

# Billerica Housing Authority



## Tenant Handbook

Billerica Housing Authority  
16 River Street  
Billerica, MA 01821

978-667-2175

Robert M. Correnti  
Executive Director

Revised August 2019

Dear BHA Resident,

# WELCOME!

The Billerica Housing Authority (BHA) is pleased to welcome you as one of our new residents. I am confident you will find your tenancy with us to be a rewarding and pleasant experience. Our dedicated staff is eager to assist you with any problems you may have as you adjust to your new surroundings.

This handbook will help answer some of your questions about BHA policies and procedures by providing general information about various rules and regulations including; maintenance, repairs, services, parking and care of your unit, etc. If you have any questions about an issue you are not clear about, or is not included in this handbook, please call the office.

**PLEASE READ THIS HANDBOOK CAREFULLY!!**

It will help make your transition into BHA housing a pleasant and stress free experience.

BHA apartments are modern and well maintained. In order for us to continue offering quality housing, everyone (staff and residents) must contribute and communicate. Respect and consideration of others are the keys to establishing a positive living situation and a sense of community spirit for all. We seek your cooperation in our efforts to achieve this.

We anticipate you will enjoy residing in a BHA apartment. You can be assured all BHA personnel are committed to making your tenancy a positive one.

Please feel free to drop by the office at 16 River Street or call 978-667-2175 if you have any questions about life as a BHA resident. Also, we urge you to frequently check our web site, [www.billericahousing.org](http://www.billericahousing.org), for important notices and timely information.

Sincerely,



Executive Director



EQUAL HOUSING  
OPPORTUNITY

## **BILLERICA HOUSING AUTHORITY STAFF**

Bob Correnti	Executive Director
Debbie Souza	Section 8 Coordinator/Administrative Aide
Berlande Edouard	Tenant Selection Coordinator/Clerk
Katie Houle	Resident Services Coordinator
Mark Simolaris	Maintenance, 33 Talbot Ave
John Simolaris	Maintenance, 16 River Street
Darrick Yates	Maintenance, 13 River Street

## **IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

Billerica Police Dept	911
Billerica Fire Dept	911
Medical Emergency	911
BHA Office	978-667-2175
	978-667-1661
Resident Services (Katie)	978-667-9214
BHA Fax	978-667-1156
BHA email	<a href="mailto:bcorrenti@billericahousing.org">bcorrenti@billericahousing.org</a>
	<a href="mailto:dsouza@billericahousing.org">dsouza@billericahousing.org</a>
	<a href="mailto:bedouard@billericahousing.org">bedouard@billericahousing.org</a>
	<a href="mailto:khoule@esmv.org">khoule@esmv.org</a>

## **OFFICE HOURS**

BHA regular office hours are Monday thru Friday from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm.

## **MAINTENANCE & REPAIRS**

Any and all repairs to your unit must be done by BHA staff or contractors approved by BHA. Residents are **NOT** allowed to make repairs. All requests for maintenance should be made **to the office** either in person or by phone 978-667-2175. A work order will be issued by the office and maintenance will complete the repair. Please do not directly ask maintenance staff to make repairs; they cannot perform maintenance repairs without a written work order. If you have a request for an emergency maintenance work order after 4pm or on weekends, please call the main office number (978-667-2175). An Answering Service will take your call and contact the on-call maintenance person. Maintenance will not come in for routine maintenance after 4pm. It will be addressed the next business day.

## **AFTER HOURS MAINTENANCE EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBER**

For all **after hour** emergency maintenance requests such as lock outs, smell of gas, overflows, leaks, etc., **call the main office number 978-667-2175**. An Answering Service will answer your call and contact the BHA on call maintenance person.

## ***RENT***

Rent is due no later than the 5<sup>th</sup> of every month. A \$25 late fee will be assessed for rent that is received late. Rent payments should be made by check or money order payable to ***Billerica Housing Authority (or BHA)***.

