

CHA Bulletin

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ENSURE TIMELY PAYMENTS BY PASSING INSPECTIONS THE FIRST TIME

Property owners who provide homes for clients on OHFA's Housing Choice Voucher Program are an integral partner. Caribou Housing wants to ensure Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) continue in a timely manner.

Maintaining units that pass Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspections the first time play a key role in ensuring timely payments.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Contract Part B, 3(a) states, "The owner must maintain the contract unit and premises in accordance with the housing quality standards (HQS)." Part B 3(c) provides that if the owner does not maintain the contract unit in accordance with the HQS the PHA may exercise any available remedies, such as, recovery of overpayments, suspension of housing assistance payments, abatement or other reduction of housing assistance payments and termination of the HAP contract.

Caribou Housing strives to provide housing to as many families as possible and pay our owners/landlords timely. However, withholding rents for noncompliant units is a part of the HUD program. While circumstances arise occasionally, the property owner can take action to reduce those instances.

- Ensure units pass each HQS inspection. When an HQS Inspector inspects a unit and it fails, it takes additional time to reschedule another inspection. Ensure all repairs are made prior to the re-inspection.
- By reducing the number of re-inspections, applicants/participants are housed faster, owners/landlords start receiving payments sooner, and Caribou Housing staff can serve other applicants/participants. Multiple visits to inspect the same unit affects everyone in the process and can delay the receipt of payments.

HEAP APPOINTMENTS

Heating season is just around the corner and that means the Home Energy Assistance Program starts on August 25th. If you had a HEAP last year, keep an eye out in your mailbox for your appointment letter with your scheduled time for an interview by telephone.

For more information on the HEAP program, call ACAP at -764-3721

MAILING REEXAMINATIONS REPLACE MEETINGS WITH CHA STAFF

In case you haven't noticed, Caribou Housing Agency has changed the process for Annual and Interim Reexaminations. Back in April we started mailing all required paperwork to process your annual/interim reexaminations, instead of coming into the office.

If you haven't received or done your annual reexamination yet, don't worry, it's coming. When it's time, you will receive a large manila envelope with a letter explaining what is happening. With the letter, will be:

- A Pink Tenant Information Questionnaire that needs to be filled out completely.
- Several forms that need to be signed in the proper spots,
- A checklist of documents that need to be provided when you return the completed package, and
- a self-addressed stamped envelope to mail everything back to us.

Families will have 14 days to complete and return the packet in the postage paid envelope. If the packet is not received, a second notice will be mailed to the you, giving them additional time to return the packet. If the packet is not received by the due date, Caribou

Housing will start the termination process of your Section 8 Voucher

Families must ensure that all forms are complete, and information is accurate.

- All adult family members must sign the forms.
- All household information must be included on the questionnaire.
- Verification, such as pay stubs, bank statements, etc. must be included with the packet.

Reasonable Accommodation: For families that need assistance in filling out the required forms, feel free to utilize the assistance of friends, families, payee, or case manager. If you don't have anyone that can help you, contact our office to set up an appointment to come and we will be more than happy to help.

Since we started the mailing of reexaminations, we have received a lot of positive feedback from not only our Section 8 Participants but from Landlords as well. By doing paperwork by mail, it saves participants from having to take time off from work or school, trying to find a ride, or even a sitter for their children.



FACE COVERINGS REQUESTED WHEN VISTING

Caribou Housing Agency has reopened our doors to the public. We are abiding by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and state guidelines for the safety of guests and employees as we do so.

- Please call our office to make an appointment for a visit.
- Face coverings are now required.
 - If you don't have one, we can provide one for you
 - If you can't wear one, staff will wear one
- Social distancing protocol will be provided, please try to stay 6 feet away from any person not in your family.
- Housing Agency staff will be regularly sanitizing common areas of offices.

CORONAVIRUS CLEANING TIPS FOR YOUR RENTAL UNIT



Knowing what to do to protect yourself and your family can be challenging and stressful, but we've compiled a list of coronavirus cleaning tips to help give you some peace of mind and allow you to deep clean your unit.

Before you start wiping down every surface and object you can think of, it's important to know which type of coronavirus cleaning products to use and how to safely use them.

