

HOUSING MATTERS

WINTER 2015



MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

I am very proud of CVR New York's accomplishments over the past year. In partnership with all of our participating Property Owners, we continue to provide quality, affordable, and safe housing to low-income families. We also encourage self-sufficiency, and strengthen community inclusiveness and diversity in housing. Most importantly, we have been making an effort to grow and to become more transparent and efficient as we do so. I would like to reflect on some of the biggest innovations we have developed over the past year.

Our **OwnerPortal** is updated daily with the latest information in our system, allowing owners to see the latest rental share and inspection information. It also allows owners to send us messages, update their contact information, and request rent increases. Our **Inspections Call Center** has been established to provide faster service for all inspections-related calls. Finally, we are in the process of migrating to an **iFile** system to move away from paper files and keep all records electronically. Each of these innovations is designed to make our program more accessible for our participating Property Owners.

Best wishes for the New Year from all of us at CVR New York.

Kind regards,

Felicia Ramos
HCV Program Director

NEW INSPECTIONS CALL CENTER DEBUTS

We have received many requests from Property Owners who wanted better communication with our Inspections Department. We have heard you loud and clear.

In an effort to make the inspections process more responsive and accessible, we now have dedicated staff at our new **Inspections Call Center** to assist you with tasks such as re-scheduling inspections and notifying you of inspections results. Please direct all inspections-related inquiries to the Inspections Call Center at **914-294-2353**. As always, the Inspections Department fax number (for rent increase requests, Verification of Repairs forms, and other Inspections-related faxes) remains **914-930-5441**. You can also send e-mail inquiries to **newyork@cvrinspections.com** and view inspections information online at **<https://newyork.cvrinspections.com>**.

The Inspections Call Center representatives have been trained to respond to inspection-related phone calls from both Participants and Property Owners. This line supports both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking callers. Call Center representatives will notate each conversation, and in the event that they cannot answer a question, they can generate a ticket to the appropriate person to follow up with the tenant or landlord. The new ticket system ensures that inspections-related inquiries are resolved by the designated staff in a timely manner.

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INSPECTION SCHEDULING UPDATE

You may have noticed recently that you received a Notice of Inspection a few months earlier than you expected. That is because the participant's annual inspection is no longer connected to the participant's annual recertification. Inspections will still be conducted annually for the foreseeable future; however, the month of your tenant's inspection may change. For example, a tenant who used to have her inspection and annual recertification in February may now have her annual inspection in December and her annual recertification in February. This was done to give us greater flexibility in scheduling inspections. Instead of filling up two weeks of each month with annual inspections, we are now able to spread them throughout the month.

TIMELINE TO CORRECT HQS DEFICIENCIES

After an annual inspection, the Participant and Property Owner are given a period of time to correct any Housing Quality Standard (HQS) violations found in the unit. For non-emergency and/or non-life threatening deficiencies, CVR New York will accept a Verification of Repairs form signed by the Participant and Property Owner at our discretion. If no Verification of Repairs form is received, a re-inspection will be scheduled within 30 calendar days.

In the instance where a unit fails for no access to the mechanical area, the Property Owner should contact our Inspections Call Center to let us know when the mechanical area can be inspected (keeping in mind the 30 day deadline.) In the instance where a unit fails for an infestation, the Verification of Repairs form must be submitted with a proof of extermination specific to the unit in question and following the date of the inspection. Emergency and/or life threatening deficiencies must be corrected within 24 hours, and must be re-inspected. They cannot be resolved with a Verification of Repairs form.

If non-emergency failure items are not verified to be completed within 30 calendar days, the Housing Assistance Payments will be abated, meaning payment will stop, and no retroactive payment will be made.

If emergency failure items do not pass re-inspection within 24 hours, Housing Assistance Payments will be abated. To keep track of your inspections, you are highly encouraged to utilize our OwnerPortal. Any questions about inspections should be directed to our Inspections Call Center at **914-294-2353**. Any Verifications of Repairs forms can be faxed to **914-930-5441**.

HEATING SEASON

Heat must be supplied from October 1 through May 31, to tenants in multiple dwellings if:

- The outdoor temperature falls below 55°F between 6 AM and 10 PM; each apartment must be heated to a temperature of at least 68 degrees Fahrenheit;
- The outdoor temperature falls below 40°F between the hours of 10 PM and 6 AM; each apartment must be heated to a temperature of at least 55 degrees Fahrenheit. (Multiple Dwelling Law § 79).

