

**NOTICE TO HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER PROGRAM
APPLICANTS AND PARTICIPANTS
REGARDING THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT (VAWA)**

This notice was adapted from a notice prepared by the National Housing Law Project.

A federal law that went into effect in 2013 protects individuals who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. The name of the law is the Violence Against Women Act, or “VAWA”. This notice explains your rights under VAWA.

Protections for Victims

If you are eligible for a Housing Choice Voucher, the housing authority cannot deny you rent assistance solely because you are a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

If you are the victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, you cannot be terminated from the Housing Choice Voucher program or evicted based on acts or threats of violence committed against you. Also, criminal acts directly related to the domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking that are caused by a member of your household or a guest cannot be the reason for evicting you or terminating your rent assistance if you were the victim of the abuse.

Reasons You Can Be Evicted

You can be evicted and your rent assistance can be terminated if the housing authority or your landlord can show there is an *actual* and *imminent* (immediate) threat to other tenants or employees at the property if you remain in your housing. Also, you can be evicted and your rent assistance can be terminated for serious or repeated lease violations that are not related to the domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking committed against you. The housing authority and your landlord cannot hold you to a more demanding set of rules than it applies to tenants who are not victims.

Removing the Abuser from the Household

Your landlord may split the lease to evict a tenant who has committed criminal acts of violence against family members or others, while allowing the victim and other household members to stay in the assisted unit. Also, the housing authority can terminate the abuser’s rent assistance while allowing you to continue to receive assistance. If the landlord or housing authority chooses to remove the abuser, it may not take away the remaining tenants’ rights to the unit or otherwise punish the remaining tenants. In removing the abuser from the household, your landlord must follow federal, state, and local eviction procedures.

Moving to Protect Your Safety

The housing authority may permit you to move and still keep your rent assistance, even if your current lease has not yet expired. The housing authority may require that you be current on your rent or other obligations in the Housing Choice Voucher program. The housing authority may ask you to provide proof that you are moving because of incidences of abuse.

Proving That You Are a Victim of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, or Stalking

The housing authority and your landlord can ask you to prove or “certify” that you are a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking. The housing authority or your landlord must give you at least 14 business days (i.e., Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays do not count) to provide this proof. The housing authority and your landlord are free to extend the deadline. There are three ways you can prove that you are a victim:

- Complete the certification form given to you by the housing authority or your landlord. The form will ask for your name, the name of your abuser, the abuser’s relationship to you, the date, time, and location of the incident of violence, and a description of the violence. You are only required to provide the name of the abuser if it is safe to provide and you know their name.
- Provide a statement from a victim service provider, attorney, medical professional, or mental health professional who has helped you address incidents of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. The professional must attest under penalty of perjury that he or she believes that the incident of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking is grounds for protection under 24 Code of

Federal Regulations (CFR) § 5.2005 or 24 CFR § 5.2009. Both you and the professional must sign the statement.

- Provide a police or court record, such as a protective order, or a record of an administrative agency.

If you fail to provide one of these documents within the required time, the landlord may evict you and the housing authority may terminate your rent assistance.

Confidentiality

The housing authority and your landlord must keep confidential any information you provide about the violence against you, unless:

- You give written permission to the housing authority or your landlord to release the information.
- Your landlord needs to use the information in an eviction proceeding, such as to evict your abuser.
- A law requires the housing authority or your landlord to release the information.

If release of the information would put your safety at risk, you should inform the housing authority and your landlord.

VAWA and Other Laws

VAWA does not limit the housing authority's or your landlord's duty to honor court orders about access to or control of the property. This includes orders issued to protect a victim and orders dividing property among household members in cases where a family breaks up.

VAWA does not replace any federal, state, or local law that provides greater protection for victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

For Additional Information

If you have any questions regarding VAWA, or to request a HUD-50066 Certification form, please contact your assigned Rent Assistance Service Coordinator at 503-802-8333.

For help and advice on escaping an abusive relationship, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE(7233) or 1-800-787-3224(TTY) or Portland Women's Crisis Line: 503-235-5333 or 1-888-235-5333.

Definitions

For purposes of determining whether an applicant or participant may be covered by VAWA, the following list of definitions applies:

Domestic Violence: VAWA defines domestic violence to include felony or misdemeanor crimes of violence committed by any of the following:

- A current or former spouse of the victim
- A person with whom the victim shares a child in common
- A person who is cohabitating with or has cohabitated with the victim as a spouse
- A person similarly situated to a spouse of the victim under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction receiving grant monies
- Any other person against an adult or youth victim who is protected from that person's acts under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction

Dating Violence: VAWA defines dating violence as violence committed by a person (1) who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim AND (2) where the existence of such a relationship shall be determined based on a consideration of the following factors:

- The length of the relationship
- The type of relationship
- The frequency of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship

Sexual Assault: VAWA defines sexual assault as "any nonconsensual sexual act proscribed by Federal, tribal, or State law, including when the victim lacks capacity to consent" (42 U.S.C. 13925(a)).

Stalking: VAWA defines stalking as (A)(i) to follow, pursue, or repeatedly commit acts with the intent to kill, injure, harass, or intimidate another person OR (ii) to place under surveillance with the intent to kill, injure, harass, or intimidate another person AND (B) in the course of, or as a result of, such following, pursuit, surveillance, or repeatedly committed acts, to place a person in reasonable fear of the death of, or serious bodily injury to, or to cause substantial emotional harm to (i) that person, (ii) a member of the immediate family of that person, or (iii) the spouse or intimate partner of that person.