

Guiding landlords to a successful relationship with LHA

Lighthouse

October 2024

John Burjus, Fix Master LLC's owner, is no stranger to Lincoln Housing Authority (LHA) — although these days, he finds himself seated on the other side of the table.

Burjus joined LHA as a maintenance repair worker in June 2020 before becoming housing inspector in September 2021. He then left LHA near the end of 2022. At the time, Burjus owned a few rental properties and wanted to turn it into a full-time career.

"It was hard for me to leave LHA; it was a great job, but I thought I had more potential to do things on my own," he said.

With his business, Burjus owns more than 10 rentals and manages more than 300 rentals for other owners. Fix Master LLC also performs remodeling work on the side. What began as a personal career has morphed into hiring several others including his wife and twin brother.

Burjus says his experience with LHA has been a benefit for himself, other property owners and tenants. He owns and manages multiple properties with Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) participants.

"Having worked at LHA has helped me open the doors for HCV tenants," he said. "Some owners didn't know how it worked and were unsure, but I've been able to speak up about it."

Burjus also works with other organizations that give people various opportunities, something he knows about personally.

Originally from Iraq, Burjus moved to the U.S. after working as an interpreter and cultural advisor for the U.S. military for three years. He arrived in 2012 with nothing, he said. Although he received assistance from organizations, he described it as a long, lonely road. Burjus is happy to call Lincoln home, and he became a U.S. citizen in 2018.

He hopes to clear up any questions property owners have about LHA and how it works and encourage more to be open to HCV participants.

"LHA does a great job and checks on its tenants and lets landlords know what's going on, which is beneficial for everyone," Burjus said. "I love working with LHA. It's a good relationship, and we intend to keep it that way."

John Burjus, Fix Master LLC owner, now houses Housing Choice Voucher tenants and provides insight to other property managers interested in the program.

**Burjus
bridges
gap**

Lincoln Housing Authority
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It is the mission of the Lincoln Housing Authority to provide safe, sanitary and decent housing to families with minor children, elderly and disabled persons, currently undergoing financial stress, in a manner which affords applicants and tenants dignity and minimal intrusion, within the limits of prudent fiscal management.

What needs to be included in a lease?

Do you need help drafting a lease for a Lincoln Housing Authority (LHA) Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) participant? If so, use this checklist:

- The term of the lease must be at least a 12-month period. The lease must start with the first day of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract (move-in date or inspection pass date, whichever occurred last).
- Contract rent rate, as approved by LHA.
- The lease **MUST** include the name of the owner/landlord and the name of each household member.
- Complete address of unit, including apartment number, city, state and zip code.
- Contain a renewal clause that is effective after the initial one-year term for automatic renewal for a definite successive term. Example of a renewal period: month-to-month or year-to-year.
- Utilities: **MUST** be specific about EACH utility paid by the tenant.
- Utilities: **MUST** be specific about EACH utility paid by the owner/landlord.
- Appliances: **MUST** include if the landlord or tenant furnishes the stove, refrigerator, dishwasher,



disposer, microwave, washer, dryer, etc.

- The lease must be signed by the owner/landlord and all adult tenants 18 years of age. An actual signature or verifiable digital signature is required.

Extra fees

Lincoln Housing Authority has seen an increase in undisclosed fees in leases. Any fees, such as pet, utility or insurance, should be listed in the lease, but they can't be lumped into the rent amount. They must be paid separately by the tenant.



Unlike the photo, apartments ready for inspection must be clean of all construction debris, and utilities should be on. They should be ready as if a tenant would move in that day.

Ensure units are ready before scheduling inspections

Inspections should not be scheduled until all construction, renovations and cleaning has been completed. Ensuring a unit is ready for inspection saves landlords time in having to reschedule.

Being prepared also has other benefits. Units with a new voucher tenant, which pass the first inspection, may be inspected again in two years instead of annually; and landlords receive a one-time payment of \$400. If the unit doesn't pass on the first attempt, landlords may still qualify for a \$200 one-time incentive payment.

