



# **Housing Authority of the City of Columbia, Missouri**

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## **Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)**

### **CHA Goals and Objectives; Programs and Activities; and Policies**

#### **CHA Goals and Objectives**

It is the goal of the CHA to provide for the health and safety of all residents and to act quickly to respond to all acts of violence occurring within our neighborhoods. The CHA has the following goals in responding to domestic violence and violence against women:

- CHA Safety Staff will respond immediately to all reports of domestic violence and immediately notify Police, Public Housing Managers and Resident Services of such acts of violence and request appropriate protections and services.
- CHA Safety Staff, Public Housing Managers and Resident Services will work with the Police and the Women's Shelter (domestic violence shelter) to provide for the immediate safety and protection of any victim of domestic violence and assist them with locating safe shelter, medical services, counseling services, and other health and social services.
- The CHA will act quickly to remove the violent offender/domestic violence perpetrator from CHA property through arrest, trespass warning, or eviction and use all legal methods to prevent the offender from future acts of violence toward their victim and other public housing residents.
- The CHA considers domestic violence as high priority transfer request and will make every effort to transfer a public housing resident who is a confirmed victim of domestic violence as soon as possible to another appropriate public housing unit in a safer location.
- The CHA will assist all Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program participants and others in CHA administered tenant-based rental assistance programs who are a confirmed victim of domestic violence to relocate to other appropriate rental housing in a safer location as soon as possible.

#### **CHA Programs and Activities**

- The CHA currently has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with The Women's Shelter to administer Shelter Plus Care vouchers for their clients who are victims of domestic violence.
- The CHA is actively pursuing partnerships for alternative housing programs for special sub-populations including victims of domestic violence which may include

converting tenant-based vouchers to project-based vouchers for victims of domestic violence.

- The CHA has an informal referral agreement with The Women's Shelter for intake, assessment and service referral of all public housing residents and Section 8 tenants who report being victims of domestic violence.
- CHA Resident Services provides immediate assistance and service referral to all victims of domestic violence by a licensed clinical social worker.
- The CHA receives FEMA Emergency Food and Shelter funding to assist with temporary emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence until they can be relocated to safer housing and other appropriate support services.

### **CHA Policies**

The CHA has completed a full review and revision of its Public Housing Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP), Public Housing Lease, and Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan.

**The CHA Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP)** provides for Public Housing residents who are victims of domestic violence to be considered as high priority housing transfer requests based on the conditions listed below.

**Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan** provides that Section 8 tenants and others in CHA administered tenant-based rental assistance programs, which are confirmed victims of domestic violence, must also meet the conditions below to be considered as high priority transfer requests for their housing voucher to allow them to secure safer housing.

- The victim of domestic violence must complete a HUD Form 50066 and name their abuser. If the victim chooses not to complete the HUD Form 50066, they must report the crime of domestic violence to either the Police or The Women's Shelter.
- All victims of domestic violence must go to The Women's Shelter for assessment and confirmation by The Women's Shelter that an act of domestic violence has occurred.

**The CHA Public Housing Lease** will include the following additional lease provisions to provide for the protection of victims of domestic violence:

- (1) An incident of actual or threatened domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking shall not be construed as a serious or repeated violation of the lease by the victim or threatened victim of that violence and shall not be good cause for terminating the tenancy or occupancy rights of the victim of such violence. Additionally, criminal activity directly relating 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 the tenancy

or occupancy rights, if and only if the tenant or immediate member of the tenant's family is a victim of that domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking.

- (2) Notwithstanding subsection 1, or any Federal, State, or local law to the contrary, the Authority may bifurcate a lease or remove a household member from a lease without regard to whether a household member is a signatory to a lease in order to evict, remove, or terminate occupancy rights of any individual who is a tenant or lawful occupant and who engaged in criminal acts of physical violence against family members or others without evicting, removing, or terminating occupancy rights or otherwise penalizing the victim of such violence who is also a tenant or lawful occupant. Such eviction or removal of occupancy rights shall be effected in accordance with the procedures prescribed by Federal, State, and local law.
- (3) Nothing in this Section:
  - limits the Authority from honoring court orders addressing rights of access or control of the property, including civil protection orders issued to protect the victim and issued to address the distribution or possession of property among the household members in cases where a family breaks up;
  - limits the Authority from evicting a tenant for any violation of a lease not premised on the act or acts of violence in question against the tenant or a member of the tenant's household, provided that the Authority does not subject an individual who is or has been a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking to a more demanding standard than other tenants in determining whether to evict;
  - limits the Authority to terminate the tenancy of any tenant if the Authority can demonstrate an actual and imminent threat to other tenants or those employed at or providing service to the property if that tenant is not evicted;
  - supersedes any provision of any Federal, State, or local law that provides greater protection than this section for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking.
- (4) All information the Authority may request to confirm domestic violence, dating violence or stalking victim status, pursuant to Federal law, shall be retained in confidence by the Authority, and shall neither be entered into any shared database nor provided to any related entity, except to the extent that disclosure is:
  - Requested or consented to by the individual in writing;
  - Required for use in an eviction proceeding; or
  - Otherwise required by applicable law
- (5) For the purposes of this Section and this lease, the following definitions apply:

**“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 cohabitation with or has cohabitated with the victim as a spouse, by a person similarly situated to a spouse of the victim under domestic or family violence laws, 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;

**“dating violence”** is defined as violence committed by a person who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim; and where the existence of such a relationship shall be determined based on a consideration of the length of the relationship, the type of the relationship, and the frequency of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship;

**“stalking”** is defined as following, pursuing, or repeatedly committing acts with the intent to kill, injure, harass, or intimidate another person; or placing under surveillance with the intent to kill, injure, harass, or intimidate another person; and, in the course of, or as a result of, such following, pursuit, surveillance, or repeatedly committed acts, placing a person in reasonable fear of the death of, or serious bodily injury to, or causing substantial emotional harm to that person; a member of the immediate family of that person; or the spouse or intimate partner of that person.

**“immediate family member”**, with respect to a person, is identified as a spouse, parent, brother or sister, or child of that person, or an individual to whom that person stands in loco parentis; or any other person living in the household of that person and related to that person by blood or marriage.