



Yolo County Housing

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Dear Participant:

Greetings! We hope you are doing well and enjoying the end of summer. As you know, it's been a difficult few years - economic downturns, collapse of the housing and financial market, drought and cuts to our programming.

You may have heard about the Congressional 2 year budget deal. Unfortunately, **Congress has not made progress in passing its budget in time for the start of the October 1 federal fiscal year.** We expect the federal government will pass another Continuing Resolution (CR), which means it will continue funding government services without a budget. Not having funding stability makes it hard to plan. And, due to ongoing cuts to the fees we earn, it makes it even harder to give you excellent customer service. **Imagine if you went to work expecting to earn a \$1, but they only gave you 79 cents?** We all know the price of things at the store and 79 cents doesn't go very far. And this amount also fluctuates every year, so we don't know what we'll receive after December 31, 2014. Last year, we received 69 cents.

Our "tiny but mighty" Housing staff work hard, but **there are about 1,600 families we serve, with about 3,500 more families on the wait list. This means there are 15,000 people served by less than 6 full-time staff.** That's pretty amazing work!

We are constantly looking at how we can maintain customer service. And, we will continue with additional streamlining and automation. **But you also play an important role.** On the following pages, **we've listed our best "tips and tricks"** for great service. And thank you for your continued participation. We appreciate it.

Sincerely,

Janis R. Holt
General Managing Director

Attachment as noted

YCH TOP PICKS FOR GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE

To help maximize success when you are moving, or have a change of income that requires an interim certification, or your annual reexamination, here is how **you can directly impact the process**. It's your Voucher, so take charge of helping to get a speedier outcome!

Top Tips and Tricks

I. The Top 10

1. Know the "lingo" - check out the meanings of Interim, Annual, Mover/Transfer
2. Report on time;
3. Whenever possible, bring the request, forms and verifications together in one package;
4. Get to know what kinds of verification count;
5. Always keep a receipt for your records;
6. Submit all required documentation by the deadline given - or contact your Housing Specialist (email is best) and let him or her know what is going on and when to expect it;
7. If you are given an in person appointment, be sure to show up and be on time. Bring your documentation;
8. If you are asked to turn in a written request or explanation, please send the written document either by mail, email or in person - but be sure to send it! (and remember 5 - keep a receipt);
9. For Interims - reporting on time speeds the process; for Annuals - reporting by the deadline saves your assistance; for Transfers/Moves - pay attention to deadlines, timing and notice requirements to make sure you keep your Voucher and have an apartment!
10. Be sure to keep any inspection appointment; have the unit ready for inspection and you must have an adult over 18 present at time of inspection. The inspector will not enter a unit where there is only a minor child at home.

The Process Detail and Tips by Type

II. Interim Reexamination: If your income changes, that is called an "Interim Reexamination." We usually call it an "**Interim.**" Here is how to manage the process:

1. Understand that **you are required to report all changes in income, people in your home (called "household composition"), and address changes** to your Housing Specialist within 15 days of knowing the change. Sometimes you might not know if your higher income will last, or if the person in your home will stay, but you will save time and problems if you report. Not all reports will result in a written change (for example, if your

income goes up, and you report it within 15 days of the change, with verification, your rent will stay the same till your next anniversary date).

2. MOST IMPORTANT, if your change is because your income went down, or someone with income left your home, or if you suddenly have new family members, **you MUST SUBMIT all the proper documentation/verification with your request.** If you tell us, but don't give us the form, we will stop the process and follow up. If you give us the form, but there is no proof, we will stop the process and follow up. **Submit the form and verification together in one package and it can move forward.** EXAMPLES of verification include:

- Lay Off Letter
- Unemployment Insurance Benefits
- Social Security or SSI documentation
- State SDI letter
- Legal document with changes to child support, alimony, etc.
- Birth certificate and social security card of new child
- Birth certificate, social security card, driver's license and income documentation of new household member
- If you have questions about whether your documentation is enough, email your specialist and ask

3. **Always keep a copy for your records.** If submitting in person, request a date stamped copy for your records. If submitting by mail, send it "return receipt requested"; if you email it, set your email to send you an electronic receipt and then keep any receipt for your records.

