



Evaluation of PHA CARES Act Waivers

FINAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL | CONTRACT #: 86614822F00045

Appendix C – Interview Protocol for Resident Advisory Board Members
at PHAs that Adopted Waivers

Introduction

Interviewer: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is _____, and I am a researcher with 2M Research (2M), the policy research firm contracted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for this study.

I will start by briefly introducing the study, obtaining consent, and making sure we cover any questions you might have before we begin the interview.

The purpose of this study is to gather information about the background, authorization, and ways in which Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) have used CARES Act waivers to implement strategies to support residents and tenants during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, we would like to understand the successes, challenges, and changes that have resulted from the implementation of these waivers. We will also further explore policy and program implications to understand how discontinuing the waivers offered by the CARES Act may impact PHAs and assisted households moving forward, as well as recommendations for HUD to continue similar waivers offered by the CARES Act.

For this study, we are interviewing stakeholders from 50 PHAs, including 45 PHAs that adopted waivers and five PHAs that declined to adopt any waivers, to understand their reasons for taking this course of action. We have spoken to your PHA leadership and staff about the waivers that were adopted, the process for the implementation of those waivers, and the impacts of the waivers on their operations. **For our conversation today, we will therefore focus on the perceived outcomes/impacts associated with the implementation of the waivers on residents. We will also cover any recommendations you may have for improvement, expansion, and sustainability of flexibilities offered by the waivers.**

Our conversation should last approximately 60 minutes.

Permission to Record

Before we begin, we would also like to request your permission to record the conversation to ensure our notes are accurate and complete. We will not share the recording with HUD, and we will delete it at the end of the study.

Do we have your permission to record this interview?

If interviewee(s) agrees to be recorded:

Thank you. Now, I am going to start the recording **(TURN ON RECORDER)**. Can you please confirm that you have agreed to be recorded?

If interviewee(s) declines:

Okay, that is not a problem. We will take detailed notes during this conversation to ensure that your views are captured accurately.

Consent to Participate

We hope you will be candid in the information you provide. We will aggregate information about your PHA and comments from stakeholders in our report. We will conduct all analyses using an anonymous (e.g., de-identified) data file and will not share your identity. You can refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may stop at any time. There will be no negative consequences if you choose to stop or if you choose not to participate. We will only use your responses to this interview for research purposes and they will NOT be used for compliance monitoring. Would you still like to participate in the study?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Section 1. Respondent Background

I'd like to start by learning a bit more about your role as it relates to the PHA. Can you describe your role at the PHA and your experience with the CARES Act waivers?

Section 2. Context and Background

Next, I'd like to ask a few questions to understand more about the waivers your PHA used and the involvement of the Resident Advisory Board in the implementation of the waivers.

1. The CARES Act waivers your PHA adopted include the following__<Interviewer to read out the waivers> ____.
 - a. Did you realize that these waivers were in place in your PHA?
 - b. If yes, what specifically made you aware of it?

2. In what ways (if at all) were members of the Resident Advisory Board involved in the process to implement waivers offered by the CARES Act?

Probe for the following, if needed:

- a. Notification of the waivers and their effect
- b. Selection of waivers
- c. Assistance in resident understanding of the waivers (including for individuals with Limited English Proficiency [LEP])
- d. Understanding when waivers were extended or expired

3. What challenges related to your housing did residents experience because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Probe for the following, if needed:

- How did the waivers affect residents to meet requirements or find appropriate documentation for program?
- How did the waivers affect potential households to access federal rental assistance?
- How did the waivers affect residents to meet rental payments?
- How did the waivers affect the time it took to finding a unit for new residents?
- How did the waivers affect the utilization of vouchers and lease-up?
- How did the waivers affect the success rates for vouchers?
- How did the waivers affect the time it took to conduct unit maintenance and upkeep?
- How did the waivers affect the time it took to determine income?
- How did the waivers affect residents housing situation?
- How did the waivers affect residents during re-examinations?
- How did the waivers affect PHA staff's ability to provide customer service to residents?
- How did the waivers affect residents achieving self-sufficiency? **Note to interviewer: Ask if PHA utilized FSS waivers.**

4. How did residents and/or PHA leadership and staff respond to these challenges?

5. **[Note to Interviewer: Ask this question if respondent indicated in Question 1 that they were unaware of the CARES Act waivers].** What did your PHA do differently during the pandemic?
 - a. Of the things your PHA did differently, which were helpful to you, and why?
 - b. What are things your PHA did during the pandemic that you would like to see them continue, and why?

[Note to Interviewer: If respondent indicated in Question 1 that they are unaware of any of the CARES Act waivers their PHA adopted, please move to the last question in Section 5. Closing]

Section 3. Perceived Outcomes

I would now like to discuss how the implementation of the CARES Act waivers impacted your residents.

6. Which of the CARES Act waivers that the PHA implemented did you find the most useful for residents during the pandemic? How were the adopted waivers useful?

[Note to Interviewer: Be prepared to refer respondents to the list of waivers PHAs adopted based on conversations with PHA Leadership and Operations Staff]

7. **[Note to Interviewer: Cycle through the probes in this question for each type of waivers that the respondent knew about their existence in Question 1.]** For the next set of questions in this section, I would like to understand in more detail how each of the waivers identified as useful impacted residents and assisted households.
 - a. In your opinion, how did __ <Waiver Name> ____ benefit residents?
 - b. In your opinion, how did __ <Waiver Name> ____ negatively affect your residents?
8. What other impacts did the implementation of the waivers have on residents?

Section 4. Policy and Program Implications

I would now like to discuss any recommendations you may have for improvement, expansion, and sustainability of waivers, beyond the CARES Act.

9. Which of the CARES Act waivers that your PHA implemented would you like to become permanent?
Probe for the following if the Respondent expressed a desire for the waivers to continue:
 - a. What are the reasons for wanting to continue these waivers?
 - b. How would continuing these waivers benefit residents?
10. Are there any CARES Act waivers that your residents did not find to be particularly useful and would not want your PHA to pursue if they were continued?
If yes, follow up with:

- a. Which waivers would you want to discontinue?
- b. What are your reasons for wanting to discontinue these waivers?

Section 5. Closing

11. Is there any other important information that might help us better understand the implementation of the CARES Act waivers, and how it impacted residents?

12. Those are all the questions we have. Is there anything else you'd like to share that we have not asked about?

We would like to thank you for taking time from your busy schedule(s) to speak with us today. Your answers have provided us with valuable insight into the ways you used the CARES Act waivers as well as their subsequent outcomes. Should you have any additional thoughts that you would like to share, please feel free to contact Dr. Hiren Nisar, the study's principal investigator, at hnisar@2mresearch.com, or our HUD contact, Justin Brock, at Justin.Brock@hud.gov.
