

HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF ERIE

Community Service Policy

INTRODUCTION

Section 512 of the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 (QHWRA), which amends Section 12 of the Housing Act of 1937, establishes a new requirement for non-exempt residents of public housing to contribute eight (8) hours of community service each month or to participate in a self-sufficiency program for eight hours each month. Residents may participate in a combination of community service and self-sufficiency. Community service is a service for which individuals are not paid. The U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development believes that the community service requirement should not be perceived by the resident to be a punitive or demeaning activity, but rather to be a rewarding activity that will benefit both the resident and the community. Community service offers public housing residents an opportunity to contribute to the communities that provide them with housing and other support services.

In order to implement this new requirement, the Housing Authority of the City of Erie (Authority) establishes the following policy effective April 1, 2001.

A. Community Service

The Authority will provide residents who are identified as required to participate in community service, a variety of volunteer activities and locations where community service can be performed. Residents may select their own community service activity but must receive pre-approval from the Authority. Community service activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Participation in volunteer services in local schools, daycare centers, Head Start, youth centers, hospitals, nursing homes, churches, senior organizations, social service agencies, neighborhood centers, or scouting;
- Participation in neighborhood improvement groups, such as resident councils;

- Participation in self-improvement activities, such as budget/credit counseling, English as a Second Language classes, GED classes, computer classes, or any approved self-help or educational program;
- Participation in school activities, such as teacher's aide, PTA, after school aide, activities volunteer.

B. Program Administration

The Authority will administer the community service program in conjunction with the development of cooperative relationships with other community-based entities, such as the Department of Public Welfare (DPW), local social service agencies, or other organizations which have, as their goal, the development of improved family self-sufficiency.

In conjunction with its own or partnership program, the Authority will provide reasonable accommodations for accessibility to persons with disabilities. The Authority will provide residents with a directory of opportunities and locations for community service.

The Authority will monitor the resident's participation in community service activities on a monthly basis. If deemed necessary, the Authority will contract the monitoring of the community service requirements to an independent agency. The Authority will then monitor the agency for contract compliance.

The Authority will assure that community service being performed is not labor that would normally be performed by Authority employees responsible for the essential maintenance and property services.

Beginning April 1, 2001 the Authority will determine at each residents next scheduled reexamination, the status of each household member eighteen (18) years of age or older with respect to the requirement to participate in community service activities. The Authority will use a Family Community Service Monthly Time Sheet (Exhibit 1) to monitor and document resident eligibility/exemption and the hours of community service. A record will be developed for each adult and community service placement selections

made. Each non-exempt household member will be provided with forms to be completed by a representative of the agency providing community service or self-sufficiency activities.

It is the responsibility of the resident to inform the Authority within 30 days of any changes in status. Such changes include but are not limited to:

- Going from unemployment to employment;
- Entering a job training program;
- Becoming unemployed;
- Entering an educational program, which exceeds eight (8) hours monthly.

If a resident's status changes from exempt to non-exempt during the 12-month lease period, they will have 90 days to meet new requirements for exempt status. During this 90-day period, the resident will continue to be exempt from community service requirements. If, after the 90-day period, the resident has not met the requirements for exempt status, the community service must be performed.

If a resident's status changes from non-exempt to exempt, they must inform the Authority within 30 days. Based on information provided, the Authority will obtain third party verification of the change. Prior to receipt of verification, the resident is responsible for completing required community service hours.

All exemptions to the community service requirement will be verified and documented in the resident file. Required verification may include, but not be limited to:

- Third-party verification of employment, enrollment in a training or educational program, welfare to work program or other economic self-sufficiency activities;
- Birth certificate to verify age;
- If appropriate, verification of disability limitations.

Families who pay flat or ceiling rents will not receive an automatic exemption from community service requirements.

C. Self-Sufficiency

The Authority will inform (See Exhibit 2) residents that participation in self-sufficiency activities for eight (8) hours each month can satisfy the community service requirement and encourage non-exempt residents to select such activities to satisfy the community service requirement. Such activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Job readiness training.
- English as Second Language classes, GED and adult basic education classes, junior college or other formal educational programs.
- Household budgeting or credit counseling programs.
- Small business training and apprenticeship programs.

Residents may utilize Authority sponsored self-sufficiency programs or those located in the general community.

D. Geographic Location

The intent of this requirement is to have residents provide community service in their own communities or in the broader community (city of Erie) in which the Authority operates. Requests to perform community service outside of Erie County will not be approved.

E. Exemptions

In accordance with provisions in the Act, the Authority will exempt from participation in community service requirements the following groups:

- Adults who are 62 years of age or older;
- Persons engaged in work activities as defined under Social Security, full-time or part-time for a minimum of eight hours per month (See Exhibit 3);

- A blind or disabled individual as defined under 216 or 1614 of the Social Security Act and who certifies that because of this disability he or she is unable to comply with the community service requirements. This also includes the primary caretaker of such a blind or disabled individual.
- Participants in a State administered Welfare to Work program or someone engaging in a work activity under the State program funded under part A of Title IV of the Social Security Act. Any person who is a member of a family receiving assistance, benefits or services under a State program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act or a family member of someone participating and in compliance in a State administered Welfare to Work program.

F. Cooperative Relationships with Welfare Agencies

The Authority may initiate cooperative relationships with local social service agencies that provide assistance to its families to facilitate information exchange, expansion of community service/self-sufficiency program options and aid in the coordination of these activities.

G. Lease Requirements and Documentation

The Authority's lease has a twelve (12)-month term and is automatically renewable except for non-compliance with certain provisions, including the community service requirement. The lease also provides for termination and eviction of the entire household for such non-compliance. The community service lease provision will be implemented for current residents at their next scheduled reexamination on or after April 1, 2001, and for all new residents effective April 1, 2001. The Authority will not renew or extend the lease if the household contains a non-exempt member who has failed to comply with the community service requirement.

H. Non-compliance

If the Authority determines that a resident who is not an “exempt individual” has not complied with the community service requirement, the Authority must notify the resident, as follows:

- They are non-compliant;
- That the non-compliant determination is subject to the Authority’s administrative grievance procedure;
- That unless the resident enters into an agreement under paragraph 4 (below) of this section, the lease of the family of which the non-compliant adult is a member may not be renewed. However if the non-compliant adult moves from the unit, the lease may be renewed;
- That before the expiration of the lease term, the Authority must offer the resident an opportunity to “cure” the non-compliance during the next twelve (12)-month period; such a cure includes a written agreement by the non-compliant adult to complete as many additional hours of community service or economic self-sufficiency activity needed to make up the total number of hours required over the twelve (12) month term of the lease.