



Bloomington Housing Authority

1007 North Summit, Bloomington, Indiana 47404
812-339-3491 fax 812-339-7177

March 17, 2020

Re: Temporary Changes to BHA Operations in Response to COVID-19

Dear BHA Community:

I am writing personally to share what we are doing at the BHA to minimize the impacts of COVID-19 (or coronavirus) to the families we serve. I assure you the BHA is taking actions to ensure that we can continue to support our clients. Beginning Wednesday, March 18th the BHA will modify our processes for residents and clients seeking administrative and maintenance assistance.

Effective Wednesday, March 18th until further notice:

- **Our main lobby will be closed to the public** in an effort to protect the well-being of clients and staff.
- **All in-person appointments are cancelled**, including annual recertifications, self-sufficiency meetings, and assistance meetings and will be scheduled over the phone or virtual meeting.
- **The Community Building** (1002 N Summit Street) **will be closed.**
- **Preventative maintenance work orders will be suspended.** Only emergency work orders will be completed. We still encourage residents to call-in work orders so BHA maintenance staff can determine if they impact resident health and safety.
- **Routine inspections, rent collection, public meetings and other processes will change to protect vulnerable populations** (see attached BHA COVID-19 Guidance).

Even though our office will be closed to the public, BHA staff is working both remotely or in safe locations to ensure we serve our housing community to the best of our ability during this time. For properties managed by BHA, maintenance staff will be available by phone to create work orders and designate priorities. We are working to digitize our change-in-income forms so they are available through our website or for pick-up and drop-off at stations in Crestmont and Walnut Woods.

The next few weeks will be challenging. I want you to know BHA is committed to your health and safety, and we are here to help. We will continue to act swiftly as possible to keep up with this constantly changing situation and to follow the guidance of our local, state and federal leaders. In this uncertain time, our priority remains the same to support our clients, staff and community. Please reach out to BHA staff as needed by calling our main office at 812-339-3491. For continued updates, visit www.bhaindiana.net or our Facebook page. Thank you, as always, for your continued support. Stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Amber Skoby
Executive Director

Attachment: BHA COVID-19 Guidance



Equal Opportunity Employer

BLOOMINGTON HOUSING AUTHORITY
COVID-19 GUIDANCE AND POLICY CHANGES
(UPDATED: MARCH 17, 2020)

1. EDUCATION ON PREVENTION/CONTAINMENT

Center for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Indiana Department of Health: <https://www.in.gov/coronavirus/>

Monroe County Department of Health: <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/?structureid=12>

Do Your Part:

- Get your flu shot
- Limit your visitors, even if you live in privately-owned housing.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home when you are sick, and cover coughs and sneezes.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects.
- [What you need to know about Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\);](#)
- [Stop the Spread of Germs;](#)
- [Symptoms of Coronavirus Disease 2019;](#) and
- [What to do if you are sick with Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

2. OPERATIONAL CHANGES

BHA is closely following public health guidance to determine how business-as-usual will need to change in these difficult circumstances, even as we work to provide the services for which people depend on us. Right now, BHA has:

- Closed our main lobby (1007 N Summit Street) to the public in an effort to protect the well-being of clients and staff
- Cancelled all in-person appointments including annual recertifications, self-sufficiency meetings, and assistance meetings and those appointments will now be scheduled over the phone or virtual meeting.
- Closed the Community Building (1002 N Summit Street)
- Suspended preventative maintenance work orders. Only emergency work orders will be completed. We still encourage residents to call-in work orders so BHA maintenance staff can determine if they impact resident health and safety.
- Changed policies and processes for routine inspections, rent collection, public meetings and other processes to protect vulnerable populations
- Asked employees to avoid external meetings and large internal meetings when possible.
- Take responsibility for sanitizing workspaces and maintaining “social distance” in the workplace
- Asked employees to stay home and see a doctor if they are ill.

We are reassessing policies daily. In doing so, we rely heavily on guidance from Bloomington, Monroe County and Indiana health officials with regard to what are considered prudent measures based upon COVID-19 prevalence in the state.