To be inspected, units should:

- ☐ Have all utilities turned on.
- ☐ Be clean.
- ☐ All repair, paint or construction equipment and debris removed.
- ☐ Floors repaired or replaced as needed.
- ☐ Have no tripping hazards.
- ☐ Have no signs of bugs.
- ☐ Stove and refrigerator clean.
- ☐ Holes in doors, walls, windows and screens repaired.
- ☐ No abandoned items.
- ☐ Everything works as designed.

LHA urges all landlords to ensure a unit is ready to lease prior to scheduling an inspection. If the unit is not rent ready, the inspection may be rescheduled.

Keep the heat on

This time of year, we want landlords to ensure their rental unit's furnace or heat source is in proper working order. If the heat isn't on, landlords only have 24 hours to get it back on and working properly before it can affect their Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract.

If a complaint is received from a tenant, LHA will call and email the landlord to notify him/her of the requirement and short deadline. If LHA can't contact the landlord, LHA staff will go to his/her residence or business address to give or post notice.

An easy way to avoid getting a notice is to inspect furnaces to verify they're ready for winter weather. If the tenant is responsible for the gas or electric, and the utilities are shut off, the landlord should send them a 14- or 30-day notice and a copy to LHA for their follow-up with the tenant.



New requirements for smoke detectors to be complete by Dec. 1

An update from the Public and Federally Assisted Housing Fire Safety Act of 2022 introduced new smoke alarm requirements for all federally assisted housing units, including multifamily, public and Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) units.

The law states all federally assisted units must have either:

- Hardwired smoke alarms, OR
- Tamper-resistant, 10-year battery-powered smoke alarms with sealed batteries.

Lincoln Housing Authority will begin citing units during inspections

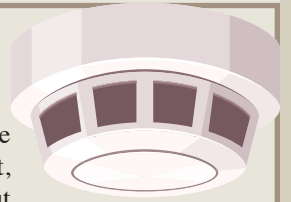
on Dec. 1, 2024. If cited, property owners have 30 days to correct the issue and allow LHA to do a physical recheck. If a recheck isn't completed, the property will go into abatement. Please update or replace outdated alarms before December to ensure units are compliant.

Property owners and managers must regularly conduct smoke alarm maintenance and testing. Please educate tenants on the importance of smoke alarms and proper testing.

For questions and concerns, contact Amanda at 402-434-5514.

Smoke alarm requirements:

- Smoke alarms must be on each level of the unit, including basements but excluding crawl spaces and unfinished attics.
 - Install smoke alarms outside each separate sleeping area in the immediate vicinity of bedrooms. (NOTE: In October 2025, new inspection standards will require smoke alarms in every sleeping room and outside each sleeping area).
 - All units constructed after 2016 must have a smoke detector in each sleeping room.
 - Smoke alarms must meet the needs of all family members, including those with sensory or physical disabilities.
- Requirements for battery-powered smoke alarms:
- Sealed batteries must be nonreplaceable and tamper-proof to ensure long-term functionality.
 - Batteries must last for at least 10 years without the need for replacement.
 - Units built or rehabilitated after the enactment of the law must be hardwired.



Your tenant-based housing team



Keeping out and cleaning up after mice

As colder weather approaches, pests such as mice often seek shelter indoors for warmth. It's up to landlords to seal any holes and gaps to prevent mice and other pests from entering.

Mice can easily fit into and inhabit tight spaces. Their fur can make their slender bodies look bulkier, and they have powerful legs. If a mouse can get its head through a hole, the rest of its body will follow. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that mice can squeeze through openings as small as a nickel.



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, mice can fit through any gaps or holes the size of a nickel.

Preparation

Inspect properties now to keep mice out. Don't underestimate the size of holes and cracks you think they could enter. Check:

- Inside, under and behind kitchen cabinets, refrigerators and stoves.
- Inside closets near the floor corners.
- Around exterior and interior doors, windows and foundations, including gaps between the floor and doors.
- Around pipes under sinks, washing machines, and to and from hot water heaters and furnaces.
- Around floor vents, dryer vents and floor drains.
- Between the floor and wall junctures.
- Holes for electrical, plumbing, cable, air conditioning, and gas lines outside the home.
- Inside attics, basements or crawl spaces.

