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## **ALASKA HOUSING RENT RELIEF Housing Relief Specialist Policies and Procedures**

Staff working in the Housing Relief Specialist team roles are responsible for reviewing the lease or rental agreement, reviewing any utility documentation, and contacting the applicants for the Alaska Housing Rent Relief (AHRR) program to verify the application details, and payment amounts. The following procedures and programmatic guidelines will guide the Housing Relief Specialist portion of the AHRR applications.

These Policies and Procedures outline the tasks to be performed for each stage of the Housing Relief Specialist role and the conditions for approval, correction and rejection associated with each task.

### **Lease or Rental Agreement Validation**

Housing Relief Specialist team members need to review the lease or rental agreement for the applicant and determine the validity of the documentation and completeness of the application materials.

Task: Review Lease or Rental Agreement and compare it to the application details.

- 1) Approval Conditions
  - a. Lease is current, tenant's name and address matches the application, and the landlord is named
  
- 2) Correction Conditions
  - a. Lease is expired
    - i. Solution: Verify verbally or through online portal communication with Tenant that the lease has converted to "month to month."
  - b. Named tenant(s) on lease do not match the application name
    - i. Solution: Utility bill shows applicant's name with matching address, allow
    - ii. Solution: If hyphenated or abbreviated name reasonably demonstrates it is actually is the applicant (i.e. Jim v. James, Smith-Jenkins v. Smith), allow
  - c. There is an obvious typographical error in the application and address of rental unit listed on lease does not match application
    - i. Solution: Verify verbally or through online portal communication with applicant the address of the rental. Check with your supervisor. Fix in the system. Address on lease and system must match.
  
- 3) Rejection Conditions
  - a. No lease or rental agreement is provided

- b. Lease or rental agreement does not contain name of Tenant or Landlord
  - i. Exception: See Paragraph 2b of this Task
- c. Lease or rental agreement does not contain address of rental unit
- d. Lease or rental agreement does not contain monthly rent obligation
- e. The tenant(s) named in lease or rental agreement does not match application
  - i. Solution: Require documentation showing the applicant pays rent to the address listed on the application (utility bill, address on ID or other bills, etc.)
- f. The tenant(s) named in the lease appear to be related to the Landlord and have the rental address is the same as the Landlord's address.

**Utility Validation [N/A if utility assistance has not been requested]**

Housing Relief Specialist team members need to review the utility bills, invoices, or statements of the applicant and determine validity of the documentation and completeness of the application materials.

Task: Review Utility Documentation and compare it to the application details.

1) Approval Conditions

- a. Utility documentation is current, name of obligated person on utility documentation matches applicant's name, address of rental unit matches application, and lease references requested utilities as a tenant cost
  - i. Approved utilities are: Gas, Electric, Water & Sewer, Trash Removal, and Heating Costs such as fuel or wood
  - ii. Approved utilities ***do not include internet services or reimbursements*** for fuel oil or energy costs already paid

2) Correction Conditions

- a. Person's name on utility documentation does not match application
  - i. Solution: Lease or rental agreement shows applicant's name with matching address, allow
  - ii. Solution: If the person's name on the utility documentation is also a tenant listed on the rental agreement, allow
  - iii. Solution: If the name on the utility bill is the landlord, confirm in rental agreement that utilities are a separate cost than rent

3) Rejection Conditions

- a. No utility documentation is provided
- b. Utility documentation does not contain name of applicant, co-occupant of the rental unit, or landlord
- c. Address of rental unit listed on utility documentation does not match application

- d. Utility documentation is outdated (more than 2 months old at time of application)
- e. Person's name on utility documentation is not the applicant and no backup documentation has been provided to indicate the utility bill(s) apply to the applicant's household
- f. Lease does not specify that requested utilities are a tenant cost

### **Rent and Utility Payment Verification**

Housing Relief Specialist team members need to review and reconcile the documented amounts owed with the stated amounts owed in the online system for AHRR funding and correct if necessary. Late fees associated with rent and / or utilities will be eligible expenses if supported by the documentation.

Applications for combined rent and utility assistance must be processed together. If an applicant is requesting rental assistance, and assistance for two utilities, the Housing Relief Specialist must verify that all required information is in place for all three components of the request prior to approving payment.

Task: Confirm Arrearages

- 1) Approval Conditions
  - a. Past due rent statement and/or past due utility documentation provided and amount(s) match online system
- 2) Correction Conditions
  - a. Past due rent amount and/or past due utility amount(s) provided in online system do not match provided documentation
    - i. Solution: If documentation is current and complete, update in online system to match documentation
- 3) Rejection Conditions
  - a. Incomplete or missing past due statement(s) were provided
    - i. Solution: Applicant must provide complete backup documentation.

