

**SPOKANE HOUSING AUTHORITY**  
**CORONAVIRUS BACK TO WORK PLAN**  
**MAY 2020**

The Spokane Housing Authority (SHA) is monitoring the current viral outbreak formally known as the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). This is a constantly changing situation, we are taking this very seriously and continue to develop new responses and plans. There are many sources of factual information concerning the virus and can be found at these websites:

- Center for Disease Control: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- Washington State Department of Health: [www.doh.wa.gov](http://www.doh.wa.gov)
- The World Health Organization: [www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus](http://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus)
- Spokane Regional Health District: [www.srhd.org](http://www.srhd.org)

It is human nature during times like this to want to be overly cautious and react in a manner we feel is justified to protect ourselves, our families, and communities. We should be cautious and take prudent measures to protect ourselves, our residents, and those we work with every day. This plan provides guidance as to how the SHA can continue our work while be cautious and respectful of this serious health issue facing our community. Our goal will be to limit the exposure of the virus to our employees and residents and to prevent the further spread of the virus.

**Effective May 4, 2020 all Spokane Housing Authority staff will return to their regularly scheduled hours; however, Spokane Housing Authority will continue to enforce workplace social distancing, sanitation, and sick employee practices as required under the Governor’s Proclamation: Stay Home – Stay Healthy Order.**

**The Spokane Housing Authority’s main office at 55 W. Mission and onsite property offices will continue to be closed to the public until Governor Inslee lifts the Stay Home – Stay Healthy Order. Business will continue to be conducted via phone and email following the guidelines set below.**

**1. Chain of Command**

In the event the Executive Director is incapacitated or unavailable to perform their duties, the CFO/Deputy Director is hereby designated to act in their capacity during their absence. Should the CFO/Deputy Director be unable to perform these duties, the Controller is hereby designated to serve in this capacity. The person designated to act in the capacity during the absence of the Executive Director shall immediately contact the Chair and or Vice-Chair of the Board of Commissioners to inform them of the circumstances necessitating this change and maintain communication with the Board.

**2. Communication**

The best efforts to combat a serious health issue like COVID-19 is to communicate clearly and effectively with employees, residents, government officials, vendors and the public. Accurate and timely communication will be critical in order to provide a proactive response rather than reactive. Use of multiple forms of communication will be important to spread the message as widely as possible to those who will rely on us now and in the future. This will include letters, emails, the SHA website and Facebook page, flyers, and when possible, text messaging.

## **A. Employees**

Communication with employees will be predominately through email, with the use of text messages if the situation call for immediate notification. In the event there are changes in policies and procedures or there are work schedule changes, this information shall be done in writing to remove any confusion or to limit misinterpretations.

Employees are advised to monitor their health and report any symptoms to the health care provider and local public health officials as necessary. If an employee believes they may have been exposed or are experiencing symptoms, they are asked to stay home and monitor their situation while keeping SHA informed of their status. SHA is ensuring that all employees are paid regular wages while we manage through this epidemic in accordance with the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA). The FFCRA includes Emergency Paid Sick Leave, and Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion effective April 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020. Employees may utilize PTO for leave that may not be covered under the FFCRA.

## **B. Residents/Participants**

Communication with our over 7000 resident and participant households will be in the form of letters, emails, telephone, website, Facebook page, flyers and our new virtual lobby. It is important to provide our residents and participants with helpful information that is reliable and effective.

Customer Service Specialists will be available Monday through Thursday from 8:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. to assist our Housing Choice Voucher participants and landlords by email at [customerservice@spokanehousing.org](mailto:customerservice@spokanehousing.org), by telephone at (509) 328-2953, or by using our Virtual Lobby found on our webpage at [www.spokanehousing.org](http://www.spokanehousing.org). The Customer Service Specialists will dedicate their time to returning all incoming communications in the order that they are received. SHA will be accepting and processing all mail received at 55 W. Mission Avenue, Spokane, WA 99201. A drop box is located outside the main SHA administrative office at the above address.

Property Supervisors will communicate with our residents by phone, email, and posting of written notifications. Residents may contact their property supervisors by email or phone. A drop box is also located at each property leasing office. All property contact information is listed on our website at [spokanehousing.org](http://spokanehousing.org). For emergencies dealing with fire or police services, residents shall continue to use 911 services.

