

**TELECONFERENCE
EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE
ST. CLOUD HRA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

Dial-in-number - (351) 888-6589

**Wednesday, March 25, 2020
5:00 P.M.**

Meeting Agenda:

1. Roll Call.
2. Update on Operations
3. Approve Telework Policy
4. Amend Office Closing Policy
5. Approve Admin Plan – HQS Language Change
6. Families First Corona Virus Response Act- no attachment at this time - coming later today

St. Cloud HRA
COVID-19 Plan
March 23, 2020

The St. Cloud HRA is closing monitoring the rapidly changing situation regarding the spread of the COVID-19 virus. In recent days, the World Health Organization designated COVID-19 as a pandemic, a national emergency has been declared, the Governor declared a peacetime state of emergency, and the Mayor Dave Kleis has declared a local state of emergency.

The health and safety of our residents, program participants, and staff is our highest priority. To help avoid the potential spread of the virus, we are taking the following proactive measures.

Applicant Interviews

All in-person intake appointments and interviews will be completed by telephone, email, mail and faxes.

Cleaning and Safety

At the apartment buildings, caretaker has been instructed to follow specialized cleaning procedures a couple times per week. At the HRA main office, a cleaning schedule has been established with specific staff assigned to specific times during the day. All staff are provided with hand sanitizer and wipes.

Hardship Rent Abatement

If a resident has experienced a financial hardship, such as the loss of a job or decrease in hours or pay, we will process the interim recertification as soon as possible for those residents and participants that our in or on a subsidized housing program.

If a resident is not on in or on a subsidized housing program, we will have the resident work with the property manager to develop a payment plan so that we can help them plan to pay part of their rent and work on the balance due after these circumstances change.

Hearings for Housing Denial

If a hearing is requested for a denial of housing, we will ask the applicant to appeal their denial by submitting via fax, email or US mail, a written explanation of why their denial should be overturned, along with supporting documentation, and two community references. Once the documentation is received, if needed, the hearing officer will hold the hearing via a telephone conference call to follow up with questions. A decision will be mailed out by the hearing officer to the applicant.

Hearings for Voucher Termination

If a hearing is requested for a termination from the voucher program, we will ask the participant to appeal their termination by submitting via fix, email or US mail, a written explanation of why their termination should be overturned along with supporting documentation. Once the documentation is received, if needed, the hearing officer will hold the hearing via a telephone conference call. A decision will be mailed out by the hearing officer to the voucher participant.

HQS Inspections

Inspections for participants moving to a new unit and/or entering the HCV program for the first time, along with emergency and complaint inspections will continue. Inspectors will have gloves, and shoe covers available. Annual inspections will be suspended until further notice.

Public Housing Inspections

All apartment inspections for HRA owned and managed properties will be postponed until further notice.

Rent Payments

All rent payments are to be dropped off at the secure site office rent drop boxes. Rent receipts will be mailed to residents that request a receipt. As of April 1, 2020 the HRA has waived late rent fees.

Recertification's

Effective immediately, all recertification's appointments will no longer be held in person. Recertification appointment letters will include the recertification packet that residents will be required to complete, sign and return with the required income and verification documents for their household. Residents and/or participants can mail or drop off their completed recertification packets at the main office and respective management offices. Property Managers and Occupancy Specialist will follow-up with their residents and/or participants via telephone or email if any additional items are needed. Residents and participants with questions are encouraged to contact their assigned property manager or occupancy specialist to discuss issues regarding their tenancy and/or rent and refrain from in person visits to HRA offices.

Work Orders/Repairs

When a resident calls in a work order, it will be processed in the same manner as before. If the resident indicates to the person taking the order or to our maintenance contractor, that they are sick, the work order will be put on hold until the resident recovers unless it is of an emergency nature. If the repair is of an emergency nature, all precautions possible will be taken by HRA staff and the maintenance contractor. If a shelter in place order is issued by the state, only emergency work orders will be completed.

**St. Cloud Housing and Redevelopment Authority
Personnel Policy Manual**

Topic: Telework Policy
Section: Hours of Work
Number 03-06

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Date Issued: 3-25-20

Telework Policy

The St. Cloud Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) provides telework arrangements to employees when it is mutually beneficial to both the HRA and the employee.

Telework is defined as any work arrangements that allows employees to work outside of their primary worksite at an alternative location, on a regular basis, pursuant to an approved agreement.

Emergency, occasional, non-regularly occurring out-of-office work arrangements may be allowed on a case-by-case basis or as approved by the Executive Director. A formal telework agreement is not required for these occasional telework arrangements but all components of this policy must be followed. In addition, the employee's Outlook calendar must state when they are teleworking and a contact phone number. Approval by the Executive Director on one occasion does not imply that future requests of a similar nature will be approved.

The telework arrangement does not change the terms and conditions of employment with the HRA. Telework is not a substitute for child or other dependent care. Teleworkers shall make or maintain childcare, adult care, or similar personal arrangements to permit concentration on work assignments during agreed upon work hours. Decreases in productivity or behaviors that detract value from the HRA may result in the immediate loss of teleworking status and/or may result in disciplinary action.