4. **Timing** - If your family share of the rent will decrease, the decrease will be effective the first day of the month **after** the month when the change was reported. **The interim certification will not be processed until ALL required verification of the change is submitted.** Interim recertifications will be conducted no later than 60 days from the date all verification documents were submitted to YCH. The family may need **to pay the higher family share of the rent** until the agency has processed the higher Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) to the landlord. FOR EXAMPLE: If you send a letter of a change on March 15, but wait till March 31 to turn in the form without verification and then we don't receive the verification until April 15th, the change would not be processed until around mid-June and be retroactive to May. If you provide the form and the verifications in one packet on March 15th, the decrease would be processed by May and would be retroactive to April. You would receive the decrease 30 days earlier and it would be effective 30 days earlier, saving you additional rent money.

III. Annual Reexamination: Once you are a participant in the program, you must still go through an annual process to demonstrate your continued eligibility. This is usually called either an **Annual Reexamination** or Annual Recertification. It is often shortened to “Annual” or “Reexam” or “Recert.” This is how to manage the process:

1. You will receive your Annual Reexamination (AR) packet. This packet will provide you with a **list of all required documentation that must be submitted by the deadline in the letter**. To help you find it fast, the list of required documentation is written in two places: both the **questionnaire** and on the sheet marked **Items to Determine Eligibility list**. First step: review the list of required verification items and determine what does and does not apply to you. If something is not applicable, make sure you mark that and the reason why. If you have a question, call the front desk or email your Housing Specialist to ask.

2. **Submit ALL items by the deadline.** Just like in an Interim, it is always better to submit the items in a package, clearly marked and clearly separated. If submitting by mail, we suggest you keep a copy for your records. If submitting by email, you may elect to get an electronic receipt and keep a copy for your records. If submitting in person, request a date stamped copy for your records.

3. In some cases, your Housing Specialist may request that you attend an in-person appointment. Please arrange your schedule to **attend the reexamination appointment** or notify us if you need to change your appointment date/time. Why would you come to an in person appointment? There are many reasons. They include:

- Documentation is not sufficient to explain your income or household;
- Documentation does not match 3rd party electronic data matching;
- Your case is more complex - things like self-employment income, complex custody or divorce cases, spousal abuse and other items may mean it will be better to conduct business in person.

4. When the process is complete, your Housing Specialist will conduct the reexamination and notify you and your landlord in writing of any changes in your Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). **NOTE: If you do not submit items by the deadline, it will delay the process. This could result in a notice of termination of assistance. If you do not return questionnaires and documentation, it will result in termination of assistance.** Please remember that Housing staff are monitored by HUD to be sure that all reexaminations are completed on time. Just like participants who

don't turn in items, we at YCH will also receive consequences if we don't complete the certifications on time. Therefore, if we cannot complete it because we don't receive required items, we must end your assistance to stay in compliance.

IV. Moving - Transfers and Portability: Unless you are in a Project Based Voucher (PBV) unit, the following rules apply. If you are in a PBV unit, check with your Housing Specialist for more details. **With the Housing Voucher (also called "Section 8", Voucher, Housing Choice Voucher), there is the opportunity to move with continued Voucher assistance - but ONLY IF you follow the proper requirements.** Moving with your Voucher is often called "Transfer" or "Mover". If you move out of our jurisdiction, it is generally called Portability or "Port" or "Porting". Here is how to have a successful process:

1. **Submit a written request** to your Housing Specialist at least sixty days before moving out or terminating your lease. It is not always possible to move and/or the unit you may wish to lease may not be available or able to pass an inspection. You do not want to give notice and then find you cannot move and your landlord has already re-rented your apartment.
2. Your Housing Specialist will mail the forms needed with an appointment to explain the process. In most instances, a move requires us to conduct an Interim Reexamination to ensure your income and household membership is current. This is the law and your Housing Specialist cannot waive it. To be successful, **attend the transfer appointment and bring your required documentation** or notify us if you need to change your appointment date/time. We will generally only change the date/time ONCE.
3. **Bring all required documents** to your transfer appointment. Once all the required documents are received, the Housing Specialist will calculate the maximum rent allowed and **issue your Voucher**. If your paperwork is late, your Voucher to move will be delayed and you risk losing the unit in which you are interested.
4. **Notify your landlord** using the **Notice to Vacate** form provided by your Housing Specialist **during the transfer appointment**. Agree to the vacate date with your landlord that will allow you time to find a new unit, preferably **60 - 90 days**. **REMINDER: DO NOT** issue a notice to vacate before you have received an appointment to receive the voucher.
5. Once you locate a unit with a landlord willing to rent to you, you will complete the Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) and go through the process you used when you first leased a unit within the Voucher program.