

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

FROM: Mississippi Regional Housing Authority No. VIII
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Clarification on Obligation to Pay Rent during COVID-19 Pandemic

On April 21, 2020 HUD released guidelines for housing authorities (HAs) regarding the temporary eviction moratorium (Section 4024 of CARES Act) which began March 27, 2020. HUD implemented this action to prevent housing instability among those affected by rising unemployment rates due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It appears that some mistakenly believe that these guidelines exempt tenants from their obligation to pay rent during the eviction moratorium. This is not the case, specifically for those tenants already receiving housing or rental assistance through the various HUD programs.

HUD Regulations were already established for tenants facing financial hardship due to a sudden loss of income, including becoming unemployed, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, when such cases occur, tenants' portion of the rent is automatically decreased as soon as the loss of income is reported to the housing authority.

Section 4024 of the CARES Act reminds HAs of the following:

- **Tenants are not relieved of their obligation to pay rent during the eviction moratorium.**
- No eviction actions for nonpayment of rent can be initiated during the moratorium, and no fees for nonpayment of rent can be assessed to any tenant. HAs can send late notices to residents during the moratorium.
- Following the moratorium, payment arrangements must be made with tenants that have rent balances, and normal enforcement actions can begin for noncompliance.
- All eviction actions unrelated to rent can proceed during the moratorium, as can the collection of late fees assessed prior to the moratorium.

The Mississippi Regional Housing Authority No. VIII (Region 8) has sent notices to tenants and posted reminders on its web site stating tenants are expected to pay their portion of rent for which they are responsible. The recently passed stimulus bill was intended to assist tenants in meeting their financial obligations during this temporary crisis. Region 8 hopes that no tenant will be lured into a false perception that delinquent rents will not be pursued at the end of this eviction moratorium. The stay of eviction action ends on July 31, 2020. At that time, Region 8 will follow HUD guidelines and agency protocol regarding collection of delinquent rents.

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