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Schenectady Municipal
Housing Authority

Tenant HANDBOOK

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WELCOME FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Public Housing Resident,

We have prepared this handbook for those who are new to public housing and for those who currently reside with us, with the hope that it will help answer many of the questions you may have about what to expect from the Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority (SMHA), and what is expected of you during your tenancy.

This Tenant Handbook is incorporated into your lease by reference, which means it is a part of your lease, and that you are responsible for complying with the information provided in this Handbook just as you are responsible for complying with the contents of the rest of your lease.

This handbook will serve as a valuable reference source, providing the latest information on current Housing Authority policies and procedures that pertain to you and your home. In these pages you will find information about everything from rent paying procedures to household cleaning tips, from social and community services to maintenance and emergency services, from what to do if you are locked out to how to go about joining your resident association and tenant patrol. In sum, this handbook will explain clearly the conditions of occupancy we expect you to observe as a resident and, in turn, what you can expect from us, your landlord.

The staff of the Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority has proudly provided effective, courteous housing management to countless families for more than 75 years. Our aim is to work with you to make sure that your home with us is a happy and safe one, a home to be proud of.

Sincerely,
Richard E. Homenick
Executive Director

ABOUT YOUR APARTMENT

Pre-Occupancy Inspection

As a new resident you are entitled to a pre-occupancy inspection of your new apartment, with your Project Manager or Occupancy Specialist, in order to identify items and conditions that may need repair to avoid future charges.

Inspect your apartment as soon as you receive the keys. Give it a thorough look. It should be in good condition, but if you do see that anything is missing or in need of repair, advise your Project Manager or Occupancy Specialist as quickly as possible, verbally and in writing. If you fail to do so within a reasonable period of time, then *you* may be held responsible and face possible costs for the work required.

Door Locks

The entrance door(s) of your apartment has been equipped with a good lock. We permit no replacements. You may NOT purchase an additional lock, or change the lock we have provided. In case of an emergency, the Housing Authority must be able to gain entry. You will be responsible for the full cost of removing an added or changed lock, and reinstalling a lock approved and provided by SMHA.

Self-Closing Doors

You may have an apartment entry door that is the self-closing type; that is, when opened and released, the door swings shut and completely closes and latches by itself. Self-closing apartment entrance doors help to prevent the spread of fire. Residents are prohibited by law from removing or disabling any self-closing apartment entrance door or permitting such a door to be held open by any device. There are no exceptions to this requirement.

Floor covering and improperly installed door locks can prevent the self-closing mechanism from working. Any carpeting that impedes the self-closing mechanism should be cut away in the area of the door's swing. To ensure that your apartment entrance door closes properly, it will be inspected periodically. Any repairs, improvements or alterations needed to restore the self-closing feature will be made. If

your apartment entrance door fails to close and latch by itself you should call in a Work Order by using the Maintenance Hot Line – (518) 372-5896.

Ingress and Egress

Ingress and Egress is another way of saying “a way in and a way out” of your apartment. It is required that the windows and doors in your apartment are not obstructed by large furniture items, such as a bunk-bed in front of a bedroom window. Keep the windows leading to the outside clear of any objects that might obstruct exit. If windows become the only escape from fire you will want a clear escape route.

Smoke Detectors

Each SMHA apartment is equipped with the proper amount of smoke detectors, and they are installed in the proper locations, as required by law. Removing, damaging or in any way disabling a smoke detector so that it does not operate properly is a violation of SMHA policy, and a violation of the law. Once a smoke detector has been installed in your apartment, you are responsible for periodically inspecting and testing it to determine that it is in working order. If for some reason the smoke detector is not working, you should call in a Work Order by using the Maintenance Hot Line – (518) 372-5896.

New batteries should be installed at least once a year. It will be easier to remember this task if you install them on a birthday, a holiday, or when you adjust your clocks forward or back in the spring and fall. Many battery-powered units “chirp” or give some other signal when their batteries need replacement.

Federal law requires the Housing Authority to provide all hearing impaired individuals with a visual smoke alarm. Please notify your Project Manager if anyone in your apartment is hearing impaired, and a visual smoke alarm will be installed free of charge.

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, tasteless and toxic gas that results from the incomplete combustion of fossil fuels, such as gasoline, natural gas and oil. Dangerous amounts of CO can accumulate when fuel is not burned properly, or when rooms are poorly ventilated and the CO is unable to escape.

We have installed a combination smoke and CO detector in every apartment where a fossil fuel-burning furnace or boiler is located. This includes Maryvale Apartments,

Lincoln Heights, Steinmetz Homes and MacGathan Townhouses (CO detectors are being added along with the conversion from electric heat to gas heat at MacGathan).

Telephones

You have to make all of your telephone arrangements directly with the telephone company you use.

Antennas and Satellite Dishes

Installation of cable television, which is available in virtually all Housing Authority developments, is the responsibility of the resident.

SMHA residents are prohibited from installing any television or other antenna on the window sill or any place outside of their apartment, including the grounds. This includes any type of satellite dish antenna that might be attached to window frames or the exterior of any building. Satellite dishes are only allowed **inside** of a resident's apartment. Roof antennas are not permitted. However, a master TV antenna may be available at your development. Contact your Project Manager for details.

Painting

All apartments are scheduled for painting by the Authority on the basis of need. If you wish to paint your own apartment, please obtain written consent from your Project Manager. You may be held responsible for the cost of removing or covering over unauthorized painting.

Pest Control/Exterminator Service

The Authority will provide a pest control service on a regularly scheduled basis, without charge to you. Please cooperate by admitting the exterminator when he or she comes to inspect and treat your apartment, and, if you cannot be home, a member of the maintenance staff will allow entry to your apartment and accompany the exterminator as they complete the work. You will be notified in advance of scheduled routine visits. Your cooperation will ensure a vermin-free home.

You must report the presence of any mice, roaches or other vermin as soon as they are discovered, and your Project Manager will immediately schedule a visit. You should never use any multiple fogger type aerosol bug sprays in the apartment.

Bed Bugs

Yes, it's true. Bed bugs are infesting homes throughout the country, and right here in Schenectady. Bed bugs are being found in expensive hotels, homes of wealthy people as well as people in apartments and public housing. Bedbugs will move into clean homes, and not so clean homes.

Bed bugs are small insects that feed on human blood. They are usually active at night when people are sleeping. Adult bed bugs have flat, rusty-red-colored oval bodies. About the size of an apple seed, they are big enough to be easily seen, but often hide in cracks in furniture, floors, or walls. When bed bugs feed, their bodies swell and become brighter red. They can live for several weeks or months without food or water. Although bed bugs are a nuisance, they are not known to spread disease.

In most cases, people carry bed bugs into their homes unknowingly, in infested luggage, furniture, bedding, or clothing. Bed bugs may also travel between apartments through small crevices and cracks in walls and floors. You may notice itchy skin welts. You may also see the bed bugs themselves, small bloodstains from crushed insects, or dark spots from their droppings. It is often hard to see them because they hide in or near beds, other furniture, and in cracks.

If you discover that you have bed bugs, contact the SMHA Maintenance Hotline Right away at 372-5896. Also, you can call Project Manager. We will send our exterminator to your apartment, and if you have bedbugs, we will begin treatment.

Our exterminator will come to your apartment and inspect. SMHA maintenance and or the Project Manager may appear as well. Once the exterminator determines if you have bedbugs or not, we will schedule the treatment day, and give you a list of things you will need to do to prepare for the treatment. You will told by the exterminator how to prepare for treatment. If you do not comply with treatment preparation instructions you may be charged for the cost of preparation performed by the SMHA or its representative, which may include exterminator appearance charges.

SMHA takes bed bugs very seriously, so we expect all residents to cooperate. Remember that you agreed in your lease to comply with obligations affecting health and safety imposed upon tenants by applicable provisions of building and housing codes materially affecting health and safety.

How can I keep bed bugs out of my home? Most bedbug infestations come in with used furniture. Never bring used or discarded bed frames, mattresses, box springs, or upholstered (fabric, leather, etc.) furniture into your home. Wash clothing and bedding

immediately after returning from a trip, whether it's to Grandma's house, a sleepover at a friend's home, or to a hotel or motel.

Laundry and Washing Machines

Some developments have a centrally located laundry room equipped with coin operated washing machines and dryers. If your apartment is equipped to install a washer and dryer hookup and you wish to install a washing machine in your apartment, you must obtain written approval and instructions from your Project Manager. Please follow specific instructions for installation issued by the Housing Authority. Improper installation may result in hazards and inconveniences to you and your neighbors. The most common problem with faulty hook-ups involves hot water gushing out of cold water faucets and a reduction in hot water. You wouldn't want a neighbor to do this to you — don't do it to a neighbor! In addition, only ENERGY STAR rated appliances will be approved for installation.

ENERGY STAR is a joint program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy helping us all save money and protect the environment through energy efficient products and practices.

Vehicle Parking and Vehicle Rules

The Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority provides parking spaces for use by authorized residents who obtain a parking permit sticker. In all developments, parking is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Consult your Occupancy Specialist for information on parking availability and permits. The Housing Authority will not assume any responsibility for any automobile (including yours) parked on Authority property. The duplication or misuse of parking permits may lead to termination of tenancy proceedings.

Any vehicle parked on SMHA property without a parking sticker may be issued a violation ticket.

Any vehicle parked on SMHA property without a valid registration and inspection may be towed without further warning to the vehicle owner.

Any vehicle on SMHA property that is parked on grass, sidewalks, fire lanes, courtyards, or any other part of the property not designated as a parking area may be towed without further warning to the vehicle owner. Vehicles parked in a designated handicapped parking area must properly display authorized handicapped tags, or be subject to towing.

Tenants are permitted to only change tires, oil, air filters and perform tune-ups on their own vehicles.

For parking and vehicle removal during winter storms and subsequent snow removal, please see the Project Manager in charge of your development. At a minimum, you must remove your vehicle to a parking area cleared of snow within 24 hours after a snowfall of 3-inches or more.

Mini-bikes, snowmobiles and any other recreational small engine and all-terrain vehicles are prohibited on SMHA property. Storing small engine vehicles inside apartments or other buildings is also prohibited.

Locked Out?

If you are locked out of your apartment through loss of your key or some other mishap, call the Maintenance Hot-Line at (518) 372-5896. With proper identification you will be admitted into your apartment. Do not try to enter your apartment by forcing a window or door. A lost or stolen key should always be reported. We will not admit children unless parents make a written request for this service and furnish us with a copy of the child's signature.

The following charges apply:

- Additional apartment key charge – pre-paid \$25.00 each
- Lock-out charge/lock change pre-paid \$50.00
- Lock-out/No lock change \$37.50

SAVE TIME AND MONEY; KNOW WHERE YOUR KEY IS!

RENT AND CONDITIONS OF OCCUPANCY

How Rent Is Determined

The rent you pay is either 30% of your income (after allowable deductions and income exclusions) or a flat or ceiling rent, whichever is less. Your family's income determines your individual rent. This is why, down the hall from you, perhaps, a family of your size living in an apartment of your size pays a different amount of rent each month.

Federal Regulations now give families living in public housing the choice of rent methods. Once a year, each public housing family has the choice of paying rent based

on family income (**income based rent**) or **flat rent** based on the market value of the dwelling unit. Residents can choose to pay the flat or ceiling rent even if it is higher than the income based rent.

Whether you choose to pay income-based rent or flat rent, your family composition (number of members in your household) will be reexamined at least once a year.

If you choose to pay the flat rent, your family income must be reexamined at least once every **three (3) years**. At least once a year, you will be able to choose between continuing to pay flat rent, and switching to income-based rent. If, at any time during the year, you are unable to pay the flat rent due to financial hardship, you may request to switch to paying rent based on your income. Financial hardship includes the following situations:

- A decrease in income due to change in family circumstances, including loss of employment, death in the family, or reduction or loss of earnings or other assistance.
- An increase in expenses due to change in family circumstances, for medical costs, transportation, education, or similar items.
- Additional Public Housing Authority policy.

If the PHA determines that your family is experiencing a financial hardship, as described above, your request to switch to income-based rent will be granted as soon as reasonably possible.

[Rent Collection Procedures](#)

[When is My Rent Due?](#)

Rent is due and payable on the first day of each month. Payments received after the first of each month are late payments.

[How Do I Make a Rent Payment?](#)

Rent payments shall be made by the tenant to the Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority Finance Department by any the following methods:

- Mail rent in time to be received by SMHA on or before the first of the month to: SMHA, 375 Broadway, Schenectady, NY 12305
- Place an envelope containing your rent payment in SMHA's main lobby drop box, 375 Broadway, Schenectady, NY 12305

- Make payment in person at the rent collection windows in SMHA's main lobby, 375 Broadway, Schenectady, NY 12305. To check when the rent window is open refer to SMHA's monthly resident newsletter.

Be sure your name, your development name, and your apartment number are written on your check or money order prior to making payment.

[Will I Get a Receipt Proving I Paid My Rent?](#)

If you make payment by mail or drop box, a receipt will be mailed to your home address.

If the Head of Household makes payment in person at a rent collection window, a receipt will be issued at that time if identification is provided (drivers license or other form of ID).

If someone other than the Head of Household makes payment at the rent collection window with a check or money order, or the Head of Household cannot provide identification, a receipt will be mailed to the Head of Household's home address. (if paying in cash, a hand written receipt will be provided to document the cash transaction)

[What Happens if I Don't Pay My Rent by the 1st Day of the Month?](#)

If you do not pay your rent in full to SMHA on or before the 1st of the month, a 5 day grace period will be allowed to make payment in full without penalty.

If your rent is not received by the 6th day of the month, SMHA will issue a late notice called a "14-day Late Payment Notice."

[What is a 14-day Late Payment Notice?](#)

A 14-day Late Payment Notice is sent by SMHA to each tenant that has not made their rent payment in full during the first five days of the month. (If you make your rent payment to the drop box on the 4th or 5th day of the month, you may still receive a 14-day notice. This can happen if a payment is made late (after the 1st of the month), and the payment is not processed in time to prevent the 14-day notice.)

The 14-day Late Payment Notice explains that your rent is past due, and that you are required to pay the past due amount in full within 14 days of the date on the notice, or move out of the apartment. If the rent is not paid within the 14-days, and you are still in the apartment, SMHA will start a lawsuit against you for unpaid rent, and ask a judge to order you to leave your apartment.

The amount of past due rent will be written on the 14-day Late Payment Notice. If you do not agree that you owe SMHA money, or think the amount you owe is wrong, the 14-day Late Payment Notice explains that you can request a hearing with SMHA to question the rent charges. Prior to the hearing, you must provide full past due rent to the SMHA Finance Director, and request that it be held in an Escrow Account until the matter is resolved. This is a special account where money is deposited that does not belong to SMHA.

[Why do I Also Get a 3-day New York State Notice?](#)

You belong to a Federal housing program, and you live in New York State, so you have rights under both Federal and State laws.

Your right under Federal law is your landlord (SMHA) must give you (in writing) 14 days to pay past due rent, which is done with the 14-day Late Payment Notice.

Your right under New York State law is your landlord (SMHA) must give you (in writing) 3 days to pay past due rent, which is done with the 3-day New York State Notice (the 3-day Notice runs concurrent with the last three days of the 14-day Notice).

So, because you live in Public Housing, you get 14 days to make your rent payment before SMHA starts a lawsuit, instead of just the three days people get who do not live in Public Housing.

[What Happens if I Ignore the 14 and 3 day Notices and Still Don't Pay My Rent?](#)

At this point, SMHA will start a lawsuit against you for unpaid rent, and ask a judge to order you to pay your rent in full or leave your apartment.

SMHA is seeking to evict you at this point because you refuse to pay rent that is due. However, SMHA is a law-abiding agency that will take every step to make sure we proceed according to your rights under the Fifth & Fourteenth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution, called "Due Process of Law." SMHA will go on to evict you by legal proceedings in a court of law, before a fair and impartial judge who will hear whatever you have to say about the case to evict you.

[How Will I Know SMHA has Started the Process to Evict Me?](#)

SMHA has a person come to your door to hand you two documents:

- 1) Notice of Petition to Recover Real Property – Non-Payment, and
- 2) Petition to Recover Possession of Real Property – Non-Payment

The person who comes to your door is not involved with your case, knows nothing about your case, and is not an employee of SMHA.

It is very important that you carefully read these documents. The Notice of Petition to Recover Real Property will have a date and time on it that you must appear in court (this is called the Return Date). In court, you will have a chance to defend yourself. At the time these documents are issued to you, a late fee for non-payment of rent will be applied to your account.

[What if I'm Not Home When the Eviction Documents are Brought to My House?](#)

If the head-of household is not home, the documents will be served to any other adult member of the household who is present.

If no one is home, or no adult member of the household is home, a process known as "Nail and Mail" will occur. Copies of the documents will be attached to the entrance door of your apartment, or placed under the entrance door, and the documents will also be mailed to you by regular first class mail and by certified mail.

[What Happens When I go to Court?](#)

When you go to court, you and any representative you wish to have with you, will first meet with SMHA's attorney to discuss the case. You may at this time pay the rent that is due in full, and the case will be over with SMHA.

If you do not pay the rent that is due, SMHA will offer you a chance to pay the rent at a later date, with the understanding that if you do not pay in full, the judge will order the Sheriff to evict you from your apartment.

For example:

- You fail to pay your rent for January 1, and go to court on January 31;
- SMHA makes an offer that full past due rent must be paid by February 28;
- Since the February 1 rent must also be paid, SMHA will also want February rent paid in full by February 28;
- SMHA will then ask the judge to approve the offer;
- The judge will then issue what is called an Order, Warrant and Judgment, agreeing to evict you from your apartment, with the condition that if the past due rent is paid in full by February 28, along with rent due for February 1, the eviction order will be cancelled.

- If your past due rent is not paid in full by February 28, along with rent due for February 1, the judge will then order the Sheriff to evict you from your apartment. After February 28, SMHA will not accept partial payments of rent owed, only full payment of rent due.

[What Happens if I Don't Go to Court on the Date and Time on the Petition?](#)

If you do not appear in court, SMHA will ask the judge to order your eviction. The judge will then issue an order for the Sheriff to evict you from your apartment. When this happens, SMHA will hold the eviction order for ten days. During this time, SMHA's Project Managers may attempt to contact you to encourage you to pay the past due rent in full to avoid eviction. Legal Aid Society attorneys may also attempt to contact you for the same reason. We do not want you to lose your home; we only want you to pay the rent.

[Will I Know the Sheriff is Coming to Evict Me?](#)

A 72-hour Notice of Eviction is sent to you by the Schenectady County Sheriff, warning you that you may be evicted at any time after three days (72 hours) has passed. If you make payment of past due rent in full, plus any applicable Sheriff's fee and moving company fees, before the Sheriff's eviction actually happens, SMHA will call the Sheriff and cancel the eviction.

[What Happens if I Decide to Pay Rent Late Month After Month?](#)

Paying your rent late month after month is a huge financial burden to the Housing Authority, the court system, and the Sheriff's office, all of which are supported by taxpaying citizens. Therefore, repeated late rent payment is an unnecessary waste of tax dollars. Because of this waste, SMHA is in the process of modifying its Public Housing lease to allow for eviction due to the objectionable behavior of repeated late rent payment. Remember, the rent in Public Housing is designed to be affordable to low-income families, and paying rent should be your first priority.

NOTE: You may pay any portion of your past due rent, or any part of the rent amount listed in the court order to evict, including any charges for Sheriff and moving company fees, at any time during the rent collection process, but **rent, Sheriff and moving fees must be paid in full in order for SMHA to stop the Sheriff from evicting you.**

Your Security Deposit

A security deposit is required prior to moving into the unit. The purpose of this security deposit is to insure SMHA against tenant-caused damage to the apartment. Your deposit will be held in an account for you and will earn interest at the current rate. Upon leaving your apartment in good condition, the security deposit will be refunded, including interest, less any charges for damages or monies owed to the Authority.

The amount of your security deposit is equal to one month's Total Tenant Payment. The dollar amount of the security deposit is noted in Part II of the Lease. No personal checks will be accepted for your security deposit. All security deposits must be paid in cash, banker's check or money order. A refunded security deposit will take approximately three (3) weeks to receive from the Authority.

You must give the SMHA a Proper 30-day notice of intent to vacate. (A month is from the 1st of the calendar month) or you will be charged the following month's rent.

Annual Income Re-examination

Your eligibility to continue occupancy with the Authority will be examined at least once a year. Your rent is based on your total family income, less exclusions.

You will receive a Continued Occupancy booklet prior to your housing anniversary date. This booklet must be filled out in its entirety. You are required to supply the Authority with information concerning ALL income received into the household by any family member, i.e. a signed statement of income from your employer, Social Security award letter, DSS budget, Workers Compensation benefits statement, child support print out from the Department of Social Services or recorded court order, bank statements of savings, stocks or bonds, etc.

If you are claiming no income, you may be required to recertify with the Authority, every ninety (90) days and pay the established minimum rent. If you are paying a minimum rent and your income status changes, you must report this change within 10 days. You may request a rent review at any time should your income decrease.

Should you fail to return your Continued Occupancy booklet by the date required, you may be charged a Fair Market Rent on the first day of the following month. Fair Market Rent will vary according to bedroom size and current market value.

Family Composition

The **law** requires you to inform us of any changes in your family composition, such as births, deaths, or any other changes in the number of household members. Not only is the size of the apartment that is most appropriate for you determined by the size of your family, frequently changes in family composition involve changes in your family income. If you start or stop receiving public assistance, please notify your Occupancy Specialist.

Other important changes must be reported as well. For example, you must report the loss or addition of a full-time, employed member of your family immediately. If you or a family member becomes unemployed you must report this fact to the Project Manager.

Similarly, if you wish to bring a relative or other person into your home for anything other than a short visit, you must obtain written permission from your housing manager. If your request is approved, any additional income received by this person may be added to your total family income to determine the amount of rent you pay.

Should you wish to add someone to your lease, that person must fill out an application and be deemed eligible. Any guest who stays 14 days or longer in a year period will be considered by the Authority as a permanent addition to your household and eviction for unauthorized person may commence. If for any reason a visitor stays longer than 14 days, you must have written permission. You can do this by contacting your Occupancy Specialist.

It is important to keep in mind that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) may perform an annual verification of this information through its Income Verification Program. Resident income data reported to the Housing Authority may be matched against records kept by the Internal Revenue Service and the Social Security Administration. If a discrepancy is detected the resident will be notified by letter, and asked to contact his or her Project Manager.

Sometimes, obviously, changes in family composition will mean that your rent will be reduced. Sometimes, they will mean the reverse. Either way, changes must be reported. That's the law.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

In accordance with the Housing Act of 1998, certain public housing residents must provide eight hours of community service a month as a condition of their tenancy.

Community service is unpaid volunteer service to a local community-based organization or to your local community.

Every adult who is 18 or older and below the age of 62, who does not qualify for an exemption must provide community service. Many residents will qualify for an exemption. If however, you are not exempt, community service is a condition of your tenancy and your compliance or lack of compliance could affect your family's right to remain in public housing. Information about Community Service and exemptions will be provided during your annual income re-examination.

EVICTIION AND TERMINATION OF TENANCY

Though the most common form of eviction is for failure to pay rent, a tenancy may also be terminated when a resident or a member of a resident's family engages in prohibited conduct. Such conduct includes: willful misrepresentation of any material fact relating to eligibility for admission, continued occupancy, or the amount of rent to be paid; breach of rules and regulations; failure to provide satisfactory verification of family income; the transfer of possession of an apartment for use by a person or persons other than the tenant of record; chronic rent delinquency; poor housekeeping; and non-desirability.

Non-desirability is defined as conduct or behavior or any criminal activity that threatens the health, safety or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises by other residents; or any drug-related criminal activity on or off the premises. The Tenant shall ensure neither the Tenant or any member of the Tenant's household engages in an abuse or pattern of abuse of alcohol that affects the health, safety or right to peaceful enjoyment of the premises by other residents.

Residents and their families can also be evicted for drug activity on or off of SMHA grounds. Residents are responsible for the conduct of all visitors, family members and guests to their apartments. Loitering and consumption of alcoholic beverages in public spaces is prohibited.

SMHA is a law-abiding agency that will take every step to make sure we proceed according to your rights under the Fifth & Fourteenth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution, called "Due Process of Law." SMHA will go on to evict you by legal proceedings in a court of law, before a fair and impartial judge who will hear whatever you have to say about the case to evict you.

MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE SERVICES

Project Manager

Your Project Manager is responsible for the overall operation of your development. The Manager is responsible for the day-to-day management of the apartments, buildings and grounds of your housing development.

Occupancy Specialist

Your Occupancy Specialist assisted you through the process of your move to Public Housing. During your tenancy, he or she will almost always serve as your contact if you have encountered any problems in your home. An Occupancy Specialist's duties include apartment rentals, inspections, interviewing, complaint resolution, and income certification, to name a few.

Maintenance Personnel

The maintenance staff is responsible for keeping the physical plant at your development in working order. They keep elevators, hallways, stairwells and building entrances clean. They care for lawns, shrubs, and remove snow from the roads and common walkways. They make repairs in your apartment and keep the heat and hot water services operating properly. Please remember that maintenance staff will only make needed repairs in your apartment if you have reported the problem by calling the Maintenance Hot-Line at (518) 372-5896, so please do not approach maintenance personnel on site to report routine maintenance needs.

It takes a lot of work to keep your development running properly, and we're proud of our maintenance and management staffs. They, in turn, are proud to serve you.

If You Need Repairs

Contact the Maintenance Hot-Line: (518) 372-5896.

The Maintenance Hot-Line is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. When a resident contacts the Maintenance Hot-Line, a Customer Service Representative will create a Work Order that Maintenance staff will respond to.

IF YOU NEED TO SPEAK WITH SOMEONE

The staff in your development should be able to answer all questions you may have concerning your apartment and the development itself. They should always be your "first stop" for questions about rent, conditions of occupancy, family composition and the like, and, of course, if you need repair work done.

If you feel that you haven't received appropriate answers to your questions, or if you are dissatisfied with the quality of work done or the anticipated date of completion you should contact your Project Manager. If you are not satisfied with the Project Manager's response, your next step should be written notice of the problem to the Executive Director.

Please keep in mind, if you contact the Executive Director without going through the Project Manager first, you will be referred back to your Project Manager.

CRIME AND SAFETY

Remember to call 911 in all cases of emergency and for all criminal activity.

Report emergencies and crime to the Housing Authority only after you have contacted the Schenectady Police Department. The Housing Authority is very committed to fighting drug users and drug dealers with every resource available, but we are not law enforcement.

If you suspect drug activity on Housing Authority property, please report this to the SMHA Crime and Drug Tip Line at: (518) 386-7050.

Employee ID Cards

Remember that every Housing Authority employee is required to carry an Identification Card.

It is your right to ask to see the ID Card when someone who says they are an Authority employee comes to your apartment. Do not feel that you are being rude when you ask for the card. Any legitimate employee will gladly provide proper identification.

His or her picture and name will appear on the card. **DO NOT** admit *anyone* unless they can present their ID card. No excuses are acceptable.

ANNUAL INSPECTION/RIGHT OF ENTRY

Once each year you will receive advance notice of a required management and maintenance staff visit to your apartment. This yearly inspection is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. You will receive a proper 2-day written notice of the inspection. If you are not home at the designated time, staff will enter your apartment to inspect.

Per your lease, and with a proper 2-day written entry notice, a duly authorized agent, employee, or contractor of SMHA will be permitted to enter your dwelling during reasonable hours (8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.) for the purpose of performing routine maintenance, making improvements or repairs, inspecting the unit, or showing the unit for releasing.

When Tenant calls to request maintenance on the unit, SMHA shall attempt to provide such maintenance at a time convenient to Tenant. If Tenant is absent from the dwelling unit when SMHA comes to perform maintenance, Tenant's request for maintenance shall constitute permission to enter.

SMHA may enter Tenant's dwelling unit at any time without advance notification when there is reasonable cause to believe that an emergency exists.

MOVING OUT

Requirements

A resident who intends to move out of his or her apartment is required to do the following:

1. Inform your Occupancy Specialist and Project Manager.
2. Complete and sign a "Notice of Intent to Vacate" form.
3. Give at least 30 days' notice. If you do not give the required notice, you may be charged for up to 30 days after you vacate the apartment.
4. Return all of your apartment keys to the Housing Assistant and leave your apartment in the same condition as when you first moved in.

Note: The apartment should be left in the same condition it was in when you first moved in.

Apartment Inspections

Residents are entitled to an apartment inspection with management staff prior to moving out to identify any items for which they will be responsible. SMHA will inspect the unit after Tenant provides notice of intent to vacate, and prior to the time the Tenant vacates, and give Tenant a written statement of the charges, if any, for which Tenant is responsible. Tenant and/or representative may join in such inspection, unless Tenant vacates without notice to SMHA. [966.4(i)]

Damage Charges

If you move from your apartment, it should be left in the best possible condition. You will be charged for any damages, beyond reasonable wear and tear. While you are living in your apartment, you will be charged for the cost of repairing any damage caused by negligence. Once again, the apartment should be left in the same condition as it was when you moved in. Refer to the list of "Special Charges to Tenants for Repair of Damages" that is attached to your lease.

WITHOUT YOUR HELP

During the years we have been in operation, residents and Authority staff have worked together to create communities to be proud of, where, by-and-large, people care for and respect each other's rights and property.

Your development needs your commitment to that kind of care and respect. In fighting the graffiti "artists" ... in teaching your children the rules of safety and respect for property, in saving energy, reporting criminal activity and dangerous animals, preventing mildew... dozens of ways. Without your help in these areas, the strength of community that exists now, and SMHA's ability to provide services, is seriously threatened.

Elevators

Elevators are found in some SMHA buildings. They are easy to break, expensive to fix and very dangerous when they are not used properly. To help ensure prompt elevator service and avoid breakdowns and accidents, we ask for your fullest cooperation. Here is how you can help to keep your elevator system in good working order:

- Teach children the rules of elevator safety.
- Report all incidents of elevator vandalism to your Project Manager and the Police.
- Avoid overcrowding.
- Do not hold elevator doors open for extended periods of time. If a car stalls between floors, just press the emergency button and keep calm. Help will be on the way immediately.
- If an elevator is out of order, report it to the Project Manager right away. When your Project Manager is closed, please phone the maintenance Hot-Line number (518) 372-5896.

Garbage Disposal

The SMHA has provided each tenant with appropriate containers for proper trash and garbage disposal.

Your Project Manager or Occupancy Specialist will notify you of your trash removal schedule and rules for proper trash disposal. You must follow these rules. Not following the rules may result in eviction proceedings. When you violate these procedures, you will be issued a CITATION explaining why your trash was rejected. The City Ordinance will be enforced to keep our developments safe and sanitary.

The labor cost to the Authority to pick up strewn papers, glass, cans, etc. is a big expense each week at each development. This money can be used to help improve the apartments and development if tenants cooperate by picking up after themselves. Please don't step over litter – pick it up.

Medical Waste Disposal

Upon request, the SMHA will provide plastic containers to every tenant that uses syringes for any purpose, or for disposal of contaminated dressings.

Our Maintenance Staff will pick up your full container(s) and supply you with a new one upon your request. Proper disposal of such items is mandated by State and Federal laws. Proper disposal is for the safety of you, your neighbors and staff of the SMHA. If you use syringes for insulin, pain medication or any other reason, please contact the maintenance HOT LINE at (518) 372-5896 to arrange for this service.

We are asking for your cooperation in this very important matter to help us provide safe and decent living conditions for all our tenants and protection for our staff in removal of such items.

There is no charge for this service.

Garbage Compactors

Compactors are the machines that compress trash after it is deposited in the hoppers located on each floor of some buildings. Please keep in mind, compactors are for trash — not for recyclables!

Here are some rules to follow:

- Only throw into the hopper trash that will slide down easily — don't force it! Do not dispose of any trash in hallways, stairways, elevators, lobbies or rear exits. Call

your Project Manager if you have a large quantity of trash that you don't know what to do with, or something that is too large for the hopper.

- Don't throw mops and broomsticks into hoppers; they will cause jam-ups.
- Don't throw newspapers, magazines, wire coat hangers, cardboard boxes or other recyclables into the hoppers. Put them in the appropriate recycling container.

AND, NEVER place burning materials or cigarettes in any compactor chute!

Gas and Electricity

We suggest the following ways to save on gas and electricity. Following these simple suggestions year-round should create a significant reduction in energy consumption:

- When you leave a room, turn the lights out and turn off the television or radio when you're not watching or listening.
- Keep the use of electrical appliances, such as irons, hair dryers, toasters, broilers and microwaves, to the practical minimum. If you're buying any of these items new, buy models that are labeled "energy-efficient."
- In the event of an electrical interruption, use flashlights instead of candles. Always keep spare batteries on hand.
- Only use air conditioners and fans when you really need them, and don't leave them running when you leave your apartment. Once again, don't forget to check with your Project Manager before purchasing an air conditioner to find out about any specifications or fees associated with it.
- When removing an item from your refrigerator, make your selection and close the door promptly. Don't keep the door open.
- Use the minimum amount of cooking gas necessary to do the job.
- NEVER USE YOUR STOVE TO HEAT YOUR APARTMENT.
- Do not run hot water continuously when washing. Fill the sink only to the required level and report any dripping faucets and/or running toilets to maintenance. Contact your Project Manager for new drain stoppers, if necessary.

- Operate washing machines only as needed, with a full load.

Heat and Hot Water

The Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority provides thermostats in your apartment that allow a maximum temperature of 70° Fahrenheit (72° degrees in apartments with elderly tenants). This temperature is in full compliance with, and exceeds, New York State Law and Schenectady City Code requirements.

The NYS Property Maintenance Code requires that heat shall be supplied during the period of Sept. 15 through May 31 at a temperature of not less than 65° in all habitable rooms.

The Schenectady City Code requires that heat shall be supplied during the period of Oct. 13 through May 31 at a temperature of not less than 68°.

If your new thermostat reads 70°, then that is the temperature in your apartment. Due to the high cost of fuel, everyone must conserve energy.

PLEASE, do not light your oven or stovetop to warm your apartment beyond 70°. This is a major fire hazard. It is also a waste of energy. SMHA will monitor energy use and charge residents for excessive utility use, per the lease.

Using a space heater near your thermostat will cause your furnace to shut down, cooling other parts of your apartment below 70°.

Air conditioners and open windows will cool your apartment; remove all air conditioners and close windows. Tampering with your thermostat is a violation of your lease. We are making these changes to save energy and tax dollars.

Wading Pools

This policy is for the protection and benefit of all Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority residents to ensure the safe and sanitary use of wading pools on Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority property.

1. Permanent swimming pools are not allowed.
2. Wading pools shall not extend beyond six (6) feet in diameter.
3. Wading pool walls shall not extend beyond a height of fifteen (15) inches.

4. Wading pools must not be used prior to June 1 or after September 15 of each year and must be stored at the end of each season. Wading pools may not be stored outside during the off-season.
5. Wading pools must be emptied after each use.
6. Wading pools must be emptied of water, removed and securely stored at the end of each day, before dark. Wading pools shall only be used during daylight hours.
7. Wading pools in use or with any water in them must be under the constant supervision and observation of the adult pool owner or his/her adult designee. The supervising adult must, at all times, be in a clear line of sight and sound of the wading pool and no more than six (6) feet away.
8. Resident/owner is responsible for any damage and/or injury caused by the pool. The cost of any damage to Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority property, such as damage to grass, may be charged to the resident/owner of the wading pool.
9. The Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority reserves the right to remove from its property, without immediate notice to the resident/owner, any wading pool that is not in compliance with this policy.

Yard/Garage Sales

It is your responsibility to be in compliance with the Code of the City of Schenectady as related to the number and frequency of sales, permits and permit fees, hours of operation, advertising, conduct, penalties for offenses, and any other requirements imposed by the City of Schenectady. Yard/Garage Sales that are not in compliance with the Code of the City of Schenectady are not permitted on SMHA property.

FIRE SAFETY

We can't emphasize enough the importance of keeping self-closing doors fully operable and maintaining clear access to windows and doors. There are a few more fire safety tips we'd like to leave with you to minimize the risk of fire for you and your neighbors.

Household Fire Hazards

Cooking and smoking are the causes of most fires in homes in the United States. So, in addition to keeping your stovetop clean, remember to keep flammable materials, such as potholders, towels, newspapers and plastic bags away from the stove. When you have something cooking, don't leave the stove unattended. If there is a grease fire, never use water to put it out; cover the pot or pan with a lid to smother the fire.

Smoking

Remember, smoking is not permitted in the lobby, the elevator, or any other public space in the building. Residents who smoke in their apartments should make sure that cigarettes and matches are completely extinguished before they are thrown into a trash container or compactor chute.

Fires from smoking frequently occur in the living room as well as the bedroom. Couches and recliners can ignite when people leave burning cigarettes unattended or fall asleep with a cigarette while watching television. To avoid fires from smoking, never smoke when medicated or sleepy and never smoke in bed.

Before emptying ashtrays, fill them with water to make sure no ashes are smoldering. Do not balance an ashtray on the arm of a chair or sofa. Instead, keep all ashtrays on a level surface so they cannot tip over. **Always keep matches and lighters out of the reach of children.**

Electrical Fires

To avoid electrical fires in your apartment, replace all frayed, cracked or broken electrical cords with new ones, and don't plug more than one large appliance into a single electrical outlet. Never attempt to extinguish a fire in an electric appliance or outlet with water.

Gasoline and Kerosene

It is illegal to store gasoline or kerosene in your apartment or to use, keep or store in your apartment a space heater or other device using gasoline or kerosene.

Candles

We have had many serious fires in SMHA apartments caused by lighted candles. Each and every tenant should cease from lighting candles in our Public Housing Authority apartments and common areas. This is for our protection, and is in the best interest of all of us.

The U.S. Fire Administration, Department of Homeland Security, has published the following tragic and preventable examples of fires ignited by lighted candles:

- Three unattended children died in a fire that was started by a burning candle.
- A lighted candle ignited the hair of a person who fell asleep on a couch causing only minor burns – but the ensuing fire killed a 9 year old and severely injured another family member.
- A student died when a lighted candle ignited her bedding.
- Eleven members of a family died in a fire when a lighted candle ignited a mattress.
- Two children died in a fire when a lighted candle rolled under the Christmas tree.
- A mother and young baby died when a burning candle used for religious observances ignited cabinetry.
- **Fact:** The majority of candle fires result from human error and negligence.

Therefore, it is incumbent that each and every tenant cease from lighting candles in our Public Housing Authority apartments and common areas.

Gas Grills

We can all appreciate the taste of food cooked over an open fire, but we need to make sure that certain guidelines and rules are followed so that we are sure that cooking is done safely.

- The use of grills on porches, patios or under overhangs is prohibited by Fire Code. Fires in approved containers shall be permitted, provided that such fires are not less than 15 feet from any structure. An “approved container,” in this case is a grill.
- The storage of propane bottles in dwellings, such as those used to fuel gas grills, is strictly prohibited. A leaking bottle or one exposed to an outside heat source could cause a serious explosion.
- Using self-starting charcoal is preferable. The use of other flammable liquids, such as gasoline, presents a serious fire hazard as flammable vapors spread quickly. Never add starting fluid to a grill once it has been lit. The result could be a dangerous flare-up.

- Don't leave a hot grill unattended, especially around small children. Make sure that coals are extinguished and cool before disposing them.

By following these simple rules the chance of an injury or fire damage is greatly reduced. Proper attention to hot grills, common courtesy, and a safe clean-up are all part of an enjoyable cook out.

CLEANING TIPS

General

1. Walls: should be clean, free of dirt, grease, holes, cobwebs, and fingerprints.
2. Floors: should be clean, clear, dry and free of hazards.
3. Ceilings: should be clean and free of cobwebs.
4. Windows: should be clean and not nailed shut. Shades or blinds should be intact.
5. Woodwork: should be clean, free of dust, gouges, or scratches.
6. Doors: should be clean, free of grease and fingerprints. Doorstops should be present. Locks should work.
7. Heating units: should be dusted and access uncluttered.
8. Trash: shall be disposed or properly and not left in the unit.
9. Entire unit should be free of rodent or insect infestation.

Kitchen

1. Stove: should be clean and free of food and grease.
2. Refrigerator and freezer: Door(s) should close properly and be clean. The inside and outside of the refrigerator must be kept clean. Door gaskets that seal the cold air in must be cleaned frequently to prevent damage to them. Dirty gaskets can stick and cause them to pull away from the refrigerator. Gaskets damaged due to failure to clean is considered tenant damage subject to charges against the tenant.
3. Cabinets: should be clean and neat. Cabinet surfaces and countertop should be free of grease and spilled food. Cabinets should not be overloaded. Storage under the sink should be limited to small or lightweight items to permit access for repairs. Heavy pots and pans should not be stored under the sink.
4. Exhaust fan: should be free of grease and dust.
5. Sink: should be clean, free of grease and garbage. Dirty dishes should be washed and put away in a timely manner.
6. Food storage areas: should be neat and clean without spilled food.

7. Trash/garbage: should be stored in a covered container until removed to the disposal area.

Bathroom

1. Toilet and tank: should be clean and odor free.
2. Tub and shower: should be clean and free of excessive mildew and mold. Where applicable, shower curtains should be in place, and of adequate length.
3. Lavatory: should be clean.
4. Exhaust fans: should be free of dust.
5. Floor: should be clean and dry.

Storage Areas

1. Linen closet: should be neat and clean.
2. Other closets: should be neat and clean. No highly volatile or flammable materials should be stored in the unit.
3. Other storage areas: should be clean, neat and free of hazards.

