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DIVISION OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
OFFICE OF MIGRANT SERVICES (OMS)

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April 8, 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR: Migrant Farmworker Center Contractors
Migrant Farmworker Center Personnel
Migrant Farmworker Center Applicants/Residents

FROM: Lindy Suggs, Branch Chief
Asset Management and Compliance Branch

SUBJECT: Intake Guidance in Response to COVID-19

The Department of Housing and Community Development's (Department) Office of Migrant Services (OMS) would like to acknowledge all the hard work of OMS contractors (OMS Contractors or Contractors) in continuing to provide safe and affordable housing for migrant farmworker communities during this public health pandemic. The Governor recently issued an executive order, N-33-20, which identified food and agricultural workers as one of the critical infrastructure sectors within California. OMS values the expertise and commitment from Contractors that have revised their intake procedures, in compliance with statutes and regulations, in order to assure precautions are taken to safeguard OMS staff and residents as centers commence operations for this year's harvest season.

In an effort to identify and share best practices from other migrant centers, OMS representatives hosted a webinar with OMS Contractors and center personnel from all 24 OMS migrant centers on March 18, 2020. The Department acknowledges not all centers can implement the same procedures in response to the COVID-19 outbreak and shares the following suggested measures that other Center Operators have found useful:

1. **General Precautions:** OMS Contractors are encouraged to institute Social Distancing protocols for centers, provide personal protective equipment (PPE), and access to hand sanitizers and cleaning wipes during the intake process. Centers that participated in the Emergency Shelter Program during the off-season have indicated they will be utilizing professional cleaning companies to ensure units will be fully sanitized and ready for migrant farmworker families. All Centers are encouraged to take additional measures to ensure units are fully cleaned and sanitized prior to residents moving into the units. Regular sanitization of all common areas including laundry rooms and playgrounds is encouraged to help maintain a clean and healthy shared environment.

2. **Initial Outreach:** OMS Contractors are encouraged to post notices of revised intake procedures, including the lottery system, at their respective centers, county offices, partner organization offices/websites, and local newspapers. Additionally, Contractors are encouraged to conduct outreach to returning families in advance of their arrival to share revised procedures regarding opening day and eligibility checks. Written notices and other communications should be provided in languages accessible to the resident population at each respective center.
3. **Families Not-Reachable:** If returning families cannot be reached and arrive on the regularly scheduled opening day, OMS Contractor personnel have the option to schedule an alternative time and day for them to complete the eligibility process. If families have no alternative housing options locally and cannot postpone, the Contractor has discretion to proceed to house them if it is in the best interest of the family and the community at-large in consideration of COVID-19 health risks. To approve a family in said scenario, the OMS Contractor could have the family drop off documents in an office dropbox and schedule the eligibility check appointment by telephone or email. If all documentation is approved, Contractors could proceed with processing the additional paperwork and payments for lease-up. The Contractor may also use a similar process that it deems efficient, safe, and in the best interest of the OMS families and the OMS Center personnel.
4. **Unit Pre-Inspections:** In keeping with Social Distancing protocols, Contractors should forego customary walk-through inspections with tenants. Instead, Contractors are encouraged to conduct all unit pre-inspections prior to residents moving into the unit. Inspections can be completed by the maintenance technician or site manager. Upon arrival, Center residents can review the completed inspection checklist and provide a response (if they do not agree with the inspection report) within 3-7 days before consenting and signing off that all inspected items were accurately reported.
5. **Pre-Qualification:** Contractors will still need to conduct eligibility checks with residents regardless of whether or not families are returning or new to the respective Center. Contractors are encouraged to contact returning families and send application and eligibility packages via mail or email. Contractors can then have applicants return documents via mail, fax or email. If applicants are unable to return documents via mail, fax or email, Contractors should establish an office dropbox for applicants to deliver documents.
6. **Scheduling Move-ins:** After Center personnel have established a family has met OMS eligibility requirements, Center personnel can mail a rent and security deposit coupon and return envelope with the confirmation letter and move-in date/time appointment. Center personnel are encouraged to schedule staggered move-in dates over the course of a few days or weeks depending on the size of the center, to limit the number of persons present at any one time so that Social Distancing precautions can be maintained. Contractors are also encouraged to stagger move-ins by building/every other unit.