Small holes can be filled with steel wool and then sealed with caulk. For large holes, cement, hardware cloth or metal lath — all which can be found at local hardware stores — can be used.

Ensure you seal any gaps, trap rodents in and around the home, as well as clean up any food or water sources.

Cleaning up

If signs of mice, droppings or a nest are found in a home, take precautions to clean the area safely. Do not vacuum or sweep rodent droppings. Disease can be spread from rodents to people when they breathe in contaminated air. Vacuuming can cause tiny droplets containing viruses to get into the air.

First, use a general-purpose household disinfectant cleaning product or bleach solution by combining 1.5 cups of household bleach with 1 gallon of water (equal to 1 part bleach to 9 parts water). Make the bleach solution fresh before use.

Wear rubber or plastic gloves and spray



Mouse droppings and nests should be cleaned up carefully. Do not use a vacuum.

urine, droppings, dead rodents or nesting material with bleach solution or disinfectant until very wet. Let soak for five minutes or according to disinfectant instructions. Place nesting material and dead rodents into a plastic bag and knot it before placing it in a garbage can. Use paper towels to wipe up the urine and droppings and cleaning products. Throw paper towels into the garbage. Mop or sponge the area with disinfectant, including floors, countertops, cabinets and drawers. It's recommended to steam-clean or shampoo carpets. Wash any cloth in hot water if exposed.

Once complete, remove gloves and wash hands with soap and warm water.

For more information about how to clean up, visit www.cdc.gov/healthy-pets/rodent-control/clean-up.html.



Get property winter-ready

With cold temperatures settling in and snow on the horizon, it's essential for property owners and tenants to prepare for the fall and winter months. Taking proactive steps can help prevent issues.

Furnace

- Make sure furnaces are cleaned and inspected at least once a year.
- Clean or replace filters once a month during cooler months.
- Check to make sure the furnace blower motor is properly lubricated.
- Clean registers, vents and duct openings.
- Check and clean flues and chimneys.
- Install proper insulation, which will help prevent heat loss and limit heating costs.
- Remind tenants to maintain a normal temperature in the unit, even if they leave. Furnace temps should not be set lower than 55 degrees to avoid frozen pipes. Maintaining a consistent temperature also helps avoid wood and other materials to expand and contract, potentially causing damage.



Gutters and downspouts

- Inspect, clean and repair rain gutters and downspouts to prevent ice from building up.
- Install gutter guards to keep gutters and downspouts clear of leaves and other debris.
- Ensure gutters drain away from the foundation to prevent slipping accidents and water damage.



Roof and chimney



- Ensure ridge vents are unobstructed.
- Check and repair or replace any missing, cracked, curled, broken or rotting shingles.
- Check the roof anywhere it is open, such as a chimney, vent, dormer or skylight. Sealing with roof cement can prevent costly repairs.
- Install a screen chimney cap to prevent birds or other animals from entering.

Windows and doors

- Check windows throughout the unit, including attics and basements, for cracks and broken glass. Cracks can cause a furnace to work harder than necessary.
- Check around windows and doors for drafts, and caulk or weatherstrip as needed.
- Exterior doors need new doorstops if you can see light peeking through underneath.
- Old, drafty windows can be covered with heavy-duty plastic to keep the cold out.
- Clean and install storm windows to reduce heat loss and prevent condensation, if available.



Faucets



- Detach hoses and use faucet covers or wrap rags, paper, trash bags or plastic foam around faucets and outdoor pipes.
- Insulate your outdoor water meter box and ensure its lid is fastened tightly.
- Protect outdoor electrical pumps.
- Remind tenants to open under-sink cabinets in the kitchen and bathroom to allow heated indoor air to circulate around water pipes during cold snaps.

Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors

- To help protect your tenants and property, smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors should be tested. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, carbon monoxide poisoning peaks in December and January, so it's important to check them now and remind tenants to leave them alone.



