



**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH)**

SPECIAL ATTENTION OF:

Regional Directors; State and Area Coordinators;
Public Housing Hub Directors; Program Center
Coordinators; Troubled Agency Recovery Center
Directors; Special Applications Center Director;
Administrators; Resident Management
Corporations; Public Housing Agencies

NOTICE PIH 2017-02 (HA)

Issued: January 19, 2017

This notice remains in effect until
amended, superseded or rescinded

Subject: Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Self-Petitioner Verification Procedures

- 1) **Purpose.** This notice explains the procedures that public housing agencies (PHAs) must follow when an applicant or resident/tenant requests admission or continued residency as a result of being a VAWA self-petitioner. VAWA self-petitioners are those who claim to be victims of “battery or extreme cruelty.” VAWA covers the following types of battery or extreme cruelty: domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.
- 2) **Applicability.** This notice applies to public housing, housing choice voucher assistance (including project-based vouchers), and Section 8 Mod Rehab.
- 3) **Background.** VAWA was originally signed into law in 1994, and was most recently reauthorized in 2013. HUD issued implementing regulations for the most recent reauthorization in late 2016 (81 FR 87812). Prior to VAWA, non-citizen victims of covered crimes were dependent on the good will of their abusers to obtain the authorized immigration status necessary to receive assisted housing. Section 214 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1980 states that HUD may not allow financial assistance to ineligible non-citizens, but assistance must not be denied while verifying immigration status.

HUD has determined that self-petitioners can indicate that they are in “satisfactory immigration status” when applying for assistance or continued assistance from Section 214-covered housing providers.¹ “Satisfactory immigration status” means an immigration status which does not make the individual ineligible for financial assistance. After verifying such

¹ See HUD memorandum “Eligibility of Battered Noncitizen Self-Petitioners for Financial Assistance Under Section 214 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1980,” dated December 15, 2016 (available at <http://library.niwap.org/wp-content/uploads/Eligibility-of-VAWA-Self-Petitioners-2016-12-14.pdf>)

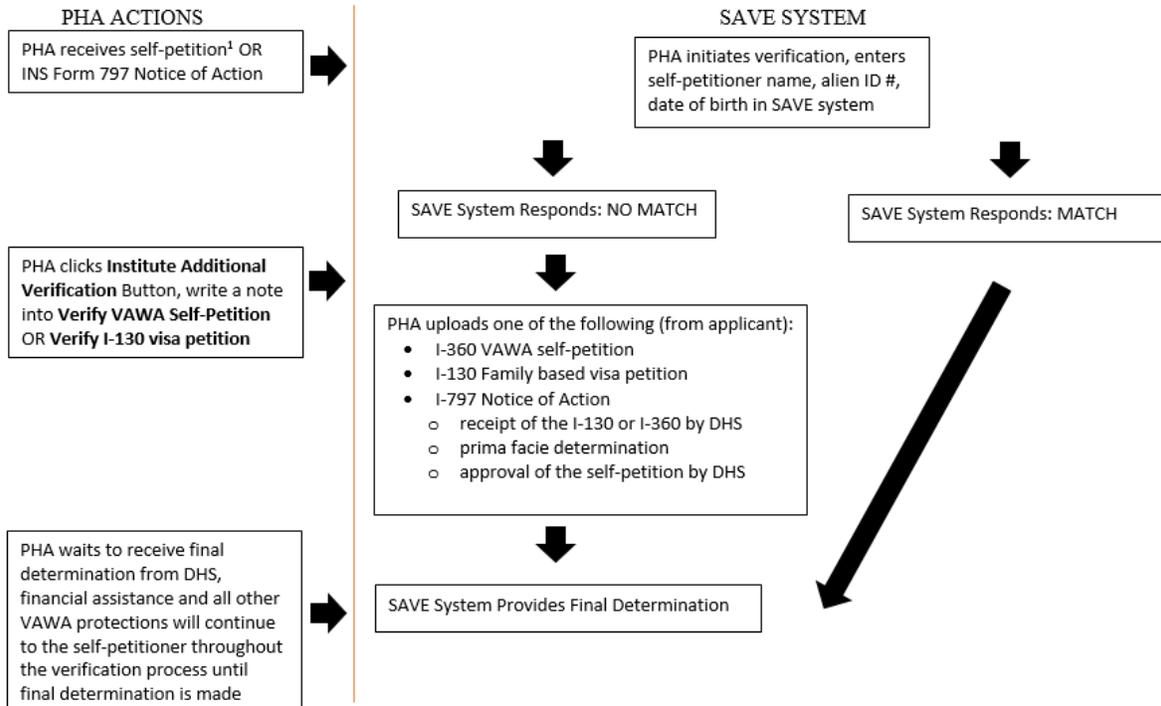
immigration status in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) System, PHAs will make a final determination as to the self-petitioner's eligibility for assistance.

- 4) **Applicability to other VAWA Housing Protections.** Not every noncitizen victim who has been subjected to battery or extreme cruelty will qualify under these procedures. In order to qualify, the noncitizen victim must have been battered or subjected to extreme cruelty by their spouse or parent, who is a U.S. citizen or LPR. PHAs may receive a petition at any time, but submissions will most likely be related to a request for VAWA protections pursuant to 24 CFR Part 5 Subpart L (e.g. with a request for an emergency transfer or family breakup resulting from domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking). See PIH 2016-09. Once a PHA receives a self-petition (INS Form I-360 or I-130) or INS Form 797, it is prohibited from requesting any additional information from the VAWA self-petitioner, other than what is required below to complete the verification.
- 5) **Procedure.** When a PHA receives a self-petition or INS Form 797 Notice of Action, the PHA must initiate verification in the SAVE System:
 1. Enter self-petitioner name, alien ID number, and date of birth in the SAVE System. The system will provide one of the following responses:
 - If the SAVE system responds with a match, no further action is necessary at this time. Skip to step 3.
 - If the SAVE system responds “no match,” the PHA must complete the following additional steps. Continue to step 2.
 2. Push the button for “Institute Additional Verification.” In the next screen, in the memo field, type “verify VAWA self-petition.” If the documentation provided by the applicant is a form I-130, type in the memo field “verify I-130.” Upload one of the following documents from applicant:
 - I-360 VAWA Self-Petition
 - I-130 Family-Based Visa Petition
 - I-797 Notice of Action

Steps undertaken by DHS:

 - receipt of I-130 or I-360
 - prima facie determination
 - approval of self-petition
 3. Wait for a final determination from the SAVE System. You will receive one of two confirmations: (1) the VAWA self-petition is verified, in which case the applicant is immediately eligible for housing and no evidence of battery or extreme cruelty shall be requested or collected; (2) the I-130 is verified, in which case the petitioner submitting

a family-based visa petition must provide to the PHA any evidence of “battery or extreme cruelty.” See 8 USC 1154(a)(1)(J). Housing assistance and all other VAWA protections will be granted to the self-petitioner throughout the verification process until a final determination of LPR status is made. If the final determination is to deny the VAWA self-petition or LPR petition, the PHA must alert the petitioner and take actions to terminate voucher assistance or evict the petitioner from public housing in accordance with the existing public housing requirements.



- 6) **Further Information.** For additional information related to this notice, please contact Eric Christensen, Program Analyst, Office of Policy, Program and Legislative Initiatives at 202-402-3475.

_____/s/_____
 Lourdes Castro Ramírez
 Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
 for Public and Indian Housing