Commonwealth of Massachusetts
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Charles D. Baker, Governor ◆ Karyn E. Polito, Lt. Governor ◆ Jennifer D. Maddox, Undersecretary

# COVID-19 PANDEMIC NOTICE OF INITIAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR FEDERAL RENTAL ASSISTANCE ADMINISTERED BY THE DIVISION OF RENTAL ASSISTANCE

In light of emerging developments and public health concerns regarding the COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) pandemic and the actions ordered by the Governor (and as they develop by HUD) DHCD hereby issues on an emergency basis the following provisional measures to protect the public health by reducing the risk of exposure to the virus and slowing the spread of the disease. These policy changes will be in effect during the "state of emergency" or until otherwise updated by further notice.

## I. TERMINATION OF PARTICIPANTS

DHCD is committed to providing housing assistance during this time of uncertainty regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, DHCD will temporarily suspend as of the date of this notice federal rental assistance terminations, including Sec8 HCV, MTW, and Sec8 Mod Rehab, in all cases other than those involving violent or drug-related criminal activity that seriously affects the health and safety of other residents.

This suspension of terminations is provisional and subject to review at any time by DHCD. DHCD is committed to continuing subsidies to those participants who, through no fault of their own may be affected by administrative barriers or access to public safety and public health entities or courts. This is not intended in any manner to ignore, sanction, or waive addressing criminal activity or fraud. DHCD remains committed to the safety (including VAWA protections) and health of our participants within our federal rental assistance programs. As such, DHCD's Regional Administering Agencies (RAAs) are expected to use reasoned steps in delaying terminations based upon applicable program Family Obligations and other policies. This suspension of terminations is not and shall not be construed as providing immunity, amnesty, or waiver of any violations by participants.

## II. Extension of Voucher Term

DHCD policy currently provides for a 60-day voucher search term, with an automatic 30-day extension upon request, and other extensions upon request in extenuating circumstances. During the state of emergency, DHCD will waive the extension requirements set forth in DHCD's Administrative Plan § 5.5.2. The 60 day voucher search term shall be extended automatically until 30 calendar days past the expiration of the state of emergency. During that period, applicants will not be required to submit a request for extension.

## III. Government Stimulus Income

As per Administrative Plan § 7.3.5, any temporary cash-based income support from federal or state government stimulus legislation that might stem from the state of emergency will be excluded from income for the purpose of rent calculation.

## IV. Verification of Self-Certification Documentation

During the state of emergency, DHCD will permit RAAs to temporarily waive rules requiring notarization and/or in-person verification of self-verification documentation (see Administrative Plan § 6.1), with the understanding that if there is a question of the veracity of the self-verification, follow-up inquiries may be conducted at a later time.

To the extent that the provisions of the DHCD Section 8 Administrative Plan explicitly noted herein and previous DHCD guidance conflict with this guidance, this guidance supersedes the above noted provisions of the DHCD Section 8 Administration Plan and previous DHCD guidance for as long as each waiver is in effect.