

EMERGENCY TRANSFER PLAN FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, DATING VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT, AND STALKING

MENARD COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY

MCHA is concerned about the safety of its tenants, and such concern extends to tenants who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. In accordance with the Violence Against Women Act of 1994, as amended (“VAWA”), MCHA allows any tenant who is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking to request an emergency transfer from the tenant’s current unit to another unit. VAWA protections are not limited to women and are available regardless of age or actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, sex, or marital status. Victims cannot be discriminated against on the basis of any protected characteristic, including race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including perceived or actual sexual orientation or gender identity), familial status, disability, or age. HUD-assisted and HUD-insured housing must also be made available to all otherwise eligible individuals and families regardless of age, or actual or perceived gender identity, sexual orientation, or marital status.

This plan identifies tenants who are eligible for an emergency transfer, the documentation needed to request an emergency transfer, confidentiality protections, how an emergency transfer may occur, and guidance regarding safety and security. The plan is based on Federal regulations at 24 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 5, subpart L, related program regulations, and the model emergency transfer plan published by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD is the Federal agency that oversees that the Housing Choice Voucher Program is in compliance with VAWA.

Definitions

- **External emergency transfer** refers to an emergency relocation of a tenant to another unit where the tenant would be categorized as a new applicant; that is, the tenant must undergo an application process in order to reside in the new unit.
- **Internal emergency transfer** refers to an emergency relocation of a tenant to another unit where the tenant would not be categorized as a new applicant; that is, the tenant may reside in the new unit without having to undergo an application process.
- **Safe unit** refers to a unit that the victim of VAWA violence/abuse believes is safe.
- **VAWA violence/abuse** means an incident or incidents of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, as those terms are defined in 24 CFR 5.2003 and “Certification of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, or Stalking” (Form HUD-5382).

Eligibility for Emergency Transfers

A tenant may seek an emergency transfer to another unit if they or their household member is a victim of VAWA violence/abuse, as outlined in the “Notice of Occupancy Rights Under the Violence Against Women Act,” Form HUD-5380. This emergency transfer plan provides further information on emergency transfers, and MCHA must provide a copy if requested. MCHA may ask for submission of a written request for an emergency transfer, such as form HUD-5383, to certify eligibility for the emergency transfer.

A Tenant is eligible for an emergency transfer if:

1. The tenant (or their household member) is a victim of VAWA violence/abuse;

2. The tenant expressly requests the emergency transfer; **AND**
3. **EITHER**
 - a. The tenant reasonably believes that there is a threat of imminent harm from further violence, including trauma, if they or (their household member) stays in the same dwelling unit; **OR**
 - b. If the tenant (or their household member) is a victim of sexual assault, either the tenant reasonably believes that there is a threat of imminent harm from further violence, including trauma, if the tenant (or their household member) were to stay in the unit, or the sexual assault occurred on the premises and the tenant requested an emergency transfer within 90 days (including holidays and weekend days) of when that assault occurred.

MCHA, in response to an emergency transfer request, should not evaluate whether the tenant is in good standing as part of the assessment or provision of an emergency transfer. Whether or not a tenant is in good standing does not impact their ability to request an emergency transfer under VAWA.

Emergency Transfer Policies

Internal transfers when a safe unit is immediately available:

For those residents in the project based development who would need to transfer to an alternate unit in the development, coordination will occur between MCHA and the property management to ensure the available unit is suitable for the needs of the VAWA request. Transfer request will be approved or denied within 5 business days, and if approved would be expected to be completed within 30 days. VAWA requestor would take priority above other transfer requests.

Internal transfers when a safe unit is not immediately available:

For those residents in the project based development who would need to transfer to an alternate unit in the development, should a unit not be immediately available, MCHA will issue the VAWA requester a portable Housing Choice Voucher. Transfer request will be approved or denied within 5 business days, and if approved would be expected to be completed within 30 days. VAWA requestor would take priority above other portability requests.

External transfers:

For those residents in either a project based development or the traditional Housing Choice Voucher program, requests will be approved or denied within 5 business days. If approved, the requestor will be issued a new tenant based voucher and ported to the jurisdiction of preference for the requestor.

VAWA provisions do not supersede eligibility or other occupancy requirements that may apply under a covered housing program. **MCHA** may be unable to transfer a tenant to a particular unit if the tenant cannot establish eligibility for that unit.

Emergency Transfer Request Documentation

To request an emergency transfer, the tenant shall notify Danielle Gerndt at 217-717-2433 or dgerndt@meanrdcha.org. If **MCHA** does not already have documentation of the occurrence of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, **MCHA** may ask for this documentation in accordance with 24 CFR 5.2007 and is required to be provided within 14 business days. Unless **MCHA** receives documentation that contains conflicting information, as described in 24 CFR 5.2007(b)(2), **MCHA** cannot require third-party documentation to determine status as a VAWA victim for emergency transfer eligibility. **MCHA** will provide reasonable accommodations to this policy for individuals with disabilities.

