

Chapter 13

LEASE TERMINATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Either party to the dwelling lease agreement may terminate the lease in accordance with the terms of the lease. A public housing lease is different from a private dwelling lease in that the family's rental assistance is tied to their tenancy. When the family moves from their public housing unit, they lose their rental assistance. Therefore, there are additional safeguards to protect the family's tenancy in public housing.

Likewise, there are safeguards to protect HUD's interest in the public housing program. The HACB has the authority to terminate the lease because of the family's failure to comply with HUD regulations, for serious or repeated violations of the terms of the lease, and for other good cause. HUD regulations also specify when termination of the lease is mandatory by the HACB.

When determining HACB policy on terminations of the lease, the HACB must consider state and local landlord-tenant laws in the area where the HACB is located. Such laws vary from one location to another, and these variances may be either more or less restrictive than federal law or HUD regulation.

This chapter presents the policies that govern voluntary termination of the lease by the family and the mandatory and voluntary termination of the lease by the HACB. It is presented in four parts:

Part I: Termination by Tenant. This part discusses the HACB requirements for voluntary termination of the lease by the family.

Part II: Termination by HACB - Mandatory. This part describes circumstances when termination of the lease by the HACB is mandatory. This part also explains nonrenewal of the lease for noncompliance with community service requirements.

Part III: Termination by HACB – Other Authorized Reasons. This part describes the HACB's options for lease termination that are not mandated by HUD regulation but for which HUD authorizes HACBs to terminate. For some of these options HUD requires the HACB to establish policies and lease provisions for termination, but termination is not mandatory. For other options the HACB has full discretion whether to consider the options as just cause to terminate as long as the HACB policies are reasonable, nondiscriminatory, and do not violate state or local landlord-tenant law. This part also discusses the alternatives that the HACB may consider in lieu of termination, and the criteria the HACB will use when deciding what actions to take.

Part IV: Notification Requirements. This part presents the federal requirements for disclosure of criminal records to the family prior to termination, the HUD requirements and HACB policies regarding the timing and content of written notices for lease termination and eviction, and notification of the post office when eviction is due to criminal activity. This part also discusses record keeping related to lease termination.

PART I: TERMINATION BY TENANT

13-I.A. TENANT CHOOSES TO TERMINATE THE LEASE [24 CFR 966.4(k)(1)(ii) and 24 CFR 966.4(l)(1)]

The family may terminate the lease at any time, for any reason, by following the notification procedures as outlined in the lease. Such notice must be in writing and delivered to the property site office or the HACB central office or sent by pre-paid first-class mail, properly addressed.

HACB Policy

If a family desires to move and terminate their tenancy with the HACB, they must give at least 30 calendar days advance written notice to the HACB of their intent to vacate.

When a family must give less than 30 days notice due to circumstances beyond their control the HACB, at its discretion, may waive the 30 day requirement.

The notice of lease termination must be signed by the head of household, spouse, or cohead.

PART II: TERMINATION BY HACB – MANDATORY

13-II.A. OVERVIEW

HUD requires mandatory termination of the lease for certain actions or inactions of the family. There are other actions or inactions of the family that constitute *grounds* for lease termination, but the lease termination is not mandatory. The HACB must establish policies for termination of the lease in these cases where termination is optional for the HACB.

For those tenant actions or failures to act where HUD requires termination, the HACB has no such option. In those cases, the family's lease must be terminated. This part describes situations in which HUD requires the HACB to terminate the lease, except Marina Village Residents as covered by the Marina Village Resident Council MOA.

13-II.B. FAILURE TO PROVIDE CONSENT [24 CFR 960.259(a) and (b)]

The HACB must terminate the lease if any family member fails to sign and submit any consent form s/he is required to sign for any reexamination. See Chapter 7 for a complete discussion of consent requirements.

13-II.C. FAILURE TO DOCUMENT CITIZENSHIP [24 CFR 5.514(c) and (d) and 24 CFR 960.259(a)]

The HACB must terminate the lease if (1) a family fails to submit required documentation within the required timeframe concerning any family member's citizenship or immigration status; (2) a family submits evidence of citizenship and eligible immigration status in a timely manner, but United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) primary and secondary verification does not verify eligible immigration status of the family, resulting in no eligible family members; or (3) a family member, as determined by the HACB, has knowingly permitted another individual who is not eligible for assistance to reside (on a permanent basis) in the unit. For (3), such termination must be for a period of at least 24 months. This does not apply to ineligible noncitizens already in the household where the family's assistance has been prorated.

See Chapter 7 for a complete discussion of documentation requirements.

13-II.D. FAILURE TO DISCLOSE AND DOCUMENT SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS [24 CFR 5.218(c), 24 CFR 960.259(a)(3), Notice PIH 2012-10]

The HACB must terminate assistance if a participant family fails to disclose the complete and accurate social security numbers of each household member and the documentation necessary to verify each social security number.

However, if the family is otherwise eligible for continued program assistance, and the HACB determines that the family's failure to meet the SSN disclosure and documentation requirements was due to circumstances that could not have been foreseen and were outside of the family's control, the HACB may defer the family's termination and provide the opportunity to comply with the requirement within a period not to exceed 90 calendar days from the date the HACB determined the family to be noncompliant.

HACB Policy

The HACB will defer the family's termination and provide the family with the opportunity to comply with the requirement for a period of 90 calendar days for circumstances beyond the participant's control such as delayed processing of the SSN application by the SSA, natural disaster, fire, death in the family, or other emergency, if there is a reasonable likelihood that the participant will be able to disclose an SSN by the deadline.

