

Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loan Program Extension of Temporary Exceptions in Relation to COVID-19 Pandemic

SFH Guaranteed Origination

October 29, 2020

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

Extension of Temporary Exceptions: The temporary exceptions originally issued on March 27, 2020, pertaining to appraisals, repair inspections, and income verifications for the Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loan Program (SFHGLP) due to the COVID-19 pandemic have been extended until December 31, 2020 and apply to the requirements in the program handbook HB-1-3555 for new loans, described below.

Residential Appraisal Reports – Existing Dwelling

For purchase and non-streamlined refinance transactions, when an appraiser is unable to complete an interior inspection of an existing dwelling due to concerns associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, an “Exterior-Only Inspection Residential Appraisal Report”, (FHLMC 2055/FNMA 2055) will be accepted. In such cases, appraisers are not required to certify that the property meets HUD HB 4000.1 standards. The appraisal must be completed in accordance with the Uniform Standards of Professional Practice (USPAP) and the Uniform Appraisal Dataset (UAD).

This exception is not applicable to existing manufactured housing pilot program, new construction properties, or construction to permanent loans. As a reminder, appraisals are not required for streamlined and streamlined-assist refinance transactions.

Repair Inspections – Existing Dwelling

Loans for which a completion certification is not available due to issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, a letter signed by the borrower confirming that the work was completed is permitted. Lenders must also provide further evidence of completion, which may include photographs of the completed work, paid invoices indicating completion, occupancy permits, or other substantially similar documentation. All completion documentation must be retained in the loan file.

This exception is not applicable to rehabilitation and repair loans noted in section 12.28 of HB-1-3555

Verbal Verification of Employment

Lenders should use due diligence in obtaining the most recent income documentation to verify the borrowers repayment ability prior to closing. When the lender is unable to obtain a Verbal Verification of Employment (VVOE) within 10 business days of loan closing due to a temporary closure of the borrower's employment, alternatives should be explored. For example, email correspondence with the borrower's employer is an acceptable alternative to a VVOE. If the lender is unable to obtain a VVOE or acceptable alternative, the requirement will be waived when the borrower has a minimum of 2 months cash reserves.

In the case of a reduction of income, the borrower's reduced income must be sufficient to support the new loan payment and other non-housing obligations. Borrower's with no income or those receiving unemployment benefits at the time of closing are not eligible for SFHGLP loans regardless of available cash reserves.

Questions regarding program policy and this announcement may be directed to the National Office Division at sfhgld.program@usda.gov or (202) 720-1452.

Thank you for your support of the Single-Family Housing Guaranteed Loan Program!