

Violence Against Women Act Report

A goal of the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee (HACM) is to fully comply with the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). It is our objective to work with others to prevent the types of victimization covered by VAWA to the greatest extent possible. To that end, HACM worked with victim advocates from the Task Force on Family Violence (TFFV), American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and Legal Action of Wisconsin (LAW) to incorporate the provisions of VAWA into its Low Rent lease, Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP), Resident Handbook and Section 8 Administrative Plan. In addition, a certification form and cover letter were created to be used in the event HACM staff was notified by a resident that their tenancy was in jeopardy as a result of an incident of domestic or family violence.

The HACM also worked with the Resident Advisory Board (RAB) on the implementation of VAWA in the aforementioned policy documents. The victim advocates made presentations and provided materials to the RAB about the importance of the VAWA protections in HACM policy documents. HACM staff and legal counsel consulted with the advocates in the drafting, revising, and implementation of policy language changes. HACM notified all residents in a letter, dated June 26, 2007, of the availability of the documents with the proposed changes for their review and comment, which concluded on August 6, 2007. At the conclusion of the 30-day public comment period, the RAB voted to adopt the provisions of VAWA at its September 6, 2007 meeting. The HACM Board of Commissioners adopted the provisions of VAWA at its September 19, 2007 meeting.

In an effort to enhance the safety of the applicant/resident, HACM has a service provider working in a number of its developments, offering case management services to those in need. HACM will also use the resource document created by the Milwaukee Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, a commission charged with increasing the safety for victims of domestic violence and their children, to make referrals for victims. HACM will offer training to various groups of HACM staff: those responsible for determining an applicant's eligibility for housing; those at the housing developments responsible for overseeing resident continued occupancy; and public safety staff involved in intervention. The training will educate staff on how to obtain information needed from the applicant/resident who is seeking protection under VAWA and make appropriate referrals to agencies that have been identified as offering assistance to such victims. RAB members and other key residents will also receive training on how to help victims get connected with services when an actual or threatened domestic abuse incident occurs.

The HACM has notified all current residents of public housing that the provisions of VAWA have been adopted in its policy documents and that they should contact their manager in the event they are a victim of or are facing lease violations for actual or threatened domestic abuse incident. All applicants will receive a certification form with their application packet that will offer them the opportunity to make HACM aware that they are or have been a victim of an actual or threatened domestic violence incident that may impact their application for housing.