

Chapter 8

LEASING AND INSPECTIONS [24 CFR 5, Subpart G; 24 CFR 966, Subpart A]

INTRODUCTION

Public housing leases are the contractual basis of the legal relationship between the PHA and the tenant. All units must be occupied pursuant to a dwelling lease agreement that complies with HUD regulations.

HUD regulations require the PHA to inspect each dwelling unit prior to move-in, at move-out, and annually during the period of occupancy. In addition, the PHA may conduct additional inspections in accordance with PHA policy.

This chapter is divided into two parts as follows:

Part I: Leasing. This part describes pre-leasing activities and the PHA's policies pertaining to lease execution, lease modification, and payments under the lease.

Part II: Inspections. This part describes the PHA's policies for inspecting dwelling units.

PART I: LEASING

8-I.A. OVERVIEW

An eligible family may occupy a public housing dwelling unit under the terms of a lease. The lease must meet all regulatory requirements and must also comply with applicable state and local laws and codes.

The term of the lease must be for a period of 12 months. The lease must be renewed automatically for another 12-month term, except that the PHA may not renew the lease if the family has violated the community service requirements [24 CFR 966.4(a)(2)].

PHAs must adopt smoke free policies, which must be implemented no later than July 30, 2018. The policy is attached as Exhibit 8-1.

Part I of this chapter contains regulatory information on leasing, where applicable, as well as the PHA's leasing policies.

8-I.B. LEASE ORIENTATION

MHA Policy

After unit acceptance but prior to occupancy, a PHA representative will conduct a lease orientation with the family. All adult family members are required to attend.

Orientation Agenda

MHA Policy

When families attend the lease orientation, they will be provided with:

- A copy of the lease
- A copy of the PHA's grievance procedure
- A copy of the house rules
- A copy of the MHA's schedule of maintenance charges
- A copy of the MHA's smoke free policy
- A copy of "Is Fraud Worth It?" (form HUD-1141-OIG), which explains the types of actions a family must avoid and the penalties for the program abuse
- A copy of "What You Should Know about EIV," a guide to the Enterprise Income Verification (EIV) system published by HUD as an attachment to Notice PIH 2010-19
- A notice that includes the procedures for requesting relief and the PHA's criteria for granting requests for relief for excess utility surcharges
- A copy of form HUD 5380, VAWA Notice of Occupancy Rights
- A copy of form HUD 5382, Certification of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, or Stalking

Topics to be discussed and explained to all families include:

- Applicable deposits and all other charges
- Review and explanation of lease provisions
- Unit maintenance requests and work orders
- The PHA's interim reporting requirements
- Review and explanation of occupancy forms
- Community service requirements

- Family choice of rent
- Smoke free policy
- VAWA protections

8-I.C. EXECUTION OF LEASE

The lease must be executed by the tenant and the PHA, except for automatic renewals of a lease [24 CFR 966.4(a)(3)].

A lease must state the composition of the household as approved by the PHA (family members and any PHA-approved live-in aide) [24 CFR 966.4(a)(1)(v)]. See Section 8-I.D. for policies regarding changes in the family composition during the lease term.

MHA Policy

The head of household, spouse or co-head, and all other adult members of the household will be required to sign the public housing lease prior to admission. An appointment will be schedule for the parties to execute the lease. The head of household will be provided a copy of the executed lease and the PHA will retain a copy in the resident's file.

Files for households that include a live-in aide will contain file documentation signed by the live- in aide, that the live-in aide is not a party to the lease and is not entitled to PHA assistance. The live-in aide is only approved to live in the unit while serving as the care attendant for the family member who requires the care.

8-I.D. MODIFICATIONS TO THE LEASE

The lease may be modified at any time by written agreement of the tenant and the PHA [24 CFR 966.4(a)(3)].

Modifications to the Lease Form

The PHA may modify its lease from time to time. However, the PHA must give residents at least thirty (30) days advance notice of the proposed changes and an opportunity to comment on the changes. The PHA must also consider any comments before formally adopting a new lease [24 CFR 966.3].

