



Berkeley Housing Authority



Section 8 Owner News September 2010

Bed Bugs

Bed Bugs! They are small, but pesty ... and particularly difficult to control once they invade a unit. We have not received any reports from Section 8 Program participants about a problem with bed bugs. If any of your tenants report "bites," particularly while they were asleep – it may be an early sign of a bed-bug problem. The bedroom and other sleeping areas should be carefully examined for bed bugs and signs of bed bug activity. Folds and creases in the bed linens, and seams and tufts of mattresses and box springs, in particular, may harbor bed bugs or their eggs. They may also be found within pleats of curtains, beneath loose areas of wallpaper near the bed, in corners of desks and dressers, within spaces of wicker furniture, behind cove molding, and in laundry or other items on the floor or around the room. For more information contact the office for a copy of the report from the Centers for Disease Control that HUD distributed in August, or go on-line to:

[http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Docs/Joint Statement on Bed Bug Control in the US.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/Docs/Joint%20Statement%20on%20Bed%20Bug%20Control%20in%20the%20US.pdf)

Property Management

We are experiencing an increase in complaints from participants and neighbors complaining about lack of property management at buildings suspected of housing families with Section 8 rental assistance. The success of our Section 8 Program is dependent upon our successful partnership: the Housing Authority, participating Landlords, and assisted families. You are encouraged to visit your property periodically for first hand information on what is happening on and about the property. Speak with neighbors about any concerns and/or observations. As necessary, issue warning notices to any tenant suspected of being in violation of the rental lease or disturbing the peaceful enjoyment of other residents. When appropriate, take action to enforce the terms of your lease – up to and including termination of tenancy. Be sure to provide a copy of all such correspondence to BHA, specifically addressed to the Tenant's Housing Specialist, if possible. We will add the information to our file for use in any action we initiate with regard to the family's ability to continue receiving rental assistance at tax payer expense.

Utility Service

HUD formula for determining family rent includes an allowance for tenant paid utilities for the assisted unit. The assisted family cannot be financially responsible for gas or electric service where a single meter registers use in the assisted unit AND for example, gas or electricity for a common laundry room. We have added this clause to the Request for Tenancy Form completed at the time a new Housing Assistance Payment Contract is requested. As existing situations come to our attention, we are offering the owner an opportunity to install a separate meter, or revise the contract to provide for owner payment of the utility. If you suspect such is the case for one of your existing contracts, please contact the assigned Housing Specialist immediately for assistance.

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Our new provision requiring installation of a carbon monoxide detector in every unit is effective January 1, 2011. Several owners have already acted voluntarily and installed the units; thank you. Note, the requirement will be waived for any unit that has electricity as the energy source for cooking and heating,

rather than gas. According to Community Energy Services Corporation, the most effective placement for the unit is near sleeping areas – but you should follow the manufacturer’s recommendations on placement.

Partial Exemption from Rent Control

Units rented through the Section 8 Voucher Program are exempt from the registration and rent ceiling provisions of the Rent Control Ordinance as long as the rent requested does not exceed the applicable Payment Standard. Note, while the Housing Authority will honor a contract for the unit based upon “market comparability,” if the amount is equal to the Payment Standard, the family is denied an allowance for utilities that they are required to cover, and in many cases – results in a family’s inability to pay rent and utilities. In situations where the market rent is greater than the Payment Standard, BHA can approve the contract, but the unit then becomes subject to registration and rent ceiling establishment by the Rent Board. Depending on how long the family has occupied the unit, this could result in a significant **decrease** in the approved rent. While we recognize the desire to maximize income for rental property, we encourage owners to maintain rents at or below the Payment Standard (minus) the utility allowance. We revise the Payment Standard each year – after HUD issues the Fair Market Rents. The next change, expected to be a modest increase, is tentatively scheduled for December 2010. An owner may request an increase in the contract once a year, at the contract anniversary. For more information please contact the assigned Housing Specialist.

Annual Unit Inspections

We continue to need your cooperation in helping us meet the HUD requirement to inspect each assisted unit annually, and determine compliance with minimal Housing Quality Standards. Our goal is to provide you 21 day advance written notice of all scheduled annual inspections. If you need to reschedule, please contact Patricia Baker, 510-981-5490 immediately. Otherwise, please make an effort to meet with your tenant, identify any deficiencies, and complete any required repairs. It is especially important that you, the tenant, or someone 18 or older is present to allow the inspector access to the unit and any common area where water heaters and/or heating boilers are located. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Absences, Additions, Subtractions to the Household

Please note that Section 8 households may not add or subtract family members at their whim – so if you notice a “new” household member that you don’t recognize on your property, or if a tenant approaches you to inform you that they have a new household member, or if you notice that a family member is absent from the unit for more than 30 days, please be sure to notify the Housing Specialist assigned to the family. If you do not know who the Housing Specialist assigned to the family is, please contact our main number, 510-981-5480, or send an email to bha@cityofberkeley.info.

Owner File Documentation

BHA is undergoing a review of all of our owner files. You may be receiving notification from us over the next several months that we need to obtain from you items such as copies of your driver’s license or social security card – thank you in advance for providing these and helping us to maintain accurate records!