Snow removal

- Your lease should state whether snow removal is the property owner or tenant's responsibility. If it is the property owner's, make a snow removal plan or hire a service company. If removal is a tenant's responsibility, remind them now before it snows.



LHA inspection team

On any given day, inspectors are assigned to inspect a rental unit based on schedule, area and availability. LHA has three full-time inspectors and two others who are certified to assist.

If you want to schedule an inspection or you have questions about the inspection process, please contact the Inspection Desk at inspectiondesk@L-housing.com, or 402-434-5522.



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inspector
402-434-5524



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Macie
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Who to contact

For questions about your case, use the information listed here to identify the appropriate person to contact to:

- Report a lease violation.
- Make a modification to a lease.
- Alert LHA that a tenant has moved out.

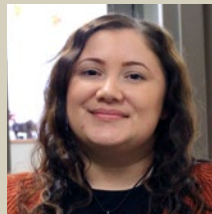
- Determine the whereabouts of a rent payment.
- Ask general questions.

Staff members are assigned cases based upon the first letter of the head of household's last name.



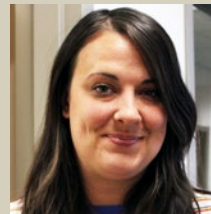
Intake and
briefing support

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Raquel@L-housing.com



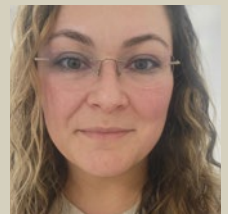
Intake

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Intake

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Intake and
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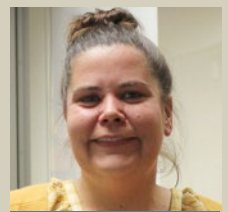
H

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Ah-Ak, D, F, J, K,
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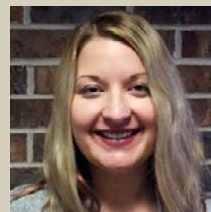
Ar-As, C, S

Sara
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saram@L-housing.com



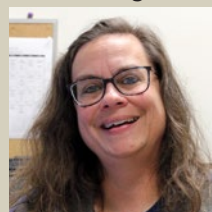
At-Az, I, M, N, Q, U

Tiffany
402-434-5519
tiffany@L-housing.com



New leases
and contracts

Makenzie
402-434-5506
makenzie@L-housing.com



Housing
supervisor

Amy V.
402-434-5517
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Tenant-based
housing manager

Jodie
402-434-5505
jodie@L-housing.com

Request for Inspection forms must be complete

Lincoln Housing Authority (LHA) urges landlords/property managers to complete every part of the Request for Inspection and Unit Information (RIUI) forms.

When a landlord/property owner turns in a RIUI form for new tenants, LHA staff carefully review all documents, including listed utilities, address, signatures, etc. If the form is missing information, LHA will notify the landlord of the incomplete paperwork and will only hold on to it for five (5) business days. Staff will:

- Call or email the landlord/owner to advise what is needed and notify them that it must be received within five (5) business days.
- Call the voucher participant and let them know LHA is waiting for completed paperwork. They will be notified



that if the information is not received within five (5) business days, they will need to continue their housing search.

If the required information is not returned in those five days, it will be returned to the housing specialist or intake staff member.

Why only five days? Incomplete or insufficient paperwork can impact a tenant's timeframe to find housing before their voucher expires. Tenants only have 90 days after voucher issuance to find housing, or they could lose their voucher.

LHA will not schedule inspections if awaiting new landlord paperwork or for information to be returned. Inspectors cannot process inspections fully until the information is complete, which could cause further delays and issues.

Winter extensions for exterior lead paint

Lead paint is hazardous, potentially causing nervous system damage, stunted growth, kidney damage and delayed development. The latter is the motivation behind the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's interest in the condition of interior and exterior paint, especially if the house was built before 1978 and if there is a child under age 6 residing there. This applies to all surfaces with cracking, scaling, peeling, chipping and loose paint including walls, stairs, decks, porches, railings, common areas, doors and trim, baseboards, and window components such as the sill or trough.

