

COMMUNITY SERVICE AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY REQUIREMENT POLICY

A. Background

Section 512 of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998, which amends Section 12 of the Housing Act of 1937, established a new requirement for non-exempt residents of public housing who are 18 years of age and older to contribute eight (8) hours of community service each month or to participate in a self-sufficiency program for eight (8) hours each month (24 CFR Subpart F § 960.600-609).

Section 432 of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 HUD/VA Appropriations Act temporarily suspended the community service and self-sufficiency requirement, except for residents of HOPE VI developments. The FY 2003 HUD NA Appropriations Act signed on February 21, 2003, reinstated this provision.

HACEP believes that the community service requirement should not be perceived by the resident to be a punitive or demeaning activity, but rather to be a rewarding activity that will benefit both the resident and the community. Community service offers public housing residents an opportunity to contribute to the communities that support them while gaining valuable work experience.

In order to effectively implement this requirement, HACEP establishes the following policy.

B. Definitions

Community Service is defined as the performance of voluntary work or duties that are a public benefit and that serve to improve the quality of life, enhance resident self-sufficiency, or increase resident self-responsibility in the community. Community service is not employment and may not include political activities.

An economic self-sufficiency activity is any activity designed to encourage, assist, train or facilitate the economic independence of assisted families or to provide work experience for such families.

C. Community Service Activities

HACEP will provide residents, identified as required to participate in community service, a variety of voluntary activities and locations where the activities can be performed.. The activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Local public or nonprofit institutions, such as schools, Head Start Programs, before-or-after-school programs, childcare centers, hospitals, clinics, hospices, nursing homes, recreation centers, senior centers, adult daycare programs, homeless shelters, feeding programs, food banks (distributing either donated or commodity foods), or clothes closets (distributing donated clothing).
- Non-profit organizations serving PHA residents or their children, such as Boy and Girl Scouts, Boys or Girls Clubs, Police Activity League, organized children's recreation, mentoring, or education programs, Big Brothers or Big Sisters, community clean up programs, beautification programs.
- Programs funded under Older Americans Act, such as Green Thumb, Service Corps of Retired Executives, senior meals programs, senior centers, Meals on Wheels
- Public or nonprofit organizations dedicated to seniors, youth, children, residents, citizens, special-needs populations or with missions to enhance the environment, historic resources, cultural identities, neighborhoods or performing arts;
- PHA housing to improve grounds or provide gardens (so long as such work does not alter the PHA's insurance coverage); or work through resident organizations to help other residents with problems, including

HACEP does not discriminate against persons with disabilities. If you or anyone in your family is a person with a disability and you require a specific accommodation in order to fully utilize our programs and services, please contact the Equal Opportunity Officer at Main: 915-849-3742//Voice/TDD 915-849-3737.

serving on the Resident Advisory Board, and,

- Care for the children of other residents so parents may volunteer.

All activities selected by the resident for credit toward the CSSR must have advance approval of the Community Asset Manager or HACEP Resident Services Department to avoid the possibility of having the activity refused or denied as an acceptable/eligible activity. This includes community service activities at profit-motivated entities, volunteer work performed at homes or offices of general private citizens, and court ordered or probation based work.

D. Self-Sufficiency Activities

HACEP will inform residents that participation in self-sufficiency activities for eight (8) hours each month can satisfy the CSSR and encourage non-exempt residents to select such activities to satisfy the requirement. It should be noted that an individual may satisfy this requirement through a combination of community service and self-sufficiency activities totaling at least eight (8) hours per month. Such activities can include, but are not limited

- Job readiness or job training
- Training programs through local One-Stop Career Center Workforce Investment Boards (Workforce Solutions Upper Rio Grande)
- Higher education (community college or college)
- Apprenticeships (formal or informal);
- Substance abuse or mental health counseling;
- Reading, financial and/or computer literacy classes;
- English as a second language and/or English proficiency classes;
- Budgeting and credit counseling
- Any activity required by the Department of Public Assistance under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

E. Program Administration

In contributing community service and/or participating in a self-sufficiency activity, an individual may not skip a month and then double up the following month, unless special circumstances warrant it. Asset Managers or HACEP Resident services will determine whether to permit a deviation from the schedule.

HACEP will administer the community service program in conjunction with the formation of cooperative relationships with other community based entities such as TANF, Social Services Agencies or other organizations which have as their goal, the improvement and advancement of disadvantaged families.

HACEP may directly supervise community service activities and will develop and provide a directory of opportunities from which residents may select. When services are provided through partnering agencies, HACEP will confirm the resident's participation. Should contracting out the community service function be determined to be the most efficient method for HACEP to accomplish this requirement, HACEP will monitor the agency for contract compliance.

HACEP will assure that the service is not labor that would normally be performed by HACEP employees responsible for the essential maintenance and property services.

In conjunction with its own or partnership program, HACEP will provide reasonable accommodations for accessibility to persons with disabilities.

HACEP may sponsor its own economic self-sufficiency program or coordinate with local social services, volunteer organizations and TANF agencies.

F. Geographic Location

The intent of this requirement is to have residents provide service to their own communities, either in HACEP's

developments or in the broader community in which HACEP operates.

G. Exemptions

Section 19 (Redeterminations) of the HACEP ACOP presents how HACEP will determine if an individual is except from the CSSR and the documentation needed to support the exemption.