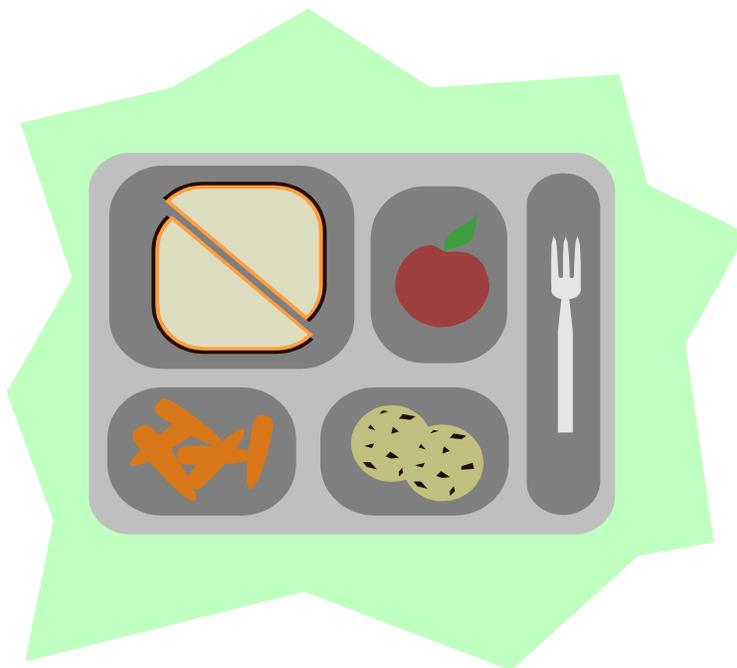
Rent receipts are **not** issued; your cancelled check is your receipt. Anyone submitting a rent check returned by the bank for insufficient funds will be assessed a returned check fee of \$35 and will be required to make future rent payments by money order or bank check. **BHA does not accept cash.**

## ***RESIDENT SERVICES COORDINATOR***

Katie Houle, BHA Residential Service Coordinator, is available for residents who may need assistance with housekeeping, shopping, transportation and referral for other services. Her telephone number is 978-667-9214 and her office hours are Monday and Thursday 8am-4pm.

She also coordinates the lunch program held during weekdays at 16 River Street. Meals cost \$2 and **all** BHA residents are eligible. You can sign up at Katie's office in the 16 River Street Community Room or call to reserve a meal. Reservations **must** be made in advance. Menus are posted at her office a month in advance and are posted monthly on the BHA web site.

There is also a weekend meal program. If interested, call Katie.



## ***BE CONSIDERATE OF YOUR NEIGHBORS***

We ask BHA residents to conduct themselves, at all times, in a polite and considerate manner towards their fellow BHA residents and their guests, as well as BHA staff. This assures a pleasant environment for everyone. Please keep the following in mind:

1. Do not shake mops or brooms over railings or porches;
2. Do not hang clothing, rugs or anything else over railings. No ornamental flags, hanging materials, banners, etc.;
3. Porches, decks and hallways must remain clear of large items at all times;
4. Make certain visiting children are supervised at all times. They are not allowed to run through hallways, up and down the stairs, ring doorbells, or knock on doors, etc.;
5. Close and lock all doors behind you. Main entry doors should never be left unlocked. Porch doors should always be closed and locked;
6. Respect the rights of your neighbors to privacy;
7. Respect the rights of your neighbors to the quiet and peaceful enjoyment of their apartment by keeping the noise in your unit to a minimum;
8. Be friendly and courteous at all times!

## ***COMMUNITY BUILDING CODE OF CONDUCT***

Each BHA property has a Community Building for use by BHA residents. In order to have a safe and welcoming atmosphere for all residents, guests, staff and visitors we ask all who enter our Community Buildings to adhere to the following Code of Conduct. It is posted at each Community Building for reference.

### ***PLEASE...***

- Treat everyone with respect and dignity at all times.