Purchase the right cleaning supplies

When it comes to cleaning, not all products are created equal. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has provided a list of approved disinfectants to help fight coronavirus.

- **Disinfectant wipes and sprays:** It's recommended that any disinfectant wipes or sprays have at least 70% alcohol in them to be effective. Disinfectant wipes made by brands like Lysol or Clorox are effective.
- **Bleach:** Bleach is another cleaning supply that can be used on countertops, plastic cutting boards, sinks, tile floors, toilets and toys. While it's an effective cleaning product on its own, it should never be mixed with any product other than water. When using bleach, wear gloves and a mask and make sure you're in a well-ventilated area. To ventilate in a smaller apartment, try opening the window or turning on a fan when cleaning with bleach. Because bleach is a strong cleaning agent, proper precautions need to be taken when using it.
- **Soap and hot water:** Soap and hot water are cleaning supplies that can be used to help kill coronavirus. When possible, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend cleaning with alcohol-based products, but soap and water will work, too.

Know the difference between cleaning and disinfecting

Often, people confuse cleaning with disinfecting. While both leave the home feeling more organized and tidier, there's a difference between the two that's important to know to keep your apartment safe from coronavirus.

- **Cleaning** removes clutter, germs and dust from a surface, but doesn't necessarily kill the harmful pathogen
- **Disinfecting** kills dangerous viruses, germs and pathogens on surfaces using chemicals and prevents them from spreading.

To get the best results, you should always clean before disinfecting. The combination of both coronavirus cleaning techniques helps better your odds to stay safe and healthy.

Wash your hands frequently

It may seem obvious, but washing your hands, even if you've been at home all day, is crucial. Everyone's known since kindergarten that it's smart to wash your hands after you cough, sneeze, blow your nose or use the restroom, but it's more important now than ever to follow these guidelines. Also, it's important to wash your hands after cleaning, disinfecting, doing laundry and dishes.

Clean household items frequently

Before the coronavirus outbreak, apartment dwellers frequently cleaned their apartments as part of weekly chores. In addition to the regular tasks like sweeping, vacuuming and mopping, people need to sanitize household objects daily, as well. So, which household items need to be wiped down?

Here are our recommendations:

- 1.) Cellphones and tablets
Your smartphone and tablet might be the only things keeping you sane right now. Not only are they how we stay connected with loved ones, they're also a huge source of our daily entertainment. Because we're frequently picking them up and down, we may be placing them on objects that are less than sanitary. There's no point in washing your hands just to pick up a dirty phone or tablet.
- 2.) Remotes and gaming consoles

Chances are you're getting your money's worth on your gaming and streaming services right now. But whether you live alone or with family, you should still be cleaning your remotes or gaming consoles daily, as well. Use a disinfectant wipe to scrub the controller, buttons, on/off buttons and console itself.

3.) Doorknobs, toilet handles and light switches

It's recommended that people should be disinfecting their handles, doorknobs and light switches at least once daily as part of coronavirus cleaning. These household features are the most used surfaces in your apartment and are often touched after you've been in a public, potentially exposed place.

4.) Laundry

Doing laundry may seem like the cleanest activity out there. But this is not an area to skimp on when it comes to cleaning. When doing laundry, it's recommended that you wear disposable gloves while touching the dirty laundry and then washing your hands when you're finished. If you don't have access to gloves, wash your hands after touching the dirty clothes. By washing your clothing at the warmest temperature, you're reducing the chance of germ spread.

5.) Countertops and hard surfaces

This may seem obvious, but you should be wiping down your countertops several times a day with disinfectant wipes, soap and water or bleach. A tip from the CDC is to clean the area first with soap and water to remove, dust, dirt or germs and then go over it again with disinfectant to kill the germs entirely. Don't wipe down the counter afterward immediately, let it sit for at least 10 minutes and then if you wish you can wipe it down again with water.

6.) Soft surfaces

To clean things like carpet, rugs and drapes, you can use soap and water. Another solution is to launder them if that service is available in your neighborhood.

7.) Packages

Coronavirus can live on surfaces, however, the duration it lives on different surfaces does vary. For example, it can live on plastic and stainless steel for two to three days and can live on cardboard packages for 24 hours.