See Chapter 7 for a complete discussion of documentation and certification requirements.

13-II.E. FAILURE TO ACCEPT THE HACB'S OFFER OF A LEASE REVISION [24 CFR 966.4(l)(2)(ii)(E)]

The HACB must terminate the lease if the family fails to accept the HACB's offer of a lease revision to an existing lease, provided the HACB has done the following:

- The revision is on a form adopted by the HACB in accordance with 24 CFR 966.3 pertaining to requirements for notice to tenants and resident organizations and their opportunity to present comments.
- The HACB has made written notice of the offer of the revision at least 60 calendar days before the lease revision is scheduled to take effect.
- The HACB has specified in the offer a reasonable time limit within that period for acceptance by the family.

See Chapter 8 for information pertaining to HACB policies for offering lease revisions.

13-II.F. METHAMPHETAMINE CONVICTION [24 CFR 966.4(l)(5)(i)(A)]

The HACB must immediately terminate the lease if the HACB determines that any household member has ever been convicted of the manufacture or production of methamphetamine on the premises of federally-assisted housing.

See Part 13-III.B. below for the HUD definition of *premises*.

13-II.G. LIFETIME REGISTERED SEX OFFENDERS [Notice PIH 2012-28]

Should a HACB discover that a member of an assisted household was subject to a lifetime registration requirement at admission and was erroneously admitted after June 25, 2001, the HACB must immediately terminate assistance for the household member.

In this situation, the HACB must offer the family the opportunity to remove the ineligible family member from the household. If the family is unwilling to remove that individual from the household, the HACB must terminate assistance for the household.

13-II.H. NONCOMPLIANCE WITH COMMUNITY SERVICE REQUIREMENTS [24 CFR 966.4(l)(2)(ii)(D), 24 CFR 960.603(b) and 24 CFR 960.607(b)(2)(ii) and (c)]

The HACB is prohibited from renewing the lease at the end of the 12 month lease term when the family fails to comply with the community service requirements as described in Chapter 11.

13-II.I. DEATH OF A SOLE FAMILY MEMBER [Notice PIH 2012-4]

The HACB must immediately terminate the lease following the death of the sole family member.

PART III: TERMINATION BY HACB – OTHER AUTHORIZED REASONS

13-III.A. OVERVIEW

Besides requiring HACBs to terminate the lease under the circumstances described in Part II, HUD requires the HACB to establish provisions in the lease for termination pertaining to certain criminal activity, alcohol abuse, and certain household obligations stated in the regulations. While these provisions for lease termination must be in the lease agreement, HUD does not require HACBs to terminate for such violations in all cases. The HACB has the discretion to consider circumstances surrounding the violation or, in applicable situations, whether the offending household member has entered or completed rehabilitation, and the HACB may, as an alternative to termination, require the exclusion of the culpable household member. The HACB must adopt policies concerning the use of these options.

In addition, HUD authorizes HACBs to terminate the lease for other grounds, but for only those grounds that constitute serious or repeated violations of material terms of the lease or for other good cause. The HACB must develop policies pertaining to what constitutes serious or repeated

lease violations, and other good cause, based upon the content of the HACB lease. In the development of the terms of the lease, the HACB must consider the limitations imposed by state and local landlord-tenant law, as well as HUD regulations and federal statutes. Because of variations in state and local landlord-tenant law, and because HUD affords HACBs wide discretion in some areas, a broad range of policies could be acceptable.

The HACB, with some restrictions, also has the option to terminate the tenancies of families who are over income.

The HACB may consider alternatives to termination and must establish policies describing the criteria the HACB will use when deciding what action to take, the types of evidence that will be acceptable, and the steps the HACB must take when terminating a family's lease.

If the HACB files an eviction action against a resident, the resident will be liable for Court costs and Marshal fees, unless the resident prevails in the action.

13-III.B. MANDATORY LEASE PROVISIONS [24 CFR 966.4(l)(5)]

This section addresses provisions for lease termination that must be included in the lease agreement according to HUD regulations. Although the provisions are required, HUD does not require HACBs to terminate for such violations in all cases, therefore HACB policies are needed.

***Definitions* [24 CFR 5.100]**

The following definitions will be used for this and other parts of this chapter:

Affiliated individual is defined in section 16-VII.B.

Covered person means a tenant, any member of the tenant's household, a guest, or another person under the tenant's control.

Dating violence is defined in section 16-VII.B.

Domestic violence is defined in section 16-VII.B.

Drug means a controlled substance as defined in section 102 of the Controlled Substances Act [21 U.S.C. 802].

Drug-related criminal activity means the illegal manufacture, sale, distribution, or use of a drug, or the possession of a drug with the intent to manufacture, sell, distribute, or use the drug.

Guest means a person temporarily staying in the unit with the consent of a tenant or other member of the household who has express or implied authority to so consent on behalf of the tenant.

Household means the family and HACB-approved live-in aide. The term household also includes foster children and/or foster adults that have been approved to reside in the unit [HUD-50058, Instruction Booklet, p. 65].

Other person under the tenant's control means that the person, although not staying as a guest in the unit, is, or was at the time of the activity in question, on the premises because of an invitation from the tenant or other member of the household who has express or implied authority to so consent on behalf of the tenant. Absent evidence to the contrary, a person temporarily and infrequently on the premises solely for legitimate commercial purposes is not *under the tenant's control*.

Premises means the building or complex or development in which the public or assisted housing dwelling unit is located, including common areas and grounds.

Sexual assault is defined in section 16-VII.B.

Stalking is defined in section 16-VII.B.

