

MIAMI-DADE HOUSING AGENCY

Community Service and Self-Sufficiency Policy

BACKGROUND

The Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 requires that all **Non-Exempt** (see definitions) public housing residents 18 years of age or older contribute eight (8) hours per month of community service (volunteer work) or participate in eight (8) hours of training, counseling, classes or other activities (described below) that help an individual toward self sufficiency and economic independence (United States Department of Urban Development regulation 24 CFR 960.600-609). **Exempt** (see definitions) public housing residents 18 years of age or older verified by Miami-Dade Housing Agency (MDHA) are not subject to the community service and/or self-sufficiency requirement.

The community service and self-sufficiency requirement is incorporated in the Public Housing Lease under Article IX, *Resident's Obligations*.

DEFINITIONS

Community Service: volunteer work that is of a public benefit and that serve to improve the quality of life and/or enhance resident self-sufficiency, and/or increase the self-responsibility of the resident within the community. Community service can take place at non-profit organizations or public institutions. Community Service does not include political activities.

The types of volunteer work activities for this purpose include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Working through a resident organization to help other residents with problems, serving as an officer on the Overall Tenant Advisory Council, and/or an incorporated public housing resident council organization;
- ✓ Working at a local school, before or after-school care program, or child care program;
- ✓ Working with a local non-profit educational, recreational, or food or clothing distribution program that serves youth, adult, elderly or other special needs population; or with a local non-profit social service, or health care or nursing home facility;
- ✓ Working at the Miami-Dade Housing Agency to help improve physical conditions, upon availability;
- ✓ Helping neighborhood groups with special projects.

Self-Sufficiency Activities: activities designed to encourage, assist, train or facilitate the economic independence of participants and their families or to provide work for participants.

These activities may include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Miami-Dade Housing Agency's (MDHA) Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program; or
- ✓ Other self-sufficiency programs, including but not limited to: job training and job readiness programs, full-time student status at any school, college or vocational school, General Equivalency Diploma (GED) classes, apprenticeships, substance abuse or mental health counseling, English proficiency or literacy (reading) classes, English as a second language classes, budgeting and credit counseling class or any kind of class or program that helps a person toward economic independence, and carrying out any welfare reform activity required by the Department of Children and Families.

Exempt Adult: An adult member (18 or older) of the family who:

- Is 62 years of age or older;
- Has a disability that prevents him/her from being gainfully employed;
- Is the caretaker of a disabled person;
- Is employed for at least 20 hours per week;
- Is participating, and is in compliance with a State of Florida welfare program, such as the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), including a welfare to work program;
- Meets the requirements from being exempted from work or work activities under a State of Florida welfare program;
- Is engaged in work-related activities for a minimum 20 hours per week. Work-related activities include: vocational educational training (not to exceed 12 months with respect to any individual), on-the-job training, job-skills training directly related to employment, job-search and job-readiness assistance, community service programs, satisfactory attendance at a secondary school or GED classes, education directly related to employment, and provision of childcare services to an individual who is participating in a community service program.

Non-Exempt Adult: An adult member (18 or older) who:

- Does not meet one of the above exemptions requiring contribution of at least eight (8) hours per month of community service and/or participation in self-sufficiency activities.

Requirements of the Community Service and/or Self-Sufficiency Activities for Non-Exempt Residents:

1. The eight (8) hours per month may be either volunteer work or self sufficiency program activity, or a combination of the two.
2. At least eight (8) hours of activity must be performed each month. An individual may not skip a month and then double up the following month, unless special circumstances warrant special consideration. MDHA will make the determination of whether to allow or disallow a deviation from the schedule.
3. Activities must be performed within the community and not outside the jurisdictional area of Miami-Dade County.

Family Obligations for all Adult Residents (Exempt and Non-Exempt):

- At lease execution or reexamination, all adult members (18 or older) of a public housing resident family must:
 - a) provide documentation that they are exempt from Community Service requirement, if they qualify for an exemption, and
 - b) sign a certification that they have received and read this policy and understand that if they are not exempt, failure to comply with the Community Service and/or Self-Sufficiency requirement will result in nonrenewal of their lease.
- Every month, non-exempt family members must present a completed Third Party Verification form to the site manager, documenting the activities performed during that month. This form will include the signature of supervisors, instructors or counselors verifying the number of hours contributed.
- If a family member is found to be noncompliant at re-examination, he/she and the Head of Household will sign an agreement with MDHA to make up the deficient hours over the next twelve (12) month period.

Requirements for change in family status:

- If, during the twelve (12) month period, a non-exempt person becomes exempt, it is his/her responsibility to report this to the MDHA site manager within ten (10) days and provide documentation of such.
- If, during the twelve (12) month period, an exempt person becomes non-exempt, it is her/his responsibility to report this to the MDHA site manager within ten (10) days. The site manager will provide the person with the Certification and Third Party Verification forms and a list of agencies in the community that may provide volunteer and/or training opportunities.

MDHA Obligations

1. To the greatest extent possible and practicable, MDHA will:
 - Provide names and contacts of agencies that may provide opportunities for residents, including disabled, to fulfill their Community Service obligations. (*According to the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act, a disabled person who is otherwise able to be gainfully employed is not necessarily exempt from the Community Service Requirement*).
 - Provide in-house opportunities for volunteer work or self sufficiency programs, such as MDHA's Family Self-sufficiency Program, helping neighborhood groups with special projects, etc.
2. MDHA will provide the family with the necessary documentation, such as the certification form, Third Party Verification form, and a copy of this policy at initial application and at lease execution.
3. MDHA will make the final determination as to whether or not a family member is exempt from the Community Service and/or Self-sufficiency requirement. MDHA may verify with the welfare agency resident's participation and compliance with the welfare program.
4. Residents may use MDHA's Grievance Procedure if they disagree with MDHA's determination.
5. Noncompliance of family member:
 - At the time of the reexamination interview, or at least thirty (30) days prior to annual reexamination and/or lease expiration, MDHA will begin reviewing the exempt or non-exempt status and compliance of family members. MDHA will notify the family of such non compliance.
 - If MDHA finds a family member to be noncompliant, MDHA will enter into an agreement with the non compliant member and the Head of Household to make up the deficient hours over the next twelve (12) month period;
 - If, at the next annual reexamination, the family member still is not compliant, the lease will not be renewed and the entire family will have to vacate, unless the noncompliant member agrees to move out of the unit;
 - The family may use MDHA's Grievance Procedure and any available judicial remedy to seek timely redress to protest the lease termination.

If you have any questions, contact your site manager.