

The CONN-NAHRO Connection

July 2020



The Executive Director's Report

In This Issue

Six Feet of Influence	2
2015 AFFH Rule Terminated	3
GASB 87	4
Cares Act/PHA Audits	5
FSS Spotlight	6
Health & Wellness	7
Trainings	8
Advertisements	9

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SAVE THE DATE! Annual CONN-NAHRO Convention will be held virtually – August 24 & 25.

Join us live for educational sessions, trade show with our valued business partners, special guest speakers and more. A link to the agenda is available in the latest CONN-NAHRO Update email. See below for complete registration information.

Register your agency today! A complete pricing package includes access to all sessions for your full staff! Content will also be available at a later time to fit your busy schedule.

Our Trade Show will be held virtually on Monday, August 24 from 2:30 pm to 4:30 p.m. and will offer our valued business partners opportunities to man your "booth" or schedule 1:1 appointments with attendees! We have incorporated some new benefits and want to hear from you if there is anything else you would like us to consider for this virtual event.

Thank you to our sponsors who have always supported our convention, and this year, although different, the support remains the same. Thank you to J. D'Amelia & Associates; Imagineers, LLC and the CT Department of Housing. This year we have opened our sponsorship opportunities to housing authorities with a new education session supporter, so take a moment to review the complete package and consider a sponsorship this year!

Membership Renewals and Website Sponsorships

Dues renewals have been sent, as well as website sponsorship opportunities. Thank you in advance for your continued support of CONN-NAHRO! #MembershipMatters

Professional Development and Events

Due to the Governor's Executive Order, and #stayathome guidelines, along with social distancing measures and gathering restrictions, all in-person trainings and general membership meetings have been cancelled and/or postponed until further notice.

We continue to promote our **online** Housing Manager Certificate Series with 10% off! If you are a new ED, or want a refresher on certain subjects, look no further than this training. It is a comprehensive program that features subject matter experts from DOH, Eversource and Halloran Sage, LLP. This is a great opportunity to learn from home.

Don't forget...

Like us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/CTHousingAuthorities) and stay up to date with the latest association and convention information.

Six Feet of Influence

Article by: Karen Futoma, Resident Services Liaison, CHFA



The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the world at large and our nation, along with heightened calls for social justice and equality, demands our attention. These life-changing and uncertain times provide us with an opportunity and responsibility to go beyond self-reflection. We can be better people and the time to act is now.

In the housing arena, we are familiar with the types of challenges people face relative to personal, economic and housing stability. This pandemic has shed blinding lights on widespread disparities in health, wealth, equality and accessibility. We can and must do better to take individual and social action for a just path for all.

Whether it be following recommended or mandated social distancing and wearing a mask, volunteering, making donations, offering assistance to someone who lost income struggling to obtain or maintain their basic needs, or picking up groceries for someone who is at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 or otherwise challenged, we all have a stake in this.

Many years ago, when I was an employee of a municipal human services department, we promoted a philosophy referenced as Six Feet of Influence (6FI). At the time, it was used as a community program tool to educate youth about the importance of reaching out to others around them. One person can make a difference by lending a helping hand, standing up for what's right, volunteering and performing acts of kindness, etc.

The premise is that if we all commit to being responsible for an imaginary circle of six feet around us, we could touch other's lives in a positive and profound way. A school child sitting alone at lunch time, on the bus or on the playground would be no more. The new student in school would feel welcomed, with a sense of belonging. A child with special needs

would be embraced and included. A frail neighbor's driveway would be cleared from snow and a lemonade stand's profits would be donated to a food bank. A family moving into housing in a different neighborhood would be welcomed. A person attending a senior center event, moving into housing for seniors and those with disabilities, assisted living or a nursing home wouldn't feel as alone or anxious. A person transitioning from homelessness would feel more supported.

Positive influence can build confidence and self-esteem and lead to harm reduction. Instead of avoidance, judgement and/or criticism, we would open our hearts and extend our hand.

The constant reminder of maintaining at least six feet of social distancing prompted a flashback to the youth program I was involved with so long ago. It provides a relevant and poignant reminder of practicing what we preach. Now, 6FI takes on a deeper, expanded meaning.

I would suggest that this philosophy applies to each and every one of us at every stage of life. When our community calculated each person having 6FI based on the population and square mileage, the reach and potential impact extended beyond the perimeter of our town borders. It was quite enlightening!

The simple premise of 6FI is so relevant and can be applied to the pandemic, as well as social injustices that surround us. We, too, can create a ripple that extends beyond ourselves, our homes, our community, our state, our country, and our world.