SHA will provide basic information about the virus to our residents and participants on how to protect themselves, prevent the viruses spread and where they can find more Information. They are encouraged to contact health officials if they believe they have contracted the virus or are showing signs of the symptoms. Residents are asked to self-quarantine themselves to protect their neighbors and others for as long as may be required due to governmental action. We ask all of our residents and participants to continue to live their lives in a manner as normal as possible and to stay alert as the conditions change. We must all be prepared to respond in an appropriate manner and not panic or act in a frenzied manner that will not protect ourselves or others.

### **C. Partners, Stakeholders, and Vendors**

For our partners who work with us to provide goods and services, we will keep them informed via emails and/or phone calls of any changes to our business environment and operations. If buildings or neighborhoods are quarantined, we will make them aware of the situation so that they may determine if they can or will provide services if needed. Emergency work items requiring immediate attention in an area of concern will be disclosed and a plan to deal with the emergency will be developed in a timely fashion subject to the nature of the emergency.

### **D. Government Officials**

SHA will work closely with state and local officials to monitor the situation and report any known instances of the virus that have affected our staff or residents. We will cooperate fully with any request for information as health officials determine the status of the virus in our communities. If and when government decrees are issued, we will work to communicate these directives to our residents and staff. The Executive Director or his/her designee of the SHA shall be the point of contact for all communication with public officials.

## **3. Federal and State Eviction Moratoriums**

SHA will comply with all current Federal and State Eviction Moratoriums.

On March 27, 2020, the president signed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) in law which provides important, immediate protections for tenants and homeowners. Evictions for non-payment of rent, and charges/fees for nonpayment of rent, have been temporarily suspended. This applies to all HUD-assisted participants from March 27, 2020 to July 24, 2020. For more information on the Federal CARES Act Eviction Moratorium, visit our website at [spokanehousing.org](http://spokanehousing.org) for a posted flyer provided by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development "Addressing Tenant Concerns Regarding Rent and the Temporary Suspension of Evictions for Nonpayment of Rent." This flyer will also be posted at SHA's main office entrance, and at all property offices.

On March 18, 2020, Governor Jay Inslee of the State of Washington issued Proclamation 20-19 "Evictions" and later further expanded it prohibiting statewide evictions until June 4, 2020. The Order prevents landlords from evicting in all situations that fall within the Landlord Tenant Act and additionally prohibits: enforcement of agreements to vacate; assessing or threatening to assess late fees or other charges for non-payment of rent; increasing rents or deposits for residential and commercial units; and prohibits landlords from treating unpaid rent and charges as an enforceable debt, unless the landlord demonstrates evidence that the resident was offered, and refused or failed to comply with a reasonable repayment plan that was based on the individual financial, health, or other circumstances of that resident. For more information on Proclamation 20-19, visit [www.governor.wa.gov](http://www.governor.wa.gov).

All rent payments delayed through this moratorium will still be owed, however a reasonable repayment plan to enforce any collection of that debt will be offered. SHA shall encourage all residents and participants to pay their portion of rent owing if they are financially able to do so. SHA will not initiate a new eviction action for nonpayment of rent and will not charge any late fees, or accrue charges/fees. SHA will offer and encourage our residents to negotiate future repayment options for any unpaid rent based upon their individual

financial, health or other circumstances. Housing Choice Voucher participants will not be terminated from assistance for non-payment of rent and are encouraged to negotiate directly with their landlord to determine possible repayment options. SHA will not process any requested increases to rent until the State Eviction Proclamation expires. Termination of assistance or eviction may still be made for drug abuse, criminal activity, lease violations and fraud. SHA will encourage tenants who feel they are being wrongfully evicted to, contact their local legal aid organization.

#### **4. Incident Response**

In the event an employee or resident notifies SHA that they are positive with COVID-19, proper reporting and notification will occur, including contact with public health officials, coordinating our response with them and ensuring that our efforts do not duplicate or in any way impede in their ability to respond to the incident. The Safety Officer and Human Resource Manager will work with public officials, will help to determine the source of the virus, take steps to ensure that the spread of the virus is halted or limited and make recommendations on how to proceed with our daily operations. The Safety Officer and Human Resource Manager shall familiarize themselves with the current issues, identify resources to assist and recommend next steps. The Executive Director shall keep the Board of Commissioners informed at all times.

#### **5. Prevention Efforts**

SHA will make all reasonable efforts to control the spread of the virus through commonly known personal practices and work practices in accordance with the Governor's Proclamation: Stay Home – Stay Healthy Order. Continual information will be communicated to staff and residents about coughing/sneezing etiquette, washing of hands, and staying home if you are sick. As a part of our normal janitorial services, we will make additional efforts to sanitize those areas frequented by staff and residents such as the lobbies, bathrooms, waiting room, common areas, meeting spaces and elevators. An emphasis will be made on those areas which come into frequent contact with hands. We will utilize appropriate disinfectants as identified by health officials.