INSPECTIONS DEPARTMENT REMINDERS

Please be advised when completing a Request for Tenancy Approval for an Initial Inspection the apartment must be vacant on the date of inspection. The previous tenant and/or their belongings cannot be in the unit. The "Date Unit Available for Inspection" field must contain a date by which you expect the previous tenant to have already moved out.

An inspection of the mechanical area/boiler room is required as part of the HQS process. A carbon monoxide detector and a smoke detector must be within the mechanical area. Make sure that they are installed and in working condition prior to the inspection. It is a good idea to maintain a regular schedule of changing the batteries.

Finally, please remember to request rent increases two months before the end of the lease. Rent increases must include the Rent Increase Request form and an ETPA Lease Renewal (if applicable.) They can be faxed to (914) 930-5441 or submitted through the OwnerPortal.

HUD UPDATES EQUAL ACCESS RULE

On August 20, 2014, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) published Notice PIH 2014-20. This notice is available to the public on the HUD website. The subject of the notice is "Program Eligibility Regardless of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Marital Status as Required by HUD's Equal Access Rule." The subject matter of this notice includes revised guidelines for both Public Housing Authorities and Property Owners who participate in the HCV program.

HUD's notice clarifies that no Property Owner participating in the HCV program may inquire about the sexual orientation or gender identity of an applicant for, or occupant of, HUD-assisted housing. All housing providers are also subject to applicable state and local Fair Housing laws prohibiting discrimination because of sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or marital status. Although sexual orientation and gender identity are not protected classes under the Fair Housing Law, HUD may review a Public Housing Authority or Property Owner's policies to determine if they conform to the Equal Access Rule. In addition, sexual orientation is a protected class under New York State law, so HUD could refer complaints not covered by the Equal Access Rule to state agencies for further investigation.

CVR NEW YORK DESIGNATED AS "HIGH PERFORMER"

We are pleased to inform you that CVR New York was designated as a High Performer following our audit for the second consecutive year. High performer rating is achieved when a Housing Authority receives a SEMAP score of at least 90 percent. SEMAP consists of indicators used by HUD to measure the performance of Housing Authorities. We know the service we provide is crucial to the families we serve, as well as the Property Owners who rely on prompt and accurate payment each month, and we will continue to strive to be a High Performer every year.

CVR NEW YORK PROPERTY OWNERS' MEETING 2015

Many of you who attended last January's Property's Owner Meeting, and many who missed it, have called to inquire about the date of the next meeting. Our **2015 Property Owners' Meeting** will be held in the Spring or Summer, in the hope of better weather conditions for this year's meeting. We will mail you a "Save the Date" postcard when we have finalized the date, time, and location for the meeting. Please feel free to contact us with suggestions for topics that you would like to learn more about and/or discuss at the meeting.

TAX SEASON APPROACHING

Although Housing Assistance Payments constitute taxable income, taxes are not taken out of them during the year. Because of this, you will receive a 1099 form in January showing the income you received from the program during 2014. The 1099s are being mailed from Albany, so please allow them time to arrive. If after a few weeks you still have not received your 1099, please contact this office. We will first verify that we have the correct address on file for you. If the address we have on file is incorrect, you will be required to submit a revised W9 form before we request another 1099.

OWNERPORTAL UPDATE

Housing Choice Voucher Program

OwnerPortal

If you have yet to do so, please sign up today for an account on our OwnerPortal. So far, more than 400 Property Owners are using this resource to keep track of their Housing Choice Voucher program tenants. The OwnerPortal is located at:

<https://nyowner.hcvportal.org>

If you have any trouble registering for or using the OwnerPortal, please contact info@cvrnewyork.com and we will assist you in using the portal and troubleshoot any technical difficulties.



**112 E. POST RD. SUITE 102
WHITE PLAINS, NY 10601**

We are always looking for ways to improve our service and we value your opinion...Please complete our survey online:

<http://surveys.cvrnewyork.com>

Participants who complete the survey and supply a valid voucher number and email are automatically entered into a drawing to receive a \$50 gift card from Target!



Scan this QR code to be directed to the survey on your smart phone.



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

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