

Resident Handbook

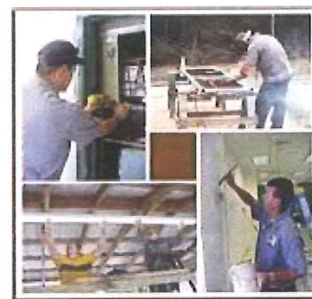


BUILDING THE COMMUNITY ONE PERSON AT A TIME! That's our motto at NORTON HOUSING AUTHORITY. As a provider of affordable public housing in the area, we offer vital support to Norton residents. We understand the importance of dignified assistance as a means of improving the livelihood of an entire community.

In addition to our housing facilities, NORTON HOUSING AUTHORITY recognizes the importance of residents' needs, including access to outreach programs, special accommodations and other community services. By investing in a sense of community, we strive to empower those who have experienced either temporary or permanent setbacks.

OUR FACILITIES

NORTON HOUSING AUTHORITY has 144 public housing units. Our elderly/handicap development features contemporary-style two-story buildings. Our family development features townhouse-style duplex buildings. Our in-house maintenance staff keeps all systems operating efficiently, makes repairs in a timely fashion and maintains the grounds beautifully.



**AT NORTON HOUSING AUTHORITY WE
TRULY CARE ABOUT OUR RESIDENTS!**

Equal Housing Opportunity



July 2015

WELCOME

We would like to welcome you to your new home.

Before you move into your unit, we urge you to take a moment to read this handbook.

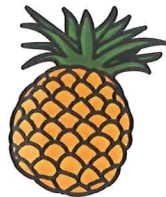
The Norton Housing Authority operates within the framework of the Rules and Regulations for State-aided Housing under the direction of the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

Residing in a development such as this will be, for most people, a new experience. You are sharing your neighborhood with individuals from many backgrounds. Our mutual obligation is to make our developments a pleasant and attractive example of community life in our town.

The Housing Authority provides efficient management and sound financial administration. To this end, we repair and maintain the property in first-class condition to the best of our ability. However, without your cooperation, it can't be done.

A development reflects its occupants – you and your neighbors have a right to peaceful enjoyment and privacy in your apartment. A mutual respect and consideration for one another will ensure that all occupants enjoy living here.

NHA will cooperate to the fullest extent to make your stay pleasant. We need your active support. Cooperation is the basis for success in any housing development.



GENERAL OFFICE INFORMATION

Board of Commissioners

James Dinsel	Chairperson	starfish5029@aol.com
Robert Salvo, Sr.	Vice-Chairperson	Robert@nortonhousing.org
James Dinsel	Governor's Appointee	starfish5029@aol.com
Marlu Briggs	Treasurer	fellowlock@comcast.net
Michael Young	Commissioner	Michaelyoung02766@gmail.com
Ralph Stefanelli	Commissioner	Ralph@nortonhousing.org

Norton Housing Authority Staff

Andrea Downey	Executive Director	andrea@nortonhousing.org
Lori Castro	Housing Coordinator	lori@nortonhousing.org
Missie Saulsby	Resident Coordinator	missie@nortonhousing.org
Matthew Clark	Maintenance	matt@nortonhousing.org
Richard Sullivan	Maintenance	rich@nortonhousing.org

Office Hours

Address: 120 West Main Street, Norton, MA 02766
(Located in the Community Hall at Woodland Meadows)

Phone: 508-285-3929

Fax: 508-285-5073

Monday8:30 – 3:00
Tuesday8:30 – 3:00
Wednesday8:30 – 3:00
Thursday8:30 – 3:00
Friday9:00 – 11:00

AIR CONDITIONERS



Only one air conditioner is allowed per apartment at our Woodland Meadows site. You must provide, maintain and install your own air conditioner. They can be installed on April 1st and must be removed by October 31st. Air Conditioners may be installed permanently in certain units.

If you require an exception to Policy, you may request a Reasonable Accommodation. Any A/C that is allowed to remain in the apartment permanently must be properly insulated and covered.

ALCHOLIC BEVERAGES / CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES

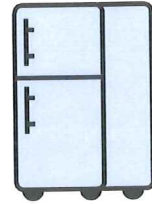
The consumption of alcoholic beverages and any controlled substance is prohibited in **any** common area at Norton Housing Authority, including but not limited to the Community Room, common porches, common grounds, courtyards, back yards, designated smoking sitting area, and the non-smoking sitting area.

ALTERATIONS

Alterations to Housing Authority property are strictly prohibited. Any alternation done in a unit without the permission of the Housing Authority will be removed and repaired at the resident's expense. Alterations to the buildings that are not permitted include, but are not limited to, painting, wallpaper, borders, ceiling fans, light fixtures, satellite television, dish television, or additional locks.