Telework arrangements may be discontinued, without cause, at any time, at the request of either the teleworker or the HRA. When practicable, either the HRA or teleworker should provide a two week notice of termination of the telework arrangement. Termination of HRA employment results in immediate cancellation of any telework arrangement with the employee.

General Conditions of Telework Arrangements

Conditions of Employment. The teleworker's conditions of employment shall remain the same as for non-teleworking employees; wages; benefits and leave accrual will remain unchanged unless there is a change in employment status or scheduled hours that impacts benefit eligibility. In addition all HRA policies, rules and procedures shall apply at the telework site, including those governing communicating internally and with the public, employee rights and responsibilities, facilities and equipment management, financial management, information resource management, purchasing of property and services, and safety. Failure to follow policy, rules and procedures may result in termination of the telework arrangement and/or disciplinary action.

Hours of Work. The telework arrangement shall specify the regularly scheduled work hours agreed upon by the teleworker and his/her supervisor. The amount of time the teleworking employee is expected to work shall remain the same as for in office work. A teleworking employee must be available during scheduled work hours by phone, email, or other specified methods of communication with his/her supervisor, co-workers, and other outside the HRA with who job-related communication is necessary.

As needed, the teleworker must attend job-related meetings, training sessions and other job related events. The supervisor will attempt to give 24 hour notice of meetings using electronic means of communication whenever possible. There may be times when the employee's physical presence is deemed essential. In such cases, the supervisor must provide sufficient notice to allow the employee a reasonable time to travel to the HRA office to participate in the meeting.

Fair Labor Standards Act. Teleworking employees who are not exempt from the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) will be required to record all hours worked in a manner designated by the HRA. Teleworking employees will be held to the same standard of compliance as HRA office employees. The agreed upon work schedule shall comply with FLSA regulations. Failure to comply with this requirement can result in the immediate termination of the telework arrangement.

Emergency Disruptions and Inclement Weather. If the primary worksite is closed due to an emergency or inclement weather, the supervisor will contact the teleworking employee and provide instructions about the continuation of work at the telework site. If there is an emergency at the telework site, such as a power outage, the teleworker will notify the supervisor as soon as possible. The teleworker may be reassigned to the HRA office or an alternative worksite in such cases or be required to take leave.

Alternative Work Site. The teleworker must establish and maintain a dedicated workspace that is quiet, clean, and safe, with adequate lighting and ventilation and must confirm in writing, annually that the work location is free of recognized hazards. The teleworker will not hold business meetings at the alternate work location. The HRA reserves the right to visit the alternate work site as long as 24 hour notice is provided. Injuries sustained by the employee in a home office location and in conjunction with his or her regular work duties are normally covered by the HRA's workers' compensation policy. Teleworking employees are responsible for notifying the employer of such injuries as soon as practicable. The employee is liable for any injuries sustained by visitors to his or her home worksite.

Inspections. In case of injury, theft, loss or tort liability related to telework at the alternative work site, the teleworker must allow agents of the HRA to investigate and/or inspect the telework site.

Equipment. Furniture and equipment, including computer workstations, shall generally be provided by the teleworker. In the event that equipment and software are provided by the HRA at the telework site, such equipment and software shall be used exclusively by the teleworker and only for the purposes of conducting HRA business. Software shall not be duplicated. The teleworker is responsible for safe transportation and set-up of such equipment.

Equipment Liability. The HRA will repair and maintain any equipment owned by the HRA. The teleworker is responsible for safely transporting such equipment to campus for repair or maintenance unless movement of the equipment is likely to result in damage. Surge protectors or other protective devices must be used with any HRA computer made available to the teleworker. Current virus protections and security measures must be used on any HRA and non-HRA device. Services must be installed and operating. The HRA may pursue recovery from the teleworker for the HRA property that is deliberately, or through negligence, damaged, destroyed, lost or stolen while in the teleworker's care, custody or control. The HRA does not assume liability for loss, damage, or wear of employee-owned equipment.

Data Security & Confidentiality. Security and confidentiality shall be maintained by the teleworker at the same level as expected at all worksites. Confidential and sensitive data should not be saved on a non-HRA computer. Restricted access or confidential material shall not be taken out of the primary worksite or accessed through a computer unless approved in advance by the supervisor. The teleworker is responsible to ensure that non-employees do not access HRA data, including in print or electronic form.

All documents and records developed while teleworking are property of the HRA. The teleworker must have a method to safeguard the security of all data, but not limited to proprietary information, confidential personnel information, resident and program participant records, and attorney-client communications. Steps include the use of locked file storage for paper files, regular password maintenance, not leaving unlocked paper files or computer screens while unattended, and any other measures appropriate for the job and the environment.

Record Retention. Products, documents and records that are used, developed, or revised while teleworking shall be copied or restored to the HRA's computerized record system. Maintenance of HRA records must be consistent with the HRA record retention rules and policy.

