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## Victim Assistance Information

If you have faced violence, you have access to special services to help you recover and become stronger. These services check the safety and well-being of your family, provide helpful referrals, and, if needed, help you move to a safer place. We make sure services are tailored to your needs. If English is not your first language and you need language assistance, we will take steps to help you understand the services and information.

**For assistance or more information, call the HCV call center at [\(312\) 935-2600](tel:3129352600) and ask to speak to a confidential VAWA staff member.**

### **The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and Victim Assistance**

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is a federal law that protects victims (of any gender) of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. This law helps people who apply for or live in private housing with a voucher. It covers the head of household and their family members living in the home. In Illinois, the Safe Homes Act also protects victims of domestic violence including Housing Choice Voucher holders.

### **Protections for Victims Who Are Applicants or Participants**

- **No Denial of Admission:** CHA cannot deny you entry to the HCV Program if you are a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking and can show that the reason for the denial is connected to one of these issues.
- **No Termination Due to Victim Status:** If you or a family member in your household is a victim of criminal activity related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, CHA cannot terminate your assistance, tenancy, or occupancy rights because of that.
- **Leaving Due to Violence:** If you need to leave your home because of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, CHA will not consider you in violation of the lease or

HCV Program requirements.

- **Splitting the Family:** CHA can remove the abuser from the HCV Program while keeping the victim and other family members in the program. The abuser will not get a separate voucher.
- **Reassigning Assistance:** If CHA ends assistance to an individual because of violence against family members, other remaining tenants can try to establish their eligibility for the assistance. If no one can, CHA, the property owner, or manager must give the tenant reasonable time to find new housing or qualify for another housing program.

### **Limitations of VAWA Protections**

- **Threat to Others:** CHA can terminate any participant, including the victim, if they are a threat to other tenants or staff.
- **Lease Violations:** CHA can terminate a participant for any lease violation not related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

### **Options Available to VAWA Victims**

- **Removing the abuser from the lease:** CHA can terminate the abuser and let the victim stay in the program. The property owner or manager will evict the abuser and allow the victim to stay in the unit. To do this, the victim must provide proof of abuse to CHA and the property owner or manager. The voucher is not automatically given to the victim upon submitting proof of domestic violence.
- **Emergency Transfer Request:** CHA reviews each transfer request to see if you qualify for a VAWA Emergency Transfer or a VAP Mandatory Administrative Transfer. We will try to move you as quickly as possible, but this depends on available housing. If you need more details, review the CHA's [Emergency Transfer Plan](#).

Additional Help:

- City of Chicago Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-877-863-6338
- Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation: 773-244-2230
- Domestic Violence Legal Clinic: 312-325-9155