

A Newsletter for Housing Owners

METRO HRA

Housing & Redevelopment Authority

VIEWS

WINTER 2019



Tenant and landlord: MARJORIE AND MIKE HAVE A CONNECTION

Mike Pikovsky takes a lot of pride in the homes he owns as rental properties, making sure they are well-kept, and utilities are in good shape.

Among his tenants are families who rely on federal rent assistance in the form of Housing Choice (Section 8) Vouchers for a place to live and call home.

“I respect my tenants and I want my efforts and properties to be respected in return,” said Mike. That’s why he’s so pleased with his recent experience with Marjorie, who needs the federal housing assistance to help make ends meet.



Marjorie’s story

Marjorie is disabled. She lives with and takes care of five grandchildren.

“I’m just very grateful for the program, but also for Mike,” said Marjorie. “I can’t say enough about him. He’s a wonderful landlord and person. He takes care of things and is so understanding.

“I hugged Mike when he said we could live here,” said Marjorie. “He has made his house our home. The kids like it here. I feel supported, so I can focus on taking care of the grandchildren and not have to worry all the time about where we’re going to stay.

Mike appreciates the partnerships that make his house a home

“She writes me notes a lot,” said Mike, who says Marjorie is “appreciative and considerate.”

Mike told a story of a time Marjorie alerted him to a problem quickly. “She let me know right away,” he said. “I appreciated knowing about it and the connection we have.”

Mike will admit that not all of his rental experiences have gone so smoothly. He says it helps to have a direct link with the agency that issued Marjorie’s voucher;

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JOIN US AT THE NEXT LANDLORD MEETING

Learn about the Metro HRA and our programs.

We invite new owners or anyone that wants a refresher on working with our programs.

Learn more at www.metrohra.org



FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Metropolitan Council Housing and Redevelopment Authority (Metro HRA) is a provider of rent assistance programs in the Twin Cities, helping low-income families afford private market rental housing. Metro HRA programs house 19,000 people and 9,500 children each night, families who may not otherwise have a place to call home. The largest program operated by the Metro HRA is the Housing Choice Voucher program (Section 8). The Metro HRA also operates several smaller programs providing rent assistance to specialized populations such as disabled or homeless individuals, veterans or families working towards self-sufficiency.



Terri Smith

Stable housing plays a critical role in improving outcomes for low-income families, including better educational opportunities, healthier children and stronger economic foundations. Housing location often determines who has access to safe neighborhoods, public transportation, grocery stores that sell fresh produce, jobs that pay living wages and safe parks.

Program success is dependent on the voluntary participation of private landlords. The Metro HRA has 1,800 participating landlords that are making a difference in the lives of low-income families in the Twin Cities region. Providing quality public service to landlords and tenants is the cornerstone of what we do as we carry out our mission. The Metro HRA strives to provide exceptional public service including:

- On-time rent payments
- Available ready renters
- Efficient inspection processes
- Simple paperwork
- Online landlord and tenant systems
- Partnerships for lease enforcement

Thank you to all participating landlords for helping us serve our region's residents with access to safe, affordable housing.

In partnership,

Terri Smith
Director

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namely, Abdiaziz Ibrahim at the Metropolitan Council's Metro HRA.

"He's the guy I call when I have issues or concerns about the program," said Mike. "I call him directly and he calls me back. I don't get stuck in some automated voice messaging system. We communicate directly."

Program ombudsman brought Mike and Marjorie together

In 2017, Metro HRA hired Abdiaziz as an outreach coordinator and ombudsman to help "bridge the divide" between families and property owners. It's his job to help people navigate the rental process and teach renters the skills needed to be successful long-term tenants.

"Knowing that I'm helping people, like Marjorie and her family, is one of the reasons I like working with the program," said Mike. "Income often doesn't cover the cost of housing and other things people need, and they need support."



Abdiaziz Ibrahim

"Another is economic," said Mike. "Metro HRA is a reliable agency and I can count on a steady source of rental income."