Care about yourself, care about others and extend a symbolic hand to make a positive difference in the lives of others. Have the strength and courage to do and say what's right and fair for all.



SECRETARY CARSON TERMINATES 2015 AFFH RULE

WASHINGTON – U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Ben Carson today announced the Department will ultimately terminate the Obama Administration’s Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) regulation issued in 2015, which proved to be complicated, costly, and ineffective – so much so that Secretary Carson essentially removed its burden on communities by suspending the regulation’s 92 question grading tool in January 2018.

“After reviewing thousands of comments on the proposed changes to the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) regulation, we found it to be unworkable and ultimately a waste of time for localities to comply with, too often resulting in funds being steered away from communities that need them most,” said Secretary Carson. “Instead, the Trump Administration has established programs like Opportunity Zones that are driving billions of dollars of capital into underserved communities where affordable housing exists, but opportunity does not. Programs like this shift the burden away from communities so they are not forced to comply with complicated regulations that require hundreds of pages of reporting and instead allow communities to focus more of their time working with Opportunity Zone partners to revitalize their communities so upward mobility, improved housing, and home ownership is within reach for more people. Washington has no business dictating what is best to meet your local community’s unique needs.”

This brand-new rule, called [Preserving Community and Neighborhood Choice](#), defines fair housing broadly to mean housing that, among other attributes, is affordable, safe, decent, free of unlawful discrimination, and accessible under civil rights laws. It then defines “affirmatively furthering fair housing” to mean any action rationally related to promoting any of the above attributes of fair housing.

Now, a grantee’s certification that it has affirmatively furthered fair housing would be deemed sufficient if it proposes to take any action above what is required by statute related to promoting any of the attributes of fair housing. HUD remains able to terminate funding if it discovers, after investigation made pursuant to complaint or by its own volition, that a jurisdiction has not adhered to its commitment to AFFH.

Persons who believe they have experienced housing discrimination may file a complaint of discrimination by contacting HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at (800) 669-9777 or visiting [How to File a Complaint](#) on HUD’s website. Materials and assistance are available for persons with limited English proficiency. Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing may contact the Department using the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

HUD's mission is to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all.

More information about HUD and its programs is available on the Internet at www.hud.gov and <http://espanol.hud.gov>.

GASB 87: New Accounting Rules for Leases Implementation Postponed 18 Months Due to COVID-19

Article by: Janet S Wortman, CPA

For fiscal years beginning July 1, 2021 or later, GASB 87 changes the way leases are reflected on the PHA's financial statements. Certain leases for smaller amounts may be deemed immaterial, avoiding the complexity and expense of compliance. If your PHA is paying for leased equipment and the dollar amounts are less than your "capitalization threshold," the PHA may be able to avoid this costly exercise. Currently the maximum capitalization threshold set by the Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is \$5,000.

PHA as Lessor

Here is how the lease is reported if the PHA is the lessor. As an example, the PHA is receiving payments (with HUD approval) for rooftop space leases for cellular communications equipment.

The PHA reports on the balance sheet an asset: lease income receivable.

To offset the asset, the PHA records a deferred inflow (similar to a liability.)

During the lease term, the lease receivable is amortized (reported as income.)

PHA as Lessee

In the instance where the PHA is paying lease payments for office equipment, vehicles, etc. the PHA is the lessee.

This treatment applies in the case of an operating lease where the PHA does not own the equipment at the end of the lease term.

The PHA records a long-term liability for the future lease payments required. A corresponding intangible asset is also recorded. The asset is amortized (similar to depreciation) over the shorter of the lease term or the useful life of the leased asset.

GASB 87 does not apply to regulated leases (example: public housing dwelling leases with tenants.) Also, it does not apply to short-term leases (less than 12 months including extensions.) If the lease is actually a purchase (capitalized lease,) GASB 87 does not apply.

PREPARING FOR THE IMPACT OF THE CARES ACT ON PHA AUDITS

Article by: Michael P. Guyder, CPA
Marcum LLP

Over four months since the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed into law on March 27, 2020, there remains some uncertainty as to the eligible uses of funds, how expenditures are to be reported to HUD and how independent auditors and the HUD Inspector General will test these expenditures. Speaking as an auditor, there are numerous concerns and questions as to how we will proceed with audits under these circumstances. HUD's guidance on eligible uses has been vague at times and there has been no guidance on how CARES Act expenditures will be reported to HUD as required by Section 15011. At this time of year, we would anticipate relying on a newly-published annual compliance supplement, as issued by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), to direct our attention to material compliance requirements of federal programs; however, the OMB has not yet published the 2020 Compliance Supplement. When issued, the Compliance Supplement is expected to address instructions for testing CARES Act expenditures, which will hopefully provide needed direction.