As the weather gets cooler, lead paint extensions apply. If, during an inspection, chipping, peeling or cracking paint is found on the house's exterior, it must be fixed. However, because of winter's unsatisfactory painting conditions from Oct. 1 to April 30, landlords are given until June 30 to pass inspection. Units will be reinspected in mid-June to ensure the unit passes inspection prior to

the June 30 deadline.

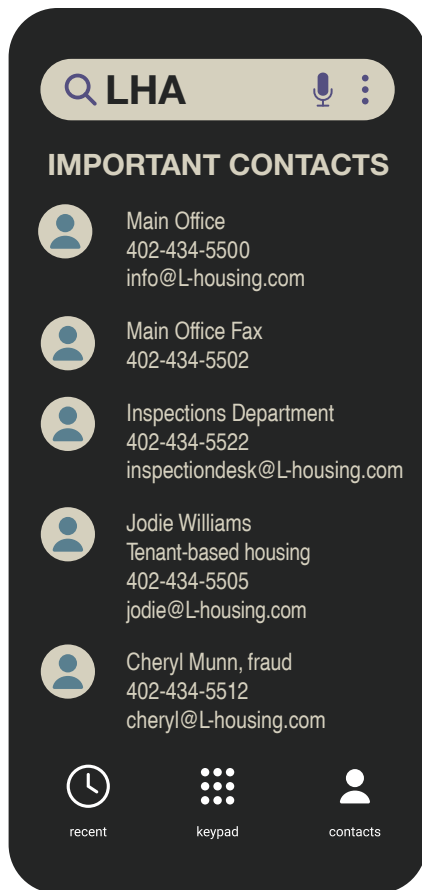
LHA will not require clearance examinations and owner certifications until June 30 for property inspected from Oct. 1 through April 30 and cited for Housing Quality Standards (HQS) violation for exterior paint issues.

1. Owners will be sent notification to contact LHA by May 31 if they plan to meet the exterior paint HQS requirements.
2. The owner's Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) will be abated on July 1 if the owner fails to comply with the exterior painting and/or clearance requirements. The owner and tenant will be notified that the HAP contract will terminate July 31 if the unit continues in "abatement" during the entire month of July. The tenant will be given the option to move.

3. If at any time the owner indicates he or she does not intend to comply with the Lead-Based Paint HQS requirements, the tenants will be given the option to search for a new unit, and HAP contracts will be terminated accordingly.

Landlords should start planning for how they will meet the paint requirements and have the unit reinspected before June 30. Don't wait until the last minute. This is good advice for two reasons:

1. It is important to start the search for the necessary professionals — painters, contractors, inspectors, etc., early to meet the reinspection deadline.
2. You want the paint problem corrected early so you can notify LHA to reinspect the unit or provide LHA with the required clearance certificate, permitting rent payments to continue.



Happy holidays

Lincoln Housing Authority wishes everyone happy holidays. May your holidays and new year be filled with hope, joy, peace and prosperity.

So the LHA staff can enjoy the holidays, offices will be closed the following federally observed holidays: Monday, Nov. 11; Thursday, Nov. 28; Friday, Nov.

29; Wednesday, Dec. 25; and Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2025. We are also closed on Monday, Jan. 20, 2025, and Monday, Feb. 17, 2025.

Landlords can post rental listings at no cost

Landlords in Lincoln who are open to participating in the Lincoln Housing Authority's Section 8 program can now post their property listings for free. This initiative aims to foster collaboration and increase affordable housing options in the community, making it easier for landlords to connect with potential tenants. Don't miss this opportunity to contribute to the housing needs of our residents.

Visit zohojiml2.zohocreatorportal.com to list available rentals in the LHA Rental Listing site. New users must sign up for an account to post available units. Listings must include a phone number and rent amount; additional fields and photos are optional.

You may also go to www.L-housing.com, click on the Rental



Scan the QR code to add your available units to LHA's website.

Assistance tab or visit www.l-housing.com/RentalAssistance.html, and scroll to the bottom of the page to the Rental Listings icon. Select the option to add or edit listings and create an account to post a unit.

To avoid repeat calls upon renting a unit, be sure to delete your listing as needed.