After proposed changes have been incorporated into the lease and approved by the Board, each family must be notified at least 60 days in advance of the effective date of the new lease or lease revision. A resident's refusal to accept permissible and reasonable lease modifications that are made in accordance with HUD requirements, or are required by HUD, is grounds for termination of tenancy [24 CFR 966.4(1)(2)(iii)(E)].

MHA Policy

The family will have 30 days to accept the revised lease. If the family does not accept the offer of the revised lease within that 30-day time frame, the family's tenancy will be terminated for other good cause in accordance with the policies in Chapter 13.

Schedules of special charges and rules and regulations are subject to modification or revision. Because these schedules are incorporated into the lease by reference, residents and resident organizations must be provided at least thirty days written notice of the reason(s) for any proposed modifications or revisions and must be given an opportunity to present written comments. The notice must be delivered directly or mailed to each tenant; or posted in at least three conspicuous places within each structure or building in which the affected dwelling units are located, as well as in a conspicuous place at the project office, if any, or if none, a similar central business location within the project. Comments must be taken into consideration before any proposed modifications or revisions become effective [24 CFR 966.5].

After the proposed revisions become effective they must be publicly posted in a conspicuous manner in the project office and must be furnished to applicants and tenants on request [24 CFR 966.5].

MHA Policy

When the PHA proposes to modify or revise schedules of special charges or rules and regulations, the PHA will post a copy of the notice in the central office and will mail a copy of the notice to each resident family. Documentation of proper notice will be included in each resident file.

Other Modifications

MHA Policy

The lease will be amended to reflect all changes in family composition.

If, for any reason, any member of the household ceases to reside in unit, the lease will be amended by drawing a line through the person's name. The head of household and PHA will be required to initial date of change.

If a new household member is approved by the PHA to reside in the unit, the person's name and birth date will be added to the lease. The head of household and PHA will be required to initial and date of change. If the new member of the household is an adult, s/he will also be required to sign and date the lease.

Policies governing when and how changes in family composition must be reported are contained in Chapter 9, Reexaminations.

8-I.E. SECURITY DEPOSITS [24 CFR 966.4(b)(5)]

At the point of the PHA, the lease may require security deposits. The amount of the security deposit cannot exceed one month's rent or a reasonable fixed amount as determined by PHA.

The PHA may

allow for gradual accumulation of the security deposit by the family, or the family may be required to pay the security deposit in full prior to occupancy. Subject to applicable laws, interest earned on security deposits may be refunded to the tenant after vacating the unit or used for tenant services or activities.

MHA Policy

The PHA does not charge a rental security deposit to any residents.

8-I.F. PAYMENTS UNDER THE LEASE

Rent Payments [24 CFR 966.4(b)(1)]

Families must pay the amount of the monthly tenant determined by the PHA in accordance with HUD regulations and other requirements.

The lease must specify the initial amount of the tenant rent at the beginning of the initial lease term, and the PHA must give written notice stating any change in the amount of tenant rent and when the change is effective.

MHA Policy

The tenant rent is due and payable at the PHA-designated location on the first of every month. If the first falls on a weekend or holiday, the rent is due and payable on the first business day thereafter.

If a family's tenant rent changes, the PHA will notify the family of the new amount and the effective date by sending a "Notice of Rent Adjustment" which will become an attachment to the lease.

Late Fees and Nonpayment

At the option of the PHA, the lease may provide for payment of penalties when the family is late in paying tenant rent [24 CFR 966.4(b)(3)].

The lease must provide that late payment fees are not due and collectible until two weeks after the PHA gives written notice of the charges. The written notice is considered an adverse action and must meet the requirements governing a notice of adverse action [24 CFR 966.4(b)(4)].

The notice of proposed adverse action must identify the specific grounds for the action and inform the family of their right for a hearing under the PHA grievance procedures. The PHA

must not take the proposed action until the time for the tenant to request a grievance hearing has expired, or (if a hearing was requested within the required timeframe,) the grievance process has been completed [24 CFR 966.4(e)(8)].

MHA Policy

If the family fails to pay their rent by the fifth day of the month, and the PHA has not agreed to accept payment at a later date, a 14-day Notice to Vacate will be issued to the resident for failure to pay rent, demanding payment in full or the surrender of the premises.

