

Kandiyohi County Housing and Redevelopment Authority
Response Plan to COVID-19
Effective 03/16/2020, Revised 3/19/20

Board of Commissioners

1. The HRA Board of Commissioners will comply with the open meeting law applicable to government entities as governed by Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13. During the COVID-19 outbreak, the location for Commissioner meetings will be changed from 2200 23rd ST NE, Suite 2090, Willmar, MN to the Lakeview Highrise, 300 7th Street NW, Willmar, MN. Commissioners and Liaisons may participate by telephone conference call provided all can hear each other. At least one Commissioner will be present in the meeting room. Any members of the public present in the meeting room must also be able to hear the meeting discussion as allowed by Minnesota State Statutes Chapter 13. All votes will be recorded by roll call.
2. The HRA Board of Commissioners may call emergency meetings to approve new policies or amend existing policies in response to emerging COVID-19 issues or for any other lawful reason to have an emergency meeting.

Apartment Buildings/Tenants

1. Visitor Restrictions will be implemented allowing only one visitor at a time per household. Non-essential visitors shall not enter. A non-essential visitor is considered anyone who is not contracted with a tenant for nursing services, home health aide, prescription deliveries, food deliveries or similar reason. If physically able, tenants shall meet delivery drivers at building entrances to receive deliveries.
2. Other non-essential services will be suspended or canceled including vending machine delivery, contracted cleaning crews and routine pest control (i.e. spiders). Routine elevator and fire system contracted services will continue. Security Patrol services will continue. Pest Control services for immediate health and safety reasons will continue.
3. Drinking fountains in common areas will be turned off.
4. Community rooms, sitting areas, exercise rooms, common area bathrooms will be closed to residents and the public. Furniture in common areas will be removed.
5. Routine HRA inspections of units will be suspended until a date determined by the Executive Director.
6. Maintenance staff will respond to emergency health and safety work orders only. Front desk staff receiving tenant maintenance requests will inform tenants that work orders will be forwarded to maintenance staff, however, the non-emergency work orders will not be completed. No timeframe for completion of non-emergency work orders will be provided. Callers will be asked if anyone in the household is ill and comments will be noted on the work order for maintenance staff. Maintenance staff will attempt to trouble shoot issues over the phone with tenants before responding. Health and Safety Emergency work order requests include but are not limited to:
 - Clogged toilets, drains and plumbing lines
 - No heat or improper heat
 - No water or water not heating properly

- No electricity or failed electricity in a room
 - Broken windows
 - Doors not locking
 - Stoves and refrigerators not working properly
 - Anything that is an immediate health and safety issue. Maintenance staff will discuss questionable issues with their Supervisor.
7. Maintenance staff responding to work orders will disinfect repair areas before touching and disinfect when they are done. If available, maintenance staff will wear protective gear such as gloves.
 8. Disinfectant supplies will be monitored and purchased where available when needed.
 9. All “high touch areas” in buildings will be disinfected each morning at 7:00 am using disinfectants recommended by the Minnesota Department of Health or Centers for Disease Control. This will also be done on Saturdays and Sundays. During the week, maintenance will do a final wipe down at the end of each day on entry way door handles and handicap access buttons, elevators, entry call systems. High touch areas are:
 - Building entry door knobs/handles/bars and handicap access buttons
 - Entry call systems
 - Elevator buttons and handrails
 - Drinking Faucets
 - Mailboxes
 - Tenant Unit Door handles
 - Garbage Shoot Doors
 - Light Switches
 - Thermostats
 - Laundry rooms machine control buttons, lids/doors
 - Trash cans with swinging doors
 - Stairway and hallway railings
 - Any other obvious areas/items with public traffic
 10. Tenants will be provided letters discussing building changes, work order changes, staff availability changes, reminders to complete daily cleaning of their units to disinfect high touch areas in their homes, reminders to have a 14-day supply of food for their household/pets along with cleaning and personal hygiene supplies. Tenants are asked to report to the HRA if a health provider asks them to self-quarantine. Tenants will be surveyed to provide updated contact information, emergency contact information and other questions regarding special needs.
 11. The HRA will implement additional flexibility for tenants regarding timing to report decreased income which affects the calculation of tenant’s monthly rent based on total household income. Effective immediately, the HRA will adjust tenant rent on the first of the month provided a tenant has reported the decreased income by the last day of the immediate previous month and the HRA has verified the decreased income.
 12. All tenants will be provided information on how to apply for unemployment benefits and will be encouraged to apply if their household is affected by decreased employment.
 13. Processes for lease signing will be modified as follows: Prospective tenants will be given an appointment to pick up leasing packets, staff will explain to them which items need to be