APPLIANCES

Stoves and refrigerators are supplied by the Housing Authority. It is the resident's responsibility to keep all the appliances clean. Please clean your stove & oven regularly. Dried or baked-on grease is difficult to remove and is a fire hazard.



No other large appliances are allowed...
such as, freezers, dishwashers, waterbeds, etc.

CABLE TELEVISION

All apartments are wired for cable television. If you would like cable TV, you must pay for all costs of installation and removal. Comcast Cable is the provider of cable service in this area and can be contacted by calling **888-633-4266**. Satellite (dish) television installed on the exterior of the building is prohibited. No cable television equipment is allowed to be installed directly onto any structural surface of any Housing Authority building.

COMMON AREAS

No storage sheds, animal cages, play gyms or trampolines may be erected. Outside toys should be stored inside when not in use. Children's wading pools are only allowed on Housing Authority property at Jacobs Way. Pools must be emptied when not in use or at the end of each day. If you use a children's wading pool, please adhere to the Swimming Pool Policy available at the Housing Authority Office. No tires, batteries or car parts can be stored on Housing Authority property.



Seasonal Furniture: Yard furniture must be kept to a minimum. Woodland Meadows residents must limit outside furniture and keep all furniture adjacent to their apartment door. Residents at Jacobs Way must place outside furniture only on the patio area in the back yard. Patio furniture and outside toys must not be left in the way of the landscaping contractor. All yard furniture must be stored away at the end of the season.

Cooking grills may be stored next to rear entranceways. However, when the cooking grill is being used, it must be placed **at least 10 feet away from the building** for fire safety.



Trash: You are responsible for properly disposing of all trash and debris on a daily basis, including large furniture items. No trash can be left unattended outside of any residential unit. If you fail to comply, a written notice will be delivered to you. Failure to remove items within the time allowed will result in our Maintenance staff disposing of the item(s) and the resident will be charged a removal fee.

DAMAGES

When damages occur to your apartment, its fixtures or appliances, beyond normal wear and tear, you are required to pay for the damage. Some examples include:

- *Broken doors, window glass, screens*
- *Defaced walls, cabinetry or countertops*
- *Cracked toilets, sinks, tubs, etc.*

EMERGENCY CALL SYSTEM

Woodland Meadows has an emergency call system. This is a pull-cord system located in the bathroom and bedroom. In an emergency, when the cord is pulled, a bell will ring to indicate you need help. When you hear such an alarm, you should call 911 to report it. Do NOT tie up the cords or put extra locks on doors. Screen doors must remain unlocked to allow for emergency entry.

ENTRY

Access to units varies according to circumstances. If NHA needs to enter your unit for a non-emergency purpose, we are required to provide you with 48 hours' notice. In case of an emergency, NHA staff and the Town of Norton Police & Fire Departments are authorized to enter your apartment without 48 hours' notice. Naturally, they will knock prior to entering. If you do not respond, they will enter your unit. Please do not install additional locks that may delay entry during an emergency.



If you give NHA a maintenance request for a repair in your unit, they will enter your unit to make the repair during normal business hours. If you would like to be home during the repair, you must tell the office that at the time of the request and be available during normal business hours for maintenance to make necessary repairs.

EXIT

Do NOT block exits with furniture, trash or anything that may prevent you from exiting in the event of an emergency. Do not store anything in stairwells or walkways leading to these exits. At Woodland Meadows storage is not permitted in any exterior closet beneath the stairs in your building.

FIRE PROTECTION



Removing or disabling smoke detectors is **AGAINST THE LAW**. Please vacuum your smoke detectors annually to prevent false alarms. Use caution when cooking to avoid a fire. Should your smoke detector appear to be working improperly, please call the Office.

HEAT

Electricity is the single most expensive expense at NHA. Each unit is equipped with thermostats to regulate the amount of heat you receive. If you require assistance, maintenance will assist you in setting the thermostat to provide enough heat to keep your apartment at a comfortable level. While residents may wish to occasionally air out their apartments during the winter months, **WINDOWS AND DOORS SHOULD NOT REMAIN OPEN FOR ANY EXTENDED PERIOD**. Also, during summer months, do not leave heat on while the air conditioner is running. The Housing Authority pays for electricity at Woodland Meadows. Please use electricity responsibly. We appreciate your cooperation in keeping the heating and air conditioning inside your apartment.

INSPECTIONS

State Regulations require periodic inspections of your apartment. This can occur at any time during the year. We must view, test and report on safety equipment once annually for routine inspections. You will be given a forty-eight (48) hour notice.





INSURANCE

The Housing Authority is not responsible for loss or damage to your furnishings or personal property as a result of fire, storms, vandalism, flood, etc. The Housing Authority strongly recommends that residents purchase renters insurance to protect themselves from personal property losses.

KEYS

Each resident will be given one key to their apartment. Additional keys can only be ordered through the Office. A mailbox key is also given when you sign the lease. If you should lose your keys, the Housing Authority will order you another key at a minimal cost to you. At the time of this handbook publishing, the cost for each duplicate unit key is \$16.00. Mailbox key replacement is \$20.00.



LEASE



It is important that you read and understand your lease. Your lease is a legal written agreement between you and the Housing Authority. It states the amount of your rent, your responsibilities, management's responsibilities, any utilities you may be responsible for, and the way that the lease may be terminated by either you or the Housing Authority. The lease complies with State Regulations and Housing Authority Policy.

MAINTENANCE REQUESTS

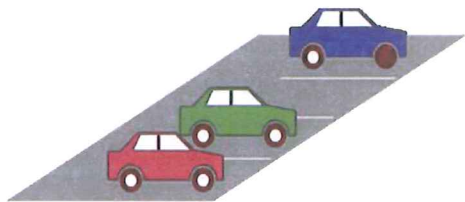
All maintenance requests for work orders are to be made to the Office during regular business hours; **please do not give Maintenance Staff work orders while they are on site.** We will try to handle your request as promptly as possible. Daytime work order calls can be numerous, so please be patient. Staff will schedule work orders as workload permits. Emergency calls take precedence; non-emergency work orders will be handled within 48 hours.



After regular business hours, if you have an emergency, you should call the Office phone number. The answering service will pick-up the call and relay your message to our on-call Maintenance staff. The Maintenance person on-call for the week will respond to emergencies immediately. To be considered an emergency, the maintenance call must be for a problem that presents a direct and immediate threat to the health and/or safety of residents.

If, in the opinion of our Maintenance staff, your call is not an emergency, the work order will be addressed during normal business hours on the next business day.

LOCKOUTS: If you are locked out of your apartment after hours, call the answering service to contact a maintenance person. Your rental account will be charged \$30 to have a maintenance person open your door during non-office hours.



PARKING

There are limited parking accommodations for automobiles. Parking spaces are assigned by the Maintenance staff after the lease is signed. All vehicles must be properly registered, insured and inspected throughout residency at NHA. Residents are responsible for repairs and cleanup of excess fluids leaking from their vehicle promptly upon request from the office or maintenance staff. Any abandoned motor vehicle will be towed at the owner's expense. The Housing Authority is not responsible for any loss or damage to your personal vehicle.

Residents are responsible for their visitors and where they park. When you have company or any staff you have for assistance visiting your unit, they must park in a visitor parking space. Visitor parking is located adjacent to the office building and at the front of the development.

PAYMENT OF RENT

Your rent is determined according to your gross income and family size. Prompt payment of rent is important and is due on the 1st of each month. It is the policy of the Housing Authority to accept payment by check or money order; we request that you do not pay your rent in cash. You may mail your rent to: Norton Housing Authority, 120 W. Main Street, Norton, MA 02766, you may drop it off during normal business hours or drop it off after hours into the black mailbox located outside our office door above the blue outgoing US mailbox. Residents whose personal check is returned due to insufficient funds will be charged our bank fee and may be required to pay by money order or certified check.



If rent is not paid by the 7th of the month, it is considered late. If your rent is repeatedly late, this will adversely affect your tenancy. If an emergency arises to prevent you from paying your rent for a particular month, you should contact the Office in writing prior to the rent due date to make a rent arrearage arrangement.

PEST CONTROL



Insects and other pests can invade even the cleanest apartments through no fault of the resident. If you see any signs of pest activity, you have a responsibility under your lease agreement to contact the Office immediately. The Housing Authority has professional contractors available to perform pest control. Periodically during late spring and early summer months Bristol County Mosquito Control will be dispatched to spray NHA properties.

PETS



Pets are allowed in resident units at Norton Housing Authority. You may have one dog (limited to a weight of forty (40) pounds), or one cat, or two birds, or a fish aquarium with a 20 gallon capacity. You must receive permission from the Housing Authority before bringing a pet onto our property. You must make an application for a Pet Waiver and supply a pet deposit of \$160.00 or one month's rent, whichever is less. According to Regulations, when your pet is outside of your unit, they must be accompanied by their owner.

You are required to pick-up after your pet. You must also keep dogs leashed while outside and cats must be with their owner while outdoors. Failure to comply with these and all the pet rules included in the pet packet may result in removal of your pet from the property. Pet guidelines are available in our community room. Also, pet blankets, bedding and clothing cannot be laundered in the NHA laundry room.

REASONABLE ACCOMODATION

A reasonable accommodation is a request for a modification to an apartment or common area or an exception to the Housing Authority's rules and regulations. This must be due to an existing medical condition that prevents normal use of the facilities or compliance with Policy. It must be supported by appropriate third-party documentation accompanying the Request for Reasonable Accommodation form.



