



NEW CASTLE COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY

Housing Choice Voucher Program

77 READS WAY, NEW CASTLE, DE 19720 • NEWCASTLEDE.GOV
(302) 395-5600 • FAX (302) 395-5591

Special Operating Procedures for the 2020 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak

Pursuant to guidance for PHAs provided in **HUD Notice PIH 2020-05**, New Castle County Housing Authority (hereafter, "NCCHA") has adopted and codified the following temporary procedures with regard to our Housing Choice Voucher Program and HQS Inspections process. These measures will remain in place until the conclusion of the State of Emergency declared by Delaware Governor John Carney to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

As NCCHA operates within New Castle County's Department of Community Services, in addition to the HCV and HQS specific processes detailed below, several general procedures have also changed. Most importantly, our offices are currently *closed to the public*. All correspondence for NCCHA staff *must* be sent by mail, fax or email. A full listing of NCCHA staff is available on the [Staff page of our website](#). Any payments sent to NCCHA at this time must be in the form of a check or money order.

Client & Voucher Processes

Annual Recertifications

The recertification packets are being mailed out 2 weeks earlier than usual to allow more time for the clients to return them since the packets can only be mailed back. The housing assistants are available by phone and email to assist clients when needed. For the packets being mailed the month of April and possibly May, a self-addressed return envelope will be included.

Recertifications will be completed even if paperwork is missing and the packet is not complete. Verification of anything missing will be handled by phone or email using "self-certifying" verification and/or "note to file" verification with the expressed understanding that all the paperwork/verifications must be returned once the crisis is over.

Interims

NCCHA will continue telling clients changes must be in by the 15th of the month—however, we will go on a month to month basis to decide if that date will be extended. If the client is unable to provide documentation from the employer or income source, the client will be provided a self-certification form to complete. For clients without the use of the internet, the housing assistant will be able to complete the Note to File form.

Vouchers

NCCHA will issue additional 60-day extensions once the State of Emergency has ended and we have resumed "regular" business practices.

RFTA's

RFTA's are being processed when received, like normal. The only change we made is that once it is approved by the H.A. and Administrator, the RFTA's are being emailed to Inspections to schedule the inspection. When the inspection passes, Inspections emails the appropriate H.A. with that information so the lease can be requested and the move in take place.

Zero HAP Terminations

NCCHA has been given the ability to extend the clients termination date if the client is being EOP'd for '6 months zero hap' during this time. The client's information will be presented to Sue Lucy or Rob Rizzo, Administration, to look over the case and formulate a decision.

Terminations/Hearings

Terminations and hearings are currently on hold. Our hearing officer, Kathy Hoerner-McGinnes, will contact us with rescheduled dates for termination hearings. If the clients are still in the units, we will continue paying the landlord until the terminations are final.

Portability

When porting a client out of our jurisdiction, it will be verified if the receiving housing authority is accepting incoming ports and/or if there is protocol in place; for example, the state of Delaware has a 2-week quarantine for out-of-state individuals.

For in-state clients who want to port-in to our jurisdiction, the packets are either being mailed or emailed to the client dependent on what is easier and more convenient for them. Once their completed paperwork is received by our Portability Office, a phone interview is done. Clients who want to port to us from another state are currently on hold. Both the client and the sending housing authority are notified.

NCCHA has suspended acceptance of all "Port-In" cases from housing authorities located in other states.

HQS Inspection Processes

Initial (Move-In) Inspections – Continuing

NCCHA Inspectors are still able to perform Initial HQS Inspection of *unoccupied* units at this time. We ask that all landlords and property managers meeting or arranging access for inspectors adhere to all state-recommended physical distancing and other virus safety protocols.

Initial inspections of *occupied* units, where a new voucher holder's current residence is being brought into HCVP and needs inspection, will be completed via Owner Self-Certification. For such Remote Initial Inspections, this form (see below) is to be accompanied by photo documentation (from either the tenant or landlord) of the following essential features:

- heater,
- hot water heater,
- thermostat showing the temperature at no less than 60°F,
- charged ABC-type fire extinguisher present,
- smoke detectors on each level and in each bedroom,
- GFI-protected outlets installed in kitchen and bathrooms,
- running water at each sink and from each shower or tub faucet, and
- junction box, open to show breakers.

The landlord and tenant will both also be required to complete and return the COVID-19 Modified Inspections Disclosure form (see below). Units inspected remotely due to new HCV tenants being already in place will be fully re-inspected by an NCCHA inspector within 60 days of the end of the State of Emergency.

Annual Inspections – Suspended

As NCCHA's normal cycle of routine inspections kept six months ahead of statutory requirements, we have suspended all Annual Inspections until further notice. We will resume and catch up on routine HQS inspections once the State of Emergency ends. If these measures are still in place at the end of July, NCCHA may adopt alternative inspection methods – including self-certification by tenants and owners – at that time.

