

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

OFFICE OF HOUSING

Special Attention of:

NOTICE: H 08-07

Multifamily Hub Directors
Multifamily Program Center Directors
Supervisory Housing Project Managers
Project Managers
Contract Administrators
Owners and Management Agents Administering
the Project-Based Section 8 Assistance Program

Issued: September 30, 2008

Expires: September 30, 2009

SUBJECT: Implementation of the Violence Against Women and Justice Department Reauthorization Act of 2005 for the Multifamily Project-Based Section 8 Housing Assistance Payments Program

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Notice is to provide guidance to owners and management agents (O/As) administering one of Multifamily Housing's project-based Section 8 programs on the implementation of the Violence Against Women Act and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005, Public Law 109-162, hereafter referred to as VAWA.

In summary, the VAWA provides legal protections to victims of domestic violence, dating violence or stalking. These protections prohibit O/As from evicting or terminating assistance from individuals being assisted under a project-based Section 8 program if the asserted grounds for such action is an instance of domestic violence, dating violence or stalking.

This Notice transmits the Certification of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence or Stalking, Form HUD-91066 (Attachment 1), as required by the provisions of Section 606 of the VAWA. The VAWA provides that O/As may request a tenant to certify that he/she is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence or stalking and that the incidence(s) of threatened or actual abuse are bona fide in determining whether the protections afforded under the VAWA are applicable.

This Notice also transmits the HUD-approved Lease Addendum (Form HUD-91067) (Attachment 2) for use with the applicable HUD model lease for the covered project-based Section 8 program. This addendum revises the lease to reflect the statutory requirements of the VAWA that are related to the project-based Section 8 assistance programs.

II. APPLICABILITY

This notice is applicable to all O/As participating in the following project-based Section 8 programs under the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437):

- New Construction
- State Agency Financed
- Substantial Rehabilitation
- Loan Management Set-Aside (LMSA)
- Property Disposition Set-Aside (PDSA)
- Section 202 Projects With Section 8 Assistance (Section 202/8)
- Rural Housing Section 515 Projects With Section 8 Assistance (RHS Section 515/8)

III. BACKGROUND

On January 5, 2006, President Bush signed into law the Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005 (Public Law 109-162) and on August 12, 2006, signed into law technical corrections to the VAWA (Public Law 109-271).

The VAWA protections apply to families applying for or receiving rental assistance payments under the project-based Section 8 program. The law protects victims of domestic violence, dating violence or stalking, as well as their immediate family members generally, from being evicted or being denied housing assistance if an incident of violence that is reported and confirmed. The VAWA also provides that an incident of actual or threatened domestic violence, dating violence or stalking does not qualify as a serious or repeated violation of the lease nor does it constitute good cause for terminating the assistance, tenancy, or occupancy rights of the victim. Furthermore, criminal activity directly relating to domestic violence, dating violence or stalking is not grounds for terminating the victim's tenancy. O/As may bifurcate a lease in order to evict, remove, or terminate the assistance of the offender while allowing the victim, who is a tenant or lawful occupant, to remain in the unit.

IV. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are provided as assistance in understanding and implementing the VAWA protections. The definitions for domestic violence, dating violence, stalking and immediate family member have been incorporated into the United States Housing Act.

Domestic Violence includes felony or misdemeanor crimes of violence committed by a current or former spouse of the victim, by a person with whom

the victim shares a child in common, by a person who is cohabitating with or has cohabited with the victim as a spouse, by a person similarly situated to a spouse of the victim under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction receiving grant monies, or by any other person against an adult or youth victim who is protected from that person's acts under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction.

Dating Violence means violence committed by a person: (A) who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim, and (B) where the existence of such a relationship shall be determined based on a consideration of the following factors: (i) the length of the relationship; (ii) the type of relationship; and (iii) the frequency of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship.

Stalking means (A)(i) to follow, pursue, or repeatedly commit acts with the intent to kill, injure, harass, or intimidate; or (ii) to place under surveillance with the intent to kill, injure, harass, or intimidate another person; and (B) in the course of, or as a result of, such following, pursuit, surveillance, or repeatedly committed acts, to place a person in reasonable fear of the death of, or serious bodily injury to, or to cause substantial emotional harm to (i) that person; (ii) a member of the immediate family of that person; or (iii) the spouse or intimate partner of that person.

