

HUD Waivers in Response to COVID-19 – December 31, 2020

HQS

- Turnover / New Units
 - Physical inspections not required in most instances
 - Signed property management or owner certification indicating no knowledge of life-threatening deficiencies may be accepted in lieu of a physical inspection
 - Units placed under Contract without physical inspection using landlord/PM self-certification of non-threatening items must be physically inspected within ONE YEAR of signed certification
 - Waiver ends December 31, 2020

Belmont – implemented this HUD waiver whereas Belmont will accept landlord’s self-certifications for new units when the landlord certifies in writing there are no life-threatening fail items in the unit. Coupled with this, Belmont will continue to conduct physical inspections whenever feasible for new units as long as the property management team and/or owner and client are willing to allow the inspection and Belmont’s Inspector feels safe physically inspecting the unit.

HCV Inspections:

- Annual Inspections
 - Biennial HQS Inspections are recommended – not necessary to update Admin Plan

Belmont – implemented this HUD waiver. Belmont has flagged units qualifying for biennial inspections regardless of the type of unit (complex vs. single unit)

Additionally, Belmont has suspended all annual inspections due to the current health situation in the Counties where Section 8 Rental Assistance is administered.

- Tenant Requests – Non-Life Threatening
 - In lieu of inspection notify owner / PM to help rectify items needing repair. Require corrective action within 60 days (normally 30)

Belmont – has partially implemented this HUD waiver by following the steps outlined below:

- Inspections Administrative Assistant is contacting the landlord/property manager immediately upon receipt of non-life threatening issues for assisted units in order to resolve the issues quickly and without a physical inspection.
 - Belmont’s goal is to limit the number of physical inspections as much as possible. Taking this approach Belmont will provide a means to the LL/T in resolving the repair items successfully without performing an inspection.
 - If issues at an assisted unit continue and/or the LL is unwilling to correct the repairs, Belmont may opt to conduct a physical inspection. This may be an option if County COVID numbers are low and the inspector feels safe conducting the inspection.
- Once repairs are completed, an inspection staff member (AA, Inspector, Supervisor) will obtain pictures/videos to review and confirm repairs were completed in compliance with HQS. The Inspector or a supervisor will make the final determination if the unit passes HQS.
- Belmont will also contact the client to verbally confirm repairs are completed and staff member will document the conversation using the over-the-phone verification form.

- The LL will have 60 days to complete the required repairs.

When possible, a physical inspection of the unit will be performed as long as the landlord/property manager, client, and Belmont's Inspector feel safe to conduct the inspection.

- Tenant Requests – Emergency
 - HA must contact owner immediately
 - HA must verify repair completed within 24 hours

Belmont – implemented this HUD waiver by following the steps as outlined below:

- Belmont has been and will continue to practice this.
- A physical inspection will not be conducted unless there are extenuating circumstances warranting an inspection and the County COVID numbers are low and inspector is safe to inspect on site.
- Obtain video, pictures of repaired item(s) whenever possible.
- Confirm verbally with client item(s) have been corrected properly and will document using the over-the-phone verification form.
- Abate unit HAP if not repaired within 24 hours

When necessary, a physical inspection of the unit will be performed as long as the landlord/property manager, client, and Belmont's Inspector feel safe to conduct the inspection.

- HQS Waiver
 - A leased unit does not need at least one bedroom or sleeping room for every two people in the household to accommodate those who may need to add members as a result of the COVID-19 emergency

Belmont: Will implement if needed

Certification of Income:

- Annual Re-examinations
 - Delay annual re-exams of family income/composition until December 31, 2020.

Belmont – implemented this HUD waiver. Belmont will provide accommodations to households who fail to comply with certifications by using the household's previous certification to continue assistance. However, Belmont will make every attempt to obtain verification and documentation and use the waiver as an exception not the rule.

- If conducting annual re-exams, can rely on family self-certs and forego reliance on 3rd party income verification. This includes over-the-phone self-certs, which are acceptable as long as the staff member records the conversation in writing – required by HUD.

Belmont – implemented this HUD waiver by accepting accept self-certifications of income using an inner-office created 'Over-the-Phone certification form'.

Interim Certifications:

- Rely on self-certifications of family due to loss of income through December 31, 2020

Belmont – implemented this waiver as indicated above and will continue to provide interim certifications for all household members who experience changes in their household income

- Update Admin Plan to allow families to maintain lower tenant rent – meaning no adjustment to household income if/when the household's income increases.

Belmont – has NOT implemented this waiver and continues to adjust household income accordingly when there is an increased in the household income.

Termination of Rental Assistance:

- HUD has not prohibited terminations at this time – no guidance except for missing paperwork – no terminations allowed for this reason through December 31, 2020

Belmont – implemented this waiver as follows:

- We will provide accommodations to family's who using their previous certification and/or self-certifications (over-the-phone verification form) to obtain household income/assets/allowances.
- Terminations for program violations unrelated to missing paperwork will be reviewed by a designated supervisor to ensure consistency and fairness to all participants.
- Whenever possible, we will try to avoid terminations during the COVID crisis.

EIV:

- HUD waived EIV use and mandatory requirements to review through December 31, 2020
- Families will be held accountable if there are significant discrepancies from self-certifications if later discovered

Belmont – has NOT implemented this waiver. Belmont will continue to review and rely on the data in EIV. Since EIV is normally a mandated review, Belmont will not implement the waiver regarding the use of EIV. Staff have been directed to continue reviewing EIV for every certification.