"It's a partnership that works out for me and helps others."

About Metro HRA

Metro HRA administers the state's largest Housing Choice Voucher program. The program relies on the existing private rental market and provides payments to private property owners on behalf of low-income renters. Eligible households pay 30% to 40% of their incomes for rent, and Metro HRA pays the remainder, within established rent guidelines.

The Metro HRA service area includes Anoka, Carver and most of suburban Hennepin and Ramsey counties.

INSPECTIONS CORNER

Each night the Metro HRA works in partnership with you, our owners, to provide more than 7,000 families a place to call home.

A component of our rent assistance program is to ensure that the units our families live in meet federal housing quality standards (HQS) and are “decent, safe and sanitary.”

Here are some reminders about the inspection process.

Prior to the Inspection

- The HRA will notify you of the inspection date.
- Visit your property and make the necessary repairs.
- Ensure that the family will be home to let the inspector in.

Annual Inspection

- You will receive a call the day of the inspection confirming our visit.
- An adult must be present for the inspection. We will not go into a unit if only minor children are home.
- If the family cannot be at the inspection, they need to make arrangements with your rental office ahead of time to let the inspector in. We will not go into a unit unless the family has provided the HRA with pre-authorization.

Initial HQS Inspection

- We will coordinate the inspection with the owner.
- Assuming all required paperwork is returned, Metro HRA will begin assistance as soon as 1) the unit passes an HQS inspection, 2) the effective date of assistance, 3) when the family takes possession of the unit, whichever is later.

Common Fail Items

- Missing or nonfunctioning smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors
- Missing lightbulbs in open and accessible sockets
- Missing or cracked electrical switch plate and outlet cover
- Cracked and/or broken window panes
- Peeling and/or chipping exterior and interior paint
- Burner on kitchen stove/range not operating as designed
- Leaking faucets/plumbing
- Inoperable bathroom fan
- Missing handrail for 4 or more steps
- Utilities not on at initial inspection
- Unit not ready-still in turnover status

GO GREEN WITH ASSISTANCECONNECT

For your convenience, we offer a secure, online service called AssistanceConnect. This convenient service allows you to contact us, make requests and submit documents online. Some of the services offered include:

- Update your contact information
- Reschedule inspections and view inspections results online
- View, print and electronically sign required documents
- View and print payment information

What's New?

- You can now access online information for multiple properties from one centralized account. Additional sub accounts can be created to allow for multiple users. You will have a “Manage Contacts” page where you can add users you would like to have access to view and manage your properties.
- If you have multiple properties, you can link them together, so you can access them using one username and password.
- Your AssistanceConnect requests can now be linked to a specific tenant, and the paperwork will go directly to the Coordinator assigned to that file.
- Inspection information for property owners and tenants is now available from the menu bar. This will allow users to view scheduled inspections and results from a full screen along with filtering and sorting capability.

You should have received a letter in the mail with your account PIN and easy setup instructions.

When using AssistanceConnect to ask questions, be sure to include enough information, such as the client name or address of the property you are asking about. Giving us enough information upfront will help us to help you quicker.

If you need help setting up your account or have questions you can contact Tammy P at 651.602.1525.

NEWS BRIEFS

SIGN UP FOR DIRECT DEPOSIT

Metro HRA encourages all landlords to enroll in the direct deposit system as a convenient option for receiving your monthly Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).

By using direct deposit, landlords have monthly HAP deposited directly into their bank account.

To request a direct deposit enrollment form or to make a change in your direct deposit arrangement, please contact Lona at Lona.Petersen@metc.state.mn.us or 651.602.1565.



CONTACT US FOR TENANT EDUCATION

Metro HRA cares about maintaining a good, working relationship with property owners and managers, as much as we do with our program participants. We are dependent upon your continued partnership to make these programs work. And we're here to assist you with communication and mediation support when needed.

Please contact Abdiaziz Ibrahim at abdiaziz.ibrahim@metc.state.mn.us with any referrals for the tenant education program or need for assistance with participant conflicts.