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HUD Issues COVID-19 FAQs for Housing Authorities

by the Housing Group

HUD issued “[COVID-19 FAQs for Public Housing Agencies](#)” on March 30, 2020, with an updated version 2 circulated on March 31, 2020 (the FAQ). The FAQ covers frequently asked questions regarding *Key Resources, Emergency Preparedness, Operational Concerns, Resident Health, Eligible Use of Funds, Relocation, and Service Grant Administration (ROSS-FSS)*. The FAQ also stresses that in light of the CARES Act, HUD will be developing detailed guidance and considering waivers that will likely modify some of the answers provided in the FAQ.

In the *Emergency Preparedness* section, HUD (i) posts PIH-COVID@hud.gov as a dedicated email address for PHA questions; (ii) encourages housing authorities to identify pandemic emergency or continuing operations plans, (iii) provides guidance on what jobs are essential, (iv) suggests websites with helpful information regarding specialized cleaning of units; and (v) reminds housing authorities of the justifications permitting single source procurement, including public exigency or emergency, but underscoring the need to maintain within its files the rationale for the single source proposal and the cost analysis.

Operationally, the FAQs (i) confirm suspension of REAC unit inspections at all PIH and Multifamily properties; (ii) allow conducting HUD-required public meetings remotely or online when gatherings are otherwise prohibited, provided the housing authority can post answers to questions raised during the meeting; and (iii) address other administrative issues related to audit, reports, income verification and ability to use electronic or scanned signatures, among other issues.

HUD provides guidance regarding communication and information sharing to the housing authority and by the housing authority with its residents.

The FAQ underscores that HUD remains fully functional during the pandemic, verifying the ability to use electronic or scanned signatures on HUD documents, dissuading the use of the postal service or express delivery, but relying on email communications instead, continuing obligation and disbursement of funds, and the availability of HUD staff through telework arrangements.

The FAQ frequently notes that certain areas will be subject to additional guidance or waivers under the authority granted HUD through the CARES Act. These include, for

example, Housing Quality Standard (HQS) inspections, extending Capital Fund obligation and expenditure end dates by one year, waiving the 25-year age limitation for Family Unification Program when providing vouchers to youth who may reach their 25th birthday while COVID-19 community restrictions are effective, guidance concerning tenancy of Section 8 program participants and the 120 day temporary moratorium on evictions for nonpayment of rent, and eligible uses of public housing Capital Funds and Operating Funds and other new funding appropriated under the CARES Act. We understand that waivers are currently working through the HUD clearance process and should be issued very soon.

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