



LAKE COUNTY HOUSING ASSISTANCE OFFICE



Housing Assistance Programs Provided by
Lake County Community Housing Organization and City of Ronan Housing Authority

P.O. Box 146 111 - 2nd Avenue SW Ronan, MT 59864

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GRIEVANCE POLICY OF Lake County Community Housing Organization

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish the procedure by which the Lake County Community Housing Organization shall insure that all individuals utilizing the services of the Lake County Community Housing Organization are given the opportunity to dispute Lake County Community Housing Organizations action or failure to act, and to receive within a reasonable period of time a response to the dispute. A copy of the Grievance Policy shall be given to each individual when requested. A copy shall be displayed in the Authority office.

B. APPLICABILITY

The Lake County Community Housing Organization Grievance Policy shall be applicable to all individual disputes between an individual and any program under the administration or control of the Lake County Community Housing Organization. The Policy shall not be applicable to disputes among individuals not involving the Lake County Community Housing Organization. The Policy is only applicable to disputes regarding the interpretation or implementation of established policy. It shall not be used as a method of initiating changes in Lake County Community Housing Organization policy.

C. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions are applicable:

LCCHO is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

To file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 voice, or (202) 720-6382 (TDD)

1. **GRIEVANCE** shall mean any formal complaint or dispute which an individual may have with respect to Lake County Community Housing Organizations action, or failure to act, in accordance with the individual lease, agreement, contractor in accordance with any other Lake County Community Housing Organization regulations.
2. **RESIDENT REQUEST** shall mean a formal documentation, in written form, of an individual grievance either using a Resident Request form or a letter, or a letter signed by the individual. The receptionist at the Lake County Community Housing Organization will assist individuals in preparation of the Resident Request.
3. **INDIVIDUAL** shall mean any tenant under the Low Rent Program or the Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Program, Section 8 Certificate Program, CDBG Home Rehabilitation Program and any person or entity receiving services from any program under the administration or control of the Authority.
4. **CONCILIATION MEETING** shall mean an informal meeting between the Executive Director of the Authority, or his/her designee, and the individual, in an attempt to resolve a grievance prior to scheduling a Grievance Hearing.
5. **GRIEVANCE HEARING** shall mean a formal presentation to the Lake County Community Housing Organization Board of all facts pertaining to a grievance and decision by the Board on the merits of the appeal.

D. DOCUMENTATION

1. The Lake County Community Housing Organization staff shall keep a record of all formal and informal individual grievances, requests for assistance, or other communications requesting a review of Lake County Community Housing Organization action or failure to act.
2. A Lake County Community Housing Organization Resident Request Form shall be completed and

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signed by the individual whenever there is a grievance. A letter requesting action and signed by the individual may substitute for a Resident Request form.

3. All action taken to respond to an individual grievance shall be recorded with an indication of results achieved and further action required or anticipated.
4. Any Grievance Hearing before the Board of Commissioners of the Lake County Community Housing Organization will be documented in the minutes, plus any explanatory materials, to be entered in the record kept regarding the appeal.

E. INFORMAL SETTLEMENT OF GRIEVANCES

1. The Lake County Community Housing Organization staff shall make every effort to respond to individual grievances, problems, requests for assistance, requests for action, or appeals of decisions so as to avoid the necessity for formal Resident Requests and Grievance Hearings before the Board.
2. Staff shall, if requested, assist individuals to document grievances, and to complete Resident Request Forms.
3. Staff shall respond to Resident Requests within ten working days of receipt.
4. If the individual is not satisfied with the initial response, the Lake County Community Housing Organization staff, including the Executive Director, shall make an additional effort to satisfy the complaint, holding a conciliation meeting within an additional five working days.

F. GRIEVANCE HEARING

1. An individual may request a Grievance Hearing within fifteen working days of receipt of a formal Authority response to his Resident Request. A Grievance Hearing may not be requested until the

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individual has filed a formal Resident Request and the Lake County Community Housing Organization has made a response.

- 2 The request for a Grievance Hearing shall be made using a Lake County Community Housing Organization Request for Grievance Hearing form, signed by the individual. A letter requesting a hearing signed by the individual, may substitute for a Request for grievance Hearing Form. If a hearing is not requested within the required fifteen working day period, the matter in dispute will not be considered further, and the individual will be required to adhere to the action specified in the original response.
3. When a Request for Grievance Hearing is received, a hearing will be scheduled at the earliest mutual convenience of the Lake County Community Housing Organization Board of Commissioners and the complainant.
4. At a formal Grievance Hearing before the Board of Commissioners, the following procedure will be followed:
 - a. The hearing will take place at the beginning of the board meeting.
 - b. All visitors and guests other than the Executive Director or designee and staff person recording minutes will be requested to leave the meeting room while the hearing is in progress. The complainant has the right to be represented by another person of their choice at the hearing.
 - c. There will be an opportunity for both the Lake County Community Housing Organization and the complainant to make an opening statement, present witnesses and documents, and ask questions of or cross-examine the other party.
 - d. The format of the hearing shall not imply that the burden of proof is more on one side than the other; the purpose of the hearing is to present all information required in order to allow a decision by the Board based on merits of the grievance.
 - e. The Board will make a decision on the grievance within ten working days of the hearing. This decision will be transmitted within five work days to the complainant, both orally and in writing, by the Authority.

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- f. The decision shall be binding on the Lake County Community Housing Organization

G. PAYMENT AND DEPOSIT OF RENT OR MONTHLY PAYMENTS

Where a grievance involves payment of rent or monthly payments or other charges, the individual may not withhold payment pending a Grievance Hearing by the Board. The complainant must make rent payments, monthly payments, and payments for other charges when due; the Lake County Community Housing Organization shall place these monies in its accounts, and shall not use them for any purpose until a Grievance Hearing is held and a decision is rendered.

H. APPEAL OF THE DECISION OF THE BOARD

The individual may appeal the decision of the Board through the appropriate judicial process. Such appeal shall be based upon the record made at the Board hearing unless good cause be shown by the complainant for the submission of additional evidence.

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RESIDENT REQUEST FOR GRIEVANCE HEARING

This form is to be used to initiate a request from the Lake County Community Housing Organization to schedule a Grievance Hearing with the Board of Commissioners. This form or letter requesting the Grievance Hearing must be returned to the Lake County Community Housing Organization within fifteen working days of the Lake County Community Housing Organizations response to the Resident Request. A Grievance Hearing may not be requested until the complainant has filed a form Resident Request and the Lake County Community Housing Organization has made a response. Attach a letter explaining your reasons for making this grievance request.

Please fill this form out completely and return it to the Lake County Community Housing Organization office. A hearing will be scheduled at the earliest mutual convenience of the Board and the Complainant.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ - _____ Unit No: _____

_____ Phone No: _____

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Date of Response from Lake County Community Housing: _____

Response of Lake County Community Housing:

Signature of Resident

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