Telework Expenses.

Office Supplies – The HRA shall provide any necessary office supplies. Out-of-pocket expenses for supplies normally available in the office will not be reimbursed unless pre-approved by the Supervisor. All supplies should be secured in the telework site and must not be used by the teleworker or others for personal purposes.

Travel and Incidental Costs – The teleworker will not be paid for time or mileage involved in travel between the telework site and the HRA site. All incidental costs, such as residential utility costs, homeowner's insurance or cleaning services, are the responsibilities of the teleworker.

Taxes – Teleworkers should consult with a tax expert to determine the tax implications of a home office. The HRA will not provide guidance nor claim responsibility for any Federal or State tax liability.

**St. Cloud Housing and Redevelopment Authority
Personnel Policy Manual**

Topic: Office Closing
Section: Employee Relations
Number 06.09

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Date Issued: 7-01-99
Date Revised: 10-01-06

From time to time, it may be necessary to close the HRA offices due to inclement weather, power outages, or other hazardous conditions. Similarly, employees may be prevented from reporting to work due to these conditions.

Every effort will be made to keep the offices open as scheduled. Operations will close when the Executive Director determines that conditions exist which make travel in the area dangerous, the physical status of the office facility is unable to support continued operations, **or other emergency situations.** If there is an office closing, **an email will be sent to all employees at their preferred email address.** ~~it will be announced within one hour prior to the HRA's regular starting time on KCLD AM and FM and WJON. In addition, the Executive Director will notify all Department Directors, who will, in turn, attempt to notify the affected employees in their department.~~

When HRA offices are closed by the Executive Director, employees will be paid for the hours they are regularly scheduled to work.

In the event that HRA offices are closed, HRA ~~maintenance~~ personnel ~~will~~ **may** be required to **work either via telework or from HRA premises.** ~~report to their assigned sites and will be paid for hours worked. The Executive Director will determine each employee's required work schedule. If the employee is unable to work as scheduled, leave must be taken, paid or unpaid, in accordance with applicable policies.~~

In the event that employees are unable to report to work due to weather or emergency conditions when the office is open, employees must call and notify their Supervisor as soon as possible. If the employee reaches the Supervisor's voice mail and is not able to speak to the Supervisor directly, the employee should leave the Supervisor a voice message and then transfer to the receptionist desk to speak to the individual who answers the phone in person to inform them of their absence or late arrival. This time will be ~~charged against the employee's accrued paid leave or taken without pay.~~ **taken as leave, paid or unpaid, in accordance with applicable policies.**

The safety of HRA employees is the most important concern; therefore, employees are urged to use their best judgment in determining if it is appropriate to come to work or leave work without concern that management will question that judgment.

- i. The percentage of the monthly adjusted income the family paid for gross rent;
- ii. The Total Tenant Payment; (TTP)
- iii. The household's share represented on the effective date of the eligibility event;
- iv. 30 percent of the household's current adjusted monthly income.

The new enhanced voucher minimum rent for these households is a percentage of income as opposed to a specific dollar amount. Once this change in the enhanced voucher minimum rent becomes effective for a household, the enhanced voucher minimum rent for the household normally remains that specific percentage of income and will not revert to a specific dollar amount, even if the household income subsequently increases or decreases unless it increases or decreases by a significant amount.

The minimum rent represents the lowest amount the household may pay as their household share for as long as the household remains in the property. A household may pay no less than the enhanced voucher minimum rent. Depending on the circumstances, the household may have to pay more than the enhanced voucher minimum rent at the time of the eligibility event.

12.0 INSPECTION POLICIES, HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS, AND DAMAGE CLAIMS

The HRA will inspect all units to ensure that they meet Housing Quality Standards (HQS). No unit will be initially placed on the Housing Choice Voucher Program unless the HQS is met. Units under a Project Based Contract will be inspected annually. All other units will be inspected at least biennially at a minimum and annually at the maximum, and at other times as needed, to determine if the units meet HQS. The HRA may use alternative inspection methods in emergency situations as determined necessary by the HRA. Alternative methods include but are not limited to inspections by video conference and pictures of repaired items. The HRA inspector will determine if the alternative method provides quality information to determine the unit meets HQS requirements (such as the quality of pictures/audio)

The HRA must be allowed to inspect the dwelling unit at reasonable times with reasonable notice. The family will be notified of the inspection appointment. If the family cannot be at home for the scheduled inspection appointment, the family must call and reschedule the inspection or make arrangements to enable the Housing Authority to enter the unit and complete the inspection.

If the family misses the scheduled inspection and fails to reschedule the inspection, the HRA will only schedule one more inspection. If the family misses two inspection appointments, the HRA will consider the family to be in violation of a family obligation and thus, will propose the termination of their eligibility to participate in the program following the 'informal hearing' process in place.

12.1 TYPES OF INSPECTIONS

There are six types of inspections the HRA will perform: