

## Mainely Landlords

### Home Retro Program

MaineHousing's new Home Retro program assists Housing Choice Voucher tenants who need to retrofit their apartment or house with accessible features to accommodate a person with a disability. Examples include the installation of keyless entry or widening doorways to allow wheelchair entry.

The funds cannot be used in a unit that must comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1983 or Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act or for tenants that have funds available under other state or federal programs.

This is a small pilot program which will be offered until the funds are depleted. Please contact Maureen Brown at (207) 626-4695 or email at [mbrown@mainehousing.org](mailto:mbrown@mainehousing.org) if you have a tenant who could utilize this program.

### Vendors help us support landlords

MaineHousing thanks all of the vendors who participate in our Owner Excellence Program and landlord outreach events!

Among them are Lowe's, which offers ProServices including a business supply replenishment program, a quote support program, a cooperative purchasing network, and LowesForPros, an e-commerce site that allows you to create custom requisition lists, order ahead for pick up, track your purchase history, and take advantage of tax exempt purchases. Learn more at [LowesForPros.com](http://LowesForPros.com) or [lowes.com](http://lowes.com).

Also attending events are: Efficiency Maine, Smoke Free Maine, BugBusterzzz, Alpha One, Bread of Life Ministries, Volunteers of America, Atlantic Pest Solutions, and area landlord associations.

Three landlord outreach events are being planned for this year. Please follow us on Facebook under MaineHousing for information about these and other programs.

### List your rentals for free at [www.mainehousingsearch.org](http://www.mainehousingsearch.org)

MaineHousing does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, physical or mental disability, age, familial status or receipt of public assistance in the admission or access to or treatment in its programs and activities. In employment, MaineHousing does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, physical or mental disability or genetic information. MaineHousing will provide appropriate communication auxiliary aids and services upon sufficient notice. MaineHousing will also provide this document in alternative formats upon sufficient notice. MaineHousing has designated the following person responsible for coordinating compliance with applicable federal and state nondiscrimination requirements and addressing grievances: Louise Patenaude, Maine State Housing Authority, 353 Water Street, Augusta, Maine 04330-4633, Telephone Number 1-800-452-4668 (voice in state only), (207) 626-4600 (voice) or Maine Relay 711.

### Director's Message

## Recognizing the importance of landlords

MaineHousing's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program began 2015 with a leased voucher count of 3,581 and closed the year with 3,748, very close to our final goal of maintaining 3,800 leased tenants.

We accomplished this with the collaboration of landlords who continue to keep their units affordable for those with very limited income, work with us on maintaining their units to Housing Quality Standards (HQS), and at times work through some significant challenges with their tenants.

While we have always known how crucial landlords are to the success of the Housing Choice Voucher program, we have not always been able to dedicate the necessary time and resources to adequately recognize and reward the landlords in our program. Now that we have begun to focus on doing just that,

I wanted to let you know about some of the new initiatives we are working on.

**Owner Excellence Program:** In 2015, we initiated the Owner Excellence Program (OEP) to recognize owners/property managers who consistently met or exceeded program expectations in regard to inspections and tenant relations, and in following HCV program guidelines and Maine law as it pertains to rental housing. Program benefits are listed on Page 2.

We currently have 32 landlords participating in OEP, representing 139 properties. We would like to increase participation significantly in the coming year.

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**Lauren Bustard**  
HCV Program  
Director

## Community Mediation Services Program offers free facilitation help

Experiencing conflict with tenants? The Community Mediation Services Program (CMS) of Volunteers of America Northern New England offers mediation and conflict management services throughout Maine to landlords participating in the Housing Voucher Program.

Through this program you will have access to trained mediators who can provide one-on-one conflict coaching to you and/or provide neutral facilitation of a meeting between you and your tenant to discuss issues that may be causing problems.

The goal of this program is to promote improved housing stability through communication and dispute resolution.

CMS wants to help landlords have the tools to address issues before they escalate into larger issues. Benefits include lower turn-over of units and fewer complaints.

Services are confidential, voluntary, convenient, and tailored to meet your needs. They're designed to empower the landlord and tenant to create their own solutions that best meet their mutual needs.

While CMS encourages you to resolve disputes that may arise and focus on achieving a positive outcome, it can help you prepare for these conversations through conflict coaching and help with the more complex matters through mediation with third-party neutrals.

Currently, there is no charge for this program. Funding is provided through a NAFCM/JAMS Foundation grant for landlords of veterans and through MaineHousing for all other tenants.

CMS will be holding a workshop – *Preventing & Managing Housing Conflicts for Landlords* – where you can get tips and practice handling conflict in general along with some typical issues that arise between landlords and tenants. The date(s) and locations will be available soon.

For more information about this program, please contact Elaine M. Bourne, CMS program manager, at (207) 373-1140, ext. 229 or email at [elaine.bourne@voanne.org](mailto:elaine.bourne@voanne.org).

## HCV Director: Recognizing the importance of landlords

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**Landlord Outreach:** In November 2015, we held a Landlord Outreach Event at Kennebec Valley Community College in Fairfield. This event was well attended by current and prospective owners and included an informational presentation on lease and fair housing issues by attorney Wendy Paradis, several vendor/informational tables, as well as the opportunity to speak with MaineHousing staff about the program. We plan to do three similar events statewide this year.