Violent criminal activity means any criminal activity that has as one of its elements the use, attempted use, or threatened use of physical force substantial enough to cause, or be reasonably likely to cause, serious bodily injury or property damage.

Drug Crime On or Off the Premises [24 CFR 966.4(l)(5)(i)(B)]

The lease must provide that drug-related criminal activity engaged in on or off the premises by the tenant, member of the tenant's household or guest, or any such activity engaged in on the premises by any other person under the tenant's control is grounds for termination.

HACB Policy

The HACB will terminate the lease for drug-related criminal activity engaged in on or off the premises by any tenant, member of the tenant's household or guest, and any such activity engaged in on the premises by any other person under the tenant's control.

The HACB will consider all credible evidence, including but not limited to, any record of arrests or convictions of covered persons related to the drug-related criminal activity.

A record of arrest(s) will not be used as the basis for the termination or proof that the participant engaged in disqualifying criminal activity.

In making its decision to terminate the lease, the HACB will consider alternatives as described in Section 13-III.D and other factors as described in Sections 13-III.E and 13-III.F. Upon consideration of such alternatives and factors, the HACB may, on a case-by-case basis, choose not to terminate the lease.

Illegal Use of a Drug [24 CFR 966.4(l)(5)(i)(B)]

The lease must provide that a HACB may evict a family when the HACB determines that a household member is illegally using a drug or that a pattern of illegal use of a drug interferes with the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises by other residents.

HACB Policy

The HACB will terminate the lease when the HACB determines that a household member is illegally using a drug or the HACB determines that a pattern of illegal use of a drug interferes with the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises by other residents.

A pattern of illegal drug use means more than one incident of any use of illegal drugs during the previous six months.

The HACB will consider all credible evidence, including but not limited to, any record of arrests or convictions of household members related to the use of illegal drugs.

A record of arrest(s) will not be used as the basis for the termination or proof that the participant engaged in disqualifying criminal activity.

In making its decision to terminate the lease, the HACB will consider alternatives as described in Section 13-III.D and other factors as described in Sections 13-III.E and 13-III.F. Upon consideration of such alternatives and factors, the HACB may, on a case-by-case basis, choose not to terminate the lease.

Threat to Other Residents [24 CFR 966.4(l)(5)(ii)(A)]

The lease must provide that any criminal activity by a covered person that threatens the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises by other residents (including HACB management staff residing on the premises) or by persons residing in the immediate vicinity of the premises is grounds for termination of tenancy.

HACB Policy

The HACB will terminate the lease when a covered person engages in any criminal activity that threatens the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises by other residents (including HACB management staff residing on the premises) or by persons residing in the immediate vicinity of the premises.

Immediate vicinity means within a three-block radius of the premises.

The HACB will consider all credible evidence, including but not limited to, any record of arrests or convictions of covered persons related to the criminal activity.

A record of arrest(s) will not be used as the basis for the termination or proof that the participant engaged in disqualifying criminal activity.

In making its decision to terminate the lease, the HACB will consider alternatives as described in Section 13-III.D and other factors as described in Sections 13-III.E and 13-III.F. Upon consideration of such alternatives and factors, the HACB may, on a case-by-case basis, choose not to terminate the lease.

Alcohol Abuse [24 CFR 966.4(l)(5)(vi)(A)]

HACBs must establish standards that allow termination of tenancy if the HACB determines that a household member has engaged in abuse or pattern of abuse of alcohol that threatens the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises by other residents.

HACB Policy

The HACB will terminate the lease if the HACB determines that a household member has engaged in abuse or a pattern of abuse of alcohol that threatens the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises by other residents.

A pattern of such alcohol abuse means more than one incident of any such abuse of alcohol during the previous six months.

The HACB will consider all credible evidence, including but not limited to, any record of arrests or convictions of household members related to the abuse of alcohol.

A record of arrest(s) will not be used as the basis for the termination or proof that the participant engaged in disqualifying criminal activity.

In making its decision to terminate the lease, the HACB will consider alternatives as described in Section 13-III.D and other factors as described in Sections 13-III.E and 13-III.F. Upon consideration of such alternatives and factors, the HACB may, on a case-by-case basis, choose not to terminate the lease.

Furnishing False or Misleading Information Concerning Illegal Drug Use or Alcohol Abuse or Rehabilitation [24 CFR 966.4(l)(5)(vi)(B)]

HACBs must establish standards that allow termination of tenancy if the HACB determines that a household member has furnished false or misleading information concerning illegal drug use, alcohol abuse, or rehabilitation of illegal drug users or alcohol abusers.

HACB Policy

The HACB will terminate the lease if the HACB determines that a household member has furnished false or misleading information concerning illegal drug use, alcohol abuse, or rehabilitation of illegal drug users or alcohol abusers.

The HACB will consider all credible evidence, including but not limited to, any record of arrests or convictions of household members related to the use of illegal drugs or the abuse of alcohol, and any records or other documentation (or lack of records or documentation) supporting claims of rehabilitation of illegal drug users or alcohol abusers.

In making its decision to terminate the lease, the HACB will consider alternatives as described in Section 13-III.D and other factors as described in Sections 13-III.E and 13-III.F. Upon consideration of such alternatives and factors, the HACB may, on a case-by-case basis, choose not to terminate the lease.

Other Serious or Repeated Violations of Material Terms of the Lease – Mandatory Lease Provisions [24 CFR 966.4(l)(2)(i) and 24 CFR 966.4(f)]

HUD regulations require certain tenant obligations to be incorporated into the lease. Violations of such regulatory obligations are considered to be serious or repeated violations of the lease and grounds for termination. Incidents of actual or threatened domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking may not be construed as serious or repeated violations of the lease by the victim or threatened victim of such violence or stalking [24 CFR 5.2005(c)(1)].