Immediate Family Member means, with respect to a person: (a) a spouse, parent, brother or sister, or child of the person, or an individual to whom that person stands in loco parentis (in place of a parent); or (B) any other person living in the household of that person and related to that person by blood or marriage.

Bifurcate means to divide a lease as a matter of law so that certain tenants can be evicted or removed while the remaining family members' lease and occupancy rights are allowed to remain intact.

V. **PROTECTIONS FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, DATING VIOLENCE OR STALKING**

The law offers the following protections against eviction or denial of housing based on domestic violence, dating violence or stalking:

- A. An applicant's or program participant's status as a victim of domestic violence, dating violence or stalking is not a basis for denial of rental assistance or for denial of admission, if the applicant otherwise qualifies for assistance or admission.
- B. An incident or incidents of actual or threatened domestic violence, dating violence or stalking will not be construed as serious or repeated violations

of the lease or other “good cause” for terminating the assistance, tenancy, or occupancy rights of a victim of abuse.

- C. Criminal activity directly related to domestic violence, dating violence or stalking, engaged in by a member of a tenant’s household or any guest or other person under the tenant’s control, shall not be cause for termination of assistance, tenancy, or occupancy rights of the victim of the criminal acts.
- D. Assistance may be terminated or a lease “bifurcated” in order to remove an offending household member from the home. Whether or not the individual is a signatory to the lease and lawful tenant, if he/she engages in a criminal act of physical violence against family members or others, he/she stands to be evicted, removed, or have his/her occupancy rights terminated. This action is taken while allowing the victim, who is a tenant or a lawful occupant, to remain.
- E. The provisions protecting victims of domestic violence, dating violence or stalking engaged in by a member of the household, may not be construed to limit the O/A, when notified, from honoring various court orders issued to either protect the victim or address the distribution of property in case a family breaks up.
- F. The authority to evict or terminate assistance is not limited with respect to a victim that commits unrelated criminal activity. Furthermore, if an O/A can show an actual and imminent threat to other tenants or those employed at or providing service to the property if an unlawful tenant’s residency is not terminated, then evicting a victim is an option, the VAWA notwithstanding. Ultimately, O/As may not subject victims to more demanding standards than other tenants.
- G. The VAWA protections shall not supersede any provision of any federal, state, or local law that provides greater protection for victims of domestic violence, dating violence or stalking. The laws offering greater protection are applied in instances of domestic violence, dating violence or stalking.

VI. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF OWNERS/AGENTS AND TENANTS

A. Owners/Agents (O/As) Rights and Responsibilities

1. Tenant Selection Plans and Policies and Procedures

O/As should update their Tenant Selection Plans and/or House Rules, as applicable, to incorporate the VAWA policies and protections.

Amending these documents will ensure uniformity in spreading awareness of the VAWA and avoid improper evictions.

O/As are encouraged to establish policies that support or assist victims of domestic violence, dating violence or stalking and that will protect victims, as well as members of their family, from losing their HUD-assisted housing as a consequence of domestic violence, dating violence or stalking.

O/As must provide tenants the option to complete the Certification form discussed in 3, below. The certification form may be made available to all eligible families at the time of admission or, in the event of a termination or start of an eviction for cause proceeding, the certification may be enclosed with the appropriate notice, directing the family to complete, sign and return the form within fourteen (14) business days.

2. Certification and Confidentiality

O/As responding to an incident of actual or threatened domestic violence, dating violence or stalking that could potentially have an impact on a tenant's participation in the housing program may request in writing that an individual complete, sign, and submit within 14 business days of the request, the HUD-approved certification form (HUD-91066). The O/A may extend this time period at his/her discretion.

Alternatively, in lieu of the certification form or in addition to it, O/As may accept a) a federal, state, tribal, territorial, or local police record or court record or b) documentation signed and attested to by a professional (employee, agent or volunteer of a victim service provider, an attorney, medical personnel, etc.) from whom the victim has sought assistance in addressing domestic violence, dating violence or stalking or the effects of the abuse. The signatory attests under penalty of perjury (28 U.S.C. §1746) to his/her belief that the incident in question represents bona fide abuse, and the victim of domestic violence, dating violence or stalking has signed or attested to the documentation.

