



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Maura T. Healey, Governor ♦ Kimberley Driscoll, Lt. Governor ♦ Jennifer D. Maddox, Undersecretary

PHN 2023-02

To: All Local Housing Authority Executive Directors and Regional Administering Agencies Directors
From: Ben Stone, Director, Division of Public Housing & Acting Director, Division of Rental Assistance
Re: Updated Release of Information form for Applicants, Tenants, and Voucher Holders
Date: March 14, 2023

Need to Know: DHCD is issuing updated Release of Information forms. The two new forms, one for Applicants and one for Tenants/Vouchers Holders, will be utilized for state-aided public housing, AHVP, and MRVP.

This PHN introduces two updated Releases of Information (see attached) for use by LHAs and RAAs (collectively referred to as “State-Aided Housing Agencies”):

1. “Applicant Permission to Release Information” form for applicants to state-aided public housing, AHVP, and MRVP (**Attachment A**); and
2. “Tenant Permission to Release Information” form for tenants of state-aided public housing and program participants of AHVP and MRVP (**Attachment B**).

[Why updated releases?](#)

By issuing these updated releases, DHCD seeks to simplify the current administration of tenant and applicant releases of information.

Currently, an applicant to state-aided public housing, AHVP, or MRVP must sign a separate release for each State-Aided Housing Agency the applicant is seeking assistance from. The new release for applicants allows applicants to state-aided public housing, AHVP, and MRVP to only sign a single release, regardless of how many State-Aided Housing Agencies or programs the applicant is applying to, therefore decreasing the administrative burden on both applicants and State-Aided Housing Agencies. This new universal release will go into effect in CHAMP on March 15, 2023, and should be signed at all income redeterminations or certifications after April 1, 2023.

The updated releases will also allow for easier data sharing between State-Aided Housing Agencies, DHCD, and other state agencies. This will help DHCD and partners improve applicant and tenant experiences in trying to obtain social services and other governmental programs and assistance.

What do the updated releases do?

These updated releases serve two important purposes:

1. To allow State-Aided Housing Agencies to obtain certain additional information to verify information provided by applicants and tenants related to their applications or tenancies.
2. To give State-Aided Housing Agencies and/or DHCD permission to share certain information to make referrals to other state-funded initiatives and benefit programs and to use the information shared to inform research, analysis, and program evaluation by DHCD, other state agencies, or external partners of DHCD.

What does my Housing Agency need to do?

1. Applicant Release: No action needed, as applicants must sign a release through CHAMP when applying. If they apply at your agency with a paper application, you should upload into CHAMP with application.
2. Tenant Release: Housing Agency should ask head of household and all other household members age 18 or older to sign the updated release at the next scheduled income certification and continue its use for all future scheduled income certifications. This replaces any previous release of information.

What information can State-Aided Housing Agencies share?

The updated releases allow State-Aided Housing Agencies and DHCD to share the following information:

1. Biographic information (e.g., name, date of birth);
2. Demographic information (e.g., address, race, ethnicity);
3. Income, employment, and other information related to applications for initial eligibility/qualification or continued participation in state-aided public housing, AHVP, or MRVP.

What information cannot be shared by State-Aided Housing Agencies?

The updated releases do not allow State-Aided Housing Agencies or DHCD to share any of the following personal information; they may, however, share statistical aggregates of this information (i.e., xx% of applicants to y Housing Authority claim Priority 4):

1. Medical information;
2. Criminal information;
3. Verification of a disability;

4. Information related to any priority or preference claims made by an applicant, including any claims of domestic violence;
5. Reasonable Accommodation information;
6. Any information on a CORI.