



THE RESIDENT NEWSLETTER

Spring 2013 | www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/ph/

Reviewing HUD's VAWA Rules

As President Obama signed legislation that reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), now is a good time to review the VAWA protections available to residents of public housing. Domestic violence is a serious issue, with victims at every level of society. For those in public housing, this violence presents the additional threat of losing their housing assistance. Since 2005, the Violence against Women Act (VAWA) has protected victims against this secondary threat. The rules protecting victims of domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking, established after the 2006 renewal, protect victims of this form of violence.

VAWA covers three forms of violence: domestic violence, dating violence and stalking. It should be noted that protections for VAWA-covered violence cover women or men, as well as people in same-sex relationships.

- *Domestic violence* is felony or misdemeanor violence committed by the victim's current or former spouse; someone in the role of a spouse according to local law; the victim's live-in romantic partner; someone the victim shares a child with; or, anyone an adult or youth victim would be protected from under local domestic or family violence laws.
- *Dating violence* is defined as violence committed by someone who is or has been in a romantic or intimate relationship with the victim.
- *Stalking* is to follow, pursue, place under surveillance or repeatedly commit acts with the intent to kill, injure, harass, or intimidate another person. It is defined as placing a person in reasonable fear of death, serious bodily injury, or substantial emotional harm. This definition covers the victim, the victim's immediate family or the victim's spouse or intimate partner.

Protections for Residents

- Victims have a right to privacy when dealing with PHAs regarding domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking. All information provided by resident must be kept confidential.
- Incidents or threats of domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking will not be considered a "serious or repeated lease violation" by the victim, or "good cause" to terminate the tenancy rights of the victim.

- If a family breaks up because of VAWA related violence, the housing assistance stays with the eligible victim.

- Some types of criminal activity are also grounds for terminating a participant's assistance. If any member of the household (or guest, or any other person under the participant's control) engages in criminal activity directly related to domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking, and the participant or participant's immediate family member is a victim of this criminal activity, the PHA cannot terminate the victim's assistance because of this criminal activity.

Limitations of VAWA Protections

- If the victim's presence poses an actual and imminent threat to other tenants or employees, the PHA may terminate the victim's assistance. The PHA must show that it has taken reasonable actions to reduce or eliminate the threat prior to seeking eviction.

- A PHA is allowed to terminate a victim's assistance for lease violations that are not related to domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking.

How to Seek Assistance

Residents who are in immediate danger should call 911. Victims of domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking can get help by calling the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). Alternatively, the Hotline's website offers a state-by-state list of local resources at <http://www.thehotline.org/get-help/help-in-your-area>.

Residents who are victims of domestic violence should contact their PHA to protect their housing assistance. The PHA may request that victims claiming VAWA protections provide documentation of the abuse. Some examples of acceptable documentation include a HUD approved form ([50066](#)), police reports and court records. A complete list of acceptable documentation and the VAWA rule in its entirety are available [here](#).

Get the Facts About the ACA Health Insurance Marketplace

It is an unfortunate fact that every day families suffer under the crippling burden of health care costs. Through no fault of their own, often the result of a sudden illness or pre-existing condition, many Americans face the unconscionable choice of keeping a roof over their families' heads or paying their health care bills. That is a choice that none of us should have to make. Thankfully, provisions of the [Affordable Care Act](#) are taking effect that will ensure that no family has to face these kinds of decisions.

The Affordable Care Act has for some time been benefitting millions of Americans. From young adults now able to stay on their parent's health care plans until the age of 26, to the elimination of pre-

existing conditions for children, Americans are feeling the positive effects of this new law. Now, with new and exciting aspects of the law taking effect, many more Americans will feel the benefits. Beginning later this year, Americans will have access to the Health Insurance Market Place, which will give uninsured and individuals providing their own insurance access to affordable health care options.

Where Can I Get More Information?

Americans will be able to get comprehensive information about different plans and benefits, as well as costs, in order to make the best decision for themselves and their families. They will also be able to find out, with a single application, whether or not they qualify for a free or low cost plan or a tax credit that could potentially lower the cost of their monthly premiums. The best place to get the most comprehensive and up-to-date information on the Health Insurance Marketplace is <http://www.HealthCare.gov>

We need to make sure that everyone knows they have health care choices and that there is help available. To do so requires us to communicate with our neighbors, friends, co-workers and those in our community about these exciting developments so that every American can get the support they need and deserve.

TIPS: Keeping Your New Year's Resolution to Quit Smoking

Quitting smoking is a common New Year's resolution for Americans each year—but it's easier said than done. Six out of 10 smokers require multiple quit attempts to stop smoking.

"The start of the New Year is a terrific time for smokers to implement their plan to quit," said Norman H. Edelman, M.D., chief medical officer of the American Lung Association. "The benefits of a smoke-free lifestyle include improved overall health, economic benefits, and protecting loved ones from harmful secondhand smoke."

How can you set yourself up for success?

Planning ahead can greatly improve your likelihood of quitting for good. Try these proven tips and resources that have helped thousands of people pack in smoking permanently:

1. **Seek support:** You don't have to quit alone. Ask family, friends, and co-workers for their help and support. Having someone to take a walk with, or just listen, can give a needed boost.

2. Take time to plan: Designate a day to quit on the calendar and stick to it. Avoid peak times of stress, such as the holidays, and gather in advance the tools and medications you will need.
3. Exercise daily: Exercise is proven to help smokers quit. Not only that, it will also combat weight gain and improve mood and energy levels. Walking is a great way to reduce the stress of quitting.
4. Prioritize nutrition and sleep: Eat a balanced diet, drink lots of water, and be sure to get plenty of sleep.
5. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist: They can discuss with you the various over-the-counter or prescription medications available to help you quit.

It may be well into 2013, but remember that it's never too late to stop smoking!

Article reprinted with the permission of the [American Lung Association](#).

See You In September!

The Resident is becoming a biannual publication. Our next issue will be out in September. With this change we hope to bring you the most interesting and relevant news for residents in public housing. Until then, please send your comments, questions, and story ideas to TheResident@HUD.gov.

Contact us:

E-mail: TheResident@HUD.gov

Send us your questions, comments and story ideas!

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