HACB Policy

The HACB will terminate the lease for the following violations of tenant obligations under the lease:

Failure to make payments due under the lease, including nonpayment of rent (see Chapter 8 for details pertaining to lease requirements for payments due);

Repeated late payment of rent or other charges. Four late payments within a 12 month period shall constitute a repeated late payment.

Failure to fulfill the following household obligations:

Not to assign the lease or to sublease the dwelling unit. Subleasing includes receiving payment to cover rent and utility costs by a person living in the unit who is not listed as a family member.

Not to provide accommodations for boarders or lodgers

To use the dwelling unit solely as a private dwelling for the tenant and the tenant's household as identified in the lease, and not to use or permit its use for any other purpose

To abide by necessary and reasonable regulations promulgated by the HACB for the benefit and well-being of the housing project and the tenants which shall be posted in the project office and incorporated by reference in the lease

To comply with all obligations imposed upon tenants by applicable provisions of building and housing codes materially affecting health and safety

To keep the dwelling unit and such other areas as may be assigned to the tenant for the tenant's exclusive use in a clean and safe condition

To dispose of all ashes, garbage, rubbish, and other waste from the dwelling unit in a sanitary and safe manner

To use only in a reasonable manner all electrical, plumbing, sanitary, heating, ventilating, air-conditioning and other facilities and appurtenances including elevators

To refrain from, and to cause the household and guests to refrain from destroying, defacing, damaging, or removing any part of the dwelling unit or project

To pay reasonable charges (other than for normal wear and tear) for the repair of damages to the dwelling unit, or to the project (including damages to project buildings, facilities or common areas) caused by the tenant, a member of the household or a guest

To act, and cause household members or guests to act, in a manner which will not disturb other residents' peaceful enjoyment of their accommodations and will be conducive to maintaining the project in a decent, safe and sanitary condition

In making its decision to terminate the lease, the HACB will consider alternatives as described in Section 13-III.D and other factors as described in Sections 13-III.E and 13-III.F. Upon consideration of such alternatives and factors, the HACB may, on a case-by-case basis, choose not to terminate the lease.

13-III.C. OTHER AUTHORIZED REASONS FOR TERMINATION [24 CFR 966.4(l)(2) and (5)(ii)(B)]

HUD authorizes HACBs to terminate the lease for reasons other than those described in the previous sections. These reasons are referred to as “other good cause.”

Other Good Cause [24 CFR 966.4(l)(2)(ii)(B) and (C)]

HUD regulations state that the HACB may terminate tenancy for other good cause. The regulations provide a few examples of other good cause, but do not limit the HACB to only those examples. The Violence against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 explicitly prohibits HACBs from considering incidents of actual or threatened domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking as “other good cause” for terminating the assistance, tenancy, or occupancy rights of the victim or threatened victim of such violence [24 CFR 5.2005(c)(1)].

HACB Policy

The HACB will terminate the lease for the following reasons.

Fugitive Felon or Parole Violator. If a tenant is fleeing to avoid prosecution, or custody or confinement after conviction, for a crime, or attempt to commit a crime, that is a felony under the laws of the place from which the individual flees, or that, in the case of the State of New Jersey, is a high misdemeanor; or violating a condition of probation or parole imposed under federal or state law.

Persons subject to sex offender registration requirement. If any member of the household has, during their current public housing tenancy, become subject to a registration requirement under a state sex offender registration program.

Discovery of facts after admission to the program that would have made the tenant ineligible

Discovery of material false statements or fraud by the tenant in connection with an application for assistance or with a reexamination of income

Failure to furnish such information and certifications regarding family composition and income as may be necessary for the HACB to make determinations with respect to rent, eligibility, and the appropriateness of the dwelling unit size

Failure to transfer to an appropriate size dwelling unit based on family composition, upon appropriate notice by the HACB that such a dwelling unit is available

Failure to permit access to the unit by the HACB after proper advance notification for the purpose of performing routine inspections and maintenance, for making improvements or repairs, or to show the dwelling unit for re-leasing, or without advance notice if there is reasonable cause to believe that an emergency exists

Failure to promptly inform the HACB of the birth, adoption or court-awarded custody of a child. In such a case, promptly means within 10 business days of the event.

Failure to abide by the provisions of the HACB pet policy

If the family has breached the terms of a repayment agreement entered into with the HACB

If a family member has violated federal, state, or local law that imposes obligations in connection with the occupancy or use of the premises.

If a household member has engaged in or threatened violent or abusive behavior toward HACB personnel.

Abusive or violent behavior towards HACB personnel includes verbal as well as physical abuse or violence. Use of racial epithets, or other language, written or oral, that is customarily used to intimidate may be considered abusive or violent behavior.

Threatening refers to oral or written threats or physical gestures that communicate intent to abuse or commit violence.

In making its decision to terminate the lease, the HACB will consider alternatives as described in Section 13-III.D and other factors described in Sections 13-III.E and 13-III.F. Upon consideration of such alternatives and factors, the HACB may, on a case-by-case basis, choose not to terminate the lease.

Family Absence from Unit [24 CFR 982.551(i)]

It is reasonable that the family may be absent from the public housing unit for brief periods. However, the HACB needs a policy on how long the family may be absent from the unit. Absence in this context means that no member of the family is residing in the unit.

HACB Policy

The family must supply any information or certification requested by the HACB to verify that the family is living in the unit, or relating to family absence from the unit, including any HACB-requested information or certification on the purposes of family absences. The family must cooperate with the HACB for this purpose.