### ***PLEASE DO NOT...***

- Use abusive, obscene, threatening, harassing, insulting or suggestive language, gestures or behavior;
- Fight, physically abuse, be argumentative or challenge others to an argument or fight;
- Harass anyone at any time;
- Use hate speech or racial, religious epithets and slurs;
- Be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs;
- Destroy or damage equipment or property.

## ***EMERGENCY PULL CORDS***

Emergency pull cords are located in the bathroom and bedroom of every apartment at 13 River Street and 16 River Street. When pulled, it will set off a **local** alarm alerting your building neighbors that you need help. It also will release the lock on your front door and a light will go on above your entry door alerting people that you need help. Pull cords must hang freely to the floor and not be obstructed. Please bear in mind the pull cords do **NOT** go directly to Emergency First Responders (Fire and Police)..

## ***NO SMOKING POLICY***

All properties are Smoke Free. Smoking is **NOT** allowed within Twenty-Five feet (25 ft) of all buildings. Please contact the Office for a copy of the policy.

## ***INSPECTIONS***

BHA conducts semi-annual inspections of all apartments. It may also be necessary to inspect your apartment at other times. Inspections will be done at reasonable hours and prior written notice will be given unless it is determined to be an emergency situation.

## ***INSURANCE***

BHA does not provide insurance to cover your personal belongings or furniture and is not liable for any theft, loss or damage to such property. Each resident is encouraged to carry their own insurance on personal property and furniture.

## ***LAUNDRY***

Coin operated washers and dryers are located in each BHA property for your convenience. Please treat these machines as if they were your own. Be considerate of others; use only 1 machine at a time. Hours of use are posted. These facilities are for use by and for BHA residents and homemakers of BHA tenants only.

## ***BUZZER***

Each building is equipped with a buzzer allowing you to open the main entry door. Please familiarize yourself with the buzzer panel on your wall and its operation. If you are unsure how to operate your buzzer, ask the maintenance staff.

## **LOCKOUTS**

If you should lock yourself out of your apartment, follow these instructions;

1. If locked out during regular office hours (Mon – Fri, 8am – 4pm), call or go to the office. Maintenance will be contacted to let you in.  
If locked out after hours or on weekends, **call the main office number 978-667-2175**. An Answering Service will answer your call and contact the BHA on call maintenance person.
2. There is a \$10 fee for all after hour lock out calls.



***ALWAYS REMEMBER YOUR KEYS!!***

## **PAINTING OR ALTERATIONS**

When you move into your apartment it will be completely renovated and will not require painting or alterations. Please keep the following in mind:

1. Wallpaper, contact paper or adhesive paper is **NOT** allowed under any circumstances.
2. Colored paints are **NOT** allowed.
3. Fixtures or appliances that attach to the walls or ceilings are **NOT** allowed.
4. You may hang pictures, paintings, mirrors, etc., from the walls with small nails.
5. Alterations are **NOT** allowed.

## **CLEANING**

BHA does not clean apartments for residents! It is up to you to clean your apartment, clean outside your door and hallway and to defrost your refrigerator (if you do not have a frost free model). If you need assistance with housekeeping, contact Katie Houle. It is important that you clean your stove, oven and counter tops. Please do not cut anything on the counter tops. You should clean the interior of your own windows; they pull in for easy cleaning. If you are unsure how to operate your windows, ask the maintenance staff.

## **UTILITIES (Gas & Electricity)**

The cost of gas and electricity is paid by BHA. It is expensive and constantly rising. Please be wise and prudent in your use of both utilities. Try not to set your thermostat above 68 degrees at night. When leaving your apartment make sure all appliances are turned off. Never have the heat on with windows open.

***PLEASE CONSERVE ENERGY & KEEP UTILITY COSTS DOWN!***

## **USE OF SPACE HEATERS**

BHA allows the use of electric space heaters **ONLY** with the following rules:

1. Use electric space heaters only. Propane or kerosene heaters are **NOT** allowed. This should not be needed very often as BHA heating systems are in good working order;
2. Use only space heaters approved by an independent testing laboratory. It should have the UL (Underwriting Laboratories) label;
3. Keep the space heater at least 3 feet away from anything flammable;
4. Always follow manufacturer's instructions while using the space heater;
5. **DO NOT** leave the space heater unattended. If you leave the apartment for any reason, **turn the heater off**;
6. Inspect the space heater regularly for frayed wires and loose or broken parts. You should do this when the heater is unplugged and cooled off;
7. **DO NOT** use the space heater as the only heat source for your apartment. If you believe you have inadequate heat, call the office.

