

HARDSHIP POLICY- PAYMENT STANDARD – SAFMR

This Moving to Work (MTW) activity allows the agency to request a change in Payment Standard based on an expanded range of 80% to 150% of the Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMR) by bedroom size.

The agency applies increased payment standards during the following participant events:

1. Regular reexamination of household income and composition.
2. When an owner requests a rent increase with a new lease.

A financial hardship for a decrease in payment standards are only for families where the payment standard would decrease in an established unit (not at unit transfers or issuance of vouchers), where the payment standard is set less than 90% of the SAFMR, and where:

- the family has experienced a decrease in income because of changed circumstances, including loss or reduction of employment, death in the assisted family, or reduction in or loss of earnings or other assistance; and
- the family has experienced an increase in expenses, because of changed circumstances, for medical costs, childcare, transportation, education, or similar items.

Requested a Hardship

To qualify for a hardship exemption for a payment standard less than 90% of the SAFMR, a family must submit a request for a hardship exemption in writing to hardshiprequest@alamedahsg.org. A paper request may be submitted at the Agency's offices, but it will be scanned and e-mailed to this address for tracking purposes. The request must explain the nature of the hardship and how the hardship has affected the family's ability to pay rent.

Determination of Hardship

When a family requests a financial hardship exemption, the AHA must suspend the MTW activity while the request is being processed beginning the first of the month following the family's request until the AHA has determined if the request is warranted. This means the AHA will set the family's payment standard at 90% until the determination of the hardship is determined.

During this suspension, the AHA will determine whether the financial hardship exists and whether the hardship is temporary or long-term. AHA defines temporary hardship as a hardship expected to last 90 days or less. Long-term hardship is defined as a hardship expected to last more than 90 days.

AHA will determine the nature of the hardship within 30 calendar days of the request being received. If the AHA requests information from the family and it is not received within the 30 days after the original request was made, the AHA may deny the request and require the family to repay the additional assistance paid during the suspension of the MTW activity period.

No Financial Hardship

If AHA determines there is no financial hardship, AHA will reinstate the reduced payment standard and require the family to repay the additional assistance paid during the suspension of the MTW activity period.

AHA will require the family to repay the suspended amount within 30 calendar days of AHA's notice that a hardship exemption has not been granted.

Temporary Hardship

If AHA determines that a qualifying financial hardship is temporary, AHA must suspend the MTW activity for the 90-day period beginning the first of the month following the date of the family's request for a hardship exemption.

At the end of the 90-day suspension period, the family must resume payment of their portion of the rent including the calculation of the decreased payment standard and must repay the AHA the amounts suspended. This repayment, upon request of the household, will be subject to a repayment plan under the AHA's repayment agreement policies if eligible.

Long-Term Hardship

If AHA determines that the financial hardship is long-term, AHA must exempt the family from the MTW activity for so long as the hardship continues. The exemption will apply from the first of the month following the family's request until the later of the end of the qualifying hardship event or the family's second regular reexamination after the decrease in payment standards was implemented. When the financial hardship has been determined to be long-term, the family is not required to repay the additional subsidy paid under the hardship.

Grievance procedure:

The family may request a second level review of the denied hardship request by submitting a written appeal to hardshiprequest@alamedahsg.org. This appeal should contain any information the family would like to be taken into account during the appeal review including why the family believes the incorrect determination was made. The appeal will be reviewed by a different staff member than the one that made the original

determination. Also, any staff reporting to the staff member making the original denial will be ineligible to review the appeal request. The appeal will be reviewed and responded to within 14 days of the receipt of the appeal.

If the second review results in the same decision as the original request, the family may request an Informal Hearing according to the AHA's Informal Hearing procedures.

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