returned within one day and tenants will be instructed to call staff with questions regarding the information they are being sent home with.

14. Appeals for assistance denials or termination will occur utilizing conference calls with applicants/tenants, staff and hearing officers.
15. There will be no changes in decision processes used for allowing Reasonable Accommodations or Emergency Transfers.

Rental Assistance Programs (HCV, Bridges, Bridges to Bridges, Bridges RTC, Shelter Plus Care)

- Program participants will be sent letters regarding reduced program staff availability in office and increased assistance through phone calls and mail, changes to HQS inspections as allowed by regulation, flexibility in reporting decreased income changes, information on unemployment assistance.
- Staff will not meet with program applicants or participants in the HRA offices. Waiting list applicants will be sent application packets and interviewed over the phone. Participant will be encouraged to call staff with issues and questions. One on one meetings with individual program participants will only occur for emergency reasons as determined by the HRA.
- Briefings as required by program regulations to instruct rental assistance eligible applicants will be done on the phone or other electronic means. New HCV participants will be given initial 60 day voucher issuances.
- Housing Quality Inspections for new program participants or existing participants moving to a new unit will continue as is required by program regulations.
- Annual Housing Quality Inspections required by program regulations which cannot be delayed will be conducted. However, if the annual inspection fails initially, the HRA will only re-inspect life-threatening deficiencies. Landlords will be allowed to self-certify that nonlife-threatening deficiencies have been corrected in required timeframes and will provide pictures of the repairs to the HRA. The HRA will abate HAP payments if acceptable documentation is not received.

Employees

1. Office Staff

- All staff working in office settings will stay 6 feet away from each other while interacting.
- Staff working in pairs to collect money from apartment building drop boxes will drive separately to locations and keep 6 feet of distance from each other at all times.
- Office staff will eliminate one to one office visits with clients when possible and increase client correspondence through the phone and mail.
- Office staff completing Housing Quality Inspections shall wear protective gear such as gloves when available.
- Baby gates will be installed at main office, Highland and 15th Street Flats to put space between clients and staff at points of office entry.
- Anyone not having a business reason to be at any HRA offices will be asked to leave.
- Office employees will be allowed to telework as approved by the Executive Director and will be allowed flexible work schedules as approved by the Executive Director. The HRA's Personnel Policy will apply in these situations.
- Office staff will be responsible for disinfecting high touch areas in their immediate work space including keyboards, desktops, phones, calculators, desks as well as other shared office

equipment and supplies such as office countertops, copiers, staplers, water coolers, other obvious areas and items.

2. Maintenance Staff

- Maintenance staff will no longer directly report to their Lakeview office to start their day. This change is made to keep distance between staff in an attempt to reduce virus spread among employees and reduce the risk of having all maintenance staff ill at the same time. Maintenance staff will be assigned to separate buildings to start their work day.
- Maintenance staff will not ride together in vehicles when more than one employee is needed to respond to work order requests and they will keep six feet of distance between them at all times when possible.
- Maintenance staff will work alone as often as possible. They will consult their supervisor to work in groups of two or more for non-emergency activities.
- Maintenance staff located in Kandiyohi County may need to respond to issues in McLeod County and vice versa for emergency reasons only.