The success of any prevention effort must rely upon the good judgement of individuals in our sphere of living. If an individual is sick, has symptoms or is known to have the virus, they must stay home and prevent the spread to others. Employees will be asked to stay at home, residents will be asked to remain in their apartments and seek assistance from family members or others to provide for their basic necessities. We must all follow the instructions provided by our Federal, State and Local government authorities regardless of any inconveniences it may cause in our lives.

#### **6. Operational Protocols**

##### **A. Receiving Paperwork and Mail**

With precaution in mind, all documents received by SHA through mail or drop box will sit overnight before being opened and dispersed to staff.

##### **B. General Employees**

SHA will implement social distancing expectations for all staff. Staff are to follow these guidelines at all times while in the office or at SHA properties. Social distancing expectations are as follows:

- Stay 6 feet away from others at all times.

- Conduct daily business as much as possible by phone, email or website. If meetings in-person must occur, limit the meeting to a maximum of 9 people in space that allows for a minimum distancing of 6 feet.
- Wear a mask or cloth face covering when in common areas outside of individual offices or cubicles.
- Avoid physical contact with others, such as handshaking.
- Wash hands with soap and water regularly for 20 seconds.
- Utilize hand sanitizers located throughout the office space regularly.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces or surfaces that are dirty in work areas daily. This includes phones, mice, keyboards, and chair arms.
- Only one staff member may be in the lunch room, work room, or mail area at one time. All lunches/breaks should to be taken at desks/cubicles or outside of the office. Disinfectant and hand wipes should be used to wipe refrigerator and microwave handles regularly after use.
- Do not congregate in hallways or common areas.
- Do not pass others in the hallways. Move to the side and await your turn.

Many times, with the best of intentions, employees report to work even though they feel ill. The FFCRA and PTO is provided to compensate employees who are unable to work due to illness. Employees who report to work ill will be sent home in accordance with the Governor's Proclamation: Stay Home – Stay Healthy Order. Until other government direction is provided, negative accruals of PTO will be allowed and will be earned back over time.

For the safety and health of employees and office visitors, all employees shall cooperate in taking steps to reduce the transmission of communicable diseases in the workplace. It is critical that employees ***do not report to work*** while they are experiencing one or more of the following:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Fever over 100.0 degrees F
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- New loss of taste or smell

The above list is not all inclusive; however, based on CDC guidelines as of 4/29/2020.

SHA may send employees home if they exhibit the above symptoms. Currently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that employees remain at home until:

- No fever (under 100.0 degrees F) for at least 72 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications  
*AND*
- Other symptoms have improved (shortness of breath, coughing)  
*AND*

- At least 7 days have passed since the first symptoms appeared

SHA holds the right to obtain a temperature from staff without notice, including entrance into any SHA workplace.

### **C. Property Management**

Property leasing offices and all community rooms with the exception of laundry and mail areas will be closed to the public with the exception of scheduled appointments for showing units or leasing. Masks will be required to be worn at all times while outside of the office or when interacting with residents or co-workers.

Leasing paperwork will be sent electronically or by mail followed up with phone conversations to review the lease and other pertinent documents. When feasible, showing of units to perspective residents will be primarily conducted by taking pictures and sending them electronically.

Move in inspections will be conducted and completed by staff before move in. The resident will not be present during this move-in; however, they will be given a copy of the completed inspection with clear instructions providing 48 hours to return the inspection form to the office with any additional noted condition remarks they find at move in. Move out inspections will be completed by staff with appropriate PPE and pictures taken after the resident returns keys. This inspection will not include the resident. During the continued stay-at-home order, security deposits shall be returned in accordance with state law. Lease enforcement will continue to the extent complaints can be followed up via emails, or phone calls.

Property Management staff will complete annual recertification's by mail and conduct phone appointments when necessary. Residents will be instructed to complete the certification paperwork and return by mail or place in the property drop box. Property staff will follow up if more information is needed.

Maintenance will continue with only common area cleaning, emergency work orders, and unit turns. SHA will use extreme caution when required to perform work in common areas and individual units. If residents are infected by the virus, additional measures will be taken to protect maintenance staff from exposure. This includes use of proper protective clothing, respirators, gloves, face masks, and other protective gear as needed. Residents will be asked to call into our emergency call line at (509) 458-7830 to report any issues requiring immediate attention (such as a water leak or dangerous electrical malfunction). If it does not require immediate attention, a work order will be created and the item will be addressed as soon as staff is able.

