



Welcome!

All of us at Osceola Housing Authority welcome you to the neighborhood! We hope you enjoy your new home.

We want you to feel at home with OHA. You have the right to have a place where you can live comfortably, safely and with dignity.

This handbook includes information that is important for you as a resident in Public Housing. It accompanies your lease and contains information that should help make your stay with us enjoyable.

This handbook includes information about our policies as well as general rules. There are also instructions should an emergency occur in your residence. Please understand that our policies, rules, and regulations have not been established to restrict your lifestyle. They are designed so that you and your neighbors can enjoy a peaceful and quiet community.

If you do not find the answers to all your questions in this handbook, please don't hesitate to give us a call, or stop by. Once again, welcome to the community. We sincerely hope that you enjoy your new home.



UNIT AND SERVICE INFORMATION

Your address and unit number is _____

Office Phone Number (870) 563-6662

Office Hours Monday-Thursday 08:00a.m.–12:00 p.m.
1:00p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Office closes at 12:00 p.m. each Friday
for the remainder of the day

After Hours Emergency Numbers

Primary Phone 870-549-1414

Back-Up Phone 870-549-1423

Rob Collins Executive Director

Cell (870) 635-4980

IN CASE OF FIRE OR POLICE EMERGENCY DIAL

911

YOUR LEASE

At the time you moved in, you signed a lease. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask us. Your lease requires:

- that you pay your rent on time
- that you take care of your unit, both inside and out
- that you avoid disturbing your neighbors
- that you report any changes in income or family size within 10 days
- that you report any damages immediately

- that you ***do not*** keep weapons of any kind anywhere on Housing Authority property

RENT PAYMENTS

Rent payments are a major source of income that the Housing Authority uses for maintenance and operations. To assure your continued occupancy, it is important that you pay your rent on time. Your rent is payable on the first day of each month. Late fees will be assessed if not paid on time.

If you cannot meet your rent deadline, contact us right away. If you have experienced an unanticipated hardship, we will work with you to make sure you don't lose your home for non-payment of rent. Remember, non-payment of rent will be cause for termination of your housing assistance and can lead to eviction.



WHEN LATE FEES ARE APPLIED TO YOUR ACCOUNT

Rent is due and payable on the first day of each month. We allow a grace period of ten days for you to pay rent without incurring a late fee. A late fee of \$30.00 will be applied as of the morning of the 11th day of the month; you will then have 14 days to pay your charges in full or move out. If you still haven't paid in full by the end of the 25th day of the month, we will turn your file over to OHA legal representation for termination.

The only time this changes is if the 10th and/or the 25th fall on a weekend or holiday. If that happens, we will give you until the end of the next regular business day (the next day when we are normally open) to pay your rent.

HOW WE APPLY RENT AND OTHER CHARGES TO YOUR ACCOUNT

Each month you incur charges for rent (unless you are a negative renter) and grounds maintenance. You may also incur charges for maintenance and repairs to your residence, and possibly fines, such as for parking on your lawn. If you pay your account in full each month, you start the next month with a zero balance. If you do not pay all your charges, you carry an outstanding balance into the next month.

It is our policy to apply payments to the oldest charges on your account first. This means that, if you have an outstanding charge from a previous month on your account, and you bring in a payment intending to pay your current month's charges, that payment will be applied to the older, outstanding charge first. And that means that your rent might not be paid in full and you could end up having late fees tacked on to your account.

It is important to know what your total balance is before bringing us a payment. If you are unsure about your balance, you can always call us before going to get your money order. We'll be glad to go over your account with you.

HOW WE ACCEPT PAYMENTS

You will pay your rent and other charges at our Main Administrative Offices, located at 100 Wingfield Street in the Northgate neighborhood. You may pay in person, or you may mail it to our office address. Checks or money orders should be made payable to Osceola Housing Authority. We do accept debit cards. There is a \$3.00 processing fee for each swipe of a debit card. We do not accept cash for any balance over \$5.00, and when we do accept cash it must be for the exact amount of the balance. If you mail your payment, allow time for it to reach us on or before the 10th day of the month. We will consider your payment as made the day we receive it and enter it into our system, not the date you bought or mailed it.