3. PUBLIC HOUSING RENT COLLECTION

Rent payments will not be considered late until the 10th of April and late fees will not be applied until the 11th of April. Payment by credit card or debit card can be made over the phone by calling the BHA Main Office at 812-339-3491. Checks or money orders can be placed in the drop box located on the north side of the main office entrance. Make sure payment is labeled and make note if receipt is requested. We will mail the rent receipts as requested. Please, as always, no cash.

If residents are unable to pay their April rent by April 10th, please contact Property Management staff (Janice Price, 812-339-3491 x112 or Sarah Boomsma, 812-339-3491 x118) so that a payment agreement can be considered. It is important residents stay in communication with the property management team so we can assist with financial resources.

4. MAINTENANCE WORK ORDERS

BHA will prioritize emergency work orders and those that impact the health and safety of our residents. All preventative maintenance or non-emergency work orders will be suspended at this time. Residents are still encouraged to report work orders by contacting the maintenance department at 812-339-3491 extension 121.

5. CHANGE FORMS

It's important to report change in income, especially if income decreased. BHA is making available the electronic reporting of interim changes (changes of income and/or household composition) as well as annual re-certification forms. Please see below for more information on how to access, complete, and submit these online forms. BHA encourages all program participants to utilize the electronic method of reporting in order to maximize the practice of social distancing.

To report any changes, increase or decrease, you **must** complete an interim change form that is available online by clicking [here](#).

For your convenience, once you have completed the fillable PDF Interim Change Form, you may save the document to your computer, tablet, or smartphone and then email the document to your case manager. Click [here](#) for the BHA staff email directory. If you are completing the form using your smartphone, it is recommended that you use the Adobe Fill and Sign app available for free from the [Google Play Store](#) and/or [Apple App Store](#).

You may also obtain and complete the interim change form at the BHA main office entrance (after Tuesday, March 17). Changes to income and/or family composition **must** be reported in writing within **fourteen calendar days** of the occurrence. If you begin working, an interim change form **must** be completed within fourteen calendar days from the hire date. **Calling to report a change will not be accepted.**

If you need to complete and submit your annual renewal/re-certification forms electronically, you may access the form by clicking [here](#). Once completed, you may save the document to your computer, tablet, or

smartphone and then email the document to your case manager. Click [here](#) for the BHA staff email directory. If you are completing the form using your smartphone, it is recommended that you use the Adobe Fill and Sign app available for free from the [Google Play Store](#) and/or [Apple App Store](#).

6. INSPECTIONS

We will continue to monitor which units are due for inspection. Rather than conducting a physical inspection for those which are due, we will conduct a teleconference call with the family to inquire about any potential deficiencies. We will encourage families to take pictures of any said deficiencies and email them to the inspector. We will also encourage Skype sessions with the family when available in order to conduct a virtual observation of the unit. We will then notify the landlord of the deficiency as we normally would and require non-life-threatening deficiencies to be corrected within 30 days; any life-threatening deficiencies will be required to be corrected within 24 hours. We will then follow up with the tenant at the end of the correction period deadline for confirmation of repairs being performed, again using methods such as teleconferencing and Skype. For any units still not meeting HQS at the end of the correction period, or any BHA-approved extension, an abatement of the Housing Assistance Payment will occur until such time that the unit is able to meet HQS.

BHA will continue to perform initial inspections provided that the unit is vacant, has been cleaned and received turnover maintenance prior to the inspection. For initial inspections in which the unit is occupied, BHA will conduct a virtual assessment of the unit utilizing such tools as Skype and webcams.

7. BRIEFINGS

BHA's next Housing Choice Voucher briefing is scheduled for April 22nd. We will assess whether or not to hold that briefing at our main office or virtually in April.

8. HOUSING ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS

Payments made to Housing Choice Voucher participating property owners on behalf of BHA voucher holders will not be impacted. Payment will be direct deposited by the 5th or 20th of the month.

9. CONTACT INFORMATION

Please contact BHA if you have additional questions. We know these are stressful times, and we are here to help the best we can. A complete staff directory can be found here: http://www.bhaindiana.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Staff-Directory-by-Department_website-friendly.pdf