

The CA Quarterly Review



**Assisted
Housing
Services
Corporation**

Spring, 2004

ASSISTED HOUSING SERVICES WEBSITE

Have you visited the Assisted Housing Services website at www.ahscoho.org? The site provides useful information to owners and the public. The types of information you can retrieve on this site are:

- Names and contact numbers for staff assigned to different counties, regions, and management companies
- Links to other helpful sites including links to HUD sites
- Answers to frequently asked questions
- A "Contact Us" link where you can submit a question or comment and receive an answer

Take a moment and visit our website . . . the information that you've been looking for might just be there.

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If you have ideas or suggestions for *The CA Quarterly Review*, or if you would like to change an e-mail address or submit a new one, please contact Kim Bianchi at AHSCnewsletter@ahscoho.org.

New HUD Initiative: 85% TRACS Compliance

Beginning with the April 2004 voucher, HUD is implementing a new initiative that requires properties to have at least an 85% TRACS compliance rate. If this requirement is not met, HUD may withhold payment of the voucher.

How is a property's TRACS compliance percentage calculated?
The number of households that have complete certifications in the TRACS system at the time of processing (this is called the "active tenant count") is divided by the number of units being billed for under the HAP contract (this is called the "regular units billed count"). For example, AHSC is processing a property's April 2004 voucher on 3/5/04. On 3/5/04, that property's TRACS active tenant count is 93 and the regular units billed count is 100. That property has a 93% TRACS compliance rate.

What steps should a property take to maintain and/or achieve the 85% compliance requirement to ensure voucher payments are received on time? First, properties need to have access to Secure Systems. If you do not have access, contact the TRACS HOTLINE at 1-800-767-7588 or visit the TRACS homepage at <http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/mfh/trx/trxsum.cfm>. Once you have access, you will be able view records for all of your properties and find your compliance percentage.

The second thing you should do is to compare the information in the system with the household certifications you have in your own records. If any of the information does not match, you should review the HUD responses that AHSC has been forwarding to your TRACS mailboxes. (See related article on TRACS Errors). These messages will help you identify errors so that you can make corrections and resubmit certifications.

Finally, even if you know your property is at or above the 85% mark, it is a good idea to check the TRACS system periodically. This way, if you spot errors or notice that you are coming close to falling below the required level, there is still time to take the necessary steps to avoid having payments suspended.

Cameo: Lynn Lowe

The CA Quarterly Review would like to introduce our newest staff member, Lynn Lowe. Lynn works as a Central Contract Specialist in the Columbus office. Her portfolio includes properties located in the Columbus, Cincinnati, and Portsmouth Regions.

Prior to joining AHSC, Lynn worked as a manager in the subsidized housing industry for 15 years. When not at work, she enjoys reading and spending time with her husband of 24 years and two sons, ages 22 and 14.

Question Regarding Special Claims:

Q: Why are some of my special claims processed using the new 4350.3 Handbook and others not?

A: HUD has determined that any claims event occurring on or before August 31, 2003 will be processed using the old rules. Any event **AFTER** August 31, 2003 will be processed using the new handbook guidance.

Frequently Asked Questions

AHSC receives questions from owners concerning a variety of issues. Below are some of the more frequently asked questions and answers.

Q: How long does it take for a certification sent to AHSC to update in TRACS?

A: AHSC sends records to TRACS every day. At the end of the day the TRACS system does a nightly batch update. So, if AHSC sent your record to TRACS on Monday, the record should be updated by Tuesday if it did not have errors.

Q: How/Why don't my records get into TRACS?

A: See article on page 2. As an owner/agent, you can read error messages and correct the records. If you don't understand the error messages you receive, contact your software vendor or TRACS Hotline for more information.

Q: When can I expect to get my error messages for records I submitted?

A: AHSC sends TRACS messages to owners the first week of every month.

TRACS Submission Errors

AHSC is now sending TRACS messages from HUD back to the sites. After a site's voucher is submitted for payment, a message is generated and sent back to AHSC's vouchering software and from there it is forwarded to the site. The message may simply be a confirmation that the voucher for that month has been approved for payment or it may be a message indicating one or more errors on the voucher or on tenant records. The following table depicts common error messages related to tenant records and some tips on correcting them:

Code	Issue	Fix
F0001	Family record not processed	Re-submit with all family records
F0002	MAT59—different information on head of household than current information	Head of household must be same as head of household for the certification
F0005	Invalid SSN; SSN is not 9 digits	Re-submit with valid SSNs. SSN cannot contain embedded blanks or alpha characters
F0008	The reported SSN is not authorized by SSA	SSN submitted matches a known invalid SSN. Correct and resubmit
F0010	MAT 50059 certification not processed	Re-submit with valid 50059 certification
F0013	Current effective date is missing	Resubmit with effective date
F0016	Owner signed date is greater than current date	Resubmit with a valid signed date
F0022	Subsidy type is invalid	Resubmit with a valid subsidy type

Find more guidance on how to correct tenant record submission errors by going to the following site:

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/mfh/trx/trxdocs.cfm>

The error codes above were taken from the document "Monthly Activity Transmission (MAT) User's Guide"

Five Steps to Take When Households Add New Members

1. **Recertify the household and recalculate the rent:** Whenever a household reports a change in composition, HUD requires the household to recertify. Many times, this new addition also adds income to the household, thus decreasing the subsidy. Other times the subsidy will be increased due to the new member's age, a disability, or medical expense. Even though the income hasn't changed, the household's rent may decrease as a result of these new deductions from income.
2. **Evaluate the unit occupancy:** After a new member is added to the household, landlords should decide whether the current unit is over-occupied. When a household becomes too large for the unit, they must be transferred to a larger unit. This is because an overcrowded unit presents risks for the landlord: more wear and tear on the unit, increased utility costs and more maintenance problems, among others.
3. **Require a transfer under certain conditions:** If the unit is determined to be an inappropriate size for a family due to a new member, landlords may transfer this family to a new unit if the following situations apply:
 - The appropriate size unit becomes available
 - The landlord has an application for a tenant requiring the current unit size
 - The household has not given the landlord written notice of their intent to move out of the site
4. **Send a unit transfer notice:** Before the household can be transferred, the landlord must send appropriate notice to the tenants. This notice should:
 - State that the lease requires transfer due to unit overcrowding and specify paragraph in lease
 - Explain why the current unit is no longer appropriate
 - Give a moving deadline (HUD requires the move to take place within 30 days)
 - State the consequences for not moving (HUD will not give subsidy to an overcrowded unit)
5. **Consider using site maintenance to help a family move:** Often a household cannot afford the costs of moving. In this case, when the transfer is required, HUD allows sites to use their own maintenance staff to assist with the move.

Helpful HUD Websites

HUD has a variety of good websites that provide helpful information for owners and agents. Below is a list of some of those sites and a brief explanation of how they may help you.

TRACS Discussion Forum:
<http://chatwrite.hud.gov/fha/mfh/trx/traboard/tracsdf/traboard.html>. This site allows you to engage in a dialog with other TRACS users. You can ask questions and get details of how other people solve problems related to TRACS.

Hudclips New Documents:
address: www.hudclips.org , then click on the What's New link. This site provides a listing, by date of release of new notices, forms, and directives.

Note: You do not need a login or a password to use these sites.