YOUR SECURITY DEPOSIT

At the time you move in, you are required to pay a security deposit. Your deposit is retained in a bank account until you move out. It does not draw interest. This deposit is refunded when you move out unless:

- a balance is due on your rental account**
- there are damages to your unit (beyond normal wear and tear)**
- you leave personal belongings or trash in your unit that must be disposed of**
- you do not provide a 30-day written notice that you are moving**
- you do not provide a forwarding address**

If you are allowed to pay your security deposit in installments, you will be required to sign a payment agreement before you may move in. Please note non-payment of a full security deposit is a lease violation and will result in termination of your housing assistance.

WHO MAY LIVE IN YOUR UNIT

Only persons listed on your lease may live in your home. No one else may move in without you having first added them onto your lease. You may have guests for up to 14 days, provided that you have notified us at the time of their arrival. Extensions may be approved based on a written request.

TRANSFERS

A request to transfer to a different unit may be permitted under certain circumstances. Ask us for information on the required conditions and procedures for transfers.

PETS

Unlike many public housing authorities, we do allow certain types of pets. However, before you may keep a pet, you must pay (or make arrangements to pay) an additional deposit; you must sign an addendum to your lease that spells out the rules for keeping pets; and you must provide us with certain documentation that you will get from your veterinarian. If you are considering getting a pet, stop by our offices and we'll give you a copy of the addendum. Once you've met the requirements, signed the addendum and taken care of your deposit your pet may move in.

SATELLITE DISH AND PHONE JACK INSTALLATION

If you want to have a satellite dish installed, that's okay – but you have to come to our offices first and get and sign a Satellite Dish Installation Release form. This form outlines the minimum requirements that your installer will have to follow to conform to our policies and your Lease Agreement.

It is up to you to make sure that the installer is aware of and follows these minimum requirements. Installations that do not meet the requirements will be required to be removed or reinstalled at your expense. In certain cases, OHA may decide to remove the installation immediately if it poses an operational or safety risk. Again, reinstallation would be at your expense. **YOU MUST HAVE THE DISH REMOVED WHEN YOU MOVE OUT!** We also have a Release form for adding telephone jacks. As with satellite dishes, the installation would be at your expense and would have to meet certain minimum requirements.

30-DAY INSPECTION

We will inspect your unit for housekeeping and unit condition 30 days after you move in. You will be notified of the date and time of the inspection. Please be prepared!

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

We have a full-time staff of professionals whose only job is to keep all our residences and common areas in the best and safest condition possible. While it is your responsibility to keep your home clean and sanitary, and to avoid damaging your building or the building systems, we understand that things happen.

If your home, your appliances or the building systems (air conditioner, heater, lighting, etc) are in need of repair, we ask that you contact us at our main offices, or, for emergencies after regular business hours, call the emergency numbers listed at the beginning of this booklet. Please call right away when you notice conditions that could get worse such as leaks or broken windows.



There is no charge for maintenance or repairs EXCEPT for the repair of damage or vandalism caused by you, your family, or your guests. A list of those charges is available in the office. Normal wear and tear is expected and will not be subject to charges.

Please do NOT attempt to make repairs on your own. You may be voiding a warranty; you may get hurt; and you might actually make things worse. Give us a call – that's what we're here for.

Maintenance workers are available at night and on weekends only for emergencies such as:

- loss of electricity
- broken windows or doors
- plumbing blockages
- water leaks causing damage
- short circuits
- no heat (in cold weather months)
- no air conditioning (in hot weather months)
- Lock outs

To report such emergencies, call the emergency pager numbers listed at the beginning of this booklet.