7. **Resident Orientations:** Contractors are encouraged to conduct orientations through online webinars, YouTube videos, or conference calls with residents. If conducted via telephone conference call, residents can announce their name so that Center personnel can keep track of attendance. Though it may not be feasible at all centers, some Contractors have installed a transaction window in the Center office or a unit so that residents can pass documents and complete orientations with center staff without having to be in the same room.
8. **Move-in Day Protocols:** Centers are encouraged to include measures that limit person-to-person interaction, which may include asking that only the head of household meet with center personnel for signing the lease, paying rent and providing a security deposit. Head of household would then be given keys, move-in sheet, house rules, and information regarding COVID-19 safety practices. If additional adults need to sign forms, they can sign forms separately. Alternatively, centers could also place lease documents, keys, fobs, and parking decals in the residents' unit to take possession. Residents could then drop off their signed leases, inspection forms, and payments in the Center's dropbox.
9. **Lottery Applicants:** By establishing pre-qualification and eligibility checks prior to opening day, Contractors should have an idea as to how many units may be available for the lottery system. Centers are encouraged to provide applications for the lottery system on their organization's website. In lieu of a public meeting, Contractors should conduct the lottery drawings onsite and contact the applicants selected via cellphone or email.
10. **Opening Day Activities:** Contractors are encouraged to postpone opening day activities, including center celebrations and vendor fairs, until further notice. As an alternative, partner organizations can provide electronic copies of resources to center personnel, which can be compiled as part of the resident intake package or resident orientation.
11. **Daycare Centers:** Center personnel are encouraged to communicate with onsite daycare service providers to establish plans service delivery. Contractors are also encouraged to consult the guidance provided on Cal/OSHA's website (listed below).
12. **Resident Council Meetings:** Centers are encouraged to postpone in-person Resident Council meetings until further notice. In-person Resident Council meetings will resume once COVID-19 health risks are deemed low enough to eliminate Social Distancing requirements. Other means of meeting and communication are encouraged if possible (e.g. newsletters, phone meetings, etc.).
13. **Laundry Room Access:** Centers are encouraged to consider scheduling reservations for laundry room use and restricting the number of persons per household at a time to avoid large gatherings.
14. **Community Room Access:** Centers are encouraged to limit the use of community rooms as an additional precaution to avoid large gatherings.

15. **OMS Inspections:** The Department has postponed non-essential inspections by OMS staff until further notice. However, there may be situations that warrant inspections. These situations will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
16. **Public Notices:** Contractors are encouraged to post public notices in all common areas, in Spanish or other commonly used languages. Notices shall provide guidance for residents proper social distancing, personal hygiene, handwashing and face covering, as directed by local health agency and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Notices can also include information for residents on procedures that centers are implementing including limited access of community spaces, laundry facilities, day care centers, office spaces, and work order requests. Additional notices can provide information regarding immigrant communities and seeking testing and treatment when necessary. See below for links to more information pertaining to various notices that can be posted.
17. **Office Hours:** Centers are encouraged to maintain regular office hours. However, communication can be done through a screen door or window. Residents should also be provided with the opportunity to leave written notes or call the office.
18. **Work Orders:** Centers are encouraged to accept work order requests by phone, email, or dropbox. Centers are encouraged to establish a list of emergency work orders that can be addressed within 24 hours. Depending on the circumstances, non-emergency work orders may be deferred.
19. **Individuals with COVID-19:** Individuals should contact their healthcare provider and Contractors are encouraged to contact their local health agency for further guidance. The CDC has also established a reference guide (listed below) with steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 if someone is sick and needs to self-isolate.
20. **Quarantine:** Operators should consider contingency plans and alternative solutions in the event a center resident needs to be quarantined. Operators should work with the local public health agency to ensure quarantine protocols align with local guidance.

The Department would like to encourage Contractors and center personnel to keep current with direction from local offices of public health, state and federal guidance and other applicable entities. The Governor's Office of Planning and Research has compiled a list of relevant resources that are updated daily:

[Statewide COVID-19 Clearinghouse](#) This site compiles resources from a variety of State Agencies, Departments, and sources all on one site. It also includes links to local resources.

[California Department of Public Health](#) Find up-to-date information about the spread of COVID-19; how to protect yourself, your family, and your community; the symptoms of the disease; and more.

[California Office of Emergency Services](#) Here you can sign up for email alerts with updates from CDPH, the Governor's Office and other sources.

[California Governor Gavin Newsom](#) The Governor's Office issues press releases on an ongoing basis outlining new statewide COVID-19 guidance for individuals, schools, businesses, healthcare facilities, and other institutions.

The Department also recommends OMS Contractors and center personnel consult the following resources:

[Cal/OSHA Guidance for Agricultural Employers and Employees](#) This guidance contains information, recommendations, and requirements for agricultural employers on how to update their Injury and Illness Prevention Programs (IIPP) and provide employee training to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

[Cal/OSHA Guidance for Childcare Facilities](#) This guidance contains information and recommendations for childcare programs on how to update their IIPPs to include information on employee training and preventing the spread of COVID-19 in childcare facilities.

[CDC Guidance on Social Distancing](#) This resource provides information regarding measures individuals can take to practice social distancing.

[CDC Guidance on Protecting Yourself and Others](#) This resource provides information on proper handwashing, personal hygiene, and disinfection guidance.

[CDC Guidance on Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 if You are Sick](#) This guidance provides information for individuals who are sick with COVID-19, or think they may have COVID-19, and the steps to follow to help protect other people at home and in the community.

[CDPH Guidance on Face Coverings](#) This guidance provides information about the use of face coverings.

[CDPH Immigrant Community Guidance](#) This guidance provides information for ensuring all individuals, regardless of their immigration status, are protected from the outbreak and receive appropriate testing and treatment.

[US HUD FAQs for Multifamily Housing Providers](#) This document provides questions and answers from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development regarding COVID-19.

If you have any further questions, please contact the OMS Program team at OMSProgram@hcd.ca.gov.