



The Proprietor



News for Landlords Partnering with the Housing Opportunities Commission



Annie B. Alston,
Executive Director

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Welcome.

We value your participation in our programs and want to keep you up-to-date on news about HOC programs.

We'd appreciate any feedback you have.

Send an email to:
les.kaplan@hocmc.org

Les Kaplan, Director, HOC Office of Community Partnerships

A Local Landlord's Experience:

Goodbye Uncertainty...Hello Success!

After just one year of participating in the Housing Choice Voucher program as a landlord, property owner Laura Murray says she has found the win-win situation she was looking for.

Ms. Murray owns several 3-bedroom townhomes in Montgomery County, only one of which is rented to an HOC participant.

While all of her tenants are good, she says, "only one of my tenants' checks arrives like clockwork at the beginning of the month — the tenant enrolled in the Housing Choice Voucher program."

With a mortgage to pay every month, the assurance of that HOC check arriving on time has given Ms. Murray great peace of mind.

One thing to keep in mind, said Murray, is that as an HOC landlord, "You have a variety of resources available to you. There are security deposit loans available for tenants, counseling, apartment lists and other aids to help the program run smoothly."

"HOC wants a productive relationship with both tenants and landlords," concluded Ms. Murray. ♦



HOC WANTS TO MEET YOU!

Come talk to us. We'll be out in a community near you this Spring and Summer. We want to answer any questions you have, hear your concerns and give you the opportunity to

meet staff involved in HOC programs. To learn more about the planned landlord forums, see *Forums*, page 2.

HOC LAUNCHES NEW OFFICE OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

By Les Kaplan, Director, Office of Community Partnerships

We have created a new Office of Community Partnerships at HOC to improve the way we communicate and respond to the many different groups with whom we interact.

The 2,000 individual landlords that provide the units in which participants in HOC programs live are one of HOC's most important partners.

The relationship between HOC and landlords is mutually beneficial. It is in everyone's best interest to identify and solve problems quickly.

The new Office of Community Partnerships will be your direct connection to resolve questions related to landlord relationships with tenants.

We want you to bring any problems you are having difficulty resolving to us.

We will hold forums about security deposits, repayment agreements, utilities and other issues that arise.

We also plan to provide helpful information related to energy conservation, maintenance, new HUD regulations and other topics. These forums will be held throughout Montgomery County.

It is my expectation that people will find these meetings helpful and will suggest topics for future forums.

In keeping with suggestions by landlords in previous meetings, we plan to develop a *Landlord Advisory Group* (LAG) which will meet regularly to receive direct input so we can consistently improve our service to current and prospective landlords.

I hope to recruit volunteers to serve on the LAG during the first series of forums to be held in April and May this year. Many landlords have already received a letter of invitation to a forum.

If you need more information you may contact me at (240) 773-9079 or les.kaplan@hocmc.org. ♦

Landlord Forums

The first four landlord forums of 2010 are coming up. The schedule of meetings is listed below.

Tuesday, April 20, 2010, 7:30 p.m.

Place: HOC Gaithersburg Customer Service Center, 101 Lakeforest Blvd., # 200, Gaithersburg, MD 20877

Wednesday, April 21, 2010, 7:30 p.m.

Place: HOC Silver Spring Customer Service Center, 8241 Georgia Ave., 3rd floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910

Tuesday, May 11, 2010, 7:30 p.m.

Place: HOC Gaithersburg Customer Service Center, 101 Lakeforest Blvd., # 200, Gaithersburg, MD 20877

Wednesday, May 12, 2009, 7:30 p.m.

Place: HOC Silver Spring Customer Service Center, 8241 Georgia Ave., 3rd floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910



The Landlord Advisor:

Get Involved Early On When Tenants Fall Behind

I received a call from a distraught landlord last week who told me that he was very upset. He said his tenant had taken advantage of him.

The family had lived in his unit for eight months and the tenant had never paid their portion of the rent. He said the tenant's next door neighbor was complaining about noise coming from the unit. He wanted me to do something right away to resolve the situation.

Being a good (and profitable) landlord requires developing a clear understanding with any tenant. It is important that both landlord and tenant fulfill their respective lease responsibilities. Helping the household be accountable for paying their por-

tion of the rent is one way to keep track of other potential issues. When a tenant doesn't pay their portion of rent, it may indicate there are other issues which may need to be addressed.

In this instance, the landlord should have addressed the problem early on. While most HCV participants are great tenants, there can be some (like any other tenants) who are problematic. HOC has a process for counseling tenants, helping to resolve conflicts, and working with tenants to become good neighbors.