The family must promptly notify the HACB when all family members will be absent from the unit for an extended period. An extended period is defined as any period greater than 30 calendar days. In such a case promptly means within 10 business days of the start of the extended absence.

If a family is absent from the public housing unit for more than 180 consecutive days, and the family does not adequately verify that they are living in the unit, the HACB will terminate the lease for other good cause.

Abandonment of the unit. If the family appears to have vacated the unit without giving proper notice, the HACB will follow state and local landlord-tenant law pertaining to abandonment before taking possession of the unit. If necessary, the HACB will secure the unit immediately to prevent vandalism and other criminal activity.

Over-Income Families [24 CFR 960.261 and FR 11/26/04, p. 68786]

Subject to certain restrictions, HUD authorizes HACBs to evict or terminate the tenancies of families because they are over income. Unless required to do so by local law, the HACB may not evict or terminate the tenancy of a family solely because the family is over income if: (1) the family has a valid contract of participation in the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program, or (2) the family is currently receiving the earned income disallowance. This rule does not require HACBs to evict over-income residents, but rather gives HACBs the discretion to do so thereby making units available for applicants who are income-eligible.

HACB Policy

The HACB will not evict or terminate the tenancies of families solely because they are over income.

13-III.D. ALTERNATIVES TO TERMINATION OF TENANCY

Exclusion of Culpable Household Member [24 CFR 966.4(l)(5)(vii)(C)]

As an alternative to termination of the lease for criminal activity or alcohol abuse HUD provides that the HACB may consider exclusion of the culpable household member. Such an alternative can be used for any other reason where such a solution appears viable in accordance with HACB policy.

Additionally, under the Violence against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013, the HACB may bifurcate a lease in order to terminate the tenancy of an individual who is a tenant or lawful occupant of a unit and engages in criminal activity directly related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

HACB Policy

The HACB will consider requiring the tenant to exclude a household member in order to continue to reside in the assisted unit, where that household member has participated in or been culpable for action or failure to act that warrants termination.

As a condition of the family's continued occupancy, the head of household must certify that the culpable household member has vacated the unit and will not be permitted to visit or to stay as a guest in the assisted unit. The family must present evidence of the former household member's current address upon HACB request.

Repayment of Family Debts

HACB Policy

If a family owes amounts to the HACB, as a condition of continued occupancy, the HACB will require the family to repay the full amount or to enter into a repayment agreement, within 30 days of receiving notice from the HACB of the amount owed. See Chapter 16 for policies on repayment agreements.

13-III.E. CRITERIA FOR DECIDING TO TERMINATE TENANCY

A HACB that has grounds to terminate a tenancy is not required to do so, except as explained in Part II of this chapter, and may consider all of the circumstances relevant to a particular case before making a decision.

Evidence [24 CFR 982.553(c)]

For criminal activity, HUD permits the HACB to terminate the lease if a *preponderance of the evidence* indicates that a household member has engaged in the activity, regardless of whether the household member has been arrested or convicted, and without satisfying the standard of proof used for a criminal conviction.

HACB Policy

The HACB will use the preponderance of the evidence as the standard for making all termination decisions.

Preponderance of the evidence is defined as evidence which is of greater weight or more convincing than the evidence which is offered in opposition to it; that is, evidence which as a whole shows that the fact sought to be proved is more probable than not.

Preponderance of the evidence may not be determined by the number of witnesses, but by the greater weight of all evidence.

Consideration of Circumstances [24 CFR 966.4(l)(5)(vii)(B)]

Although it is required that certain lease provisions exist for criminal activity and alcohol abuse, HUD provides that the HACB may consider all circumstances relevant to a particular case in order to determine whether or not to terminate the lease.

Such relevant circumstances can also be considered when terminating the lease for any other reason.

HACB Policy

The HACB will consider the following facts and circumstances before deciding whether to terminate the lease for any of the HUD required lease provisions or for any other reasons:

The seriousness of the offending action, especially with respect to how it would affect other residents' safety or property

The extent of participation or culpability of the leaseholder, or other household members, in the offending action, including whether the culpable member is a minor, a person with disabilities, or (as discussed further in section 13-III.F) a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking

The effects that the eviction will have on other family members who were not involved in the action or failure to act

The effect on the community of the termination, or of the HACB's failure to terminate the tenancy

The effect of the HACB's decision on the integrity of the public housing program

The demand for housing by eligible families who will adhere to lease responsibilities

The extent to which the leaseholder has shown personal responsibility and whether they have taken all reasonable steps to prevent or mitigate the offending action

The length of time since the violation occurred, including the age of the individual at the time of the conduct, as well as the family's recent history, and the likelihood of favorable conduct in the future

While a record of arrest(s) will not be used as the basis for termination, an arrest may, however, trigger an investigation to determine whether the participant actually engaged in disqualifying criminal activity. As part of its investigation, the HACB may obtain the police report associated with the arrest and consider the reported circumstances of the arrest. The HACB may also consider:

Any statements made by witnesses or the participant not included in the police report

Whether criminal charges were filed

Whether, if filed, criminal charges were abandoned, dismissed, not prosecuted, or ultimately resulted in an acquittal

Any other evidence relevant to determining whether or not the participant engaged in disqualifying activity

Evidence of criminal conduct will be considered if it indicates a demonstrable risk to safety and/or property.

In the case of program abuse, the dollar amount of the underpaid rent and whether or not a false certification was signed by the family

Consideration of Rehabilitation [24 CFR 966.4(l)(5)(vii)(D)]

HUD authorizes HACBs to take into consideration whether a household member who had used illegal drugs or abused alcohol and is no longer engaging in such use or abuse is participating in or has successfully completed a supervised drug or alcohol rehabilitation program.