In addition, if the resident fails to make payment by the end of office hours on the fifth day of the month, a late fee of \$25.00 will be charged. Notices of late fees will be in accordance with requirements regarding notices of adverse action. Charges are due and payable 14 calendar days after billing. If the family requests a grievance hearing within the required timeframe, the PHA may not take action for nonpayment of the fee until the conclusion of the grievance process. If the resident can document financial hardship, the late fee may be waived on a case-by-case basis.

When a check is returned for insufficient funds or is written on a closed account, the rent will be considered unpaid and a returned check fee of \$25.00 will be charged to the family. The fee will be due and payable 14 days after billing.

Excess Utility Chargers

If the PHA charges the tenant for consumptions of excess utilities, the lease must state the basis for the determination of such charges. The imposition of excess utilities is permissible only if the charges are determined by an individual check meter servicing the leased unit or result from the use of major tenant-supplied appliances [24 CFR 966.4(b)(2)].

Schedules of special charges for utilities that are required to be incorporated in the lease by reference must be publicly posted in a conspicuous manner in the development office and must be furnished to applicants and tenants on request [24 CFR 966.5].

The lease must provide that charges for excess utility consumption are not due and collectible until two weeks after the PHA gives written notice of the charges. The written notice is considered an adverse action and must meet the requirements governing a notice of adverse action [24 CFR 966.4(b)(4)].

The notice of proposed adverse action must identify the specific grounds for the action and inform the family of their right to a hearing under the PHA grievance procedures. The PHA must not take the proposed action until the time for the tenant to request a grievance hearing has expired, or (if a hearing was requested within the required timeframe,) the grievance process has been completed [24 CFR 966.4(e)(8)].

MHA Policy

When applicable, at Holly Berry Court, Ferguson Court and Riverview West families will be charged for excess utility usage according to the PHA's current posted schedule.

Riverview West tenants will have the air conditioning feature on their P-Tech Units activated upon execution of an air conditioner usage agreement. Tenants will be charged monthly in accordance with said agreement.

Holly Berry Court and Ferguson Court tenants will have their apartments inspected monthly during the first week of each calendar month year-round. If the tenant has air conditioner units in their windows during the inspection, the tenant will be charged the prevailing rate for those units in the next monthly billing cycle.

Example: On June 3rd the property manager inspects the apartments for window air conditioners and documents an air conditioning unit in a tenant's apartment window. That tenant will be billed for the use of that AC unit at the prevailing AC usage rate in the July 1st monthly billing.

Notices of excess utility charges will be mailed monthly and will be in accordance with requirements regarding notices of adverse actions. Charges are due and payable 14 calendar days after billing. If the family requests a grievance hearing within the required timeframe, the PHA may not take action for nonpayment of the charges until the conclusion of the grievance process.

Nonpayment of excess utility charges is a violation of the lease and is grounds for eviction.

The PHA may grant requests for relief from surcharges from excess utility consumption of PHA furnished utilities as a reasonable accommodation where the PHA deems an exception is appropriate to meet the needs of elderly, ill, or disabled residents. In determining whether to grant this request, the PHA will consider special factors affecting utility usage that are not within the control of the resident, such as the need for medical equipment. Residents may request relief in accordance with Section 2-II.C. of this ACOP. The PHA will process such requests in accordance with Section 2-II.E. of this ACOP.

MHA Policy

Notice of the availability of procedures for requesting relief (including the PHA representative with whom initial contact may be made by the resident) and the PHA's criteria for granting requests, will be included in each notice to residents of changes in utility allowances or surcharges as well as to new residents as part of the lease orientation.

Maintenance and Damages Charges

If the PHA charges the tenant for maintenance and repair beyond normal wear and tear, the lease must state the basis for the determination of such charges [24 CFR 966.4(b)(2)].

Schedules of special charges for services and repairs which are to be incorporated in the lease by reference must be publicly posted in a conspicuous manner in the development office and must be furnished to applicants and tenants on request [24 CFR 966.5].

The lease must provide that charges for maintenance and repair beyond normal wear are not due and collectible until two weeks after the PHA gives written notice of the charges. The written notice is considered an adverse action and must meet the requirements governing a notice of adverse action [24 CFR 966.4 (b)(4)].

