

housing matters

Spring / Summer 2012



Message from the Program Director

It has been my sincere pleasure to serve the Landlord partners of the Westchester County

Section 8 Program during the last year. As a resident of the Hudson Valley, I have found this time of service to the community to be particularly rewarding.

The entire CVR New York Team and I are committed to *exceeding* your expectations in all that we do. Customer service continues to be our top priority as we strive to enhance program operations and implement positive change to serve you better. A key component of this mission is to enhance communication with our Landlords — hence this newsletter specifically designed to keep you informed about hot topics, HUD regulations and Program policies.

We are pleased that so many of you have come to rely on our new website (cvrnewyork.com) as a useful resource for Program information, forms, links, etc. Keep the feedback coming, we want the site to be fresh with relevant content and resources right at your fingertips.

Most importantly, I look forward to creating opportunities to strengthen our partnership with each of you, now and in the years to come. We hope you find this inaugural issue of your newsletter interesting and informative.

Kind regards,
Felicia Ramos
 HCV Program Director
 CVR New York

Introducing



It's hard to believe that CVR New York has been serving as the Local Administrator of the Westchester County HCV Program for a year now.

As a national consulting firm serving the affordable housing industry exclusively, CVR manages nearly 30,000 vouchers across the country — many of which are similar operations to this Program.

As Landlords, your voice continues to be instrumental in the changes we make — including implementing policies that support Landlords (*Notice to Vacate*

form and process) and seeking ways to enhance inspections scheduling.

Leading these changes is CVR New York's Program Director Felicia Ramos, who has close to two decades of experience working with some of the largest agencies in the nation as well as those in the Hudson Valley for more than fifteen years alone. In the coming months her team approach and vision will provide you with new program benefits like the online listing service featured on the back page.

We invite you to find out more about CVR by logging on to our website at cvrassociates.com. CVR New York has a great many things in store for you, after all, you are the key to the Program's success.

take a look INSIDE



Housing Quality Standards (HQS)

- ▶ Passing the Inspection the 1st Time
- ▶ Resolving Deficiencies



Your Lease Agreement

- ▶ Lease Enforcement
- ▶ Requesting a Rent Increase



Rent Your Unit Faster

- ▶ Market to More Renters with Free Online Listing Service

Participating in the Westchester County HCV Program provides many benefits to Landlords. Please keep in mind that it also comes with the responsibility of maintaining these units in accordance with HUD's Housing Quality Standards (HQS) at all times.

Maximize Your Rental Income — Be Familiar with the Housing Quality Standards.

Because it is in your best interest to for your unit to pass inspection, it is important to not only understand the standards set forth by HUD, but to also maintain your unit accordingly. Benefits of passing inspections the first time include:

- Tenants can move in sooner than if a re-inspection is required.
- Landlords avoid abatement for not passing within the required timeframe.

There are a variety of reasons that a unit may not pass an HQS inspection. This article presents the most common deficiencies and how to resolve them.



Non-Emergency Failures

Non-emergency deficiencies must be corrected within 30 days. Depending upon the nature of the finding, self-certification of the repair may be permitted in lieu of a re-inspection.

Resolution Process

All self-certified repairs require the Landlord to complete and submit a *Verification of Repair (VOR)* Form.

HAP will be abated if this form is not received by the due date.

Emergency / 24 Hour Failures

As the name implies, *Emergency Failures* are of an urgent nature and as such must be corrected within 24 hours of the failed inspection — regardless of whether the emergency deficiency is considered the responsibility of the Landlord or the Tenant.

For safety reasons, HCV Program regulations require the Inspector to inform the Tenant (or designee present at the inspection) of such finding. CVR New York will also notify the Landlord of the deficiency via telephone (at the number on file) and send a letter via U.S. mail.

Resolution Process

The only way to resolve this type of deficiency is to make the repair and grant access for the re-inspection within 24 hours. CVR New York will automatically schedule the re-inspection. Note that both the Tenant and Landlord must be present for this re-inspection.

If a successful re-inspection does not occur within 24 hours, CVR New York will take the following action:

- abate HAP for Landlord-related issues
- initiate the process to terminate the Tenant from the Program for items deemed the Tenant's responsibility.

Note: The abatement or termination process will continue until a successful re-inspection is conducted. Be advised that per HCV Program regulations, no retroactive payments can be made on abated units.

Unable to Gain Access

HQS regulations require all areas of a unit be inspected — including areas where mechanical components providing service to the unit reside. If the Inspector is not able to gain access where needed, the inspection will fail. Specifically, the Landlord/Property Owner and/or Tenant must:

- have an authorized adult present to grant entrance to the unit
- provide access to all areas of the unit itself
- provide access to other areas related to the unit (for example, the basement; mechanical areas where the heating equipment, electrical meters or water heater reside, etc.)

Should an Inspector not have access to the required areas, both the Landlord and Tenant will receive a notice of such via U.S. mail along with a list of all failed items.