3. All HRA Employees

- All staff will be scheduled to work weekends to assist with disinfecting apartment buildings unless excused by the Executive Director due to employee or immediate family medical reasons. The time on weekends to disinfect in response to COVID-19 will be considered part of the HRA's normal operations and will be an adjustment to employee's regular work schedules and job duties. Time for working on the weekends to disinfect buildings in the morning will not be considered on-call time. Non-exempt staff will be paid at their regular pay rates for weekend work to disinfect sites. If at the end of a pay week, an employee's time exceeds 40 regular hours, time will be paid at 1 ½ times regular rates (overtime rate). All overtime will be approved by an employee's Supervisor in advance. Employees will contact their Supervisor if they predict their time for the week will exceed 40 hours for approval to work in excess of 40 hours. Maintenance staff who respond to other emergency work orders on weekends will be paid at their on-call rate, however, they will be paid at their regular rate for weekend disinfecting. Staff will not be paid for their time to drive from their home to the initial apartment building to begin their disinfecting shift on a weekend. Time is paid for driving between apartment buildings after completing disinfecting work at an initial building.
- Staff will be allowed to use their cell phones for time clock access.
- Staff showing symptoms of COVID-19 illness shall stay home until they are symptom free either voluntarily or by direction of the Executive Director per the HRA's Personnel Policy. Staff who need to stay home will not return to work until they directly consult with the Executive Director.
- Advancement of Personal Leave time to employees who have exhausted personal leave time shall follow the HRA's Personnel Policy. Employees are expected to follow social distancing recommendations noted above and directives from authorities declaring public health emergencies including the President of the United States' Coronavirus Guidelines for America posted at [coronavirus.gov](https://www.coronavirus.gov) as of 03/18/2020. Failure to follow current recommendations and future recommendations as they change may jeopardize approvals for personal leave advancement. The Coronavirus Guidelines for America as of 03/18/2020 are:
 - a. Listen to and follow the directions of your State and Local Authorities;
 - b. If you feel sick, stay home. Do not go to work. Contact your medical provider;

- c. If your children are sick, keep them at home. Do not send them to school. Contact your medical provider.
 - d. If someone in your household has tested positive for the coronavirus, keep the entire household at home. Do not go to work. Do not go to school. Contact your medical provider.
 - e. If you are an older person, stay home and away from other people.
 - f. If you are a person with a serious underlying health condition that can put you at increased risk (for example, a condition that impairs your lung or heart function or weakens your immune system), stay home and away from other people.
 - g. Work or engage in schooling from home whenever possible.
 - h. Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10 people.
Avoid eating or drinking at bars, restaurants and food courts. Use drive-thru, pickup or delivery options.
 - i. Avoid discretionary travel, shopping trips, and social visits.
 - j. Do not visit nursing homes or retirement or long-term care facilities unless to provide critical assistance.
 - k. Practice good hygiene. Wash your hands, especially after touching any frequently used item or surface. Avoid touching your face, sneeze or cough into a tissue, or the inside of your elbow. Disinfect frequently used items and surfaces as much as possible.
 - l. If you work in critical infrastructure industry as defined by the Dpt of Homeland Security, such as healthcare services and pharmaceutical and food supply, you have a special responsibility to maintain your normal work schedule. You and your employers should follow CDC guidance to protect your health at work.
- In making decisions regarding telework and flexible work schedules, the Executive Director will first consider the needs of the agency. Also considered will be the requests of individual employees and an employee's underlying medical conditions that may increase the risk of serious COVID-19 for individuals of any age. These medical conditions are posted on the Minnesota Department of Health website as of 03/15/2020.

Response Plan Changes

As Federal, State and Local authorities respond to COVID-19 emerging issues and changes, this response plan will be revised to comply with directives and recommendations as they pertain to the Kandiyohi County HRA.