Outside the Apartment

1. Yards: should be free of debris, trash, and abandoned cars. Exterior walls should be free of graffiti.
2. Porches (front and rear): should be clean and free of hazards, including snow and ice. Any items stored on the porch shall not impede access to the unit.
3. Steps (front and rear): should be clean, and free of hazards, including snow and ice.
4. Sidewalks: should be clean and free of hazards, including snow and ice.
5. Storm doors: should be clean, with glass or screens intact.
6. Parking lot: should be free of abandoned cars. Tenants are permitted to only change tires, oil, air filters and perform minor tune-ups on their own vehicle.
7. Hallways: should be clean and free of hazards.
8. Stairwells: should be clean and uncluttered.
9. Laundry areas: should be clean and neat. Remove lint from dryers after use.
10. Utility room: should be free of debris, motor vehicle parts, and flammable materials.

Mold and Mildew

Mold and mildew are fungi that grow on, and sometimes in, damp surfaces and objects. In nature, molds help break down dead materials and can be found growing on soil, foods, plant matter, and other items. Molds produce microscopic cells called "spores"

which are very tiny and spread easily through the air. Live spores act like seeds, forming new mold growths (colonies) when they find the right conditions. Mold is most likely to grow where there is water or dampness, such as in bathrooms.

Most types of mold that are routinely encountered are not hazardous to healthy individuals. However, too much exposure to mold may cause or worsen conditions such as asthma, hay fever, or other allergies. The most common symptoms of overexposure are similar to reactions to plant pollen, such as, coughing, congestion, runny nose, eye irritation, and aggravation of asthma.

Preventing Mold

All molds need water to grow, and are most often confined to areas near water sources. Removing the source of moisture — by repairs and by providing sufficient ventilation — is critical to preventing mold growth.

The Fresh Air Cure

Letting *fresh air* into your apartment will help to lower the moisture, and at the same time this will help reduce dust mites and cockroaches. Keep your apartment well ventilated by opening windows, using fans, and arranging furniture so that windows are not blocked.

Other Ideas That Will Help:

- Use your stove only for cooking, **never** for heating;
- Keep your drapes open during the day;
- Request repair of leaky plumbing or other water leaks as soon as possible;
- Keep the “drip pans” in your air conditioners, refrigerators and dehumidifiers clean and dry;
- If you have a bathroom window, keep it open even a little, when weather permits, especially when you are showering;
- If you have an exhaust fan in your bathroom, make sure it is working; inform your Housing Manager if it’s not;
- Hang wet clothes to dry in *open areas*, such as on bathroom shower rods, or on drying racks; thoroughly wring out clothes prior to hanging; take slow drying heavy items to the Laundromat.

Cleaning Mold

Once you have detected mold, *act quickly!* Mold should be cleaned as soon as it appears. *Persons cleaning mold should be free of allergies or symptoms such as nasal congestion, cough, sore throat, or upper respiratory infections.* Wear gloves and protective

eye goggles and clean only small areas at a time using a detergent/ soapy solution, or an appropriate household cleaner, preferably one that is labeled "antimicrobial." The cleaned area should then be thoroughly dried, and any sponges or rags used to clean mold should be disposed of. Absorbent materials that contain mold, such as linen or carpets, might need to be replaced.

If the Problem Persists

Mold and mildew can pose a health hazard for you and your family, so it is important to eliminate the problem as soon as possible.

When you've tried cleaning fluids and proper ventilation and nothing seems to help, report mold to your Project Manager. A returning mold condition may indicate an underlying problem such as a leak. Your Housing Manager will provide you with assistance to correct this condition.

GETTING INVOLVED

Resident Councils

Most Authority developments have Resident Councils, also referred to as Tenant Associations, or Resident Councils. These are democratically operated organizations that are intended to promote the welfare of their development and, in some instances, the surrounding neighborhood. The Resident Association is the core of resident representation. The Resident Association Executive Board, elected by Resident Association members, typically consists of a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Sergeant At Arms.

Participation in your Resident Association is an important way to ensure that the association is active and responsive to resident needs in your development. Joining your Resident Association is one of the easiest and most effective ways to feel like a part of your community. To find out how you can join, contact your local Project Manager.

The Resident Advisory Board (RAB)

The primary function of the Resident Advisory Board is to advise SMHA in the creation of the annual Agency Plan that it is required by federal law to submit to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The members of the RAB discuss various management issues covered in the Plan, express their concerns, and provide recommendations. These recommendations are considered as the Plan is

drafted. If you are interested in serving on the RAB, please contact your Project Manager.

Tenant Commissioners

Two Tenant representatives, who are residents of the Authority's housing, are elected by the tenants to membership to the Authority's Board of Commissioners to serve for terms of two years. If you don't know how to contact the Tenant Commissioners that represent you, or you want to know how to become a Tenant Commissioner, please contact your Project Manager.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

SMHA residents with mobility impairments and other physical disabilities are entitled to transfers to apartments that have been made accessible. An apartment is considered to be accessible if, in addition to necessary modifications to the apartment itself, a mobility impaired resident can get from the street to the apartment without any obstruction. A resident may also request that his or her current apartment be modified to provide a "reasonable accommodation" for a disabled family member. A "reasonable accommodation" can be a structural, such as the installation of a grab-bar or a roll-in shower; and/or a change in SMHA policies, procedures or practices so that individuals with mobility impairments and other physical disabilities have equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from SMHA programs.

If you or a member of your household becomes disabled at any time while living in a SMHA development, you may contact your Project Manager to inquire about transfers and reasonable accommodations.

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Police or Fire Emergencies.....	911
Police Department – Non-Emergency.....	382-5200
Maintenance Hotline.....	372-5896
Drug and Criminal Tip Line.....	386-7050
Tenant Investigator.....	386-7015
Client Services / Occupancy Department.....	386-7030 or 386-7008
Project Manager – Yates Village.....	386-7007
Project Manager – Steinmetz Homes/MacGathan Townhouses/Maryvale Apts...	386-7004
Project Manager – Ten Eyck/Lincoln Heights/Schonowee Village.....	386-7003
Fire Department – Non-Emergency	382-5141
Tenant Accounting	386-7009 or 386-7036
Administration Office.....	386-7000
National Grid Gas Emergency.....	462-7551
TDD (Hearing Impaired).....	372-0184