The tenant's request for VAWA must be in writing. Written request for an emergency transfer must include either:

1. A statement expressing that the tenant reasonably believes that there is a threat of imminent harm from further violence, including trauma, if the tenant (or household member) stays in the same dwelling unit; OR
2. In the case of a tenant (or household member) who is a victim of sexual assault, **either** a statement that the tenant reasonably believes there is a threat of imminent harm from further violence or trauma if the tenant (or household member stays in the same dwelling unit), **or** a statement that the sexual assault occurred on the premises and the tenant requested an emergency transfer within 90 days (including holidays and weekend days) of when the assault occurred.

Form HUD-5383 may be used for making a written request for an emergency transfer.

Priority for Transfers

Tenants who qualify for an emergency transfer under VAWA will be given the following priority over other categories of tenants seeking transfers and individuals seeking placement on waiting lists. The VAWA requestor will be issued the next available unit in a PBV development, or the next available voucher for the HCV program.

Confidentiality

If a tenant inquires about or requests any VAWA protections or represents that they or a household member are a victim of VAWA violence/abuse entitled to VAWA protections, **MCHA** must keep any information they provide concerning the VAWA violence/abuse, their request for an emergency transfer, and their or a household member's status as a victim strictly confidential. This information should be securely and separately kept from tenant files. All the information provided by or on behalf of the tenant to support an emergency transfer request, including information on the Certification Form (HUD-5382) and the Emergency Transfer Request Form (HUD-5383) (collectively referred to as "Confidential Information") may only be accessed by **MCHA** employees or contractors if explicitly authorized by **MCHA** for reasons that specifically call for those individuals to have access to that information under applicable Federal, State, or local law.

Confidential information must not be entered into any shared database or disclosed to any other entity or individual, except if:

- Written permission by the victim in a time-limited release;
- Required for use in an eviction proceeding or hearing regarding termination of assistance; or
- Otherwise required by applicable law.

In addition, HUD's VAWA regulations require emergency transfer plans to provide strict confidentiality measures to ensure that the location of the victim's dwelling unit is never disclosed to a person who committed or threatened to commit the VAWA violence/abuse. Accordingly, **MCHA** will not disclose information related to the VAWA request, new address, or any information regarding the status of the requestor in our program unless given the expresses written consent of the requestor.

Emergency Transfer Procedure

MCHA cannot specify how long it will take from the time a transfer request is approved until the tenant can be placed in a new, safe unit. **MCHA** will, however, act as quickly as possible to assist a tenant who qualifies for an emergency transfer. If **MCHA** identifies an available unit and the tenant believes that unit would not be safe, the tenant may request a transfer to a different unit. **MCHA** may

be unable to transfer a tenant and their household to a particular unit if the tenant and their household has not established or cannot establish eligibility for that unit.

If **MCHA** does not have any safe and available units for which the tenant is eligible, **MCHA** will assist the tenant in identifying other covered housing providers who may have safe and available units to which the tenant could move. At the tenant's request, **MCHA** will also assist the tenant in contacting the local organizations offering assistance to victims of VAWA violence/abuse that are attached to this plan.

Making the Emergency Transfer Plan Available

The MCHA emergency transfer plan is available upon request to any or prospective program participants, as well as on our website at menardcha.org. This will be made available in alternate formats to those with a disability requesting a reasonable accommodation, and available to be requested in additional languages if needed.

Safety and Security of Tenants

When **MCHA** receives any inquiry or request regarding an emergency transfer, **MCHA** will encourage the person making the inquiry or request to take all reasonable precautions to be safe, including seeking guidance and assistance from a victim service provider. However, tenants are not required to receive guidance or assistance from a victim service provider.

For additional information on VAWA and to find help in your area, visit <https://www.hud.gov/vawa>.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to range from four to eight hours per each covered housing provider's response, depending on the covered housing program. This includes the time to develop program and project-specific emergency transfer policies and develop contacts with local service providers. Comments concerning the accuracy of this burden estimate and any suggestions for reducing this burden can be sent to the Reports Management Officer, QDAM, Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 7th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20410. This is a model plan and covered housing providers in programs covered by VAWA may, at their discretion, use it to develop their own emergency transfer plans, as required under 24 CFR 5.2005(e). While HUD does not intend to collect emergency transfer plans, HUD may access these plans to ensure compliance with the regulations. A Federal agency may not collect this information, and you are not required to complete this form, unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget control number.