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GENERAL NEWS

HUD Announces Latest in PHA Best Practices During COVID-19 Webinar Series

The Department of Housing and Urban Development ([HUD](#)) has announced that it will be hosting the latest in its series of [training webinars](#) titled “PHA Best Practices During COVID-19.” The series provides PHAs with best practices, recommendations, and solutions related to improving operations, program compliance, and financial management during the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, the webinars are relevant for PHA staff at all levels of the Housing Choice Voucher and public housing programs, including property management, inspections, housing specialist, and program management staff.

The latest scheduled webinar, titled “[Planning for Operations During Emergency/Disaster](#),” will take place on Thursday, October 14, 2021, from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. Eastern time. Click [here](#) for more information, including [instructions](#) on how to register.

Treasury Posts New ERAP Resources

Yesterday the U.S. Department of Treasury ([Treasury](#)) posted the following resources to the Emergency Rental Assistance ([ERA](#)) program website:

- [Guidance on ERA reallocation](#), which sets forth the procedures for the ERA1 reallocation process
- [A letter to grantees](#) providing further insight on the reallocation guidance
- [ERA reallocation highlights](#), a document that explains how ERA reallocation works

Treasury will publish guidance for the reallocation of ERA2 funds, which will not begin until March 31, 2022, at a later date. You can find more ERA resources on the [ERAP website](#).

DOJ Settles Sexual Harassment Suit against Housing Authority in Arkansas

In a [press release](#) last Friday, the Department of Justice ([DOJ](#)) announced that it has reached an agreement to resolve a lawsuit alleging that a housing authority located in Arkansas and its former employee violated the [Fair Housing Act](#) by sexually harassing a woman who applied for a housing choice voucher.

The lawsuit alleges that in 2020, a woman who was living with her two minor children at a shelter for survivors of domestic violence and abuse applied to the housing authority for a housing choice voucher and was sexually harassed by an employee who served as the HCV coordinator. Specifically, the suit alleges that the employee touched the applicant without her consent, requested that she provide him with full-frontal nude photographs in exchange for his assistance in finding housing, made graphic descriptions of the poses he wanted for the photographs, made other unwelcome sexual advances, and threatened to post nude photographs of the applicant on social media if she reported him. Although the housing authority later notified the applicant that she could receive a voucher, the lawsuit alleges that she chose not to accept it because she was afraid of the employee and did not want him to know where she lived. The lawsuit also alleges that the housing authority is vicariously liable for its employee’s unlawful conduct.

According to the press release, the applicant filed a complaint against the housing authority and its employee with HUD. After an investigation, HUD determined that the housing authority and its employee had discriminated against the applicant in violation of the Fair Housing Act, and it issued a charge of discrimination. After the applicant chose to have the matter decided in federal court, HUD referred the matter to the Department of Justice.

Under the [settlement](#), the housing authority will pay a total of \$70,000 in monetary damages to the applicant, adopt and maintain an anti-discrimination policy with a complaint procedure, and provide training on the Fair Housing Act to its employees. The settlement also permanently bars the employee from participating in the management of residential rental property and from participating in any public housing program.

The Fair Housing Act prohibits harassment of tenants and other forms of housing discrimination because of race, sex, color, national origin, disability, religion, and familial status. In October 2017, the DOJ’s Civil Rights Division [announced](#) the [Sexual Harassment in Housing Initiative](#). The initiative specifically seeks to increase the Department’s efforts to protect individuals from harassment by landlords, property managers, maintenance workers, security guards, and other employees and representatives of rental property owners. Since launching the Initiative, the Department has filed 23 lawsuits alleging sexual harassment in housing.



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