For the time being, in the absence of clear and instructive guidance, audits (as they relate to the CARES Act) will be guided by the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200), interpretations of PIH Notices, 2020-05, 2020-07, 2020-8, COVID-19 FAQs and auditor judgment. Topics that are likely to come up in an audit include the following:

Waivers of Certain Requirements – PHAs are required to keep written documentation that record which waivers the PHA applied to their programs and the effective dates. The authorized waivers are outlined in PIH Notice 2020-05, which also provides a summary table as an attachment. PHAs should complete and retain that table (or an equivalent document) in order to appropriately document the waivers they have applied. This will demonstrate the PHA's internal controls over compliance and provide a road map for auditors in their testing of compliance. In the absence of clear documentation, PHAs may be subject to audit findings for noncompliance and deficiencies in internal controls.

Cost Principles – Whether CARES Act expenditures are justified as normal operating expenses or specifically for preparing for, preventing and responding to COVID-19, all expenditures must adhere to the cost principles contained in the Uniform Guidance 2 CFR 200, Subpart E – Cost Principles. In order to be allowable, costs must be necessary, reasonable, adequately documented and allocable to the federal program. PHAs should ensure that all costs allocated to the CARES Act meet these criteria. Interpretations of eligible expenses provided by individuals, such as HUD representatives, may not be enforceable under scrutiny, but documentation of these interpretations, whether made orally or in writing, should be retained.

Reporting – Whether or not a PHA is subject to the reporting requirements of Section 15011, PHAs should maintain a detailed list of all CARES Act transactions to provide to their auditor or to HUD upon request. PHAs should also document in writing the controls over the accounting and reporting process, including the approval and coding of CARES Act transactions. The accounting for revenue earned, expenses incurred, and balance due to or due from HUD on the PHA's financial statements should be clear and accurate when presented for audit.

Accruals – With the current period of performance deadline being December 31, 2020, PHAs should make sure that all eligible CARES Act expenditures are accounted for, whether accrued or paid, prior to the deadline so that they can be appropriately reimbursed. Eligible expenses that may be incurred but not yet paid at December 31 could include fees for accounting, audit and legal services, as well as payroll and materials and supplies purchased on account. PHAs should consider requesting invoices from professional service providers to separately identify CARES Act related services on their invoices in order to adequately document eligible expenses.

Deadlines – Version 5 of the COVID-19 FAQ indicates that the extended deadline for audits is 15 months from year end; however, as of June 29, the OMB rescinded the extended deadlines. Beginning with years ending March 31, 2020, there is no longer an extension for audited submissions to the Federal Audit Clearinghouse. As a result, per the OMB, audits for 9/30/2019, 12/31/2019 and 3/31/2020 audits are now all due by December 31, 2020. PHAs should ensure that reasonable timelines for performance of the audit are in place to ensure compliance with these deadlines.

Audits of CARES Act expenditures will be commencing soon, and some may have already begun. We look forward to receiving additional guidance and approaching these engagements with a comprehensive and practical strategy. In the meantime, ensuring that your PHA has adequately addressed the matters outlined above, should make for an efficient audit process and mitigate the risk of noncompliance.

FSS Spotlight

FSS During COVID-19

Article by: Eimmy Smith, FSS Coordinator
West Hartford Housing Authority

This year, as we all know, has been a particularly trying and difficult one. Staying in touch with my FSS participants has become more important than ever. Helping them remain positive and motivated serves as a reminder of what it means to see them succeed despite the obstacles. It's wonderful to receive and share a positive note from one of my FSS participants!

The act of her reaching out and relaying, "I have been working on my credit, you are going to be so proud. I'm really looking forward to the next step of getting a house," speaks volume towards the effort they continue to devote regardless of what's going on around us. This particular participant has been working towards her Masters in Human Services for the last few years, and will be graduating as soon as she is able to complete her internship.

Her plate is pretty full, considering she is a single mother of two that works full-time and additionally attends online classes in hopes to graduate by the end of this year. She is on the path of accomplishing her goals, including purchasing a home and become economically self-sufficient within the next year. I'm really proud of all her hard work and how consistent she continues to be. It's extremely rewarding to see how life changing the Family Self-Sufficiency program is, and I'm so grateful to be a part of it.

