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December 17, 2020

**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 16, 2020. SAHA is also adopting two new waivers. 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 PIH Notice 2020-13 dated July 2, 2020 for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. SAHA is also adopting two new waivers pertaining to the Foster Youth to Independence Program and Project-Based Voucher Program. SAHA is required to notify affected residents of the impact of applicable waivers and alternative requirements. The list of all waivers and alternative requirements we have adopted have also been posted publicly on our webpage.

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

**1. Family Income and Composition – Annual Reexaminations:**

- a. Annual reexaminations are not required to be held in-person. SAHA will follow-up with third party income verification following the annual reexamination (if documents were not completed/provided at the annual re-certification period) and will complete an interim based on the information verified through that verification.
- b. This waiver will be available through June 30, 2021.

**2. Family Income and Composition – Interim Reexaminations:**

- a. SAHA is waiving the requirements to use the income verification hierarchy required by HUD for interim reexaminations. As stated in previous waiver dated

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April 16, 2020, SAHA will accept self-certification when 3<sup>rd</sup> party income verification for interim reexaminations is not available.

b. This waiver will be available through June 30, 2021.

**3. 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 June 30, 2021.

**4. Initial Inspection Requirements:**

a. For occupied/lease-in-place units (where the unit is currently occupied), SAHA will conduct a Remote Video Inspection (RVI) without inspecting the unit in-person. The RVI will be performed by a proxy inspector. The proxy inspector may be the owner (or landlord), owner’s representative, or the tenant. The RVI will enable SAHA’s inspector and the proxy inspector to complete the inspection using a cell phone, iPad or other mobile devices and by using one of these apps: FaceTime, Skype, Google Duo, or Zoom. If there are no life-threatening conditions in the unit, SAHA may accept the owner/tenant’s self-certification of HQS repairs completed with supporting documentations, photos, videos.

b. In the event that RVI inspection is not the chosen method, for occupied/lease-in-place units, SAHA will accept the owner and tenant’s self-certification that to the best of their knowledge no life-threatening conditions exist in the unit instead of conducting a physical inspection. The owner will need to conduct an initial inspection for occupied/lease-in-place units as part of their self-certification with the tenant. If no life-threatening conditions exist in the unit, SAHA may accept the owner/tenant’s self-certification of HQS repairs completed with supporting documentation, photos, or videos. SAHA is required to conduct an HQS inspection on the units as soon as reasonably possible, but no later than 1 year anniversary of owner/tenant’s self-certification.

c. SAHA will accept a Owner/Tenant HQS repairs self-certification until June 30, 2021.

d. For vacant units – SAHA will conduct a physical inspection.

**5. (Amended 11/30/2020) Biennial Inspections:**

a. SAHA is waiving the requirement that we must inspect the unit not less than biennially (once every two years). At a minimum, the owner must certify that the owner has no reasonable basis to have knowledge that life threatening conditions exist in the unit or units in question instead of SAHA conducting an initial inspection.

b. SAHA will conduct a Remote Video Inspection (RVI) without inspecting the unit in-person. The RVI will be mandatory. The RVI will be performed by a proxy inspector. The proxy inspector may be the owner (or landlord), owner’s representative, or the tenant. The RVI will enable SAHA’s inspector and the proxy inspector to complete the inspection using a cell phone, iPad or other mobile devices and by using one of these apps: FaceTime, Skype, Google Duo, or Zoom. If no life-threatening conditions exist in the unit, SAHA may

accept the owner/tenant's self-certification of HQS repairs completed with supporting documentation, photos, or videos.

- c. Should the tenant/owner choose to opt out of the RVI method, please contact the Housing Inspector requesting to reschedule for an in-person inspection. The biennial inspection will be rescheduled within the next 9 months.
- d. All delayed biennial inspections must be completed as soon as reasonably possible, but no later than 1 year anniversary of the biennial inspection due date.

#### **6. Interim Inspections:**

- a. If there is a life-threatening HQS deficiency reported, SAHA will conduct a Remote Video Inspection (RVI) without inspecting the unit in-person. SAHA will notify the owner of the life-threatening deficiency and the owner must correct it within 24 hours of SAHA's notification. SAHA will use the RVI method to re-inspect the unit the next day to ensure that the deficiency no longer exists.
- b. If there is no life-threatening conditions in the unit, SAHA must notify the owner within 30 days and the owner must make the repair within 30 days of SAHA's notification. SAHA will conduct the re-inspection using the RVI method to ensure the HQS repairs are completed.
- c. This waiver will be available through June 30, 2021.

#### **7. Project-Based Voucher (PBV) Turnover Unit Inspections:**

- a. The inspection of these units will mirror the Initial Inspections Requirements stated as item number 4 above herein.
- b. This waiver will be available through June 30, 2021.

#### **8. HQS Quality Control Inspections:**

- a. SAHA will be performing Quality Control Inspections using the RVI method and will resume supervisory quality control inspections when SAHA begins conducting biennial inspections again.
- b. This waiver will be available through June 30, 2021.

#### **9. HQS Space and Security**

- a. SAHA is waiving the regulation requiring one bedroom for every two people where SAHA approves a current participant to add a member or members to the assisted household as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. This waiver does not apply to an initial or new lease.
- b. The waiver will be in effect for the duration of the current lease term or July 1, 2021, whichever period of time is longer.

#### **10. Information When Family Is Selected – SAHA Oral Briefing:**

- a. SAHA will 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 June 30, 2021.

**11. 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, any active voucher searching may be extended until June 30, 2021.
- b. This waiver will be available through June 30, 2021.

**12. (Amended 11/30/2020) Absence from the Unit:**

- a. SAHA is waiving the requirement that a voucher family may not be absent from a unit for a period of more than 90 consecutive calendar days (e.g. due to hospitalization, extended stays at nursing homes, caring for family members).
- b. A family may be absent from the unit for longer than 90 consecutive calendar days based on an extenuating circumstance as documented in the tenant's file. The family must provide documentation to explain the extenuating circumstance that caused the extended absence. SAHA will not make payments after June 30, 2021 if the family continues to be absent and the HAP contract will terminate.

**13. Automatic Termination of HAP Contract:**

- a. SAHA is waiving the requirement to terminate a HAP contract 180 days after a housing assistance payment is reduced to \$0. All current HAP contracts where a housing assistance payment is \$0 will be extended to June 30, 2021
- b. This waiver will be available through June 30, 2021. SAHA will not extend the HAP contract beyond June 20, 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 June 30, 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 June 30, 2021.

**16. Mandatory Removal of Unit from PBV-HAP Contract**

- a. Under the PBV program, SAHA is required to remove a unit from the PBV HAP contract after 180 days of zero housing assistance payments to the assisted

unit owner. This happens when the tenant has an increase in income and no longer requires housing assistance payment. HUD PIH Notice 2020-13 waives this requirement and authorizes SAHA to keep the assisted unit under contract for a period of time that exceeds 180 days. However, the contract may not be extended beyond June 30, 2021.

- b. This waiver will be available through June 30, 2021.