Staying safe, clean and sane

Let's be honest, it's a crazy time right now with everything going on in the world. Keeping your apartment safe with these coronavirus cleaning tips will help you feel more in control and protected, plus you're doing your part to flatten the curve.



RENT ABATEMENT ON FAILED INSPECTIONS

A rental unit must pass a Housing Quality

Standards inspection every year in order to continue to receive Housing Assistance Payments (HAP).

Abatement means there is no rental subsidy payable for the days the unit is out of HQS compliance. An owner is notified of all failed items and given a reasonable amount of time to make repairs. If the repairs are not completed in the time given,

Caribou Housing will notify the owner that the rent subsidy is in abatement. Abatement notification letters will be sent by both regular and certified mail to the owner, copying the tenant.

During the abatement period the owner can only collect the tenant's portion of the rent. The tenant only is responsible for their portion of the rent. The landlord cannot impose on the tenant to pay for any part of the abated HAP subsidy. The abated HAP subsidy cannot be reimbursed or compensated at any future date.

An abatement can be lifted if the owner makes the repairs timely. If the owner fails to make the repairs the tenant is issued a voucher to move and the HAP contract is ended

JOIN THE FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM!

The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program is a voluntary program that encourages participants of the Caribou Housing Agency's Section 8 Program to work towards becoming financially independent of government aid and self-sufficient.

FSS can help you if you are unemployed, going to school, or already working but want to increase your income.

- ⇒ FSS is an opportunity for you to improve your personal financial situation.
- ⇒ FSS will put cash into a special savings account (called an escrow account) to reward you if you increase your earned income and successfully complete the program. As your earned income increases, so does the amount that FSS deposits into the escrow account for you each month.
- ⇒ FSS provides case management support to help individuals achieve goals related to employment, education, finances, or even home ownership.

Your FSS Case Manager works with you and your family to set short- and long-term goals and determine the steps you need to take to achieve those goals and achieve self-sufficiency!

CALL SUE TODAY! 207-493-5977



TOP 10 TIPS FOR TENANTS

- 1. Bring your paperwork:**
Be prepared when meeting with a landlord, bring with you a pen, names and phone numbers of references, proof of income.
- 2. Review the Lease.**
Carefully review all the conditions of the tenancy before you sign on the dotted line. Ask questions!
- 3. Get everything in writing**
To avoid disputes or misunderstandings with your landlord, get everything in writing. Keep copies of any correspondence and follow up in writing.
- 4. Protect your privacy rights**
Make sure you understand your landlord's rights and timing to enter a rental unit.
- 5. Request repairs in Writing**
Any repairs that you feel need to be corrected to your rental unit, submit the repair request in writing and submit a copy to your local housing authority.
- 6. Talk to your landlord**
Keep communication open with your landlord.
- 7. Purchase renter's insurance**
Your landlord's insurance policy will not cover your losses due to theft or damages.
- 8. Protect your security deposit**
When you move in, do a walk-through with the landlord to record existing damage to the premises, and document it in writing.
- 9. Protect your safety.**
Inquire with your local Police Department about any reported activity in the neighborhood.
- 10. Deal with an eviction properly**
Know when to fight an eviction notice – and when to move. Sometimes fighting an eviction notice can cause you hundreds of dollars in debt.

LIMITED NUMBER OF BACKPACKS STILL AVAILABLE

ACAP in conjunction with United Way has a limited number of backpacks remaining from their Stuff the Buss School Supply Drive. If you receive Maine Care, SNAP, WIC or HEAP services you may be eligible to receive a backpack for your child.

For an application to apply, here is the link:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx...>

Did you remember to update the Housing Agency?

To be able to assist participants in an efficient and timely manner, the Housing Agency requires that participants report **ALL** changes to their household:

The following updates must be reported in writing:

- Request to add a new household member
- Household member moved out
- New household income
- Increase/decrease in household income

Any/all changes must be reported to the Caribou Housing within 10 days of the change/addition. Failure to report the change within a timely manner could result in a breach in your Family Obligations, and possible termination of your Section 8 Voucher assistance.

For more information, contact the Caribou Housing Agency.

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