Letting Clients Process What They're Going Through

Article by: Claudia Riley, Senior Financial Coach
Compass Working Capital

We are living in historic times and folks are experiencing a sudden, unexpected and difficult hardship. In my conversations with my clients, I am first and foremost taking steps as an active listener. I let them steer the conversation and

honor where they're at emotionally. People are sharing their fears about the safety and wellness of their family and loved ones, and how they will remain financially secure in the face of unemployment or vastly reduced income. They are concerned about the education of their children and for the health of the local economy.

My main focus is to let my clients process what they're going through personally and acknowledge their feelings. If needed, I will direct them to specific local resources and to offer advice on specific areas of assistance, whether it's employment, food security or health/wellness. I would like my clients to end our conversations on a positive note and in a mindset of optimism. I know that one day this will all be over and in the past and at last, we will be able to return to more traditional financial coaching as opposed to a "triage" approach.

Back in late March, I had a client call me with much fear and stress in his voice. He informed me that his employer had just cut his hours by more than half and refused to lay him off entirely. He was panicking because it was April 1 and his rent was due. I offered him compassion and understanding in his terrible situation but we turned his panic around into a more proactive and positive mindset and approach. We talked about him being his own best self-advocate. We agreed on a plan that he would offer open communication with his property manager about his financial situation and collaborate on a solution.

We also talked about him going ahead and filing for unemployment benefits due to his vastly reduced hours and lastly we talked about food resources in his neighborhood so that his cupboards would never become bare. He ended the conversation no longer feeling like a victim of his terrible circumstance, but like someone who was going to "make the most of it". As always, I reiterated the fact that I was always an email, phone call or text away -- to help in any way that I was able as a financial coach.

Some Good News About Health and Wellness

Article by: Vicky Shea
Hamden Housing Authority



Healthy Mind and Body: Being healthy is the key to a much happier life. And while healthy lifestyles can prevent conditions such as heart disease and diabetes, mental health is just as important as physical health and it should not be neglected. Sitting and doing a puzzle or word search can help ease stress and anxiety. Meditation is a great exercise that anyone can do in the privacy of their home. Focusing on something that relaxes and quiets your brain is the key to a healthy mind. All you need is 15-30 minutes per day to enjoy all the benefits which include: increasing metabolism of the body; lowering blood pressure; relieving stress and anxiety; improving heart rate; increasing calmness; and promoting clarity and happiness. Learning how to meditate is easy, so if you are ready, take a deep breath and let us get started. Here are some basic steps to help you: 1. Set aside time to meditate. Start off with 2-5 minutes per day. Then, increase the minutes as meditation becomes easier. 2. Find a comfortable, quiet place. 3. Focus on your breathing. Inhale for 4 seconds and exhale for 4 seconds. Sometimes your mind will wander. That is normal. Refocus your brain and concentrate on your breathing. Living a healthy lifestyle is one of the best gifts you can give your family.

By taking care of yourself, you will live longer and share many more memories with them. A healthy lifestyle is achieved simply by watching what you eat, cutting all processed and high fat foods out of your diet, and exercising regularly. Exercising does not mean torturing yourself. It can simply mean going for a pleasant walk outside. Walking allows you to see your neighborhood, appreciate the details of a nice house, admire the beautiful flowers, or notice a cat in the window. You might stop and talk to someone (from six feet away to practice safe social distancing of course). Walking for more than 20 minutes a day is a great reset and mental break from TV as well as an escape from the never-ending scroll of social media. Take a walk.

Fitness: As we continue to stay home and practice social distancing, chances are we are sitting for long periods of time. For most of us, that means a tight upper back, achy hips, sore glutes, stiff shoulders, or all of these. Your body needs resistance training to build muscle and keep your metabolism burning which will keep the weight off. Here are a few exercises you can do while sitting or standing using weights, dumbbells, or even soup cans: 1. bicep curl; 2. shoulder presses; 3. arm circles; 4. knee raises; 5. squats. Complete 16 reps of each exercise and repeat 3 times.

Trainings



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PUBLIC HOUSING MANAGER (PHM)

rescheduled - September 14 - 18

Holy Trinity Greek Church

937 Chase Parkway

Waterbury, CT 06708

Presented by: NAHRO, Beth Turner

8:30 AM - 4:30 PM (Mon. - Thurs.)

8:00 AM - 10:30 AM (Fri. Exam Administered)

For more information or to register, visit nercnauro.org



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