**Landlord Briefings:** We have designed a new owner informational packet of materials to distribute to landlords new to the program and any current landlords who would like additional program information. We hope to do a better job of explaining the program to new landlords to avoid misunderstandings around program rules and to allow for more dialogue before

entering into a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract.

**Landlord Advisory Group:** We want to hear from landlords on how things are going from your perspective. We also want feedback on some of the new initiatives we're planning. We have identified a small group of landlords who are willing to work with us and are looking for additional landlords, so if you are interested, please send an email to me, Lauren Bustard, at lbustard@mainehousing.org.

**Landlord Repair Grant Program:** We will be launching this program in early April to assist those landlords who are unable to afford to make repairs necessary for a unit to pass an initial HQS inspection so that an HCV tenant can move in. This is a reimbursement program for up to \$5,000 (after the owner has paid the first \$500 on the repairs) once the unit has passed inspection and we have a signed lease and

HAP contract in place. These funds are intended for some of the most costly failed items such as egress windows, tie-downs and deteriorating paint, and an individual owner would only be able to access the grant funds once. More specific information will be provided to owners when an initial inspection has failed and the owner is financially unable to make the repairs.

We're looking forward to working more closely with landlords, gaining additional insight into your thoughts and concerns in regard to the HCV program, and offering some rewards and incentives for the great work you do with our tenants.

If you are interested in knowing more about any of these initiatives, or have ideas to improve the way we work with you and/or our tenants, please don't hesitate to contact me at lbustard@mainehousing.org or 624-5712.

## Housing Choice Voucher department shares Owner Excellence Program details

Property owners and managers can apply to become a participant of the Owner Excellence Program (OEP) at any time if they meet the following criteria:

### OEP participants:

- Have been an active property owner/manager with the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program for the past 12 months
- Follow Maine laws regarding security deposits
- List their units on MaineHousingSearch.org, and get an OEP seal on their listings
- Are registered or in the process of registering for MaineHousing's Direct Deposit Program and Partner Portal
- Are in good standing with utility companies for landlord-provided utilities, including no tenant complaints regarding utilities

### Congratulations!

#### Honeymoon Housing, LLC (Jean & Arthur Muse)

recently became participants in the Housing Choice Voucher Program's Owner Excellence Program. The Muses have two properties in Mexico and one in Rumford with a total of 11 units.

- Provide valid proof of ownership for all HCV Program units

### OEP participants do not have:

- A history of abatements
- A history of Fair Housing violations
- Any serious complaints on file with MaineHousing in the last 12 months

- A history of failure to enforce the lease or follow the HAP, or fail to manage a unit
- A history of or pending foreclosure(s) for any HCV Program unit
- Any liens or owed back taxes on any HCV Program unit

### And, OEP participants do not:

- Owe MaineHousing any outstanding money

### Membership benefits include:

- Paid membership fee to your local landlord organization
- Self-certification of minor Housing Quality Standards fail items
- Exclusive inspection scheduling and consolidation inspections for multiple units
- Security Deposit Program participation
- Biennial unit inspections

More info? Contact Leah Brown at lbrown@mainehousing.org or 626-4637 or Barbara Brann at bbrann@mainehousing.org or 624-5725.

## Carbon Monoxide Safety



**Carbon monoxide (CO) is a gas. It has no odor. CO gas is poisonous. It can make a person feel sick and can be deadly. In the home, heating and cooking devices that burn fuel can be sources of carbon monoxide.**

### CO ALARMS

- » CO alarms should be installed outside each sleeping area. Install alarms on every level of the home. It is best to use interconnected alarms. When one sounds, all CO alarms in the home sound.
- » Follow the instructions on the package to properly install the CO alarm.
- » Test CO alarms at least once a month.
- » Replace CO alarms according to the instructions on the package.
- » Know the sounds the CO alarm makes. It will sound if CO is detected. It will make a different sound if the battery is low or if it is time to get a new CO alarm.
- » If the battery is low, replace it.
- » If the CO alarm sounds, you must get fresh air. Move outdoors, by an open window or near an open door. Make sure everyone in the home gets to fresh air. Call the fire department from a fresh air location. Stay there until help arrives.

### PREVENT CO POISONING

- » When warming a vehicle, move it out of the garage. Do not run a fueled engine indoors, even if garage doors are open. Make sure the exhaust pipe of a running vehicle is not blocked. Clear snow away.
- » During and after a snowstorm, make sure vents for the dryer, furnace, stove and fireplace are clear of snow build-up.
- » Clear all debris from dryer, furnace, stove, and fireplace vents.
- » A generator should be used outdoors. Use in a well-ventilated location away from windows, doors, and vent openings.
- » Gas or charcoal grills can produce CO. Only use them outside.
- » Have heating equipment and chimneys inspected by a professional every year before cold weather sets in.
- » Open the damper when using a fireplace for adequate ventilation.
- » Never use your oven or stove to heat your home.

### FACT!

CO is called the silent killer because the gas cannot be seen or smelled. Take action to stay safe from CO poisoning.

 **Your Source for SAFETY Information**  
NFPA Public Education Division • 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169

www.nfpa.org/education