The notice of proposed adverse action must identify the specific grounds for the action and inform the family of their right for a hearing under the PHA grievance procedures. The PHA must not take the proposed action until the time for the tenant to request a grievance hearing has expired, or (if a hearing was requested within the required timeframe,) the grievance process has been completed [24 CFR 966.4 (e) (8)].

MHA Policy

When applicable, families will be charged for maintenance and/or damages according to the PHA's current schedule. Work that is not covered in the schedule will be charged based on the actual cost of labor and materials to make needed repairs (including overtime, if applicable).

Notices of maintenance and damages charges will be mailed monthly and will be in accordance with requirements regarding notices of adverse actions. Charges are due and payable 14 calendar days after billing. If the family requests a grievance hearing within the required timeframe, the PHA may not take action for nonpayment of the charges until the conclusion of the grievance process.

Nonpayment of maintenance and damages charges is a violation of the lease and is grounds for eviction.

PART II: INSPECTIONS

8-II.A. OVERVIEW

HUD regulations require the PHA to inspect each dwelling unit prior to move-in, at move-out, and annually during occupancy. In addition, the PHA may require additional inspections, in accordance with PHA Policy. This part contains the PHA's policies governing inspections, notification of unit entry, and inspections results.

8-II.B. TYPES OF INSPECTIONS

Move-IN Inspections [24 CFR 966.4(i)]

The lease must require the PHA and the family to inspect the dwelling unit prior to occupancy to determine the condition of the unit and equipment in the unit. A copy of the initial inspection, signed by the PHA and the tenant, must be provided to the tenant and retained in the resident file.

MHA Policy

The head of household and/or spouse/co-head must attend the initial inspection and sign the inspection form.

Move-OUT Inspections [24 CFR 966.4(i)]

The PHA must inspect the unit at the time the resident vacates the unit and must allow the resident to participate in the inspection if he or she wishes, unless the tenant vacates without notice to the PHA. The PHA must provide to the tenant a statement of any charges to be made for maintenance and damage beyond normal wear and tear.

The difference between the condition of the unit at move-in and move-out establishes the basis for any charges against the security deposit so long as the work needed exceeds that for normal wear and tear.

MHA Policy

When applicable, the PHA will provide the tenant with a statement of charges to be made for maintenance and damages beyond normal wear and tear, within 20 business days of conducting the move-out inspection.

Annual Inspections

Section 6(f)(3) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 requires that PHAs inspect each public housing project annually to ensure that the project's units are maintained in decent, safe, and sanitary condition. The PHA shall continue using the Uniform Physical Condition Standards (UPCS) in 24 CFR 5, Subpart G, Physical Condition Standards and Inspection Requirements, to

conduct annual project inspections. These standards address the inspection of the site area, building systems and components, and dwelling units.

MHA Policy

The PHA will inspect all occupied units annually using HUD's Uniform Physical Condition Standards (UPCS).

Quality Control Inspections

The purpose of quality control inspections is to assure that all defects were identified in the original inspection, and that repairs were completed at an acceptable level of craftsmanship and within an acceptable time frame

MHA Policy

Supervisory quality control inspections will be conducted in accordance with the PHA's maintenance plan.

Special Inspections

MHA Policy

PHA staff may conduct a special inspection for any of the following reasons:

- Housekeeping
- Suspected pest infestation
- Unit condition
- Suspected lease violation
- Preventive maintenance
- Routine maintenance
- There is reasonable cause to believe an emergency exists

Other Inspections

MHA Policy

Building exteriors, grounds, common areas and systems will be inspected according to the PHA's maintenance plan.

8-II.C. NOTICE AND SCHEDULING OF INSPECTIONS

Notice of Entry

Non-emergency Entries [24 CFR 966.4(j) (1)]

The PHA may enter the unit, with reasonable advance notification to perform routine inspections and maintenance, make improvements and repairs, or to show the unit for re-leasing. A written statement specifying the purpose of the PHA entry delivered to the dwelling unit at least two days before such entry is considered reasonable advance notification.