## **FEEDING STRAY ANIMALS & BIRDS**

Feeding of any animals or birds outside the apartments is **STRICTLY PROHIBITED**. It attracts stray cats and dogs, squirrels and may also attract rats. Please be considerate of your neighbors and **DO NOT** feed birds or animals.

## **STORAGE**

There is **NO** storage area available except in your apartment. If you have any large items that do not fit in your apartment, please arrange to have them stored professionally or kept by a family member.

## **GARBAGE & TRASH**

Some units may be equipped with a garbage disposal in the kitchen sink. This is meant to break up small pieces of food when rinsing off your plate and should be used every time food goes down the drain. When using the disposal, run cold water and turn the disposal on for 5-10 seconds. The garbage disposal should not be used as an in-sink trash can.

The following items should **NEVER** be put into your disposal: fruit peels, egg shells, potato peels, animal bones, pits or seeds from fruits or vegetables,

grease, pasta, rice (it swells and will block the drain), asparagus, lettuce, celery, corn husks and artichokes.

Please put all trash in plastic bags, tightly secure it and place in the dumpsters provided. Do not pile trash outside your unit on the porch or near the doorway. Please do not put garbage in the trash; it creates odors and attracts small animals.

Dumpsters are available on site for you to place your trash. Pick-up day is Tuesday.

### ***EMERGENCY PLAN***

Should it be necessary to evacuate the buildings for any reason (power outage, fire, severe weather, no heat, etc), those tenants who are able to get to family or friends should do so. Those who cannot will be transported to temporary emergency shelter at either the Senior Center, the High School or will be put up at a hotel if necessary. This will be coordinated by BHA and the Billerica Fire and Police Department emergency personnel.

### ***FIRE DRILL INSTRUCTIONS***

#### **FIRE DRILL**

In the case of a fire drill exercise; when the alarm sounds, please take your keys, close your apartment door, leave the building immediately through the main stairwell and go directly to the Community Room. No one will be allowed back into their apartment until the Fire Department gives the OK.

#### **ACTUAL FIRE**

In the case of an actual fire, depending on the location of the fire, all tenants will exit via the front or rear door and go directly to the Community Room where we will conduct a head count.



## ***PARKING***

Parking at BHA is limited. Following these rules will help make it easier for all.

1. Speed limit for all vehicles driving within BHA property is **5 MPH**. Please obey this limit at all times and be sure your guests do also;
2. There is **NO ASSIGNED PARKING** for BHA residents;
3. Guests (for 13 River Street and 16 River Street) should park in the 16 River Street rear upper lot;;
4. Assigned handicapped spaces are designated for residents in handicapped modified apartments. See the office for details.
5. Vehicles must be parked only in areas designated for parking. Parking in Fire Lanes is prohibited at all times;
6. Tenants should not request others to move their vehicles from a particular spot as there is no assigned parking;
7. No visitor shall park their vehicle on BHA property between the hours of 12am to 8am without prior written approval from BHA;
8. Vehicles must be operated safely and responsibly at all times so as not to cause damage to BHA property or unnecessary disturbances such as noise and/or smoke;
9. Making repairs to vehicles is not allowed on BHA property;
10. Abandoned or unregistered vehicles are not allowed on BHA property;
11. BHA residents will be issued a BHA parking sticker to be clearly displayed on their vehicle. A sticker can be obtained at the office.
12. Use of BHA parking areas is entirely at the risk of the vehicle owner/operator. The BHA is not responsible for damage to vehicles or property.

