Commonwealth of Massachusetts

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Maura T. Healey, Governor ◆ Kimberly Driscoll, Lieutenant Governor ◆ Jennifer D. Maddox Undersecretary

Public Housing Notice: 2023-03

To: All Local Housing Authority Executive Directors
All Non-Profit Housing Agencies Administering Massachusetts Rental Voucher Programs

From: Christine A. DeVore, Director, Bureau of Housing Management

Date: March 16, 2023, Updated May 9, 2023

RE: Wage Match for State Housing Program Tenants

Wage Match must be conducted for state housing program tenants, including tenants in conventional housing, MRVP and AHVP, for every adult member (aged 18 and over) of the tenant household residing in state housing programs. All Massachusetts housing authorities and non-profit agencies that administer state-funded housing programs must participate in the Wage Match program, which was first implemented in 2004. The pertinent law and regulations can be found at M.G.L. c. 62E, M.G.L. c. 66A, 760 CMR 6.00 and 801 CMR 3.00.

Because LHAs and Non-Profits, through this system, have access to "personal data" as defined by M.G.L. c. 66A, LHAs and Non-Profits must ensure the confidentiality of information requested and received through the wage match system. As such, LHAs are subject to and must comply with all applicable laws and regulations relating to confidentiality and privacy, including but not limited to M.G.L. c. 62E, M.G. L. c. 66A, 760 CMR 4.00 and 801 CMR 3.00. Any unauthorized disclosure of wage reporting information will result in the immediate termination of your LHA's or Non-Profit's authorization to receive such information. As a holder of personal data, an unauthorized disclosure of wage reporting information may subject your LHA or Non-Profit to payment of monetary damages. In addition, an unauthorized release of wage reporting information may subject your employees to a fine.

As part of an Interdepartmental Service Agreement (ISA) between the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) and the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), DHCD is authorized to receive wage reporting information from DOR pursuant to M.G.L. c. 62E, § 3. We are required, on a periodic basis, to provide information about the wage match system. Further, we must ensure that LHAs and Non-Profits are informed of the confidentiality requirements and penalties for non-compliance.

The wage match processing occurs between the local housing authorities (LHAs) and the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR), with DHCD as the pass-through agency. DHCD, as pass through of information between an LHA and DOR, is responsible for making sure that LHAs adhere to the guidance, law and policies that surround the use of the wage match system. A limited number of the LHAs responded to the required annual certification collected by DHCD. We issue this notice to ensure that the system functions in accordance

with the DOR requirements and ensure 100% compliance with certification submission. DHCD through this notice:

1) Reminds LHAs of the guidelines for use of Wage Match and restate an annual requirement to complete the certification, and
2) Requests that all housing authorities submit the form: Executive Director/Board Approval Regarding Wage Match, v2 updated 2023 (Attachment A)**. *This form must be returned to DHCD within 60 days of the issuance of this PHN.***
3) Implements a ***new online submission requirement*** in the Fiscal Year End certifications for FY24 submitted via Housing Authority Financial Information System (HAFIS).

Guidelines for use of Wage Match and Annual Certification Requirement

Wage Match is intended for tenants, and Wage Match can be submitted for applicants that are perspective tenants at initial lease-up as part of final verification after eligibility and qualification is completed. Tenants are required by the lease to provide their social security number, and to authorize use of their social security number by the housing authority for verification of income and assets through DOR's wage reporting system. **However, there is no requirement that applicants or tenants have a social security number to be eligible or housed.**

Public Housing Notice 2019-16: Wage Match for State Housing Program Tenants contains the full details about the Wage Match program, including:

1) For Whom is Wage Match Conducted and Notification Process
2) Confidentiality and Controls
3) Procedures for Handling Cases of Income Discrepancy
   a) Identifying Cases of Income Discrepancy
   b) Meetings/Hearing Process
4) Reporting Adverse Actions to DHCD

And also include attachments:

A. Sample Letters for:
   a. Tenants – replaced with updated form, PHN 2023-03 Attachment B
   b. Applicants at Final Eligibility – replaced with updated form, PHN 2023-03 Attachment C
B. Income/Asset/ Tax Match Authorization
C. Adverse Action Report to DHCD
D. Executive Director/Board Approval – replaced with updated form, PHN 2023-03 Attachment A
E. Wage Match Acknowledgement Regarding confidentiality of Information
F. DOR Disclosure and Security Training for Safeguarding Information
   a. DHCD Identifying and Safeguarding Information – Training
   b. Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development Privacy and Information Security Brochure

The PHN also stated that "commencing with FYE 2020 the Executive Director/Board Approval form will be a required submission with your fiscal year-end reports, along with other required year-end submissions" (page 5). DHCD expected this submission at the same time as other FYE reports, this form was submitted separately outside of HAFIS. Certain LHAs have not made these required submissions with their Fiscal Year End documentation.

Submitting the certification: Executive Director/Board Approval Regarding Wage Match, v2 updated 2023
Attachment A, Executive Director/Board Approval Regarding Wage Match, indicates that the Executive Director and Board have read and thoroughly understand the contents of this notice and the prior notice (PHN 2019-16). It will also indicate that all authorized employees at your housing authority have read and signed, PHN 2019-16 Attachment E, Wage Match Acknowledgement Regarding Confidentiality of the Department of Revenue's Information and PHN 2019-16 Attachment F, the DOR Disclosure and Security Training for Safeguarding Information. Please note that the Acknowledgement & DOR Disclosure and Security Training for Safeguarding Information include a summary of the law and other attachments.

Within sixty (60) days of the date of this Public Housing Notice (PHN), please return a signed Attachment A to DHCD via email attachment to DHCDLHAWageMatch@mass.gov. This form must include signatures of the Executive Director and the Chairperson of the Housing Authority, as well as board extract showing vote of approval. The completed form must include a list of all LHA employees who authorized to request and receive Wage Match information.

Online submission required, starting with FYE 6/30/2024
In addition to submitting the certification by email within 60 days as directed above, starting with the FYE 6/30/2024, LHAs must submit the certification: Executive Director/Board Approval Regarding Wage Match, with all year-end certifications in Housing Authority Financial Information System (HAFIS). Going forward, the Executive Director/Board Approval Regarding Wage Match will become part of the annual certifications submissions in the Housing Authority Financial Information System (HAFIS).

We appreciate your cooperation and your efforts to protect the confidentiality of state housing program tenants and accurately calculate rents. We hope that these new procedures will ensure continued compliance with the Wage Match program, pursuant to our Interdepartmental Service Agreement (ISA). Questions about the Wage Match system can be directed to Michael Chow, Auditor, at Michael.chow@mass.gov.