

## **INCOME ASSET WAGE MATCH POLICY FOR STATE-AIDED HOUSING**

This Wage Match Policy applies to all administrative employees of the Taunton Housing Authority who are responsible for the management of state housing program tenants, including tenants in conventional housing, MRVP and AHVP. All Massachusetts housing authorities and non-profit agencies that administer state-funded housing programs must participate in the Wage Match Program. The pertinent law and regulations can be found at section 3 of M.G.L. c. 62E, M.G.L. c.66A, 760 CMR 6.00 and 801 CMR 3.00.

As part of an Interdepartmental Service Agreement (ISA) between the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) and the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), DHCD is authorized to receive wage reporting information from DOR pursuant to M.G.L. c. 62E, Section 3. The Wage Match system information is exchanged via the statewide network. The housing authority will transmit data via the internet Wage Match System to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) who will then transmit the data to the Department of Revenue (DOR). DOR will match the data against its wage reporting files, provide the information to DHCD, and in turn DHCD will forward the information to the housing authority within five (5) days. The housing authority will review the data to determine whether income reported by tenants for determining rent is correct.

The housing authority shall conduct wage match for every adult member (aged 18 and over) of the tenant household residing in state housing programs. Tenants must be informed about the wage match program and must authorize the use of their Social Security numbers for the program. Tenants are required by the lease to provide their social security number, and to authorize use of their social security number by the housing authority for verification of income and assists through DOR's wage reporting system. However, there is no requirement that applicants or tenants have a social security number to be eligible or housed.

Because the housing authority will have access to "personal data" as defined by M.G.L. c.66A, the housing authority will ensure confidentiality of information requested and received through the wage match system. The housing authority is subject to and must comply with all applicable laws and regulations relating to confidentiality and privacy, including but not limited to M.G.L. c. 62E, M.G.L. c. 66A, 760 CMR 4.00 801 CMR 3.00. The Executive Director is responsible for ensuring the security and confidentiality of the wage match reporting information entrusted to his/her staff and to ensure that all employees who have access to wage reporting information understand the severe penalties associated with any misuse of the system or the information obtained. Wage reporting information may only be accessed or viewed by an authorized employee of the housing authority and must directly relate to his/her assigned case. No other employee or person under the housing authority's control, or on the premises, may inspect, disclose or browse the wage reporting information for any purpose. Information shall not be kept on a computer monitor. Printed material shall not be kept in clear view where an unauthorized person(s) will have access to Wage Match information. All Wage Reporting information will be kept in a secure manner in the tenant's file which is kept in a locked file cabinet within locked offices.

As the HAFIS administrator, it is the responsibility of the Executive Director to determine who will access Wage Match information. The Executive Director will assign a user name and password to that employee, which will allow him/her to log on to the Wage Match application. Authorized users must sign an acknowledgement regarding the confidentiality of the Department of Revenue's information and shall be kept on file at the THA. If or when that authorized individual is no longer employed at the housing authority, their log-on capability must be disabled in HAFIS. A new user name and password must be assigned to the next employee authorized to access Wage Match.

Any unauthorized disclosure of wage reporting information will result in the immediate termination of employment.

The Taunton Housing Authority will notify DHCD immediately both orally and in writing if any personal data is improperly used and accessed. The Taunton Housing Authority will cooperate with DHCD to enjoin or prevent misuse of, regain possession of, or otherwise protect the data.

### **Identifying Cases of Income Discrepancy**

The THA will compare income and asset information reported by members of a tenant household with wage reporting information provided by DOR. The THA will use its best judgment to identify cases where there is a discrepancy of ten percent or greater. This ten percent figure triggers a rent re-determination under 760 CMR 6.00 and 760 CMR 49.00. When the THA believes a tenant may have income that exceeds this ten percent threshold, the THA will ask the tenant to explain the difference at meetings with housing authority.

### **Meetings/Hearing Process**

The THA shall provide the tenant with an opportunity to explain the discrepancy.

1. The tenant will be requested in writing to attend a meeting at the housing agency. The letter must state the purpose of the meeting and contain the information from DOR that will be discussed. The letter will ask the tenant to call the housing agency to arrange for a mutually agreeable time.
2. If the tenant does not contact the THA, the housing agency will make a reasonable effort to set up the meeting. If no meeting has been arranged with the tenant after three weeks from the date of the notification letter, the housing agency will proceed to notify the tenant of his or her right to request a Grievance Hearing [See Step 5].
3. At the meeting, the housing agency director or his or her designee will discuss the information obtained from DOR concerning the tenant's wages and how it might affect the tenant's rent or voucher amount, or might be grounds for the tenant's eviction or termination. The tenant will be given three weeks from the date of this meeting to provide income information, documentation, or other evidence that shows why the wage reporting information received from DOR is incorrect. The THA will evaluate all information provided by the tenant.
4. The THA will then send a letter notifying the tenant of the action it will take, if any. If adverse action will be taken (i.e., increased rent, termination, or eviction), the housing agency will ask the tenant to attend an additional meeting. The letter will state clearly how the tenant is to schedule this meeting and the deadline for doing so. This meeting should be held within three weeks of the date of the letter. Any adverse action the THA plans to take shall commence following this meeting, if one is held, or at the end of the three-week period, if the tenant does not schedule or attend a meeting.
5. Tenants who feel aggrieved because of adverse action taken by an THA are entitled to a grievance hearing according to procedures outlined in 760 CMR 6.08 for state housing tenants and 760 CMR 49.10 for voucher holders (which refers to the process outlined in 760 CMR 6.08).

### **Reporting Adverse Actions to DHCD**

The THA shall report to DHCD any adverse actions they take for each tenant, such as evictions or termination proceedings, rent increases, or rent repayment arrangements. It is not necessary to report cases that are investigated but are cleared.