Task: Confirm Current Payment Needs and Check for Duplicative Assistance

1) Approval Sequence and Conditions

- a. Applicant confirms they are responsible for paying all or part of the stated rent and utilities.
  - i. Identify the total amounts owed for rent and utilities
  - ii. Identify the amounts paid towards rent and utilities by the other sources of assistance
    1. Applicants must be asked if they are receiving any assistance from other sources that help pay their rent and / or utilities
    2. Identify the amounts owed by the applicant after deducting the other sources of assistance from the total amount(s) owed
    3. Update the application with:
      - a. The total amount(s) owed for rent and / or utilities (regardless of who pays), and
      - b. The amount(s) owed by the tenant after the other funding sources have been applied to the rent and / or utilities
    4. The amount of funding provided through the AHRR program will equal the values noted in 3(b) – above

2) Correction Conditions

- a. Monthly rent and / or utilities listed in application does not match documents provided
  - i. Solution: Adjust rent and / or utility assistance to match the source documentation provided by the applicant if the applicant confirms the initial entry contained mistakes (note the file prior to approving)

3) Rejection Conditions

- a. Applicant confirms that they are receiving other rent and / or utility assistance that results in no tenant paid rent and / or utility costs.
- a. Monthly rent and / or utilities listed in application does not match documents provided and amounts specified in application are higher than amounts specified in supporting documentation
  - i. Solution: Verify verbally or through online portal communication with applicant if rent and / or utility amounts have changed. Require documentation reflecting correct amount(s).

1. Example of approved documentation: Updated lease or rental agreement, updated utility invoice(s) or statement(s), bank statement showing proof of higher rent payment, or other proof of higher rent payment.
- ii. Solution: Once corrective documentation has been provided, complete the steps outlined in Part 1 of this section.

Task: Confirm landlord / utility company information with the Applicant

1) Approval Conditions

- a. All payees (landlords and / or utility providers) have contact information and Tax ID numbers in the system (EIN from W-9, SSN for private landlords), property name is confirmed. Example: property is Strawberry Cottage not Strawberry Place. Not all properties will have property names.
- b. DO NOT SHARE THE EIN or SSN for the landlords with the tenant.

2) Rejection Conditions

- a. No landlord and / or utility information provided for the entities to be paid
- b. Landlord and / or utility name and contact information provided but no taxpayer ID
  - i. Solution: Refer applicant to forward portal link to their landlord / utility provider.

### **Confirmations and Data Collection**

Housing Relief Specialist team members need to review and confirm payment details with the applicant and set expectations for the next steps prior to the request for payment. This confirmation may take place verbally by way of telephone call, or it may take place through online portal communication.

Task: Confirm Payment Details

Confirm the amounts that will be paid for arrearages and current assistance. Confirm the names of the payees for each entity that will receive AHRR monies.

Task: Ask for final confirmation of application details prior to approving request (simply ask if all of the information provided in the application was accurate) and then set expectations for next steps, including

- 1) When payments will be posted
- 2) How the applicant can track their information online

- 3) The process for re-evaluating future need every three months
- 4) How to end program participation if circumstances change in the future where the applicant no longer becomes eligible or no longer wishes to participate
- 5) How refunds will be processed in the event the applicant moves

### **Policies and Procedures for Housing Relief Specialist Teams**

- 1) Disclosure and Conflict of Interest
  - a. All Housing Relief Specialist staff must immediately notify their supervisor if they encounter an application from a person they have a financial relationship with and immediately stop work on that application.
  - b. All Housing Relief Specialist staff must immediately notify their supervisor if they encounter an application from a person they have a personal or familial relationship with and immediately stop work on that application.
  - c. All Housing Relief Specialist staff must disclose to their supervisor if they or known members of their family or households have applied for relief through the AHRR program.
- 2) Application Data Security and Privacy
  - a. No client records are to be printed or image captured
  - b. Access to the system will be limited to specific IP addresses or workstations approved by the back office team member's supervisor
  - c. All Housing Relief Specialist team members must read and sign the AHFC information security policy and procedures document
  - d. Housing Relief Specialist team members are not permitted to access applicant records outside of their stated work hours
  - e. No client records are to be solicited or transmitted via email
- 3) Work will comply with the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation's Information Security Policy (attached)