Increased attention will be made to cleaning and disinfecting common areas with heavy pedestrian traffic and surfaces which come into frequent contact of humans. Doors, handrails, elevator buttons, and intercom panels for example will be sanitized at least twice per day, subject to staffing availability. Staff offices will be maintained by office staff.

Maintenance shall take stock of inventory at least bi-weekly to ensure adequate supplies are in place should there be a disruption of the supply chain. This should include adequate cleaning supplies as well as any material or equipment necessary for the safe operation of our facilities.

#### **D. Housing Choice Voucher**

Spokane Housing Authority will prioritize voucher issuance and the processing of lease ups for all new program participants to the fullest extent possible. However, because of social distancing requirements, and the availability of waivers issued by HUD to adjust normal operations, the need to conduct oral intake briefings by alternative methods such as by phone, zoom, skype, etc., may be utilized if needed. For all active participants, the SHA will give priority to all incoming notifications regarding loss of income and will process all other paperwork and notifications as soon as staff are able. Elective moves by voucher participants will also be processed with as much expediency as possible, however, the SHA will recommend that those who already have adequate housing at this time give strong consideration to remaining in place while current Federal and State restrictions regarding the COVID-19 crisis are in effect.

Initial Housing Quality Inspections of unoccupied units will continue as they have in the past without restrictions. Initial inspections of occupied units will also continue, but will be subject to the verification that proper social distancing can be maintained for the duration of the inspection process. SHA will delay all ongoing biennial inspections of active units until full operations are restored; however, these delayed inspections will be completed no later than 10/31/2020. All emergency and special inspections will be addressed on a case by case basis and will be conducted as normal when possible, but if it is determined that the inspection cannot be conducted in a safe and timely manner, then an alternative method of inspection may be utilized to resolve the deficiencies in question.

SHA is strongly committed to restoring its normal operations as quickly as possible and measures are currently in place to ensure that staff are able to work in an environment that maintains social distancing and allows staff to feel safe. It is important to note however, that, while we are hopeful that we can soon return to a sense of normalcy regarding productivity, all of the information provided above is subject to change should further federal, state, or local actions or instructions be issued which affects the operations of the housing authority.

#### **E. Financial and Information Technology**

The Spokane Housing Authority will maintain full operational financial and Information Technology capabilities remotely. SHA will continue to receive and make payments for goods and services provided and or delivered.

Rent payments may be made electronically using our Rent Track service at [www.RentTrack.com/SHA](http://www.RentTrack.com/SHA) , placed in drop boxes located at each of our properties or at the drop box located at the main administrative office. All residents will be encouraged to sign up for Rent Track and to keep SHA informed of any change in their circumstances.

Payments to our vendors will be processed weekly every Monday. Every effort will be made to reach out to vendors and keep them informed of when payments can be expected if we are unable to process them when they are due for any reason. Vendors interested in signing up for direct deposit should email [accountspayable@spokanehousing.org](mailto:accountspayable@spokanehousing.org).

SHA does not expect any disruption to its Federal funding of the Housing Choice Voucher Program. Therefore, payments to landlords will be processed timely on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of every month. SHA will encourage all landlords to opt for direct deposit payments for the quickest receipt of funds. Priority will also be given to those landlords signed up for direct deposit. Landlords interested in signing up for direct deposit utilizing our landlord portal should visit our website at [www.spokanehousing.org](http://www.spokanehousing.org). Payments by check may be delayed depending on social distancing requirements in place for staff.

If SHA's ability to process payments to its landlords and vendors is impeded due to government action or staffing availability, it is understood that all accrued payments will be made upon the earliest possible ability to process payment. SHA is requesting patience and understanding during this difficult time.

**F. Telework**

Finance, Information Technology & Administrative staff will be allowed to work from home until Governor Inslee's Stay Home – Stay Healthy Order is lifted.

**G. Travel & Training**

Until further notice only webinar and online based training will be allowed except internal training, which will follow social distancing measures outlined above in *6.B. General Employees*.

**H. Social Gatherings**

All SHA social functions shall be suspended or canceled until further notice. This includes all resident meetings and social activities on SHA properties. It is our intent to cooperate with containment efforts and not expose our residents. In-person meetings that must occur will follow guidelines set above under *6.B. General Employees* for expected social distancing measures.