O/As are not required to demand that an individual produce official documentation or physical proof of an individual's status as a victim of domestic violence, dating violence or stalking in order to receive the protections of the VAWA. O/As, at their discretion, may provide assistance to an individual based solely upon the individual's statement or other corroborating evidence. O/As are encouraged to

carefully evaluate abuse claims as to avoid conducting an eviction based on false or unsubstantiated accusations.

O/As should be mindful that the delivery of the certification form to the tenant via mail may place the victim at risk, e.g., the abuser may monitor the mail. Therefore, in order to mitigate risks, O/As are encouraged to work with the tenant in making acceptable delivery arrangements, such as inviting them into the office to pick up the certification form or making other discreet arrangements.

The identity of the victim and all information provided to O/As relating to the incident(s) of domestic violence must be retained in confidence by the O/A and must neither be entered into any shared database nor provided to a related entity, except to the extent that the disclosure is a) requested or consented to by the individual in writing; b) required for use in an eviction proceeding or termination of assistance; or c) otherwise required by applicable law. The HUD-approved certification form provides notice to the tenant of the confidentiality of the form and the limits thereof.

O/As must retain all documentation relating to an individual's domestic violence, dating violence or stalking in a separate file that is kept in a separate secure location from other tenant files.

3. Lease

a. Lease Addendum

O/As are required to attach the HUD-approved Lease Addendum, Form HUD-91067, (Attachment 2), which includes the VAWA provisions, to each existing or new lease.

1) New admissions. O/As must provide the tenant with the applicable HUD model lease along with the Lease Addendum.

2) Existing tenants. O/As must expeditiously begin to notify existing tenants of the modification to the lease. Notification is accomplished by forwarding to each tenant a copy of the addendum that revises the existing lease agreement. O/As must also include a letter clearly stating that the tenant can either accept the modification or move but that a response is due within 30 days. For additional information on lease modifications, refer to HUD Handbook 4350.3, REV-1, *Occupancy Requirements of Subsidized Multifamily Housing Programs*, Chapter Six.

b. Lease Bifurcation

Should it be determined that physical abuse caused by a tenant is clear and present, the law provides O/As the authority to bifurcate a lease i.e., remove, evict, or terminate housing assistance to that individual, while allowing the victim, who lawfully occupies the home, to maintain tenancy. O/As must keep in mind that the eviction of or the termination action against the individual must be in accordance with the procedures prescribed by federal, state, and local law.

In the event that one household member is removed from the unit because of engaging in acts of domestic violence, dating violence or stalking against another household member, an interim recertification should be processed reflecting the change in household composition. See Handbook 4350.3 REV-1, *Occupancy Requirements of Subsidized Multifamily Housing Programs*, Chapter 7, Section 2 for processing interim recertifications.

B. Tenants Rights and Responsibilities

Tenants and family members of tenants who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence or stalking are protected by the VAWA from being evicted or from housing assistance being terminated because of the acts of violence against them.

If requested, tenants are required to submit to the O/A a completed Certification of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence or Stalking, Form HUD-91066, or other supporting documentation as described in VI.A.2, above, within 14 business days of the O/A's request, or any extension of that date provided by the O/A. If the certification or other supporting documentation is not provided within the specified timeframe, the landlord may begin eviction proceedings.

If the tenant has sought assistance in addressing domestic violence, dating violence or stalking from a federal, state, tribal, territorial jurisdiction, local police or court, the tenant may submit written proof of this outreach.

It is possible for someone lawfully occupying the unit, who is also a victim, to be evicted or removed from the home. If the victim commits separate criminal activity, a landlord may evict them for engaging in crime. Furthermore, if a victim poses "an actual and imminent threat to other tenants or those employed at or providing service to the property," they could be evicted, despite the VAWA. Of paramount

consideration within the VAWA is that the landlord may not hold the victim to a more demanding standard than other tenants.

VII. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

O/As are encouraged to access the complete version of the VAWA (Public Law 109-162; 119 Stat. 2960) via the internet at the following address: <http://thomas.loc.gov> (the Library of Congress website). The VAWA technical corrections bill (Public Law 109-271) was signed into law on August 12, 2006, and may also be viewed via the Library of Congress website using the above noted address.

VIII. PAPERWORK REDUCTION

The information collection requirements contained in this notice have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3520) and assigned OMB Control Number 2502-0204. In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act, HUD may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless the collection displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Any questions related to this Notice should be addressed to the Multifamily Housing Assistance Policy Division at (202) 708-3000.