## ***SNOW REMOVAL***

Residents will be asked to move their vehicle so snow removal can be done as quickly and efficiently as possible. BHA staff **cannot** move resident's vehicles because of liability, so please do not ask. Once removal is completed, move your vehicle back. If you have questions about moving your vehicle, call the office. Snow Notices are given prior to winter explaining the procedure at each property.

## ***PETS***

Pets are not allowed unless a tenant has met all the requirements. You must complete a Pet Waiver Request and submit all required information, including a Pet Deposit of \$160 prior to having a pet. Please contact the office for complete details.

## ***PRIMARY RESIDENCE***

State regulations require your BHA apartment to be your primary place of residence for 9 months during any 12 month period. The maximum amount of time you can be away from your unit is 3 months. Also, you cannot sublet your unit while you are away or at any other time. Please inform the office if you are going to be away for more than a few days.

## ***TRANSPORTATION SERVICES***

**Road Runner** - The LRTA Road Runner Service is a demand-responsive, dial-a-ride transportation service for elderly and mobility impaired individuals. All LRTA Road Runner vehicles are wheelchair-lift equipped and provide curb-to-curb service. Any person at least 60 years of age or any individual who is physically unable, by reason of either a chronic or temporary condition, to drive a car or use regularly scheduled fixed-route bus service is eligible to use LRTA Road Runner Service. To schedule Road Runner Service, call at least 24 hours in advance to make arrangements.

For service and/or further information call 978-670-5775 between the hours of 8am to 5pm on weekdays.

**Council on Aging (COA) Van Service** – On Mondays and Tuesdays only, the COA van will take pick and take seniors to the Senior Center. The van will also provide seniors with rides to medical appointments and errands in Billerica only. Call Ruth at 978-671-0916 x229 to schedule an appointment or for more information. A 2 day notice is required.

## ***TELEPHONE & TELEVISION***

BHA encourages all residents to have a telephone installed in their apartment. Telephones should be installed only where a jack is provided. No additional jacks may be installed. Please provide the office with your telephone number.

All buildings have been wired for Cable TV. If you would like cable TV, call Comcast Cable or Verizon Cable.

## ***FILE OF LIFE***

The Billerica Health Department and BHA urges each resident to complete a **FILE OF LIFE KIT**. This is a list of important personal medical information and family identification available in case of a medical emergency.

Please contact the Billerica Health Department at 978-671-0932 for more information.

## ***VISITORS & GUESTS***

You are welcome to have visitors and guests in accordance with the terms of your Lease. Please inform your guests to not park in the fire lanes or along driveways. Also, remember you are responsible for all actions and behavior of your guests.



## **BHA NO TRESPASSING POLICY**

BHA property is to be used only by residents, staff and invited guests. All others are hereby notified that the property is not open to the public for any reason at any time. The purpose of this policy is to prevent uninvited, non-licensed, non-residents from entering or using BHA property except as otherwise allowed by law.

1. BHA shall post "No Trespassing" signs where appropriate;
2. BHA shall give oral or written notice not to trespass, in addition to the posted notice whenever feasible, to anyone it finds on BHA property who is not a resident or invited guest or licensee;
3. Residents are encouraged to inform their guests that they are permitted to enter the property to visit the resident and for no other reason. Guests shall not make use of BHA facilities unless accompanied by the resident or a member of the resident's household. Residents are reminded they are responsible for the conduct of their guests in accordance with their lease;
4. Anyone not complying with a No Trespass Order shall be subject to prosecution;
5. BHA shall enforce the lease by its own terms in accordance with applicable laws;
6. Any person desiring access to BHA property or facilities other than as noted above should make appropriate arrangements with BHA through the Executive Director;
7. Upon written notification by any resident that a person whom BHA has designated as a trespasser is in fact the invited guest of that resident, BHA shall take all appropriate steps to rescind the No Trespass notice pertaining to that person, including notification to the Billerica Police Department of the rescission of the notice;
8. Notice of this policy shall be given to BHA staff and all residents;
9. If the Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) adopts any new regulation that differs from this policy, while this policy remains in effect, BHA shall apply forthwith to DHCD for a waiver or comply with said regulation. If a waiver is denied, the BHA will comply with said regulation; however, the existence of this agreement shall in no way prejudice the right of any resident to challenge the legality of said regulation.