Exemptions for adult residents unable to participate, as codified at 24 CFR 960.601, include persons who are:

- 62 years or older;
- Blind or disabled (as defined under 216(i)(1) or 1614 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 416(i)(1), 1382c) and who certify that because of this disability they are unable to comply with the service provisions; or primary-caretakers of such individuals;
- Engaged in work activities (at least 30 hours per week) as defined in section 407(d) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 607(d)), specified below:
 1. Subsidized employment;
 2. Subsidized private-sector employment;
 3. Subsidized public-sector employment;
 4. Work experience (including work associated with the refurbishing of publicly assisted housing) only if sufficient private sector employment is not available;
 5. On-the-job-training;
 6. Job-search and job-readiness assistance;
 7. Community service programs;
 8. Vocational educational training (not to exceed 12 months with respect to any individual);
 9. Job-skills training directly related to employment;
 10. Education directly related to employment in the case of a recipient who has not received a high school diploma or a certificate of high school equivalency;
 11. Satisfactory attendance at secondary school or in a course of study leading to a certificate of general equivalence, in the case of a recipient who has not completed secondary school or received such a certificate; and
 12. The provision of childcare services to an individual who is participating in a community service program.
- Meets the requirements for being exempt from having to engage in a work activity under the State program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) or under any other welfare program of the State in which HACEP is located, including a State-administered welfare-to-work program.
- Is a member of a family receiving TANF assistance, benefits, or service under the State program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.); or under any other welfare program of the State in which HACEP is located, including a State administered welfare-to-work program and has not been found by the State or other administering entity to be in non-compliance with such program.

If, during the twelve (12)-month period, a non-exempt person becomes exempt, it is his or her responsibility to report this to HACEP and to provide documentation within ten (10) calendar days of the occurrence. The community service requirement will remain in effect until such time as the exempt status is reported to HACEP

and verified. Each household member must supply HACEP with accurate written information regarding exemption status.

If, during the twelve (12)-month period, an exempt person becomes non-exempt, it is his or her responsibility to report this to HACEP within ten (10) calendar days of the change in status. He/she will be provided with appropriate forms and information for fulfilling the community service requirement. A household member who fails to report a change from exempt to non-exempt status will be required to enter into an agreement to complete an equivalent of eight (8) hours per month of community service for each month of unreported non-exempt status within ninety (90) days of discovery or the household's lease will be subject to termination.

Failure to supply information and/or misrepresentation of information of exemption/non-exemption is a serious violation of the terms of the lease and may result in termination of the lease.

All exemptions to the community service requirement will be verified and documented in the resident file. Required verifications may include, but not be limited to:

- Third-party verification of employment, enrollment in a training or education program, welfare to work program or other economic self sufficiency activities;
- Birth certificates to verify age 62 or older; or
- Third-party verification of disabilities preventing performance of community service.

H. Family Responsibilities

At the lease execution or re-examination, after the effective date of the adopted policy, all public housing household members age eighteen (18) or older must:

- Provide documentation that they qualify for an exemption, if they claim to be exempt from the CSSR [24 CFR 960.601(b)] Documentation provided by the tenant will be used by the PHA to determine whether the tenant is exempt from the CSSR; and
- Sign a certification that they have received and read the policy and understand that if they are not exempt, failure to comply with the community service requirement will result in nonrenewal of their lease per 24 CFR 966.4(1)(2)(iii)(D).

On a quarterly basis or every three months, each non-exempt adult household member must present documentation of activities performed. Documentation will include name of organization, dates activity was performed, a description of the activities, and signatures of supervisors, instructors, or counselors, certifying to the number of hours contributed.

As failure to complete the community service requirement constitutes noncompliance with the terms of the Lease, the family may use HACEP's Grievance Procedures if they disagree with the determination of exemption status or noncompliance.

I. Noncompliant Residents

If a family member who is required to perform CSSR is found to be noncompliant, either for failure to provide documentation of community service or for failure to perform community service, he/she and the head of household will sign an agreement with HACEP to make up the deficient hours over the next twelve (12)-month period. The entire household will be allowed to enter into such an agreement only once during the household's entire tenancy with HACEP.

If HACEP determines that a resident who is not an "exempt individual" has not complied with the community service requirement, HACEP will notify the resident:

1. of the noncompliance;
2. that the determination is subject to HACEP's administrative grievance procedure;
3. that unless the resident enters into an agreement under paragraph 4 of this section, the lease of the family of which the non-compliant adult is a member may not be renewed. However, if the

- noncompliant adult moves out of the unit, the lease may be renewed;
4. that before the expiration of the lease term, HACEP must offer the resident an opportunity to cure the noncompliance during the next twelve (12)-month period; such a cure includes a written agreement by the non-compliant adult and the head of household (as applicable) to complete as many additional hours of community service or economic self-sufficiency activity needed to make up the total number of hours required over the twelve (12)-month term of the lease.

J. Lease Requirements and Documentation

HACEP's lease has a twelve (12)-month term and is automatically renewable except for non-compliance with the community service requirement. The lease also provides for termination and eviction of the entire household for such noncompliance. The lease provisions will be implemented for current residents at the next regularly scheduled reexamination and for all new residents effective upon occupancy-. HACEP will not renew or extend the lease if the household contains a non-exempt member who has failed to comply with the community service requirement.

Documentation of compliance or non-compliance will be placed in each resident's file.