

## **Section 8 Temporary Policy Changes During COVID-19 Crisis Expiring 12/31/2021**

This document provides a list of the temporary policy changes to Santa Clara County Housing Authority's (SCCHA's) Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and identifies which are expiring effective December 31, 2021 and which will continue. Policy changes apply to all HCV participants unless otherwise specified.

### **Temporary COVID-19 Policies Continuing**

#### **Briefings**

SCCHA stopped in-person briefings for new voucher holders effective March 17, 2020. Briefing information instead was provided in the form of a packet mailed to the voucher holder or as a webcast available to view. Some briefings may be conducted over the phone. HUD has allowed this COVID waiver to continue indefinitely and so SCCHA will continue to waive in-person briefings until further notice.

### **Temporary COVID-19 Policies Expiring 12/31/2021**

#### **Hierarchy of Verification- Interim and Regular Reexaminations**

SCCHA waived the income verification hierarchy requirements for regular and interim reexaminations. Instead, SCCHA allowed the participant to self-certify their income without requiring third-party documentation. If there is outstanding income information that has not been verified by January 1, 2022, the remaining income must be verified, in accordance with HUD regulations, using the verification hierarchy as described in Chapter 5, Section 5.2.

#### **Hierarchy of Verification- Initial Eligibility**

SCCHA waived the income verification hierarchy requirements for initial eligibility for assistance. Instead, SCCHA allowed the applicant to self-certify their income without requiring third-party documentation. If there is outstanding income information that has not been verified by January 1, 2022, the remaining income must be verified, in accordance with HUD regulations, using the verification hierarchy as described in Chapter 5, Section 5.2.

#### **Social Security Number and Citizenship Verification- Initial Eligibility**

SCCHA waived the requirement to obtain and verify social security number documentation, date of birth documentation and documentation evidencing eligible non-citizen status before admitting applicants to the HCV program. Individuals admitted under this waiver needed to provide the required documents within 90 days of admission to be eligible for assistance. Beginning January 1, 2022, SCCHA must obtain social security and citizenship status verification documents prior to determining eligibility for the HCV program.

#### **Periodic Unit Inspections**

With a HUD waiver, SCCHA allowed tenants to cancel their regular biennial Housing Quality Standard (HQS) inspections due to COVID concerns. If an inspection is scheduled to occur December 31, 2021 or earlier, SCCHA will accept cancellations due to COVID concerns. **However, canceled**

**inspections due to COVID concerns must occur by 6/30/2022.** Beginning for inspections scheduled January 1, 2022 or later, SCCHA will not allow tenants to cancel inspections due to COVID concerns. Tenants may continue to cancel a scheduled HQS inspection one time and the inspection will be immediately rescheduled.

#### **Housing Quality Standards: Space and Security**

SCCHA temporarily waived the requirement that each dwelling unit have at least one bedroom or living/sleeping room for each two persons. SCCHA did not *require* families to move if the family fails this requirement, although the family could still *choose* to move to a larger unit. Effective January 1, 2022, the requirement to move to a larger unit will be required if the unit does not pass inspection due to space and security issues.

#### **Special Inspections**

SCCHA temporarily suspended Quality Control HQS inspections. These inspections are intended to audit regular HQS inspections for compliance with HUD regulations. These special inspections will resume effective January 1, 2022.

#### **Enterprise Income Verification (EIV) Monitoring**

SCCHA, as a PHA, is required to monitor the Deceased Tenants Report, the Identity Verification Report, the Immigration Report, the IVT Report, and the Multiple Subsidy Report and the New Hires Report on a monthly basis. SCCHA, through a temporary policy change from HUD, waived the mandatory EIV monitoring requirements. Effective January 1, 2022, SCCHA will resume the monitoring and addressing of discrepancies in the EIV reports.

#### **Allowance for Age of Person with Disability Upon Initial Use of Mainstream Voucher**

SCCHA waived the requirement that a Mainstream family have a non-elderly person with a disability as a part of the family upon entering a Housing Assistance Payment Contract for the first time. As long as the family had a non-elderly person with a disability in the family at voucher issuance (non-elderly means between the ages of 18 and 61), and that person is less than 63 years of age upon initial lease up, the family remained eligible for Mainstream Program assistance. Effective January 1, 2022, the disabled household member in a family with a Mainstream shopping voucher must be 61 years of age or younger at initial lease up.

#### **Family Unification Program: FUP Youth Age Eligibility to Enter HAP Contract**

SCCHA waived the requirement that a FUP or FYI youth must be no more than 24 years of age upon entering a HAP contract for the first time, and instead allowed the execution of a HAP contract on behalf of any otherwise eligible FUP youth not more than 25 years of age (not yet reached their 26<sup>th</sup> birthday). Effective January 1, 2022, the FUP youth must be no older than 24 years of age at initial lease up.

### **Temporary COVID-19 Policies Ended Prior to December 31, 2021**

#### **Interim Reexaminations**

**Non-MTW Participants:** SCCHA allowed an increased payment standard to be applied at any time (including at interims) instead of at the regular reexamination (SCCHA already allows this policy for MTW participants). This waiver ended effective May 1, 2021, when the only non-MTW program (Mainstream 5-Year vouchers) using this waiver became fully operational under SCCHA's MTW activities. **Ended 4/30/2021.**

### **Maximum Family Share at Initial Occupancy**

**Moving to Work (MTW) Participants:** HUD regulations prohibits a tenant to pay more than 40% of their monthly income toward the rent of their new home at initial lease. SCCHA waived this to raise the income cap at initial lease to 50% of the tenant's monthly income. This MTW technical amendment was temporary and was not extended. **Ended 6/30/2021.**

### **Voucher Extensions**

All vouchers with an expiration date of March 16, 2020 or later have been automatically extended to 12/31/2020. Vouchers that were in their initial 120-day term will still be eligible for a 60-day extension upon request if additional time is needed after 12/31/2020. Vouchers that were already under an extension period will not be eligible for another extension except due to extenuating circumstances or as a reasonable accommodation. **Ended 12/31/2020.**

### **Reexamination Schedules**

Regular reexaminations due on May 1, 2020 may be up to three months delayed. Regular reexaminations on June 1, 2020 to September 1, 2020 may be up to two months delayed. Regular reexaminations due on October 1, 2020 and November 1, 2020 may be up to one month delayed. *This policy change utilized HUD waiver HCV-2.* **Ended 12/31/2020.**

### **Effective Date of Interim Reexaminations**

For all interim changes in income or family composition reported on March 11, 2020 or later, a decrease in the family's portion of the rent will be effective the first day of the month following the family's report of the change. **Ended 12/31/2020.**

### **Non-Compliance Terminations of Rental Assistance**

SCCHA has made a temporary change in its process for non-compliance terminations by providing a four month notice of the termination, instead of 30 days, and providing a three-month notice to request an appeal of the termination through an informal hearing, instead of 15 days. **Ended 12/31/2020.**

### **Other Terminations of Assistance**

On a case-by-case basis, SCCHA will waive the requirement that a HAP contract be terminated if the family has been absent from the unit for more than 180 consecutive days. SCCHA may decide not to terminate the HAP contract if the family is unable to return to the unit due to COVID-19 related reasons. **Ended 12/31/2020.**