



Berkeley Housing Authority

BHA Client Newsletter

COVID-19 Edition

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, and landlords, our families, business owners, and employees.

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 protect the safety of you, our program participants, and our landlords, as well as staff. 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 to occur 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 income changes and annual reexams, inspections, and household changes. Note: Reasonable Accommodations and VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) processes are unchanged; see BHA's website, www.cityofberkeley.info/bha, for important details on these matters.

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 next page for contact information of BHA Housing Specialist staff.

- **Income/Rent:**
 - Tenants must continue paying your monthly rent portion to your landlords.
 - Tenants must continue notifying your Housing Specialist when there is job loss or change in income.
 - If possible, please take a photo of layoff notice or work hour reduction notice, and email or drop off any paperwork through the mail slot or send by regular mail. The outside gates to our office are sometimes locked, we apologize and realize it is a challenge, so thank you for bearing with us.
 - If experiencing job loss, tenants are expected to apply for Unemployment Benefits and inform your Specialist, when approved.
 - You may access forms via BHA’s website:
https://www.cityofberkeley.info/BHA/Home/Forms_for_Owners_and_Tenants.aspx
 - If you do not have email access, please call your Housing Specialist so they are made aware of your income/household change, in order to re-calculate your rent portion.
 - Annual Reexams are still taking place—we ask that you mail back your forms and documentation that you have available, to: BHA, 1936 University Ave, Suite 150, Berkeley, CA 94704. If you are not able to mail or email back your forms, it is best to contact your Housing Specialist by email or phone.
- **Inspections:**
 - Move in Inspections (“RTA”) are still happening, in order to allow new tenancies. If you are transferring units, you still need to give your current landlord notice of your move out date and notify your Housing Specialist so you may get a transfer voucher and RTA packet for your new landlord to complete and submit to BHA. We are now accepting faxes and emails of RTAs, to: tpumphrey@cityofberkeley.info or fax 510-704-0581.
 - 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 tenants or landlords. 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 repairs were made already, please send evidence of the repairs such as photos to: tpumphrey@cityofberkeley.info, so we can pass the inspection remotely.
- **Family Obligations- a Reminder:**
 - Assisted families must continue to provide true and complete information to BHA, such as notifying your Specialist when there is a requested change in household composition or income change.

Contacting Your Housing Specialist

NOTE: Housing Specialist, Althea Maybon is out of the office until June. If she is your case worker, instead please contact Housing Occupancy Supervisor, Tilda Barnes.

<u>Client Last Name begins with:</u>	<u>Housing Specialist:</u>
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
** If you are currently participating in the Family Self Sufficiency Program (FSS), your Housing Specialist is Celinda Aguilar-Vasquez, 981-5483, caguilar-vasquez@cityofberkeley.info .	