

SALEM HOUSING AUTHORITY CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE PLAN MARCH 2020

Introduction:

The Salem Housing Authority is monitoring the current viral outbreak formally known as the Coronavirus, or CoVid-19. This is a constantly changing situation that we are taking very seriously. We have developed a Response Plan should this health crisis impact delivery of services to residents and participants of our housing programs. There are many sources of information concerning the virus that can be found at these websites:

The Center for Disease Control:

www.cdc.gov

New Hampshire Health and Human Services:

www.dhhs.nh.gov

Town of Salem:

www.townofsalemnh.org

The World Health Organization:

www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus

The National Institutes of Health:

www.nih.gov/health-information/coronavirus

Department of Housing and Urban Development:

www.hud.gov/coronavirus

It is human nature during times like this to want to be overly cautious and react in a manner we feel is justified to protect ourselves and our families. We should be cautious and take prudent measures to protect ourselves, our residents and those we work with every day. This plan provides guidance as to how the SHA can continue our work while also being cautious and respectful of this serious health issue facing our community. Our goal is to limit exposure to the virus amongst our employees and residents and to prevent further spread of the virus. **Effective March 17, 2020 at 8:00 AM, the office will be closed to the public. At this time, all employees are still required to report to work. However, in the event SHA employees are required to stay at home, business will continue to be conducted via phone and e-mail.**

Section 1

Chain of Command:

In the event the Executive Director is incapacitated or unavailable to perform her duties, the Maintenance Supervisor is hereby designated to act in her capacity during the absence. The person designated to act in her capacity during the absence of the Executive Director shall immediately contact the Chair and or Vice-Chair of the agency to inform them of the circumstances necessitating this change and to maintain communication with the Board. Should the Maintenance Supervisor be unable to perform these duties, the Assistant to the Executive Director shall immediately contact the Chair and or the Vice-Chair, at which time the Chair will perform the duties of the Executive Director until a designated person is appointed.

Section 2

Communication:

The best way to combat a serious health issue like CoVid-19 is to communicate clearly and effectively with employees, residents, government officials, vendors and the public. Accurate and timely communication will be critical in order to provide a proactive response rather than a reactive one. Use of multiple forms of communication will be important to spread the message as widely as possible to those who will rely on us now and in the future. This will include letters, emails, flyers, meetings and, when possible, text messaging.

A. Employees:

When it is necessary to communicate with staff, the preferred method will be to call for a mandatory staff meeting to review information and any course of action that may be required. If the situation calls for immediate notification, use of texting and emails will be used to get information to employees quickly. In the event there are changes in policies and procedures or there are work stoppages, this information shall be provided in writing to eliminate any confusion or to limit misinterpretations.

Areas that may need to be addressed:

- Protocols for completing work orders in residents' homes;
- Responding to emergency calls;
- Inspections;
- New lease ups;
- Use of outside vendors;

Employees are advised to monitor their health and report any symptoms to their health care provider and local public health officials as necessary. If employees believe they may have been exposed or are experiencing symptoms, they are asked to stay home and monitor their situation while keeping the SHA informed of their status. Employees must not be concerned with the status of their Earned Benefit Time account as we will work with employees to ensure that they are paid while we manage this epidemic.

B. Residents/Participants:

The SHA currently serves 182 households and therefore communication may be limited to letters, use of the website and our robocall service. It will be important to provide our residents with helpful information that is reliable and effective. Written communication will include basic information about the virus, about protections against the virus, including how to stop its spread and where residents can find additional information about the virus. Residents will be encouraged to contact health officials if they believe they have contracted the virus or are showing signs of the symptoms. They will be asked to self-quarantine themselves to protect their neighbors and others for as long as may be required due to governmental action. We ask all of our residents and participants to continue to live their lives in a manner as normal as possible and to stay alert as the conditions change. We must all be prepared to respond in an appropriate manner and not panic or act in a frenzied manner that will not be beneficial to ourselves or others.

C. Vendors:

For our partners who work with us to provide goods and services, we will keep them informed via emails and/or phone calls of any changes to our work environment. If buildings or neighborhoods are quarantined, we will make them aware of the situation so that they may determine if they can or will provide services if needed. Emergency work items requiring immediate attention in an area of concern will be disclosed and a plan to deal with the emergency will be developed in a timely fashion subject to the nature of the emergency. For emergencies dealing with fire or police services, residents shall continue to use 911 services.

D. Government Officials:

The SHA will work closely with state and local officials to monitor the situation and report any known instances of the virus affecting our staff or residents. We will cooperate fully with any request for information as health officials determine the status of the virus in our communities. If and when government decrees are issued, we will work to communicate these directives to our residents and staff. The Executive Director, or her designee of the SHA, shall be the point of contact for all communication with public officials.

Section 3

Incident Response:

In the event an employee or resident has contracted the virus contact with public health officials will be made immediately. We will coordinate our response with them and ensure that our efforts do not duplicate or in any way impede in their ability to respond to the incident. The Executive Director shall keep the Board of Commissioners informed at all times. Decisions as to ceasing operations or limiting operations shall be at the direction of the Board of Commissioners.

If it is necessary to cease operations of the SHA our phone lines will continue to operate and receive messages, which will be forwarded to staff monitoring these messages.

Section 4

Prevention Efforts:

The SHA will make reasonable efforts to control the spread of the virus through commonly known personal practices and work practices. Information will be disseminated to staff and residents about coughing/sneezing etiquette, washing of hands and staying home when sick. As a part of normal janitorial services, we will make additional efforts to sanitize those areas frequented by staff and residents such as the lobbies, bathrooms, waiting room, meeting space, laundry areas, trash areas and elevators. An emphasis will be placed on those areas most frequently contacted by hands. We will utilize appropriate disinfectants as identified by health officials.