Resolution Process

The only way to resolve this type of deficiency is to inspect the area previously inaccessible. CVR New York will automatically schedule the re-inspection and contact the Landlord and Tenant via U.S. mail to inform them of the date.

If the re-inspection is unsuccessful, CVR New York will be forced to abate HAP until a successful re-inspection is conducted. Be advised that per HCV Program regulations, **no retroactive payments can be made on abated units.** 🏠



self-certifying repairs?

AVOID ABATEMENT

submit Verification of Repairs (VOR) by due date

PASS your INSPECTION



Avoid These Common HQS Deficiencies

- inaccessible mechanical areas
- missing or inoperable smoke or carbon monoxide detectors within the unit and mechanical areas
- broken or missing electrical switch and receptacle covers
- broken window balances, frames, or locks
- poorly weather-stripped doors and windows
- open slots in circuit breaker boxes
- exposed wires and other electrical hazards
- peeling or deteriorated paint
- malfunctioning GFCI receptacles
- missing extension pipe at water heater pressure relief valves
- cracked or chipped tubs, sinks, and toilets
- poorly anchored toilets (must be secured).

Prepare Your Unit with Our Pre-Inspection Checklist

The CVR New York website offers a variety of resources, including a pre-inspection checklist, that can help you prepare for a new Tenant, or assist you with periodic maintenance checks of your unit. Resources are available at the CVR New York website *Form and Document Library* at:

http://cvrnewyork.com/forms-documents_owners/

Quality Control Inspections

In accordance with Federal HUD requirements, CVR New York may select your unit at random for a **Quality Control Inspection**. This process serves to confirm that each Inspector is conducting accurate and complete inspections and ensures that there is consistency among Inspectors.



Help Us Speed up the Process



Would you like to receive notifications and other correspondence from us (including this newsletter) faster than you are currently? Communicating via email is more efficient and hence more effective.

Don't wait, get in the fast lane today and provide your email address (along with your Landlord ID and addresses of all participating units) to us at: addmyemail@cvrnewyork.com Together we can speed up the process.

HUD Means Business to Landlords



Every month you receive your HAP check, HUD — the Federal agency that funds our Program — means *business* to you.

But did you also know that HUD *means business* when it comes to violating Program regulations?

Please be aware that it is a violation of the HCV Program rules and also a *crime* to:

- Falsely certify that repairs have been made. Doing so can result in the recovery of overpayments of assistance, termination of any and all HAP Contracts, and/or the pursuit of criminal charges.
- Collect or attempt to recover any abated rent from Tenants.

Does Your Unit Have a MECHANICAL AREA ?

Remember, Inspectors *must* have access to any required mechanical areas on an *annual* basis. This includes furnaces, water heaters, plumbing, electrical meters, and gas meters, etc.



our partnership with you is key to our success

Lease Enforcement

CVR New York Supports You

If you find your Tenant in violation of the Lease, please know that CVR New York not only *supports* you in your efforts to *uphold* the Lease agreement, we *encourage you to enforce the Lease agreement*. It is important to understand that Lease enforcement is the Landlord's legal responsibility and for this reason the Westchester HCV Program is unable to do so on your behalf.

Landlords have the following rights and obligations relative to Lease enforcement:

- to serve the Tenant a notice of serious Lease violations
- if eviction is warranted, you must proceed according to New York State and local laws
- send a copy of all notices provided to the Tenant to the Westchester HCV Program office.

The CVR New York Landlord Partnership

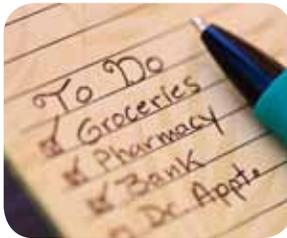
Voucher holders are advised that if a Landlord prevails in obtaining a warrant for eviction or a judgment for past due amounts, CVR New York will take action to terminate their voucher. Ultimately, if a Tenant violates the Lease, he not only risks losing his home, he risks losing his voucher. 

TIPS from Successful Landlords

- Taking prompt and well documented action on the first lease violation may help to curb future offenses.
- A thorough screening process often helps to improve the quality of the Tenant and may serve to minimize this type of occurrence.

Shorten Your To Do List

Eliminate monthly trips to the bank with Direct Deposit.



Sign up for Direct Deposit today and avoid the time consuming task of going to the bank to deposit your HAP check every month. Benefits include:

- availability of funds by the 1st of every month
- increased security
- reduced paperwork with online remittance advice

How Do I Sign Up? Just submit a voided check along with a completed enrollment form to CVR New York as indicated below. The enrollment form is available on the CVR New York website *Form and Document Library* at http://cvrnewyork.com/forms-documents_owners/.



drop it off at the HCVP office



FAX it to 914-995-5839



mail it to the HCVP office

Already Signed Up for Direct Deposit?

Great, but we still need your correct mailing address. If you have moved or had a change in property ownership/management within the last six months, please contact Nicholas Cassaro at 914-995-6227 to update your file on record. This is the only way to ensure you receive all important correspondence — like 1099s.