RENT RECERTIFICATIONS

ANNUALLY: Once a year, you will be required to provide current information to re-evaluate the status of both your income and family size. This information will be used to adjust your rent for the next year.

INTERIM ADJUSTMENTS TO RENT:

Increases: If your monthly gross household income increases, the Housing Authority is required to re-determine your rent. You must report all increases to the Housing Authority by the 7th day of the month, following the month that the increase occurred. You must complete a continued occupancy form, release form(s) and provide 4 weeks of pay check stubs to verify income.



Decreases: If your income decreases, it is your responsibility to request a rent re-determination. You must complete a continued occupancy form, release form(s) and provide verification from your employer of the income change or termination from employment.

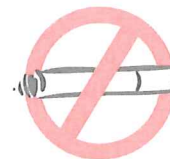
For ALL rent re-determinations, a completed Application for Continued Occupancy Form and Release of Information must be handed in to the Office. These forms are available in the front office and on our website at www.nortonhousing.org Residents must report current income verification for all household members 18 years old and older is necessary.

All income must be reported, including, but limited to, pensions, spousal/child support payments, wages, and self-employment income, all payments from social security, veteran's benefits, 401K and IRA income.

SEWAGE SYSTEM

Proper care to the sewage system is necessary. Kitchen sinks do not have garbage disposals. Do not throw paper towels or personal hygiene wipes or feminine products down the toilet. Do not put grease, coffee grinds or garbage into the sinks or toilet. If your sink or toilet is blocked, call the Office for maintenance. Do not try to fix it yourself. If you cannot find the shut off and water is pouring out after hours, please call the fire department for help until maintenance arrives on site.

SMOKING



Effective July 1, 2015, a non-smoking policy has been implemented at NHA. Smoking is not allowed in any residential unit, and any common area on NHA property. This includes but is not limited to all rooms in the community building, porches, stairways, housing authority grounds and other locations as referenced in the policy. The policy is available in the community building. Residents are responsible for informing their guests, family, friends and anyone in their employ or visiting that smoking is prohibited on this property.

Norton Housing is offering a designated smoking area adjacent to the community room. This area is reserved for smoking purposes. Please be advised smoking in this area does not include any illegal or controlled substances.

STAIRWAYS, CLOSETS, CORRIDORS AND HALLWAYS

Your apartment and adjacent common areas, such as stairways, corridors, halls, porches and yards, must be kept clean and free of personal clutter. Common areas and stairs cannot be used for storage. At Woodland Meadows, resident storage is not permitted in any exterior closet located under stairways in each building. Do not block electric panels or any mechanical system in your unit or closets, as full access is required at all times.

TRANSFERS

A transfer can be requested in the case of a change in family size or severe medical problem. You must obtain an application at the Office. Once application is completed you must attach supporting documentation from a 3rd party medical professional supporting your need including why a first floor unit will improve your medical situation. In order for your request to be considered, all monies owed to the Housing Authority must be paid in full and you must be fully compliant with all the terms of your lease.

VACANT APARTMENT



If you wish to vacate your apartment, a thirty (30) day notice must be given from the first day of the month.

Your apartment is not allowed to be left vacant for more than three (3) months out of a calendar year or it can be considered abandoned. Exceptions to this Regulation must be requested in writing to the Executive Director. If you plan to vacate your unit you are required to complete a vacancy form, available in the Office.

VISITORS

Each resident is responsible for their guests while on housing authority property. Residents must complete an Overnight Guest Form and submit it to the office each time a guest stays overnight. Visitor vehicles parked on site must park in a visitor space. Visitor vehicles parked in resident parking without a pass are subject to towing at their own expense.

In accordance with your lease agreement with the housing authority, residents cannot have overnight guests on the premises for more than a TOTAL of 21 days in any 12 month period. (This means total nights per household, not per visitor.) If you allow guests to remain in your apartment for more than 21 nights, you are in violation of the terms of your lease.



WASHERS AND DRYERS

Washing machines and clothes dryers are not permitted in your apartment at Woodland Meadows. Coin operated automatic washers and dryers are located in the Laundry Room inside the Community Hall and are for resident use ONLY. Laundry must also not be left unattended. If laundry is left unattended in a machine, it will promptly be removed by the next resident or homemaker that wishes to use the machine. If you prefer to do your laundry at times other than regular office hours, you can purchase a key for the Laundry Room door at a cost of \$16.



BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR!

A good neighbor is one who is considerate of others and has a community spirit. He/she does not play his radio or television too loud; he/she will not hold noisy gatherings in his apartment or permit a disturbance or activity which would cause annoyance or discomfort to his or her neighbors. Be a good neighbor.

Be friendly to those

near you!

