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Notice to Public Housing Residents Regarding the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

A federal law that went into effect in 2006 protects individuals who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. The name of the law is the Violence Against Women Act, or “VAWA.” This notice summarizes the Houston Housing Authority’s policies and your rights under VAWA.

Protections for Victims

If you are eligible for public housing, the Houston Housing Authority will not refuse to admit you to the public housing program just because you are a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking.

If you are the victim of domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking, the Houston Housing Authority will not evict you based on acts or threats of violence committed against you. Also, criminal acts directly related to the domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking caused by a member of your household or a guest can’t be the reason for evicting you if you were the victim of the abuse.

Confidentiality

The Houston Housing Authority will keep confidential any information you provide about the violence against you, unless:

- You give written permission to the Houston Housing Authority to release the information.
- The Houston Housing Authority needs to use the information in an eviction proceeding, such as to evict your abuser.
- A law requires the Houston Housing Authority to release the information.

You should inform the Houston Housing Authority if your safety will be placed at risk if the Agency discloses information about the violence against you.

Proving that You Are a Victim of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, or Stalking

The Houston Housing Authority can ask you to prove or “certify” that you are a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking. There are three ways you can prove that you are a victim:

- Complete the certification form given to you by the Houston Housing Authority. The form will ask for your name, the name of your abuser, the abuser’s relationship to you, the date, time, and location of the incident of violence, and a description of the violence.
- Provide a statement from a victim service provider, attorney, or medical professional who has helped you address incidents of domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking. The professional must state that he or she believes that the incidents of abuse are real. Both you and the professional must sign the statement, and both of you must state that you are signing “under penalty of perjury.”
- Provide a police or court record, such as a protective order.

If you are requested by the Houston Housing Authority, or a Section 8 owner, to provide verification, you must provide such verification within 14 business days (i.e., 14 calendar days, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and federally-recognized holidays) after receipt of the request for verification.

Removing the Abuser from the Household

The Houston Housing Authority may evict a household member who has committed criminal acts of violence against you, your family members or others, while allowing the remaining household members to stay in your unit.

Reasons You Can Be Evicted

The Houston Housing Authority may still evict you if it can show that not evicting you creates a real and immediate threat to residents or staff. Also, the Houston Housing Authority may evict you for serious or repeated lease violations that are not related to the domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking against you.

VAWA and Other Laws

VAWA does not limit the Houston Housing Authority's duty to honor court orders about access to or control of the property. This includes orders issued to protect you and orders dividing property among household members in cases where a family breaks up.

VAWA does not replace any federal, state, or local law that provides greater protection for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking.

For Additional Information

If you would like additional information about the Houston Housing Authority's VAWA Policy, you may obtain the complete VAWA Policy on HHA's website at www.housingforhouston.com

For help and advice on escaping an abusive relationship, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY).