



Berkeley Housing Authority

BHA Newsletter

COVID-19 Edition for Landlords

April 2020

BHA staff hopes this newsletter finds you and your family well. It is an understatement to say our world has changed since the coronavirus pandemic hit California, including impacts to our daily lives within Berkeley. This means each of you, the staff of BHA, our families, business owners, and employees.

It includes the strange reality of re-thinking our routines and approach to places we are so used to frequenting without thought: taking public transportation, bringing the kids to the playground, students learning in school, heading out to buy basic necessities, and how we conduct business.

When the Shelter in Place Order was announced in Berkeley, effective March 17, BHA made the important decision to close our doors to the public. This was to comply with the Health Officer's Order in an effort to keep all of our clients, you, our landlords and program participants (your tenants), as well as staff, safe. As you know, this sheltering in place seems to be working in California. We don't know when it will end just yet. Here is what the State of California website shares:

Everyone in California is required to stay home except to get food, care for a relative or friend, get necessary health care, or go to an essential job. If you go out, stay at least 6 feet away from other people and wear a cloth face covering.

Be assured: the essential work of BHA continues during the Shelter in Place Order. Staff members are practicing social distancing, working in the office twice a week, and from home the rest of the time; when staff are in the office, it is on a staggered schedule to minimize the number of people in the same location simultaneously. Below is more information on how BHA staff are handling operations, including HAP payments and inspections.

Note: the State of California and City of Berkeley have passed moratorium on evictions during the COVID-19 emergency declaration. For more information, see the Rent Board's website: <https://www.cityofberkeley.info/rent/>.

As you are aware, non-payment of rent should **not** be a factor for tenancies assisted through the Berkeley Housing Authority, because rent portions both paid by clients to landlords, and by BHA paid to landlords in the form of HAP (subsidy), are adjusted, when households experience job loss or reduced working hours due to COVID-19. This means that households with a Section 8 voucher are expected to continue to pay their rent portion.

Please continue to be safe, and take good care of yourselves and one another. We will get through this difficult moment. **In the meantime, the quickest way to learn about updates in BHA's operations during the COVID-19 crisis is to check our website: www.cityofberkeley.info/bha.**

BHA Operations during the Shelter in Place Order

The Berkeley Housing Authority is implementing the following temporary measures to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, in compliance with the City of Berkeley's Health Officer's Order to Shelter in Place:

BHA's Office Operations:

- During the Shelter in Place Order, the agency will be closed to the public, until the Order is lifted.
- Staff will check email and voice mail regularly and will be able to respond. See below for contact information of specific BHA Housing Specialists.

Rent/HAP:

- BHA expects that HUD will continue providing HAP subsidy to housing authorities, nation-wide throughout the pandemic.
- Tenants must continue paying their monthly rent portion to their landlords.
- BHA is re-calculating tenant rent portion and adjusting HAP as needed for those households experiencing job loss, or reduction in work hours.
- Staff will attempt to mail, or email (where emails are available) new rent portions. If mail/email are unavailable, they may simply call you.
- If you have not yet signed up for direct deposit, now would be a good time to do so. The weblink to the form is: https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/BHA/Level_3_-_General/Direct%20Dep%20Form%20Jan12.pdf?n=5224.
- Currently our database is having challenges with the email notification function of monthly HAP amounts for your Section 8 tenancies. Please be patient while we attempt to get this fixed.
- If you have any questions regarding the monthly HAP payment for any Section-8 assisted tenancies, please contact Jayla Fuentecilla, in the Finance/Accounting unit, at bsoukphaly@cityofberkeley.info or 510-981-5474.

Inspections:

- We still have an inspector working on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, from 9 am – 12:00 noon.
- Move in Inspections ("RTA") are still happening, in order to allow new tenancies. We are now accepting faxes (510-704-0581) and emails of completed RTAs, to: tpumphrey@cityofberkeley.info.
- Special inspections, for emergency fail items will continue (such as no heat, major plumbing leak, no smoke or carbon monoxide detectors, etc), as requested by landlords or tenants. If you need an emergency Special inspection, please email tpumphrey@cityofberkeley.info or call 510-981-5490.
- All other inspections are on hold. If you have a reinspection for which you have made repairs, please send evidence of the repairs (photos or receipts for work/supplies) to: tpumphrey@cityofberkeley.info, so we can pass the inspection remotely.

Contacting Housing Specialist Staff

NOTE: Housing Specialist, Althea Maybon is out of the office until June. Please contact Housing Occupancy Supervisor, Tilda Barnes instead. For a complete list of staff, visit our website: https://www.cityofberkeley.info/BHA/Home/Contact_Us.aspx.

Client Last Name begins with:

Housing Specialist:

A, B, C, D, K, L and O.....Lynda DeShazier, 981-5482, ldeshazier@cityofberkeley.info

E, F, G, H, I, J, M and N.....Tracy Jackson, 981-5486, tjackson@cityofberkeley.info

Mc, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y and Z.....Althea Maybon (Until June, please contact Tilda Barnes)

New Contracts/Portability/Mod Rehab.....HCV Supvsr Tilda Barnes, 981-5484, tbarnes@cityofberkeley.info

** For Participants in the Family Self Sufficiency Program (FSS), theHousing Specialist is Celinda Aguilar-Vasquez, 981-5483, caguilar-vasquez@cityofberkeley.info.