The success of any prevention effort relies upon the good judgement of individuals in our environments. If an individual is sick, has symptoms or is known to have the virus, he/she must stay home and prevent the spread to others. Employees will be asked to stay at home, while residents will be asked to remain in their homes and seek assistance from family members or others to provide for their basic necessities. If a State of Emergency is declared by an act of the government, we must all follow the instructions provided regardless of any inconveniences it may cause in our lives.

Section 5

Operational Protocols:

Leasing:

In the event that service delivery is curtailed due to community health concerns, SHA shall endeavor to assist clients, to the extent feasible, through electronic or written means (mail). Applications can be requested from the SHA website: www.salemhousing.com.

- A. **Property Management.** Showing of units will take place in person when possible. In the event a lock down is ordered by the government, and if possible, photos will be taken and sent electronically to potential renters. Move in/move out inspections will be waived during any lock down. If a move out inspection cannot occur, security deposits shall be returned minus any unpaid rent. Lease enforcement will continue however, SHA shall continue to comply with state and federal regulations as it relates to the enforcement of lease provisions.
- B. **Occupancy Issues:** Program eligibility, Annual/interim Recertifications: SHA shall continue to process program eligibility and recerts subject to staffing and further regulatory guidance. Whereas income verifications are subject to third party review, processing of eligibility/recertifications may be delayed and or suspended until such time conditions will allow.
- C. **Inspections:** In order to comply with virus containment protocols, inspections may continue if conditions allow. Conditions which may affect inspections include but are not limited to: availability of staff; additional regulatory guidance; known conditions

of occupants of the units to be inspected (SHA will not allow inspection of units where a known CoVid19 case exists.); and government restrictions.

- D. **Maintenance:** SHA will use extreme caution when required to perform work in common areas and individual units. If sick, personnel will be asked to remain home and refrain from performing any work on behalf of SHA. If residents are infected by the virus, work will be limited to emergency work orders only and staff will take additional measures to protect themselves from exposure. This includes use of proper protective clothing, respirators, gloves, face masks and other protective gear as needed.

Increased attention will be made to cleaning and disinfecting areas with heavy pedestrian traffic and surfaces which come into frequent contact of humans. Doors, handrails, elevator buttons, intercom panels, laundry areas and trash areas. for example, will be cleaned at least once per day, subject to staffing availability. The office will be cleaned by office staff at the beginning of each business day.

The Maintenance Supervisor shall take stock of inventory to ensure adequate supplies are in place should there be a disruption of the supply chain. This should include adequate cleaning supplies as well as any material or equipment necessary for the safe operation of our facilities.

- E. **Financial:** Our objective during this crisis shall be to continue to receive and make payments for goods and services provided and or delivered. Residents are expected to continue to make rent payments in a timely fashion. We request that during this crisis, payments be made by check via U.S. mail or the drop slot located at SHA's main office. There is an additional drop box located at our Millville Arms development, as well. We will continue to accept payments in person at the office until such time as the SHA is required to cease operations or determines that it is best to discontinue direct payments. Residents will be encouraged to take advantage of SHA's direct debit option for rent payments. Under no circumstances should cash be mailed to make payments.

Revenue: Staff, to the extent possible, shall make every effort to record revenues received and process deposits as needed. Should the SHA be hampered in its ability to collect and record payments, no action will be made upon any household for non-payment of rent. Until such time as mail delivery is suspended, we will regularly check our mailbox to receive and record payments. Staff will continue to verify direct deposits through online banking systems.

Accounts Payables will be processed if staff is available and proceeds are on hand to cover expenses. Every effort will be made to reach out to vendors and keep them informed as to when payments can be expected if we are unable to process them when they are due. Where a check is required, processing shall be completed subject to availability of staff and funds. If the SHA's ability to process payments to its vendors is impeded due to government action or the lack of staff due to this crisis, it

is understood that all accrued payments shall be made on the earliest possible date. SHA is requesting patience and understanding during this difficult time.

Section 6

Telework:

Working from home shall be encouraged for those employees who are sick or have been in contact with someone who has the virus. Whereas not all employee duties can be performed at home, every effort will be made between employer and employee to identify work that can be performed electronically from home.

Maintenance of SHA units obviously cannot be performed from employees' homes; therefore, maintenance staff shall be designated as standby if it is necessary to close the office for any period of time. Residents will continue to be asked to call into the emergency call line to report any issues requiring immediate attention. If the report does not require immediate attention (such as a water leak or dangerous electrical malfunction), a work order will be created, and the item addressed as soon as possible. Any staff required to perform work at any Authority property shall wear proper protection provided by SHA and utilize safe work practices at all times. We will communicate to residents the need for patience as we work to continue to provide safe housing while protecting our employees and their families.

Section 7

Travel & Training:

The SHA shall rely upon the decisions made by government officials and or sponsors of any training to determine whether or not travel is advised. Should a ban be enacted that restricts travel and gatherings of large groups, we shall follow these bans accordingly. In the event that trainings are not canceled but staff has decided it is in their best interest to forgo travel, the SHA shall respect these wishes and seek reimbursement of any fees paid. If travel and training has been scheduled in an area that is quarantined or restricted, SHA shall prohibit travel to these areas.

Section 8

Social Gatherings:

If cases involving CoVid-19 expand, causing concern for public health, all SHA social functions shall be suspended and or canceled. This would include all resident meetings and social activities on SHA properties. It is our intent to cooperate with containment efforts and not unnecessarily expose our residents and their guests.

For additional information regarding Salem Housing Authority's Coronavirus Response Plan please contact Sheri L. McCloskey, Executive Director, at 603.893.6417