One of the most important things for a landlord to know is that early intervention yields the best results. The landlord should have directly contacted the tenant (following the provisions of the lease agree-

ment) when the rent was unpaid. If, after that, the rent still had not been paid, the landlord should have contacted the tenant's HOC counselor.

If the problem was not resolved by the second month, the landlord should enforce the lease and contact the tenant by certified mail, copy to HOC, stating that the rent was still not paid, and that paying rent is required by the lease the tenant signed.

Any landlord who needs help negotiating this process should contact Les Kaplan, HOC's Director of the Office of Community Partnerships at: **240-773-9079** ♦



HOC INSPECTIONS

A Quick Guide to the Housing Quality Standards Inspection for Landlords

The editors of *The Proprietor* sat down with **Aleta Orem**, HOC's lead inspector, to find out the answers to some of your most frequently asked questions. The interview is summarized below.

◆ What does the HOC inspection of my unit cover?

To participate in the Housing Choice Voucher program, your unit must meet HUD Housing Quality Standards (HQS). To learn more about the HQS, HUD's website has a checklist that will help you to prepare for your inspection. (<http://www.hud.gov/offices/adm/hudclips/forms/files/52580.pdf>)

◆ What types of inspections does HOC do?

There are 4 types of inspections HOC does.

The **initial** inspection takes place before the tenant moves in. It will take place no more than 30 days before the move-in date. Generally, your property will be inspected 10 days after our Inspection Department receives the "Request for Tenancy Approval" form from your prospective tenant.

The **annual** inspection takes place between 30 and 90 days before the anniversary date of your initial inspection.

The **complaint or special inspection** is initiated when HOC receives a call from a tenant (or a neighbor) complaining that a landlord has not responded to and fixed a reported problem. This inspection is issue-specific.

The **quality control inspection** is a random selection of HOC inspectors' portfolios to make sure the inspector and the inspection adheres to the guidelines.

Tenants and landlords receive notice of these inspections. HOC tries to give at least one week's prior notice of this inspection.

◆ What happens if a unit fails inspection?

If your unit fails the annual inspection, and it is deemed to be your responsibility to make the repairs, you are given up to 30 days to make the repairs. You will receive a reinspection date from the Inspections Unit.

In the case of an initial inspection, the landlord has the responsibility of making the repairs and contacting the inspection unit for a reinspection date.

If repairs are not made by the reinspection date, the HAP (Housing Assistance Payment which is calculated on a daily basis) is placed on hold (put into "abatement"). Funds held in abatement will not be reimbursed once the unit conditions are corrected and the unit passes the inspection.

◆ How can a landlord avoid abatement if the repairs cannot be made within the required time-frame?

If the landlord finds that the time needed to make the repairs exceeds the time allotted for the reinspection, then requests for extensions may be granted, as long as the landlord submits any requested documentation.

If a unit stays in abatement more than 30 days, the landlord will automatically receive a contract termination letter, to be effective in 60 days. ◆

Commonly Missed Items During Inspections:

- If there is a yard, make sure it is well-maintained and free of trash and obstacles.
- All utilities must be operating at the time of the inspection.
- There must be locks on all windows.
- Smoke alarms must be operating.
- There must be a working fan in enclosed bathrooms.
- There must be a railing for four steps or more.
- There may be NO peeling of paint on exterior or interior of the unit.



Aleta Orem, HOC Lead Inspector

Aleta Orem loves to see landlords succeed!

If you have any questions about complying with the federal inspection guidelines when it's time for HOC to inspect your unit, do not hesitate to give her a call, or send her an email.

Her phone number is: 240-773-9121

Her email address is:
aleta.orem@hocmc.org

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

General Information: **240-773-9009**

Inspections: **240-773-9396**

Joy Flood, Director, Housing Resources: **240-773-9221**

Lynn Hayes, Asst. Director, Housing Resources: **240-773-9222**

Doug Ryan, Asst. Director, Housing Resources — Federal Programs: **240-773-9157**

Tracey Humphrey, Director, Gaithersburg Customer Service Center: **240-773-8816**

Bonnie Hodge, Director, Silver Spring Customer Service Center: **240-773-9163**

Les Kaplan, Director, Office of Community Partnerships: **240-773-9079**

HOC's "ambassadors" recently made their way up to Capitol Hill to advocate for the Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Program, which helps HOC participants move toward financial independence through better job training and/or better education. Many people graduate from the 5-year FSS program with enough savings to purchase their own first home.

The group shown at right is made up of HOC staff and FSS graduates and participants on a visit to an Arkansas legislator's office in Congress during a recent National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) conference in Washington, D.C. ♦