HACB Policy

In determining whether to terminate the lease for illegal drug use or a pattern of illegal drug use, or for abuse or a pattern of abuse of alcohol, by a household member who is no longer engaging in such use or abuse, the HACB will consider whether such household member has successfully completed a supervised drug or alcohol rehabilitation program.

For this purpose the HACB will require the tenant to submit evidence of the household member's successful completion of a supervised drug or alcohol rehabilitation program.

Reasonable Accommodation [24 CFR 966.7]

If the family includes a person with disabilities, the HACB's decision to terminate the family's lease is subject to consideration of reasonable accommodation in accordance with 24 CFR Part 8.

HACB Policy

If a family indicates that the behavior of a family member with a disability is the reason for a proposed termination of lease, the HACB will determine whether the behavior is related to the disability. If so, upon the family's request, the HACB will determine whether alternative measures are appropriate as a reasonable accommodation. The HACB will only consider accommodations that can reasonably be expected to address the behavior that is the basis of the proposed lease termination. See Chapter 2 for a discussion of reasonable accommodation.

Nondiscrimination Limitation [24 CFR 966.4(l)(5)(vii)(F)]

The HACB's eviction actions must be consistent with fair housing and equal opportunity provisions of 24 CFR 5.105.

13-III.F. TERMINATIONS RELATED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, DATING VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT, OR STALKING

This section addresses the protections against termination of tenancy that the Violence against Women Act of 2013 (VAWA) provides for public housing residents who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. For general VAWA requirements and HACB policies pertaining to notification, documentation, and confidentiality, see section 16-VII of this ACOP, where definitions of key VAWA terms are also located.

VAWA Protections against Termination [24 CFR 5.2005(c)]

VAWA provides that no person may deny assistance, tenancy, or occupancy rights to public housing to a tenant solely on the basis of criminal activity directly relating to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking that is engaged in by a member of the household of the tenant or any guest or other person under the control of the tenant, if the tenant or affiliated individual is the victim or threatened victim of such domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking [FR Notice 8/6/13].

VAWA further provides that incidents of actual or threatened domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking may not be construed either as serious or repeated violations of the lease by the victim or threatened victim of such violence or as good cause for terminating the tenancy or occupancy rights of the victim of such violence [24 CFR 5.2005(c)(1), FR Notice 8/6/13].

Limits on VAWA Protections [24 CFR 5.2005(d) and (e), FR Notice 8/6/13]

While VAWA prohibits a HACB from using domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking as the cause for a termination or eviction action against a public housing tenant who is the victim of the abuse, the protections it provides are not absolute. Specifically:

- VAWA does not limit a HACB's otherwise available authority to terminate assistance to or evict a victim for lease violations not premised on an act of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking providing that the HACB does not subject the victim to a more demanding standard than the standard to which it holds other tenants.
- VAWA does not limit a HACB's authority to terminate the tenancy of any public housing tenant if the HACB can demonstrate an actual and imminent threat to other tenants or those employed at or providing service to the property if that tenant's tenancy is not terminated.

HUD regulations define *actual and imminent threat* to mean words, gestures, actions, or other indicators of a physical threat that (a) is real, (b) would occur within an immediate time frame, and (c) could result in death or serious bodily harm [24 CFR 5.2005(d)(2) and (e)]. In determining whether an individual would pose an actual and imminent threat, the factors to be considered include:

- The duration of the risk
- The nature and severity of the potential harm
- The likelihood that the potential harm will occur
- The length of time before the potential harm would occur [24 CFR 5.2005(e)]

Even when a victim poses an actual and imminent threat, however, HUD regulations authorize a HACB to terminate the victim's assistance "only when there are no other actions that could be taken to reduce or eliminate the threat, including but not limited to transferring the victim to a different unit, barring the perpetrator from the property, contacting law enforcement to increase police presence or develop other plans to keep the property safe, or seeking other legal remedies to prevent the perpetrator from acting on a threat" [24 CFR 5.2005(d)(3)]. Additionally, HUD regulations state that restrictions "predicated on public safety cannot be based on stereotypes, but must be tailored to particularized concerns about individual residents" [24 CFR 5.2005(d)(3)].

HACB Policy

In determining whether a public housing tenant who is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking is an actual and imminent threat to other tenants or those employed at or providing service to a property, the HACB will consider the following, and any other relevant, factors:

Whether the threat is toward an employee or tenant other than the victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking

Whether the threat is a physical danger beyond a speculative threat

Whether the threat is likely to happen within a short period of time

Whether the threat to other tenants or employees can be eliminated in some other way, such as by helping the victim relocate to a confidential location, transferring the victim to another unit, or seeking a legal remedy to prevent the perpetrator from acting on the threat

If the tenant wishes to contest the HACB's determination that he or she is an actual and imminent threat to other tenants or employees, the tenant may do so as part of the grievance hearing or in a court proceeding.

Documentation of Abuse [24 CFR 5.2007]

HACB Policy

When an individual facing termination of tenancy for reasons related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking claims protection under VAWA, the HACB will request in writing that the individual provide documentation supporting the claim in accordance with the policies in section 16-VII.D of this ACOP.

The HACB reserves the right to waive the documentation requirement if it determines that a statement or other corroborating evidence from the individual will suffice. In such cases the HACB will document the waiver in the individual's file.