RENTER'S INSURANCE

We STRONGLY encourage you to purchase renter's insurance as soon as possible after you move into your home, and to maintain your policy for as long as you live with us. In case of theft or other loss of your possessions, renter's insurance may well help you cover the costs of replacement. There are several insurance agencies in Osceola that can provide you with a quote for renter's insurance coverage.

ENTERING YOUR UNIT

For routine inspections and maintenance, we will give you at least 48 hours (2 days) notice before we enter your unit. However, we may enter without prior notice if we have reason to believe an emergency exists, if you call in any work order, and when the exterminators come per their schedule.

LOCKED-OUT?

Should you find yourself locked out of your unit, contact the office if it happens during regular office hours. You will be charged \$5.00. If the lockout occurs in the evening, on a weekend, or on a holiday, you may call the emergency maintenance pager numbers listed at the beginning of this booklet for assistance, but be aware that you will be charged actual overtime charges for this service.

CARE OF YOUR RESIDENCE, APPLIANCES AND FIXTURES

When you move into your home, you will participate in an inspection with an OHA staff person. The inspection will confirm that your entire residence is clean and free of pests; that the walls and floors have been cleaned; and that all the appliances and building systems are in good working order.

The appliances and fixtures in your unit represent a considerable investment and will give both you and OHA long and excellent service if you give it good care. By following the few suggestions listed in this section, you can keep your appliances and fixtures in good working order and avoid costly repair charges.

Refrigerator: Clean with a soft rubber spatula and a sponge. Wipe out the crisper drawers with a warm, wet cloth or sponge. An open box of baking soda left in the refrigerator will help cut down on odors between cleanings. Do not over-fill your freezer or it will not be able to cool sufficiently to keep your food frozen.

Stove: The easiest way to keep your stove clean is to mop up spills as they happen. Once a week (or whenever necessary) raise the top of the stove and clean under it with warm soapy water (NOTE that on newer model gas stoves the top cannot be raised. If you are unsure whether your stove's top can be raised, call us and we'll let you know). Never spray a cleaner directly on the burners themselves. Lining the bottom of the oven with aluminum foil, or an inexpensive aluminum tray (available at most grocery stores) will help contain spills and keep them from baking onto the oven surface.

Toilet: The ONLY material that should go into your toilet is food that has made a trip through your stomach, and toilet paper. All other items belong in the trash. Should your toilet get stopped up, you can first try to clear it with a plunger, then, if unsuccessful, call for maintenance assistance. If your toilet stops up and appears to be overflowing, the first thing you should do is turn off the water supply. Turn the water supply valve handle (located below the toilet tank and to the side of the toilet itself) clockwise to stop the water flow. Then call the main office for maintenance service.

COCKROACHES AND OTHER PESTS

OHA contracts with a professional pest management company who will inspect your residence every other month, and apply pesticide to eliminate cockroaches if necessary. We provide this service at no cost to you. They will also provide special treatment if your residence has a cockroach infestation (if the cause of the infestation is not related to neglect).

We also have our contractor maintain bait boxes around the perimeters of the Northgate and Shirley Drive neighborhoods to ensure that rats do not become a problem.

We do not treat for other pests such as spiders, ants, or mice. You can help us keep your residence, and our neighborhoods free of pests by following these simple suggestions:

- most importantly, do not leave food or food products, such as cooking grease out. Store food and cooking products in tightly sealed containers or bags
- Clean up food scraps and crumbs immediately
- dispose of garbage and store in sealed bags. OHA will provide you with garbage bags twice a year, in April and September, free of charge
- if necessary, seal and store full bags until garbage pickup days
- always place sealed bags at the curb on scheduled garbage pick-up days. Osceola collects garbage on Mondays and Thursdays
- keep your residence clean, inside and out



HOUSEKEEPING:

You are responsible for seeing that your residence is maintained in a clean, safe, and sanitary condition and that the property is cared for. Housekeeping is especially important. Failure to maintain adequate housekeeping standards may be grounds for termination of your lease, especially if poor housekeeping leads to health and/or safety problems.