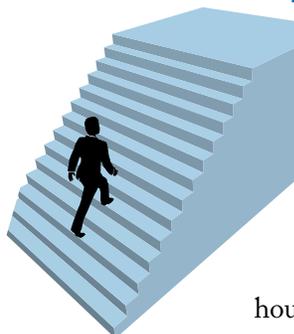
New to the Westchester HCVP?

Please note that *Direct Deposit* is *mandatory* for all new Landlords. Sign up do today if you have yet to do so, otherwise your HAP may be delayed.

[Find Out More at cvrnewyork.com](http://cvrnewyork.com)

As always, more information is available on our website. Click on the “*Direct Deposit Program*” link under Property Owners menu. 

Step Right Up!



Walk-In Hours Continue for Landlords

In our continued efforts to improve operational efficiencies and customer service, effective May 1, 2012, walk-in office hours for *Participants* will be limited to Monday through Thursday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Please identify yourself as a Landlord to Security during these hours to be granted entry. 

Requesting a Rent ↑ Increase

Should you find it necessary to request a rent increase, understanding the process will make things more efficient. Keep in mind that in order for your request to be considered, it must first meet the following criteria:

- the request is made via a completed *Rent Increase Request Form* available on the CVR New York website *Form and Document Library* at http://cvrnewyork.com/forms-documents_owners/
- the request should be made no more than 60 days prior to the lease expiration
- the effective date of the increase must occur after the first year of tenancy
- the effective date of the increase must coincide with the expiration of the current Lease term
- more than one year has elapsed since the effective date of a previous increase
- the unit is not in a failed inspection status
- Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is not in abatement
- Emergency Tenant Protection Act (ETPA) buildings must include a copy of the ETPA Lease Renewal form
- if the increase is related to any Major Capital Improvements (MCI), the request must include a copy of the New York State DHCR order granting the increase.

If you meet the criteria as outlined, the requested rental amount will be reviewed relative to comparable units in the area. Based upon the determination made, the process will proceed as outlined in this article.



Congrats! The Full Increase Was Approved

You will be notified via U.S. mail if the full increase requested is approved. Be sure to notify your Tenant of the new rent according to the Lease requirements.

Smile! A Partial Increase Was Approved

In cases where less than the requested amount is approved you will be notified via U.S. mail. If you decline the approved increase, you will need to inform the Tenant whether you will be renewing the Lease. If you choose to accept the amount offered you will need to notify your Tenant of the new rent. *Note:* You must contact CVR New York to execute a new HAP contract and Lease if any other Lease provisions change.

Who Pays the Increase — The Tenant or the Program?

Please keep in mind that if the *Contract Rent + Utility Allowance exceeds the Payment Standard*, the Tenant will be required to pay either a portion of or the entire rent increase. This is more likely to occur if the requested increase is very large. If this is the case, the Tenant has the option of moving instead of paying the increased amount.

TIPS from Successful Landlords

Something to consider before instituting a rent increase and possibly losing a Tenant in the process:

The amount of rental revenue lost due to a vacancy may exceed the incremental income you would have received from the higher rent. This is of particular importance if you have a good Tenant.

If the Increase is Not Approved

You will be notified via U.S. mail why your request was denied.



Remember, not only is it a violation of the HCV Program rules, but also a crime to ask your Tenants to make side payments in order to collect a rent higher than authorized by the Program. 🚫



how can we better serve you?

call our community relations hotline 914-995-2415 ext. 7



Housing Matters is a semi-annual publication for CVR New York's participating Landlords. Help us **Go Green** and request future issues electronically at addmyemail@cvrnewyork.com

cvrnewyork.com

Rent Your Unit Faster with New Listing Service

The Westchester Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) is pleased to offer Landlords yet another benefit — an innovative new way to list your rental unit. With NYHousingSearch.gov you can improve your unit's marketability and decrease the number of "days on market".

Register Today — It's Easy, Fast and Free

Choose the method that works best for you:

 *Online:* NYHousingSearch.gov click "List a Place to Rent" under heading "Add Property"

 *Call toll-free:* 1-877-428-8844

 *Fax toll-free:* 1-866-265-7811

Pick up a property listing form at the CVR New York office or download it from the CVR New York website *Form and Document Library*.

http://cvrnewyork.com/forms-documents_owners/

Questions? Their Customer Support Call Center has the answers. They are available Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m at 1-877-428-8844.

Features & Benefits of NYHousingSearch.gov

- greater exposure to prospective Tenants — CVR New York refers all voucher holders to this site
- the ability to upload photos and include desirable features about your unit
- your listing goes 'live' immediately when created online
- customized search engine matches Tenants interested in your unit's features
- the service is FREE to all users (those listing their property *and* the Tenants seeking a new home)

Find Out More at cvrnewyork.com

As always, more information is available on our website. Click on the "Market Your Rental Property" under the Property Owners menu. 