Brian D. Montgomery
Assistant Secretary for Housing -
Federal Housing Commissioner

Attachments (2)

CERTIFICATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, DATING VIOLENCE OR STALKING

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Housing**

Attachment 1
OMB Approval No. 2502-0204

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response. This includes the time for collecting, reviewing, and reporting the data. Information provided is to be used by owners and management agents administering Section 8 project-based assistance under the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437) to request a tenant to certify that the individual is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence or stalking. The information is subject to the confidentiality requirements of the HUD Reform Legislation. This agency may not collect this information, and you are not required to complete this form unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Purpose of Form: The Violence Against Women and Justice Department Reauthorization Act of 2005 protects qualified tenants and family members of tenants who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence or stalking (collectively "domestic violence") from being evicted or terminated from housing assistance based on acts of such violence against them.

Use of Form: If you have been a victim of domestic violence, you or a family member on your behalf, must complete and submit this certification form, or submit the information described below under "Alternate Documentation," which may be provided in lieu of the certification form, within 14 business days of receiving the written request for this certification form from the owner or management agent. The certification form or alternate documentation must be returned to the person and the address specified in the written request for the certification form. If the requested certification form or the information that may be provided in lieu of the certification form is not received by the 14th business day or any extension of the date provided by the owner or management agent, none of the protections afforded to victims of domestic violence under the Section 8 project-based assistance program will apply. Distribution or issuance of this form does not serve as a written request for certification.

Alternate Documentation: In lieu of this certification form (or in addition to it), the following documentation may be provided:

- (1) A federal, state, tribal, territorial, or local police or court record; or
- (2) Documentation signed by an employee, agent or volunteer of a victim service provider, an attorney or medical professional, from whom the victim has sought assistance in addressing the domestic violence, dating violence or stalking, or the effects of abuse, in which the professional attests under penalty of perjury (28 U.S.C. 1746) to the professional's belief that the incident(s) in question are bona fide incidents of abuse, and the victim has signed or attested to the documentation.

TO BE COMPLETED BY OR ON BEHALF OF THE VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

- 1. **Date written request is received from owner or management agent:** _____
- 2. **Name of victim:** _____
- 3. **Your name (if different)** _____
- 4. **Name(s) of other family members listed on the lease:** _____

- 5. **Name of the abuser:** _____
- 6. **Relationship of the abuser to the victim:** _____
- 7. **Date of incident:** _____
- 8. **Time of incident:** _____
- 9. **Location of incident:** _____

{Page two must be completed and attached to this form.}

LEASE ADDENDUM
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND JUSTICE DEPARTMENT REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2005

TENANT	LANDLORD	UNIT NO. & ADDRESS
--------	----------	--------------------

This lease addendum adds the following paragraphs to the Lease between the above referenced Tenant and Landlord.

Purpose of the Addendum

The lease for the above referenced unit is being amended to include the provisions of the Violence Against Women and Justice Department Reauthorization Act of 2005 (VAWA).

Conflicts with Other Provisions of the Lease

In case of any conflict between the provisions of this Addendum and other sections of the Lease, the provisions of this Addendum shall prevail.

Term of the Lease Addendum

The effective date of this Lease Addendum is _____. This Lease Addendum shall continue to be in effect until the Lease is terminated.

VAWA Protections

1. The Landlord may not consider incidents of domestic violence, dating violence or stalking as serious or repeated violations of the lease or other “good cause” for termination of assistance, tenancy or occupancy rights of the victim of abuse.
2. The Landlord may not consider criminal activity directly relating to abuse, engaged in by a member of a tenant’s household or any guest or other person under the tenant’s control, cause for termination of assistance, tenancy, or occupancy rights if the tenant or an immediate member of the tenant’s family is the victim or threatened victim of that abuse.
3. The Landlord may request in writing that the victim, or a family member on the victim’s behalf, certify that the individual is a victim of abuse and that the Certification of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence or Stalking, Form HUD-91066, or other documentation as noted on the certification form, be completed and submitted within 14 business days, or an agreed upon extension date, to receive protection under the VAWA. Failure to provide the certification or other supporting documentation within the specified timeframe may result in eviction.

Tenant

Date

Landlord

Date