

# Program Fraud Q&A

Housing Authority of the County of Santa Cruz , also serving Hollister and San Juan Bautista

Jan 06

## Most fraud cases result from:

- ✓ Failure to report income or assets, which are used to calculate the amount of rent a family will pay.
- ✓ Failure to obtain permission for additional persons to live in the household, or to report their income and assets.
- ✓ Unapproved or incorrect rent payments to owners
- ✓ Failure to comply with program requirements

## Stopping Program Fraud and Abuse

### What does the Housing Authority do to address program fraud?

The Housing Authority takes its responsibility as a public agency very seriously. The programs we administer are created and funded through federal, state or local government agencies.

It is our responsibility to make sure that program funds are used judiciously to help as many people as we can and those who need it most.

The vast majority of the families we assist would never knowingly or unknowingly report false information or accept a subsidy they were not entitled to.

However, incidents of fraud do take place every year, and the Housing Authority has a special investigative unit to handle those cases.

### How do I report a suspected case of program fraud?

If you suspect program fraud, we encourage you to call the Housing Authority and report it. You will be contacted by trained staff in our investigative unit who will gather information about the situation.

While we do accept anonymous calls and letters, please be aware that we may not be able to act on the information if we don't have a way to contact the informant and ask additional questions.

All reports of fraud are held in strict confidence.

### How can I find out the outcome of a fraud investigation?

Due to confidentiality requirements, we cannot tell an informant whether or not the person being reported is actually a Housing Authority client; whether or not the reported activity constitutes a program violation; or the outcome of the investigation.



Questions? Call our Info Line at 454-5955  
or visit us online at [www.hacosantacruz.org](http://www.hacosantacruz.org)



2931 Mission Street Santa Cruz, CA 95060 Open M-TH 8-5, Closed Fridays  
For our business office or para información en español: 831 454-9455  
*Program rules are subject to change. Use this as general guidance only.*

TDD: 831 469-0122

# Program Fraud Q&A cont'd

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## Investigating Program Fraud and Abuse

### How can I protect against program fraud in my own household?

The head of household is responsible for ensuring that **all members of the household and, where applicable, their guests**, follow program requirements and are accurately reporting their incomes.

Make sure your family members know that you could lose your housing assistance if they do not reveal, or lie about, their income, or otherwise violate program regulations.

If you're not sure what you should report, just ask.

**It is your responsibility to report all information directly to us.**

Also, don't assume that the Housing Authority already has information on file about your family just because we are a government agency.

Please read the Q&As listed in the box to the right for more details on your responsibilities.

### What happens when a person has been found guilty of fraud?

The penalties for fraud may include the following, depending on the type and severity of the fraud:

- ✓ Prosecution, which could result in fines, imprisonment, and additional fraud investigations by other agencies.
- ✓ The requirement to repay subsidy that was improperly paid.
- ✓ Termination from the program
- ✓ Denial of requests to move or participate in other housing programs
- ✓ Restrictions preventing the family from receiving future housing assistance from any housing authority.

### How does the Housing Authority investigate fraud?

We use many methods to investigate fraud by applicants, tenants, or owners, including but not limited to:

- ✓ Interviews with friends, family, and neighbors and surveillance of activities.
- ✓ Use of government databases that provide records of income, assets, places of residence, criminal background, and other information.
- ✓ Work with law enforcement agencies and other public agencies to conduct joint investigations. We cooperate fully with law enforcement on criminal and civil prosecutions.



### Need More Info?

Visit our website or call our Info Line for more information about program responsibilities, including:

- ✓ Reporting Changes Q&A
- ✓ Program Eligibility Q&A
- ✓ Landlord Q&A

**Info Line: 831 454-5955**

**Website: [www.hacosantacruz.org](http://www.hacosantacruz.org)**