MHA Policy

The PHA will notify the resident in writing at least 48 hours prior to any non-emergency inspections.

For regular annual inspections, the family will receive at least 2 weeks in written notice of the inspection to allow the family to prepare the unit for the inspection.

Entry for repairs requested by the family will not require prior notice. Resident requested repairs presume permission for the PHA to enter the unit.

Emergencies Entries [24 CFR 966.4 (j)(2)]

The PHA may enter the dwelling unit at any time without advance notice when there is reasonable cause to believe that an emergency exists. If no adult household member is present at the time of an emergency entry, the PHA must leave a written statement showing the date, time, and purpose of the entry prior to leaving the dwelling unit.

Scheduling of Inspections

MHA Policy

Inspections will be conducted during business hours. If a family needs to reschedule an inspection, they must notify the PHA at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled inspection. The PHA will reschedule the inspection no more than once unless the resident has a verifiable good cause to delay the inspection. The PHA may request verification of such cause.

Attendance at Inspections

Residents are required to be present for move-in inspections [24 CFR 966.4 (i)]. There is no such requirement for other types of inspections.

MHA Policy

Except at move-in inspections, the resident is not required to be present for the inspection. The resident may attend the inspection if he or she wishes.

If no one at home, the inspector will enter the unit and conduct the inspection.

8-II.D. INSPECTION RESULTS

The PHA is obligated to maintain dwelling units and the projects in decent, safe, and sanitary conditions and to make necessary repairs to dwelling units [24 CFR 966.4(e)].

Emergency Repairs [24 CFR 966.4(h)]

If the unit is damaged to the extent conditions are created which are hazardous to the life, health, or safety of the occupants, the tenant must immediately notify the PHA of the damage, and the PHA must make the repairs within a reasonable time frame.

If a household member or guest caused the damage, the PHA must charge the family for the reasonable cost of repairs. The PHA may also take lease enforcement action against the family.

If the PHA cannot make repairs quickly, the PHA must offer the family standard alternative accommodations. If the PHA can neither repair the defect within reasonable time frame nor offer alternative housing, rent shall be abated in proportion to the seriousness of the damage and loss in value as a dwelling. Rent shall not be abated if a household member or guest caused the damage, or if the resident rejects the alternative accommodations.

MHA Policy

When conditions in the unit are hazardous to life, health, or safety, the PHA will make repairs or otherwise abate the situation within 24 hours.

Defects hazardous to life, health, or safety include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Any condition that jeopardizes the security of the unit
- Major plumbing leaks, or flooding, waterlogged ceiling, or floor in imminent danger of falling
- Natural or LP gas or fuel oil leaks
- Any electrical problem or condition that could result in shock or fire
- Absence of a working heating system when outside temperature is below 60 degrees Fahrenheit
- Utilities not in service, including no running hot water
- Conditions that present the imminent possibility of injury

- Obstacles that prevent safe entrance or exit from the unit
- Absence of a functioning toilet in the unit
- Inoperable smoke detectors

Non-emergency repairs

MHA Policy

The PHA will correct non-life threatening health and safety defects within 30 business days of the inspection date. If the PHA is unable to make repairs within that period due to circumstances beyond the PHA's control (e.g. required parts or services are not available, weather conditions, etc.) the PHA will notify the family of an estimated date of completion.

The family must allow the PHA access to the unit to make repairs.

Resident-Caused

Damages MHA

Policy

Damages to the unit beyond wear and tear will be billed to the tenant in accordance with the policies in 8-I.G., Maintenance and Damage Charges.

Housekeeping

MHA Policy

Residents whose housekeeping habits pose a non-emergency health or safety risk, encourage insect or rodent infestation, or cause damage to the unit are in violation of the lease. In these instances, the PHA will provided proper notice of a lease violation.

A re-inspection will be conducted within 7 days to confirm that the resident has complied with the requirement to abate the problem. Failure to abate the problem or allow for a re-inspection or cooperate with the exterminator's instruction and recommendations is considered a violation of the lease and will result in termination of tenancy in accordance with Chapter 13.

Notice of lease violation will also be issued to residents who purposely disengage the unit's smoke detector. Only one warning will be given. A second incidence will result in lease termination.