Interim (“Special” or “Emergency”) Inspections – Continuing Remotely

As at any other time, tenants should first contact their landlords regarding any necessary repairs in their homes, whether routine or emergency, and should follow the guidelines in their respective leases for reporting and response time. After making such a report regarding routine repairs and receiving no response in a timely manner – OR, after making such a report regarding Emergency Repairs and receiving no response within 12 hours – clients should contact their caseworker or NCCHA Inspections to request a Special or Emergency inspection.

Upon receiving such requests, NCCHA will ask tenants to provide photos by text message (to 302-300-0544) or email (to matthew.alexander@newcastlede.gov) showing the damage or issue they are reporting. Such documentation will be added to our file but will not be required for any issue impacting the safety, security or sanitation in the unit. Tenants reporting minor, “Non-Life-Threatening” issues may be asked to work with their landlord to find a resolution appropriate to the current crisis, at the discretion of NCCHA staff.

Once we have taken the complaint and received documentation, if any, a remote inspection will be entered into our system and the landlord will be notified of the cited violations. For emergency repairs, we will make every attempt to contact landlords immediately via phone and email. Emergency repairs must still be completed within 24 hours, and routine repairs within 30 days, of citation.

Upon completion of repairs, the landlord should notify NCCHA that the work is complete. At that time, we will verify this with the tenant and request documentation by photo or receipt that the work was done satisfactorily. We will also send the landlord a form to Self-Certify that unit is in compliance, as well a disclosure and acknowledgment form regarding COVID-19 special operations for both landlord and tenant to read, sign and return. Once NCCHA has received all required documentation, a Re-Inspection will be entered and Passed, and letters sent to both parties by US Mail.

If there is a dispute between the landlord and tenant regarding the completion or satisfactoriness of repairs, NCCHA staff will handle that on a case-by-case basis, based on the nature of the repairs, verifiability, the current situation with regard to Coronavirus, and other pertinent factors.



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HCV Landlord Self-Certification of HQS Compliance

To be completed by NCCHA Staff:

Property Address: _____
Date of Citation by NCCHA: _____ **Emergency Repairs Required? Y / N**
Tenant Name: _____ **Housing Program Assistant:** _____
Original Inspection ID: _____ **Re-Inspection ID:** _____

Violation Cited (not required for Initial Inspection Self-Certification)	Completed?
1. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

If any required repairs were not able to be completed, please describe why and attach any related receipts or work orders for items on order or third-party repairs scheduled but not finished.

Owner Name: _____ **Company:** _____
Email Address: _____ **Phone:** _____

Certification

I, the Owner or Owner’s Agent (Landlord) for the above-referenced property, do hereby certify that any listed violations have been corrected in a professional manner to the best of my knowledge. I further certify that, to the best of my knowledge, no Life-Threatening conditions currently exist in the unit or on the premises and that it meets HUD’s Housing Quality Standards.

Owner or Agent Name **Signature** **Date**



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COVID-19 Modified HQS Inspections Statement and Disclaimer

Property Address: _____

WHEREAS, in response to the public health treat created by COVID-19, on March 13, 2020 a State of Emergency for the State of Delaware went into effect;

WHEREAS, New Castle County Housing Authority (“NCCHA”) administers critical rental assistance in the form of the HCV Program, which supports stable housing for many county residents, and that housing instability increases the risk of transmission and community exposure to COVID-19;

WHEREAS, NCCHA will continue administering the critical rental assistance resources and has implemented a COVID-19 Modified Housing Inspection Process (the “Special Operating Procedures for the 2020 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak”) in order to protect the public health by limiting community exposure and transmission of COVID-19;

WHEREAS, NCCHA hereby disclaims liability for any damages, foreseeable or otherwise, financial, physical or otherwise, that may result from this COVID-19 Modified Inspection;

NOW, THEREFORE, in furtherance of the above mentioned, Tenant and Owner Each Agree as follows:

- I have received a copy of “Special Operating Procedures for the 2020 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak” and the COVID-19 Modified Inspection process has been adequately described;
- The Unit(s) will be re-inspected within 60 days after a state of emergency is lifted;
- If items noted during the COVID-19 Modified Inspection checklist are found to be in deficiency upon reinspection, the rent may be abated if not repaired within 30 days of the re-inspection;
- If noncompliance items not discovered during the COVID-19 Modified Inspection are discovered upon re-inspection the rent may be abated if not resolved within 30 days of the re-inspection;
- NCCHA will be held harmless jointly and severally by Owner and Tenant for any damages, physical, financial, or otherwise that may result from the implementation of the COVID-19 Modified Inspection, including but not limited to any claim to any rent that may be abated resulting from noncompliance discovered upon re-inspection which may have been discovered on a non-modified initial inspection, or any harm that may be caused by noncompliance items not discovered that may have been discovered by a non-modified inspection.

This form may be executed in multiple counterparts which taken together will be considered as one.

Sign	Tenant:	Owner:	NCCHA:
Print	Tenant:	Owner:	NCCHA:
Date			