FLOORING

The best way to avoid damage from sand and grit is to follow the tradition of removing your shoes as soon as you step inside. Place a rug remnant or even an old towel by the door to keep outdoor shoes and boots on. Some folks keep a pair of slippers or heavy socks right inside the door to slip on when they come in.

CONDENSATION

If you notice moisture appearing on your windows, ceilings, walls, etc. or if your windows steam up, it is probably condensation resulting from too much moist, stagnant air in your home. Eventually such condensation will cause mold and wall stains. To prevent this, provide cross ventilation by keeping windows slightly cracked particularly if you are drying clothes inside or are doing a lot of cooking that causes steam, making sure to close the windows afterwards.

If your kitchen has a fan over the stove, always use it when cooking. Use the bathroom fan when you take a shower. Too many plants can also be a major cause of excessive mold or mildew. If you have mold or mildew in your unit, you may be charged for damages when you move out. Check with us on ways to prevent, and if necessary, clean mold and mildew.



INSPECTIONS:

We are required by HUD regulations to inspect every one of our residences at least once a year. So, approximately every 9 to 12 months, you will receive a notice stating that your residence has been scheduled for an annual inspection. The purpose of this inspection is to be sure your home is in the best physical condition possible; that your appliances, building systems and fixtures are in good working order; and that you are

keeping your home in a clean, sanitary and safe manner. The inspectors will be also be checking to make sure that heating units are not blocked, that entrances and hallways are uncluttered, and that your smoke detector is working. Another major concern is that bedroom windows which could be used as an emergency exit in case of fire are not blocked. Housekeeping and preventative maintenance inspections will be conducted periodically throughout the year.

FIRE PREVENTION:

Smoke detectors are perhaps the single most important feature of your unit. They are required by law in every residence and must be kept in working condition.

If the detector in your unit operates off of batteries, it is your responsibility to contact us when the battery is low. Normally, the detector will “beep” periodically when the battery is low.

All detectors will be checked at the time of routine inspections. In the meantime, if you have reason to believe yours is not working properly, notify us right away. Sometimes, these devices can go off even when there is no thick smoke for fire. The reason is usually because of a buildup of soot or dust, or because something cooking on the stove is getting “well done”. When this happens, DO NOT disconnect the alarm, but either turn on the fan over the range or open a window for added ventilation. If the false alarm continues, notify us immediately.

There are many ways in which residents can greatly improve their fire safety. While many are self-evident, all deserve to be listed, since it is easy to overlook the obvious.

Electrical Cords and Outlets

- **Try to avoid the use of extension cords whenever possible and in no case use an extension cord that is frayed**
- **Do not use any extension cord smaller in diameter than the cord of the electrical item you plug into it**
- **Keep all electrical cords away from any heat source**
- **Do not use adapters to plug in more electrical cords than the outlet allows.**
- **Never remove faceplates from the electrical outlets or switches. If an outlet or switch is malfunctioning call us for maintenance service**
- **Do not run cable cords, extension cords, phone cords, or any other cords across the floor as this is a tripping hazard**

Heating and Air Conditioning Systems

- **If you detect any problem in the operation of your heating or air conditioning system, however slight, call us immediately. Do not attempt to correct a problem yourself**
- **Keep beds, couches, carpets, curtains, and small objects at least 4 inches and preferably 12 inches from any heating source, particularly heater vents**
- **Do not use your oven or stove burners to heat your home**
- **Do not use portable heaters in your home**

Cooking

- **Do not leave your home while cooking on the stove or in the oven**
- **When cooking, wear short or tight fitted sleeves that won't brush up against the burners**
- **Never use a barbeque grill inside your home**
- **If your kitchen is not provided with a fan, open the window slightly to vent cooking fumes that may cause your smoke detector to go off**