## **POLICY ON BEDBUG CONTROL**

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Bedbug infestations have become a serious problem in housing throughout the country. Public Housing properties are not immune to infestations. Bedbugs are considered a pest of significant public health importance by the EPA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This details the Billerica Housing Authority's (BHA) policy regarding the prevention and control of bedbug infestations. This policy may be amended from time to time as circumstances merit.

Excess clutter can provide bedbugs with more places to hide, making early detection and targeted control difficult. The best approach to bedbug management is to prevent an infestation from occurring in the first place. Accordingly, the BHA requires tenant's (and each household member and guests) to fulfill their lease obligations, specifically "To keep (and to cause each household member and guest to keep) the leased premises in a clean and sanitary condition and promptly to remedy any lack of cleanliness or lack of sanitary condition. Tenants shall not create any condition which is likely to attract rodents or insects, to cause offensive odors, or to endanger the health of a person. Tenant and household members shall comply with all applicable obligations imposed upon them by the State Sanitary Code" (Section I of Lease). The BHA will periodically involve tenants in education for pest management so tenants may learn to identify bedbugs, create unfriendly environments for pests, and be more knowledgeable to report suspicions of bugs as soon as possible. However, any pest management program cannot be successful without tenant cooperation.

**ACTION PLAN:**

1. The BHA Office is to be promptly notified (by staff, tenants, household members, guests) of suspected bedbug activity;
2. Within one (1) business day, the BHA will notify a Pest Management Professional (PMP);
3. The PMP will conduct an inspection of the suspected dwelling unit(s) and will advise the BHA of its findings;
4. Should the PMP findings confirm the presence of bedbugs, the BHA will notify the adjacent (surrounding) units (i.e. above, below, left and right). Tenants of these units shall permit the PMP to access units for inspection;
5. Upon notification by the PMP, the BHA will, within two (2) business days, notify the Billerica Board of Health of the findings and location of the infestation;
6. The PMP will implement a treatment plan appropriate to the infestation and provide instructions to the tenant regarding treatment:
  - i. Tenants shall cooperate with the BHA and the PMP in the inspection and treatment of unit(s);
  - ii. Tenants of infested units are obligated to follow the recommendations of the PMP;
  - iii. Until the PMP declares the infestation eradicated, tenants of infected units are also instructed to launder their clothing and linens, placing items in plastic bags so as not to spread bed bugs during transport to the laundry. Only new bags should be used and used only once. After use, bags should be sealed before transport. Laundry should be placed directly in the machines from the plastic bags so as not to infect laundry room tables, floor, etc.

- iv. The PMP may advise the tenant (and BHA) of the tenant's necessity to dispose of infested furnishings. It is the tenant's responsibility to wrap and seal any such items in a protective cover to prevent bugs and eggs from falling off during transport and disposal. The tenant must notify the BHA of all items that are to be disposed. All items must be labeled "Infested with Bedbugs". The BHA will notify the town of items requiring pickup and will accordingly advise the tenant when such items can be brought to the street curb, by the tenant, for disposal pickup. The tenant is not to remove or dispose of any item(s) in any other manner. The tenant is to ensure that all vacuumed refuse and vacuum bags from the infested rooms are disposed of curbside in sealed plastic bags;
  - v. Upon notification, by the PMP, of the completed treatment plan, the BHA will notify the Billerica Board of Health, as well as the tenant(s) in units infested, and tenants in surrounding/adjacent units. Until the PMP has declared the infestation eliminated, maintenance personnel (both in-house and outside contractors) will be restricted from entering infested units except for life threatening emergencies.
7. Failure to comply with the recommendations of the PMP or this policy, shall be deemed a violation of appropriate sections of the tenant's lease. The BHA will actively process any violation subjecting the tenant to appropriate action(s), including lease termination.