

TO: Municipal CEOs, EMDs, Social Service Agency Heads

FROM: Paul Gibb, Public Assistance Coordinator
CT Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security

DATE: November 16, 2005

RE: Latest FEMA Guidance For Public Entities Housing Katrina/Rita Evacuees

On September 13, 2005 President Bush issued an Emergency Declaration for the State of Connecticut (FEMA-3246-EM) to allow the State of Connecticut and its municipalities to utilize FEMA funds to assist with housing evacuees from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita residing in our State.

Subsequent to that declaration, the State Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) and the State Department of Social Services conducted a series of Applicants' Briefing around the State to advise municipalities that were interested in renting or providing apartments for evacuees of how to participate in this program and how to seek federal reimbursements through DEMHS. Municipal officials were also advised that they could instead simply direct evacuees living in their communities to a State-sponsored evacuee housing program established by the State Department of Social Services.

To the best of our knowledge, very few municipalities in Connecticut elected to house evacuees at municipal expense and to seek FEMA reimbursement through DEMHS. Most municipalities began referring evacuees to the State's program, as they were encouraged to do at the Applicants' Briefings.

However, municipalities that are currently housing evacuees, or possibly intending to house evacuees, must immediately take note of the latest guidance attached herewith regarding FEMA's reimbursement program (a.k.a. the "403 Program" or the "FEMA Public Assistance Program"). In particular, please note the wording the paragraph entitled "States will restrict new or extended 403 Program apartment leases," and the paragraph entitled "No Later Than March 1, 2006."

The new FEMA policy effectively says:

- 1) Between now and December 1, 2005 **new or extended leases** can only be for **3 months** unless specifically approved for a longer period by the FEMA Regional Director.
- 2) As of December 1, 2005 **NO NEW OR EXTENDED LEASES** will be eligible for reimbursement under the 403 Program

3) By March 1, 2006 all leases signed or-co-signed by State or local officials must be terminated and the lease assumed by the occupant if the occupant elects to stay in the apartment. Fees and penalties associated with termination of leases will be reimbursed by FEMA.

This new FEMA guidance is intended to move evacuees into FEMA's regular temporary housing program (a.k.a. the "Individual and Households Program" or "408 Program") and out of hotels/motels and apartments provided under the FEMA Public Assistance Program (i.e. the 403 Program).

Prior to March 1, 2006 evacuees should contact the FEMA hotline (1-800-621-3362) to inquire about receiving continued FEMA rental assistance under FEMA's Individual and Households Program (a.k.a. the "408 Program").

FEMA had initially declared they would provide 12 months of rental assistance to evacuees under the 403 Program. The new guidance is a reversal of FEMA's previously stated position and regrettably leaves both State and local officials currently housing evacuees with the difficult task of explaining an unfavorable change in FEMA's housing program. Nevertheless, in the words of one FEMA Headquarters official ".....we expect everyone to pull together to help support this next phase of evacuee transition."

A FEMA Press Release (HQ-05-373) on this matter is also attached herewith.

Please ensure this information is immediately brought to the attention of the head of your local social service agency if your municipality has such an agency.

Please contact me at (860) 566-3377 or paul.gibb@po.state.ct.us with any questions or concerns.