IN CASE OF FIRE

- 1. Stay calm. The more excited you are, the more rapid your breathing will be, and the more poisonous gases you will inhale, which will impair your judgment. Sometimes gases will so seriously affect a person's judgment as to make them incapable of fleeing**
- 2. If you are in a closed room, feel the door of the room before exiting. If it is warm to the touch or if smoke is seeping in around the door, do not open it. Use a pre-planned alternate means of escape, probably a window. If possible, crawl out the window feet first. Hang from the sill and drop to the ground. (Small children may be lowered from the window.)**
- 3. If the door is cool to the touch, slowly crack it open. If it is reasonably free of heat and you do not see smoke, quickly exit this way**
- 4. If you are unable to leave by either exit, open a window. The smoke will escape through the opening. Stay low in the window and signal your location by waving a bright cloth or sheet**
- 5. If possible put a closed door between you and the fire; seal off cracks with anything – wet towels or clothes if possible**
- 6. Make sure all members of the family have heard the smoke detector alarm. The smoke detector, as loud as it is, may fail to wake all members of the family**
- 7. In smoke, crawl, do not walk. Air nearest to the floor is freer of smoke**
- 8. Set a meeting place outside the building for your family so you will know that all members are safe. Once safely outside, go to a neighbor's home and dial 911 and ask for Fire Department assistance. Never go back into a burning building. If you think someone is trapped inside, tell the Fire Department**

BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR

Living in our neighborhoods, like any neighborhood requires a little effort on everyone's part to keep the community a peaceful, secure, and comfortable place to live. You and every one of our residents deserve, and have the right to expect a high quality of life. Here are some ways you and your family can contribute toward a more pleasant living environment:

TRASH

Trash pick-up is paid for by OHA; however it is your responsibility to see that it is disposed of properly. Avoid letting your trash pile up in or around your home and dispose of it in closed plastic bags. You will need to set your trash out the night before or early in the morning on your pick-up days, which will be Mondays and Thursdays. Please keep your home picked up and remind your children that littering is a lease violation.

GROUNDS

The maintenance staff maintains the common areas. Every resident is responsible for the yard area directly around their home. Failure to maintain your assigned area will be considered a violation of your lease and may result in termination. Please be especially aware of, and clean up things like broken glass, sharp metal or other objects that could injure you or a neighbor.

PARKING

To avoid an unpleasant (and costly) towing experience, we urge you to keep your registration tags current, the vehicle in operating condition, and OFF THE LAWN. Parking vehicles on lawns will result in a \$25.00 fine for each occurrence. If lawns or common areas are damaged by your vehicle or a guest's vehicle, you will be charged the actual cost of repairs. You need to register your vehicle with OHA at the time you move in, or whenever you get a new or different vehicle. All residents are required to have in OHA parking sticker on their vehicle.



NOISE

One of the most basic ways to show respect for your neighbors is to do your part to “keep the peace.” A good rule of thumb for your TV, radio, or stereo is to have it turned down by 10:00 p.m. It is equally important that you know where your teens are and what they are doing.

SECURITY

OHA works closely with Osceola Police Department, Mississippi County Sheriff Department, DTF and others to identify and eliminate any source of disruption or danger in any of our neighborhoods. However, the real secret to keeping our neighborhoods quiet and safe is YOU and your neighbors.

Criminals and others who are disturbing your peace, or making your neighborhood unsafe can’t win against neighbors who watch out for each other. Get to know your neighbors. Be aware of who should be in your neighborhood. Keep an eye out for suspicious people or activity in your area. If you see something happening that concerns you; if you see someone, or a group that you think shouldn’t be in your neighborhood, call the police. Fighting, public drinking, or other disturbances? Call the police. And then – call us. The only way we can take action to eliminate problems and/or those who cause them is if we know about it. Let us know and we will do everything possible to make sure you have the safe, quiet neighborhood you deserve.

