



HOUSTON
HOUSING AUTHORITY

Transforming Lives & Communities

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Notice to Public Housing Applicants and Tenants Regarding the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

*Upon request, this notice and the Violence Against Women Act Policy
will be made available in an alternate format.*

On March 7, 2013, President Barack Obama signed into law the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 (VAWA). VAWA 2013 expands judicial and law enforcement tools to combat violence against victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. This Notice to Public Housing Applicants and Tenants Regarding the Violence Against Women Act summarizes the VAWA rights of applicants and tenants and responsibilities of the Houston Housing Authority.

Gender-Neutral

VAWA is gender-neutral and applies to men, women, and children who seek VAWA protection as victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Protections for Victims

The Houston Housing Authority shall not deny admission for an applicant or evict a tenant solely on the basis of the person's status as a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. In addition, criminal activity directly related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking shall not be cause for denial of admission or eviction.

Documentation of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, or Stalking

The Houston Housing Authority may ask the victim to prove or "certify" that he or she is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. A person can prove that he or she is a victim by submitting one of the following:

- A HUD-approved certification form provided by the Houston Housing Authority;
- A document that is signed by the applicant or tenant and an employee, agent, or volunteer of a victim service provider, an attorney, or a medical professional who assisted the victim relating to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. The professional must state, under penalty of perjury, that he or she believes that the abuse meets the requirements under VAWA;
- A Federal, State, tribal, territorial, or local police or court record;
- A record of an administration agency; or
- A statement or other evidence provided by the applicant or tenant, at the discretion of the Houston Housing Authority.

The victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking is required to provide the name of the perpetrator on the HUD-approved certification form only if the name of

the perpetrator is safe to provide and is known to the victim. The applicant or tenant must provide the documentation within 14 business days after the date that the Houston Housing Authority requests for documentation. Discretion to extend the 14-day deadline is at the Houston Housing Authority.

Confidentiality

Any information submitted to the Houston Housing Authority regarding domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking shall be kept confidential and may not be entered into any shared database or disclosed to any other organization or person unless:

- The applicant or tenant requests or consents in writing;
- The Houston Housing Authority needs to use the information in an eviction proceeding, such as to evict the victim's abuser; or
- A law requires the Houston Housing Authority to release the information.

Bifurcation of Lease

The Houston Housing Authority may bifurcate a lease for housing in order to evict or remove a tenant who engages in criminal activity directly related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking against another tenant. If such bifurcation occurs and the removed tenant was the sole tenant eligible to receive assistance under a housing program, the Houston Housing Authority shall provide any remaining tenant the opportunity to establish eligibility for the covered housing program. If the remaining tenant cannot establish eligibility, the Houston Housing Authority is required to provide the tenant a reasonable time to find new housing or establish eligibility under another covered housing program.

Emergency Moves

If it is necessary for the victim to move to another dwelling to receive protection, the Houston Housing Authority shall execute an emergency move for the victim to another available and safe dwelling under a covered housing program. Reasonable confidentiality measures shall be implemented to ensure that the public housing agency does not disclose the location of the new dwelling unit of a tenant to a person that commits an act of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Actions Not Protected Under VAWA

The Houston Housing Authority may evict a tenant if the victim is an actual and imminent threat to other tenants or staff. Further, the Houston Housing Authority may deny admission for an applicant or evict a tenant if the basis for the action is not related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

VAWA and Other Laws

VAWA does not replace any federal, state, or local law that provides greater protection for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

If you are victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking and you are seeking VAWA protection, please contact the Legal Compliance Officer by email at 504ADA@housingforhouston.com, by phone at 713-260-0353, or by fax at 713-260-0376.

TENANT ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I, _____, have received the Houston Housing Authority's Notice to Public Housing Applicants and Tenants Regarding the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).

Tenant's Signature

Unit #

Property Manager's Signature

Date

Date