Terminating or Evicting a Perpetrator of Domestic Violence

Although VAWA provides protection from termination for victims of domestic violence, it does not provide such protection for perpetrators. In fact, VAWA gives the HACB the explicit authority to bifurcate a lease, or remove a household member from a lease, “in order to evict, remove, or terminate assistance to any individual who is a tenant or lawful occupant of the housing and who engages in criminal activity directly relating to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking against an affiliated individual or other individual, without evicting, removing, terminating assistance to, or otherwise penalizing a victim of such criminal activity who is also a tenant or lawful occupant of the housing” [FR Notice 8/6/13]. Moreover, HUD regulations impose on the HACB the obligation to consider lease bifurcation in any circumstances involving domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking [24 CFR 966.4(e)(9)].

Specific lease language affirming the HACB’s authority to bifurcate a lease is not necessary, and the authority supersedes any local, state, or federal law to the contrary. However, if the HACB chooses to exercise its authority to bifurcate a lease, it must follow any procedures prescribed by HUD or by applicable local, state, or federal law for eviction, lease termination, or termination of assistance. This means that the HACB must follow the same rules when terminating or evicting an individual as it would when terminating or evicting an entire family [FR Notice 3/16/07].

HACB Policy

The HACB will bifurcate a family’s lease and terminate the tenancy of a family member if the HACB determines that the family member has committed criminal acts of physical violence against other family members or others. This action will not affect the tenancy or program assistance of the remaining, nonculpable family members.

In making its decision, the HACB will consider all credible evidence, including, but not limited to, a signed certification (form HUD-50066) or other documentation of abuse submitted to the HACB by the victim in accordance with this section and section 16-VII.D. The HACB will also consider the factors in section 13.III.E. Upon such consideration, the HACB may, on a case-by-case basis, choose not to bifurcate the lease and terminate the tenancy of the culpable family member.

If the HACB does bifurcate the lease and terminate the tenancy of the culpable family member, it will do so in accordance with the lease, applicable law, and the policies in this ACOP. If the person removed from the lease was the only tenant eligible to receive assistance, the HACB must provide any remaining tenant a chance to establish eligibility for the unit. If the remaining tenant cannot do so, the HACB must provide the tenant reasonable time to find new housing or to establish eligibility for another housing program covered by VAWA 2013.

PART IV: NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS, EVICTION PROCEDURES AND RECORD KEEPING

13-IV.A. OVERVIEW

HUD regulations specify the requirements for the notice that must be provided prior to lease termination. This part discusses those requirements and the specific requirements that precede and follow termination for certain criminal activities which are addressed in the regulations. This part also discusses specific requirements pertaining to the actual eviction of families and record keeping.

13-IV.B. CONDUCTING CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECKS [24 CFR 5.903(e)(ii) and 24 CFR 960.259]

HUD authorizes HACBs to conduct criminal records checks on public housing residents for lease enforcement and eviction. HACB policy determines when the HACB will conduct such checks.

HACB Policy

The HACB will conduct criminal records checks when it has come to the attention of the HACB, either from local law enforcement or by other means, that an individual has engaged in the destruction of property, engaged in violent activity against another person, or has interfered with the right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises of other residents. Such checks will also include sex offender registration information. In order to obtain such information, all adult household members must sign consent forms for release of criminal conviction and sex offender registration records on an annual basis.

The HACB may not pass along to the tenant the costs of a criminal records check.

13-IV.C. DISCLOSURE OF CRIMINAL RECORDS TO FAMILY [24 CFR 5.903(f), 24 CFR 5.905(d) and 24 CFR 966.4(l)(5)(iv)]

In conducting criminal records checks, if the HACB uses the authority of 24 CFR 5.903 and 5.905 to obtain such information, certain protections must be afforded the tenant before any adverse action is taken. In such cases if the HACB obtains criminal records information from a state or local agency showing that a household member has been convicted of a crime, or is subject to a sex offender registration requirement, relevant to lease enforcement or eviction, the HACB must notify the household of the proposed action and must provide the subject of the record and the tenant a copy of such information, and an opportunity to dispute the accuracy and relevance of the information before an eviction or lease enforcement action is taken.

HACB Policy

In all cases where criminal record or sex offender registration information would result in lease enforcement or eviction, the HACB will notify the household in writing of the proposed adverse action and will provide the subject of the record and the tenant a copy of such information, and an opportunity to dispute the accuracy and relevance of the information before an eviction or lease enforcement action is taken.

The family will be given 10 business days from the date of the HACB notice, to dispute the accuracy and relevance of the information. If the family does not contact the HACB to dispute the information within that 10 business day period, the HACB will proceed with the termination action.

Should the tenant not exercise their right to dispute prior to any adverse action, the tenant still has the right to dispute in the grievance hearing or court trial.

13-IV.D. LEASE TERMINATION NOTICE [24 CFR 966.4(l)(3)]

Form, Delivery, and Content of the Notice

Notices of lease termination must be in writing. The notice must state the specific grounds for termination, the date the termination will take place, the resident's right to reply to the termination notice, and their right to examine HACB documents directly relevant to the termination or eviction. If the HACB does not make the documents available for examination upon request by the tenant, the HACB may not proceed with the eviction [24 CFR 996.4(m)].

When the HACB is required to offer the resident an opportunity for a grievance hearing, the notice must also inform the resident of their right to request a hearing in accordance with the HACB's grievance procedure. In these cases, the tenancy shall not terminate until the time for the tenant to request a grievance hearing has expired and the grievance procedure has been completed.

