

# Dakota County Community Development Agency Rental Assistance Program Owner Newsletter

## Monthly Owner

### Workshops

The CDA is hosting monthly workshops to provide rental property owners and managers a good basis for successful participation in the Dakota County CDA's Housing Choice Voucher Program. Upcoming dates include:

**July 26**  
9 - 11 a.m.

**August 18**  
9 - 11 a.m.

**RSVP to:**  
651-675-4543

### Changes to Report?

If you have a change of address, name or ownership, contact the CDA to ensure your account is updated. Forms will be provided to you for your specific change.

To report a change call Leah at  
651-675-4533.



July 2011

## Federal Funding Update

The CDA has received a number of calls from property owners concerned about the impact of federal budget cuts to the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. In April 2011, Congress passed a continuing resolution for the 2011 federal budget (October 1, 2010-September 20, 2011) which includes HCV funding. The HCV funding is separated into two parts: Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) renewals and program administrative fees. Overall, the HAP renewals received a 2% increase and administrative fees were cut by 8%. The actual affect on each housing authority may differ and the Dakota County CDA expects to receive final reduction amounts this summer.

The HAP renewal increase does not allow for additional vouchers to be issued, but provides for the increase in average payments. The average HAP per voucher for the Dakota County CDA is \$567 (a 2.2% increase from 2010). The CDA is authorized to assist up to 2,306 households. If the CDA receives a 2% increase in HAP renewal funding, we will be able to continue to assist the same number of households in the HCV program. If the CDA sees a cut of more than 2% in HCV funding, we will not need to terminate any existing HAP contracts because the CDA has been conservative in the issuance of vouchers. The cut to administrative fees is significant. While the CDA will be able to retain all staff, program delivery adjustments are being evaluated.

The program isn't out of the woods yet for future funding fluctuations. Congress will be revisiting funding for the HCV Program as legislators work on the 2012 federal budget. The CDA anticipates additional cuts to the HCV Program and will keep participating property owners briefed through these newsletters.

If you have any questions, call Jennifer Keogh, Assistant Director of Housing Assistance at 651-675-4543 or Melissa Taphorn, Director of Housing Assistance at 651-675-4530.

## Inspector's Insights

Long winters can do damage to your property that may affect passing a Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspection. Below are a few things to look for:

- **Storm Windows & Screens** - If they were removed for the winter for any reason, they need to be re-installed and free from any holes or defects that might allow bugs into the home.
- **Door Locks** - With the snowy winter, there may have been some settling in the foundation which can lead to door openings coming slightly out-of-square making the door locks improperly functioning due to misalignment. Doors may need to be adjusted slightly to re-align the locks which are required on grade floor openings for security purposes.
- **Paint** - For any units constructed prior to 1978, deteriorated paint may be an issue because of the extended snow cover from this winter. Soaking of wood on decks from melting snow may also have loosened up guard rails or deck boards which need to be tightened up. These surfaces are required to be stabilized before passing a HQS inspection.

Remember HQS requirements apply to the interior and exterior of your property, so please take a moment to check your properties for any fix-it items. **If you have any questions, contact the Dakota County CDA's Housing Inspector Dave Mathews at 651-675-4532.**

## Additional Household Members

Additional household members are not allowed to be residing in an assisted unit unless authorized by the CDA and landlord.

If your assisted tenant requests to add an additional member to their lease, please have them contact their housing specialist at the CDA to start the eligibility paperwork. Unless otherwise stated by the CDA, additional members should not be residing in the unit prior to CDA approval.

Always check your lease to ensure that members listed match the members listed on the Housing Assistance Payment Contracts. Please contact your tenants housing specialist immediately if you notice a discrepancy.

The CDA takes program integrity very seriously. If you believe that unauthorized members are residing in an assisted unit or suspect drug activity, contact Sarah H. at 651-675-4406 to file a fraud complaint.

# Benefits of a Smoke-Free Housing Policy



**M**ulti-housing owners, managers and residents can all benefit from a smoke-free housing policy. Below are some benefits related to smoke-free housing from the Live Smoke Free organization.

## Market Advantages

Buildings may be able to attract more tenants by going smoke-free. Over 50% of Twin Cities tenants would prefer to live in a smoke-free environment. Building owners and managers have an opportunity to appeal to the large group of renters who want smoke-free apartment living.

## Reduced Costs

Cleaning costs are lower when you don't have to scrub, paint and replace items in an apartment that smells like smoke or are covered in residue. An apartment that has been smoked-in will probably need to be cleaned, primed, painted and sealed; carpets and countertops may need to be replaced. Many building owners and landlords have said that cleaning a smoking unit often costs two to three times as much as cleaning a non-smoking unit.

## Fewer Fire Risks

Smoking related fires are deadly and costly. By going smoke-free, you eliminate the source of smoking related fires. Some insurance companies may even provide reduced premium rates to buildings that are smoke-free or to tenants who live in a smoke-free building. For more information on smoking related fires in apartments, view Live Smoke Free's Fact Sheet "Up in Flames: The Dangers of Smoking in Apartment Units," which can be found online at [www.mnsmokefreehousing.org](http://www.mnsmokefreehousing.org).

## Smoke-free Policies are Legal

A building owner or manager can legally make a rental building (or entire property) completely smoke-free.

Live Smoke Free assists building owners and managers with creating and promoting smoke-free policies for their properties. They provide for FREE: consultations and presentations, sample tenant survey, model smoke-free lease addendum, sample announcement letters, signage and window clings for your building or grounds. **For more information, contact Matt Farmer at 651-646-3005 ext.309.**

## Fair Housing Q&A

Courtesy: Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services

**Q** I rent to an African American family who complains to me that they are being picked on by another family in my building because of their race. Do I have to do anything about this?

**A** Yes. If you have knowledge that a family is being harassed because of their race and you fail to act, your tenants could potentially sue you for discrimination in the terms and conditions of their housing. The U.S. Department of Justice recently filed a federal action alleging these facts.

**Q** It is easier for me to have a first-come, first-serve policy for parking spots at my apartment building. One of my tenants has requested an assigned parking spot near his apartment because of a mobility impairment. Do I have to grant this request?

**A** Yes. This request is necessary for the tenant to be able to have an equal opportunity to use and enjoy his apartment. Also, the request is reasonable in that it does not present an undue financial and administrative burden and it is not a fundamental alteration of your business.