MARGERY M. PIERCE DIRECTOR

NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES DEPARTMENT

April 18, 2013

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RE: NOTICE OF IMPACT OF FEDERAL FUNDING CUTS ON THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM (SECTION 8 RENTAL ASSISTANCE) AND PROGRAM CHANGES RELATED TO VOUCHER BEDROOM SIZES AND UNIT INSPECTIONS

Dear Oceanside Housing Choice Voucher Program participant:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you about funding cuts to the Oceanside Housing Authority's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program (also known as Section 8) that were effective March 1, 2013. The funding cuts are nationwide and many federal programs are affected, including the HCV program administered by the Oceanside Housing Authority.

In the last five years, funding for the HCV program has been decreasing each year. This year the funding has also been reduced for Housing Assistance Payments paid to landlords on behalf of HCV families. Nationally, it is estimated that the funding cuts may seriously impact more than 100,000 families. At the local level, without taking actions to reduce housing assistance payments, the cut would require us to serve 92 fewer families in our HCV Program. We expect that the program changes outlined below will allow the Housing Authority to continue assisting all eligible households.

Administrative funds to pay for operating costs (other than payments to landlords) such as staff, computers, postage and phones have been reduced by 23 percent since 2010. Housing Authority employees who have left their jobs have not been replaced during this time. Due to the reality of decreased staff, we appreciate your patience and request that you schedule an appointment with your Housing Specialist prior to coming into the office. Many questions can be answered by telephone or by checking the Housing Authority website at <a href="https://www.oceansideha.com">www.oceansideha.com</a>.

## What this means to you as a HCV (Section 8) participant:

We do not expect to cancel any voucher contracts that are currently in place. In order to avoid cancelling contracts and vouchers, the Housing Authority has reduced the subsidy standards, which determine the number of bedrooms and amount of assistance for the HCV program participants. Approximately 25 percent of the currently assisted households will be impacted by this change, which will take place upon moving to a new unit or at the family's next annual reexamination, whichever is sooner.

Your Housing Specialist will evaluate your household to determine the appropriate voucher bedroom size. The new standard will be two persons per bedroom regardless of age, sex or family relationship. However, persons added to the household after the family began receiving rental assistance will not be considered when determining the appropriate bedroom size. The only exception will be for minor children added due to birth, adoption or court awarded custody by an approved household member. In other words, adding persons to the household after the initial lease will not result in a larger bedroom voucher. The Housing Authority does not determine sleeping arrangements and it is possible that family members may need to use the living room as a sleeping area, as currently permitted by program rules.

Families impacted by this change will be notified of the voucher bedroom size reduction and may choose to move to a smaller unit or pay the increased rent amount. You may ask the rental owner to reduce the contract rent; the owner must notify both you and the Housing Authority in writing of any proposed rent decreases or increases. All

HCV rental owners will receive a letter explaining the overall impacts of the funding cuts, as well as the new rules regarding voucher bedroom sizes.

While we understand that this change will negatively affect some families, it is necessary to continue to assist the maximum number of households with limited funds. The federal budget cuts will also result in applicants waiting longer for assistance (with the most recent applicants pulled from the waiting list applied in 2006) and our ability to approve rent increases will be constrained.

If you are concerned about this situation, please do not call the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) who contract with us to operate the program. Unfortunately, this issue is outside of their control, just as it is outside our control. Any fixes must be decided by Congress and signed by the President. If you have questions, or would like Congress to understand this issue as it affects you, we recommend that you contact your U.S. Congressional representatives directly. The names and addresses of Congressional representatives, as well as sample letters, are available online at <a href="https://www.oceansideha.com">www.oceansideha.com</a> on the *Tenants* page.

## PROGRAM CHANGES RELATED TO INSPECTIONS

## SELF-CERTIFICATION BY RENTAL OWNERS/MANAGERS AND TENANTS FOR FAILED HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS (HQS) INSPECTIONS

Effective July 1, 2013, the Housing Authority will be implementing a new procedure whereby the rental owner/manager and tenant will be able to complete and submit a form certifying that repairs have been completed by the required deadline. This procedure will only be available for annual recertification and special Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspections.

At the HQS inspection, the Inspector will determine if required repairs are emergency (must be repaired within 24 hours) or non-emergency fail items. If it is determined that the fail items are non-emergency, a form will be mailed to the rental owner within two business days of the unit failing the inspection indicating the non-emergency fail item(s). The rental owner and tenant will be given a deadline to complete the repairs (within 30 days of the item(s) failing HQS). Once the repairs are complete, the form will require the signatures of both the rental owner and tenant certifying that the repairs have been made and that the unit is now in compliance with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) HQS.

For emergency repairs only, property owners or tenants that are on the premises at the time of the failed HQS inspection will be verbally informed that they will have 24 hours to complete the repair. The inspector will schedule an inspection to verify that the emergency fail item has been repaired.

As always, service and continued assistance to program participants is our first priority and we will work to ensure that we are able to provide both service and rental assistance to as many eligible households as possible.

If you have any questions about this notice, please contact your Housing Specialist. You may contact him/her via email or telephone. Our main number is 760-435-3360. You can obtain email addresses and phone numbers from our staff roster online at <a href="https://www.oceansideha.com">www.oceansideha.com</a>. We encourage you to visit the website for rental listings, inspection checklists, the California Tenant's Guide, Section 8 forms and documents, and other resources.

Sincerely,

Margery M. Pierce

**Neighborhood Services Director** 

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