirement - Biennial Inspections:**
 - a. SAHA will begin conducting in-person physical inspections on July 1, 2021, but may conduct a Remote Video Inspection until December 31, 2021, only if a tenant states in writing that s/he is unwilling to allow SAHA to conduct an in-person physical inspection.

8. [AMENDED] HQS Interim Inspections:

- a. If there is a life-threatening or non life-threatening HQS deficiency reported, SAHA will conduct in-person physical inspections beginning on July 1, 2021, but may conduct a Remote Video Inspection until December 31, 2021, only if a tenant states in writing that s/he is unwilling to allow SAHA to conduct an in-person physical inspection.

9. Project-Based Voucher (PBV) Turnover Unit Inspections:

- a. For occupied/lease-in-place units, SAHA will begin conducting in-person physical inspections on July 1, 2021, but may conduct a Remote Video Inspection until December 31, 2021, only if a tenant states in writing that s/he is unwilling to allow SAHA to conduct an in-person physical inspection.
- b. For vacant units – SAHA will conduct a physical inspection.
- c. This waiver will be available through December 31, 2021.

10. [AMENDED] HQS Quality Control Inspections:

- a. SAHA will begin conducting in-person Quality Control Inspections beginning on July 1, 2021, but may conduct a Remote Video Inspection until December 31, 2021, only if a tenant states in writing that s/he is unwilling to allow SAHA to conduct an in-person physical inspection.

11. [NEW] Administrative Plan:

- a. Policies may be adopted without Board approval until September 30, 2021. Any provisions adopted informally must be adopted formally by December 31, 2021.

12. Information When Family Is Selected – SAHA Oral Briefing:

- a. SAHA will begin conducting in-person oral briefings but will also continue to conduct the oral briefing using conference call or Zoom video conference meeting. SAHA will ensure that the method of communication for the briefing effectively communicates with each family member, including those with vision, hearing, and other communication-related disabilities and those with persons with limited English proficiency.
- b. This waiver will be available through December 31, 2021.

13. Term of Voucher – Extensions of Term:

- a. SAHA is waiving the requirement that voucher term extensions must be in accordance with SAHA's administrative plan. If SAHA receives a written request for a voucher extension prior to the expiration of the voucher, any active voucher searching may be extended until December 31, 2021.
- b. This waiver will be available through December 31, 2021.

14. Foster Youth to Independence Eligibility to Enter HAP Contract

- a. SAHA is waiving the requirement that a Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) youth must be not more than 24 years of age (not yet reached their 25th birthday) and is replacing it with the requirement that FYI youth be not more than 25 years of age (not yet reached their 26th birthday).

- b. This waiver will be available through December 31, 2021.

15. Family Unification Program (FUP): Timeframe for Referral

- a. Under the Foster Youth to Independence Program, assistance may be provided on behalf of “otherwise eligible youths who have attained at least 18 years of age and not more than 24 years of age and who have left foster care or will leave foster care within 90 days.” Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it may be difficult for youth to find units that are available for lease within the 90-day timeframe, increasing the risk that such youth may experience homelessness. To prevent such an outcome, HUD is waiving the statutory limitation and establishing an alternative requirement. Specifically, SAHA may accept referrals from Orange County Social Services Agency for youth who will leave foster care within 120 days.
- b. This waiver will be available through December 31, 2021.

16. [NEW] Mainstream Voucher Program Initial Lease Term:

- a. SAHA may enter initial lease terms of less than one year for the Mainstream Voucher Program.
- b. This waiver will be available through December 31, 2021.

17. [NEW] Mainstream Age Eligibility to Enter HAP Contract Statutory Authority:

- a. SAHA is expanding the definition of an eligible non-elderly family member to include those who were issued a voucher prior to turning 62 and were not yet 63 on the effective date of the HAP Contract.
- b. This waiver will be available through December 31, 2021.