When the HACB is not required to offer the resident an opportunity for a grievance hearing because HUD has made a due process determination and the lease termination is for criminal activity that threatens health, safety or right to peaceful enjoyment or for drug-related criminal activity, the notice of lease termination must state that the tenant is not entitled to a grievance hearing on the termination. It must specify the judicial eviction procedure to be used by the HACB for eviction of the tenant, and state that HUD has determined that the eviction procedure provides the opportunity for a hearing in court that contains the basic elements of due process as defined in HUD regulations. The notice must also state whether the eviction is for a criminal activity that threatens the health, safety, or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises of other residents or employees of the HACB, or for a drug-related criminal activity on or off the premises.

HACB Policy

The HACB will attempt to deliver notices of lease termination directly to the tenant or an adult member of the household. If such attempt fails, the notice will be sent by first-class mail the same day.

All notices of lease termination will include information about the protection against termination provided by the Violence against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 (VAWA) for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking (see section 16-VII.C). The HACB will also include a copy of the form HUD-50066 and a notice of VAWA rights to accompany the termination notice. Any tenant who claims that the cause for termination involves (a) criminal acts of physical violence against family members or others or (b) incidents of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking of which the tenant or affiliated individual of the tenant is the victim will be given the opportunity to provide documentation in accordance with the policies in sections 13-III.F and 16-VII.D.

Timing of the Notice [24 CFR 966.4(l)(3)(i)]

The HACB must give written notice of lease termination of:

- 14 calendar days in the case of failure to pay rent
- A reasonable period of time considering the seriousness of the situation (but not to exceed 30 calendar days)

If the health or safety of other residents, HACB employees, or persons residing in the immediate vicinity of the premises is threatened

If any member of the household has engaged in any drug-related criminal activity or violent criminal activity

If any member of the household has been convicted of a felony

- 30 calendar days in any other case, except that if a state or local law allows a shorter notice period, such shorter period shall apply

HACB Policy

The HACB will give written notice of 14 calendar days for nonpayment of rent. For all other lease terminations the HACB will give 30 days written notice or, if state or local law allows less than 30 days, such shorter notice will be given.

The Notice to Vacate that may be required under state or local law may be combined with or run concurrently with the notice of lease termination.

Notice of Nonrenewal Due to Community Service Noncompliance [24 CFR 966.4(l)(2)(ii)(D), 24 CFR 960.603(b) and 24 CFR 960.607(b)]

When the HACB finds that a family is in noncompliance with the community service requirement, the tenant and any other noncompliant resident must be notified in writing of this determination. Notices of noncompliance will be issued in accordance with the requirements and policies in Section 11-I.E.

HACB Policy

If after receiving a notice of initial noncompliance the family does not request a grievance hearing, or does not take either corrective action required by the notice within the required timeframe, a termination notice will be issued in accordance with the policies above.

If a family agreed to cure initial noncompliance by signing an agreement, and is still in noncompliance after being provided the 12-month opportunity to cure, the family will be issued a notice of continued noncompliance. The notice of continued noncompliance will be sent in accordance with the policies in Section 11-I.E. and will also serve as the notice of termination of tenancy.

Notice of Termination Based on Citizenship Status [24 CFR 5.514 (c) and (d)]

In cases where termination of tenancy is based on citizenship status, HUD requires the notice of termination to contain additional information. In addition to advising the family of the reasons their assistance is being terminated, the notice must also advise the family of any of the following that apply: the family's eligibility for proration of assistance, the criteria and procedures for obtaining relief under the provisions for preservation of families, the family's right to request an appeal to the USCIS of the results of secondary verification of immigration status and to submit additional documentation or a written explanation in support of the appeal, and the family's right to request an informal hearing with the HACB either upon completion of the USCIS appeal or in lieu of the USCIS appeal. Please see Chapter 14 for the HACB's informal hearing procedures.

13-IV.E. EVICTION [24 CFR 966.4(l)(4) and 966.4(m)]

Eviction notice means a notice to vacate, or a complaint or other initial pleading used under state or local law to commence an eviction action. The HACB may only evict the tenant from the unit by instituting a court action, unless the law of the jurisdiction permits eviction by administrative action, after a due process administrative hearing, and without a court determination of the rights and liabilities of the parties.

HACB Policy

When a family does not vacate the unit after receipt of a termination notice, by the deadline given in the notice, the HACB will follow state and local landlord-tenant law in filing an eviction action with the local court that has jurisdiction in such cases.

If the eviction action is finalized in court and the family remains in occupancy beyond the deadline to vacate given by the court, the HACB will seek the assistance of the court to remove the family from the premises as per state and local law.

The HACB may not proceed with an eviction action if the HACB has not made available the documents to be used in the case against the family, and has not afforded the family the opportunity to examine and copy such documents in accordance with the provisions of 24 CFR 966.4(l)(3) and (m).

13-IV.F. NOTIFICATION TO POST OFFICE [24CFR 966.4(l)(5)(iii)(B)]

When the HACB evicts an individual or family for criminal activity, including drug-related criminal activity, the HACB must notify the local post office serving the dwelling unit that the individual or family is no longer residing in the unit.

13-IV.G. RECORD KEEPING

For more information concerning general record keeping, see Chapter 16.

HACB Policy

A written record of every termination and/or eviction will be maintained by the HACB at the development where the family was residing, and will contain the following information:

Name of resident, number and identification of unit occupied

Date of the notice of lease termination and any other notices required by state or local law; these notices may be on the same form and will run concurrently

Specific reason(s) for the notices, citing the lease section or provision that was violated, and other facts pertinent to the issuing of the notices described in detail (other than any criminal history reports obtained solely through the authorization provided in 24 CFR 5.903 and 5.905)

Date and method of notifying the resident

Summaries of any conferences held with the resident including dates, names of conference participants, and conclusions