



# THE RESIDENT

## NEWSLETTER

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## HUD Letter Promotes Children's Health Programs

Last month, Sandra B. Henriquez, HUD's Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing, sent a letter to PHAs promoting two initiatives which focus on the health and safety of children. These programs offer free or low-cost solutions for problems that may already be affecting child welfare in Public Housing. "I believe Text4Baby and the TV/Furniture Tip-over Prevention Campaign offer important resources to families," said Assistant Secretary Henriquez.

Text4Baby is a free health service that provides accurate health information and resources through text messages. Women can sign up for the service by texting BABY for English or BEBE for Spanish, to 511411. They will then receive three, SMS text messages each week. Messages for pregnant women will be timed to their due date and will concern prenatal care, labor symptoms, and preventing birth defects. Text messages for new moms will be timed to their baby's date of birth. New mothers will be informed about newborn nutrition, breast feeding, and physical development. To learn more about the program or sign up, visit: <http://www.text4baby.org/>.



Each year, an estimated 28,000 children die before their first birthday. While many factors contribute to this problem, Text4Baby provides expecting mothers access to information on how to keep themselves and their babies healthy. The program was developed by National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition who teamed up with a broad group of private and public partners including Johnson & Johnson, Grey Healthcare Group, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, to create the service.

The TV/Furniture Tip-over Prevention Campaign from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's takes on the serious household danger of unstable furniture. Every year 18,000 children are injured by unsecured or improperly secured furniture. Most of these injuries are preventable. The campaign encourages parents or guardians to anchor furniture, televisions and appliances as part of their home child proofing efforts. More information on the TV/Furniture Tip-over Prevention Campaign can be found at: <http://cpsc.gov/nsn/TipOvers.pdf>.\*

HUD encourages Public Housing residents to take advantage of Text4Baby and TV/Furniture Tip-over Prevention Campaign to ensure that our children grow-up healthy.

\*The Resident ran the related piece: "TIPS: Protect Your Children from Tip-Over Hazards" in September 2011, you can read that story here: <http://1.usa.gov/rSegBG>.



## We want to hear from you!

Write [TheResident@HUD.gov](mailto:TheResident@HUD.gov) with your questions comments and story ideas.

## Resident Councils: A Voice for Public Housing Tenants

Resident participation is vital in offering residents a way to build working relationships with the housing agency, and create a positive living environment in Public Housing. One form resident participation can take is the resident council. These groups play a part in improving the quality of life for Public Housing communities and bring a wide variety of issues to the attention of PHA from safety and unit to pet and eviction policies.

A resident council is a group of Public Housing residents who organize by holding elections for officers and adopting by-laws that serve as a roadmap for how the council will conduct its business. The council's democratically elected board must consist of five board members who have been elected by the voting membership.

Public Housing residents can serve on resident councils if they are: 1) heads of household (of any age) or 2) a household members whose name is on the lease and at least 18 years old. Council members cannot be in violation of the lease. They also have to meet any additional requirements that are written into the resident council by-laws.

PHAs must acknowledge a duly elected resident council as the one voice of the residents and support its tenant participation activities. The housing should make sure to meet with a new council whenever one is elected. In fact, the housing agency should approach the resident council to set up an initial meeting and provide materials on its occupancy, admissions policies, and tenant participation policies. Also, communication should not stop with this initial session. The PHA must encourage a flow of information and to address outstanding issues or concerns through meeting and other means of communication. Finally, the relationship between the PHA and the resident council should be formalized in a written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which is updated every three years.

HUD provides housing agencies with money for tenant participation activities. PHAs then make these funds to properly elected resident councils and jurisdiction-wide councils. The PHA and its resident council must work together and decide how the funds will be used for tenant participation activities; if the PHA and the council cannot agree on how the funds should be distributed, then the housing agency takes the matter to its local HUD field office. Tenant participation funds may be used to support training activities, meetings, resident organization and other related activities such as: neighborhood cleanup, crime watch, outreach programs, resident training, and household training.

Residents should be actively involved in the PHA's decision-making process since the residents have firsthand knowledge of what is needed in their respective communities. By developing a productive working relationship, the residents and PHA can flourish together.

# TIPS

## New HUD Manual Offers Environmental Tips for Residents

Recently, a new Green Building Operations and Maintenance Manual for Public Housing Agencies was made possible through a grant HUD. One important section focuses on ways residents can support green maintenance. Some of its suggestions are below.

**1. Ask for assistance:** Be sure to seek help if something in your unit is not working properly. For example, a window that will not close can result in significant energy loss. Also, reach out to maintenance staff to remove your air conditioning unit when the weather gets cold. Such steps will allow for preventative maintenance of units, as well as energy and water savings.

**2. Reduce energy use:** If possible, keep your thermostat at 78°F or above in the summer and at 68°F or below in the winter. Make sure your windows and doors are closed when the heat or air conditioning is on. Also, turn off lights and appliances when they are not in use.

**3. Reduce water use:** Turn off running water whenever it is not being used. Notify maintenance staff about leaking or running faucets, toilets, or other water fixtures. Use the lowest load size setting possible on your washing machine and consolidate loads of laundry.

**4. Reduce solid waste:** Increase the amount of goods you recycle. Ask your maintenance staff what can be recycled and how the items should be sorted. Also ask how to properly dispose of products that contain hazardous materials, such as: batteries, paint, fluorescent lights, mercury thermometers, and electronics.

**5. Purchase environmentally friendly products:** When possible, buy "ENERGY STAR" or "E" labeled small appliances and electronics. Select compact fluorescent lamps— although they have higher up-front costs, they use less energy and will last longer. Purchase paper products with the highest recycled content you can find. Look for home and body products that have one of three ecolabels: Design for the Environment, EcoLogo, or Green Seal. Products with these labels have all been formulated to be safer for people and the planet.

Though many products are marketed as environmentally friendly, their claims may be untrue. If you cannot find products with the labels above, check the label for these terms: "made with recycled content," "reduced toxicity and/or hazardous material," and "manufactured with renewable energy." Do not be afraid to ask your building manager and maintenance staff for assistance – we are all partners in reducing energy usage and protecting the environment.



## Contact us:

**Public and Indian Housing  
Information Resource Center (PIH IRC)**

2614 Chapel Lake Drive  
Gambrills, MD 21054

**Toll free number:** 1-800-955-2232

**Fax number:** 1-443-302-2084

**E-mail:** [pihirc@firstpic.org](mailto:pihirc@firstpic.org)

(Put "Resident Newsletter" in subject line)

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## HELP CORNER

### National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention

At the direction of President Obama, the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention (the Forum) was established to build a national conversation concerning youth and gang violence that would increase awareness, drive action, and build local capacity to more effectively address youth violence through comprehensive planning. The Forum models a new kind of federal/local collaboration, encouraging its members to change the way they do business by sharing common challenges and promising strategies, and through coordinated action. Participating localities include Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Memphis, Salinas, and San Jose. Additional information on local activities can be found in the individual plans of each participating city.

For more information on the Forum visit:

[http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/topic\\_preventingViolence.shtml](http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/topic_preventingViolence.shtml)