IVT will continue review of previous income discrepancies

New Hire date report should be reviewed whenever possible

Payment Standards:

- If payment standards increase, do not need to wait until regular family annual re-exam to implement

Belmont – currently not applicable as PS's are not higher than last year's annuals. However, if Belmont increases the PS, this would be considered and implemented to further assist our clients.

Admin Plan:

- May update without Board approval through September 30, 2020

Belmont – will implement this HUD waiver when/if any changes made to the Administrative Plan are made along with forwarding changes to the Town of Amherst and the City of North Tonawanda for their records regardless if Board approval is required or not

Agency Plan / 5-Year Plan:

- Agencies with upcoming fiscal year end dates through December 31, 2020, will receive an extension for submission (same as the July HUD Waivers)

Belmont – FY December 31, 2020 - extension to January 16, 2021 for annual plan submission. Belmont will NOT implement this waiver as Belmont does not anticipate a delay in the process at this time. Belmont will follow the regularly established schedule for the FY 2021 Annual Plan.

HCV Extensions:

- PHA has latitude to extend HCV terms as needed (no limit and no guidance from HUD)

Belmont – implemented this HUD waiver. Belmont initially provided extensions for all Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) issued through July 31, 2020. Most recently, Belmont extended issued HCVs through December 31, 2020. On that date all HCVs that are not utilized, will expire. Exception: Newly issued disabled households who have requested further extensions as an accommodation. However, they may only receive up to ONE year unless they were in the HCVs in the COVID batch, in which case they have until December 31, 2020, as their issuance will be well over a year at that time.

Additionally, if the health crisis is such on December 31, 2020, further accommodations may be extended. However, at this time the final extension is set for December 31, 2020.

HAP Contract Execution:

- PHA may execute HAPCs up to 120 days of effective date (previously 60-day limit)

Belmont – implemented this HUD waiver. However, Belmont will continue to follow up regularly on all outstanding HAPCs in order to comply with the normal 60-day execution requirement. However, Belmont will not reissue the HAPC if it is received within 120 days from the effective date

Unit Vacancies:

- Allow vacancies for more than 180 days from the assisted unit

Belmont – implemented this HUD waiver by determining which participants fell into this group early on and extended all terminations of Housing Assistance Payments Contract from the assisted unit through July 31, 2020, then recently extended to December 31, 2020. Belmont will continue to monitor and determine any additional participants who may fall into this category to ensure rental assistance is not terminated.

- Retain units on HAPC even if the unit does not generate subsidy for 180 days

Belmont – implemented this HUD waiver by:

- Identifying participants whose subsidy level was at a zero (\$0) HAP level and extend their termination from the program to July 31, 2020 initially. Most recently these families were provided with another extension to December 31, 2020.
- Belmont has extended ALL Housing Assistance Payments Contracts that have not had housing assistance (HAP) paid within the last 180 days and extend the termination dates to December 31, 2020. NOTE: If there is an inspection issue, Belmont reserves the right to terminate the Housing Assistance Payments Contract if necessary to allow the participant to relocate if failed items are not repaired and the unit is not compliant with inspection Housing Quality Standards.

FSS:

- COVID-19 qualifies as ‘good cause’ through December 31, 2020, to extend a family’s participation in the FSS Program for up to two (2) years

Belmont – implemented this on a case-by-case basis to ensure continued participation in the FSS Program for current participants needing the extension

FUPY:

- Raises the age of eligibility from 24 to 25 in FUPY Program and extends the length of assistance for a year for youths who were approaching the 36-month cut-off for assistance under FUP. Also extends the length of time the youth has to find a unit under FUP from 90 to 120 days.

Belmont – implemented this HUD waiver using the higher age for FUP youth applicants.

Homeownership:

- Extends the period of eligibility for Section 8 homeownership assistance by one year for families approaching their maximum term of assistance prior to December 31, 2020

Belmont – implemented this waiver for homeowners on the Section 8 program as needed.

Utility Allowance (Energy Audit):

- Suspended - PHAs need not review utility allowances until December 31, 2020

Belmont – did NOT implement this waiver and have implemented an up-to-date utility allowance effective October 1, 2020, based on recent utility analysis.

Waiting List:

- Notice for opening or closing Section 8 Waiting Lists can be provided by leaving an outgoing voice message on its answering machine and website

Belmont – will implement if need to open or close a waiting list is needed

SEMAP:

- Temporary suspension of SEMAP for PHAs with fiscal year ends through December 31, 2020

Belmont – automatic implementation by HUD. The Erie County and City of North Tonawanda Section 8 Programs' fiscal year ends on December 31, therefore, the waiver indicates SEMAP will not commence for these programs. HUD will begin issuing new PHAs and SEMAP scores for PHAs with fiscal year end dates of March 31, 2021.

Financial Statement:

- Deadlines have been extended.

Belmont – will NOT implement this HUD waiver

PIC Submissions:

- Reporting of HUD 50058 Forms have been extended from 60 to 90 days

Belmont – will NOT implement as Belmont is able to effectively submit the programs' HUD 50058 Forms at least once monthly to PIC.

Funds

- Allows flexibility to move monies between operating and capital funds - extended six months

Belmont – will NOT implement this HUD waiver