ELIGIBILITY FOR CONTINUED RESIDENCE

It is a HUD requirement that we re-examine you and every resident of OHA at least once a year to determine your continuing eligibility for housing assistance. It will be up to you to provide us with documents we request so that we can verify your eligibility.

RENT REVIEW

We will review your rent annually to determine the rent you will pay for the next twelve months and to ensure that it will not exceed 30% of your income. We'll also review your income, and help you determine whether it is more advantageous for you to choose a "flat rent" or a rent based on a percentage of your income.

We'll send you a letter well in advance, notifying you of your appointment with our Housing Clerk for re-examination. The letter will also tell you what documents you need to bring with you.

REPORTING CHANGES IN INCOME AND FAMILY SIZE

You must report any changes in your household income or family size within 10 days of the change. Your rent will be reviewed and adjusted in conformance with your family size and anticipated annual income for the coming year.

You should know that because your rent is based on your income, and because you certify that you are being truthful about all income you receive in order to receive a federal rent subsidy, it is considered criminal fraud to withhold information about any income you or anyone else in your household are receiving.

If we learn that you or anyone in your household has been receiving income that you haven't reported to us, you will be required to pay any additional rent you may owe based on the total value of that unreported income.

Normally your rent is not subject to any change between yearly income reviews and you are not required to make any report of changes in income or family size between income reviews, EXCEPT,

- if a husband or wife leaves or joins the household, or if a member of your family who has signed the lease leaves the home**
- if a marriage occurs**
- if there is a change in income. In such instances, you may be eligible for a temporary rent reduction. If you expect or experience a change in income, report it to us right away. We'll have to verify the change, and that can take time. Don't wait until your rent is due.**

THINGS TO KNOW AND DO WHEN YOU MOVE OUT

When you get ready to move out, you'll save both yourself and the Housing Authority trouble and expense by observing these simple rules:

- give proper 30-day written notice of your intent to vacate
- clean up all trash. Take all garbage or trash in your residence to the dump. If you leave garbage or trash in your residence, you will be charged a trash removal fee that will be deducted from your security deposit
- leave your unit clean and neat. Besides normal wear and tear, you are expected to leave your unit as near to the condition it was in when you moved in as possible. Pay special attention to the appliances
- be sure to clear your account with the office. Any unpaid rents will be deducted from your security deposit, and may be subject to civil court action so that we can recover what you owe us
- leave your keys and a forwarding address at the office; you cannot get your security deposit refunded without a correct forwarding address

REMEMBER

YOU ARE CHARGED RENT UNTIL YOUR KEYS ARE TURNED IN!

CHARGES WHEN YOU MOVE OUT

The Housing Authority is required to return your full security deposit the 1st of the month following the date you turned in your keys IF there are no charges to your account. This includes unpaid rent and damages. The most frequent causes of extra charges are:

- broken or cracked windows
- damage to walls from crayon marks, nail holes, resident painted walls and ceilings, etc.
- missing range or refrigerator parts, broiler pans, ice trays, etc.
- damage to countertops, floors, walls, etc., (especially burn marks), beyond normal wear and tear
- dirty windows and walls, floors, etc., which require excess cleaning time
- dirty appliances

- **damaged window shades**

Charges are charge schedule as the costs of changes.



based on a standard that is subject to change materials and labor

IF YOU VIOLATE A TERMINATION

Your lease is a legal contract. If YOU violate your lease you will receive a termination notice. You may, depending on the circumstances have the right to make a reply to the termination notice and a right to request a hearing in accordance with the Housing Authority's grievance procedure. You may also request to examine documents in your file concerning the lease termination.

YOUR LEASE AND RECEIVE NOTICE

Any termination notice will include a date by which you must have vacated your residence. If you fail to vacate by that date, you then are considered to be in violation of Arkansas' Unlawful Detainer Act, and subject to eviction by Mississippi County Sheriffs.

ENJOY YOUR NEW HOME!

