



How to Prepare for a **HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS (HQS) INSPECTION**

The goal of the Housing Choice Voucher Rental Assistance Program is to provide decent, safe, and sanitary housing at an affordable cost to lower income families. To accomplish this, HUD regulations set forth basic Housing Quality Standards (HQS) which all units must meet before rental documents are initiated on behalf of program participants. Units will be inspected again at least once every 12 to 24 months to confirm that the unit continues to meet these requirements. The tenant and landlord will be informed by the caseworker whether the unit passes the HQS inspection.

The unit must be:

DECENT: The unit must be in good condition. For example, appliances, doors, and windows must be in good condition and in working order.

SAFE: The unit must be free from all safety hazards, including tripping and electrical hazards. The unit must have a working porch light. The unit must provide an alternate means of exit in case of fire. Exit must be on two sides of the unit (door or window with minimum opening width of 20", minimum height of 24" and cannot be more than 44" above the floor).

SANITARY: The unit must be clean and uncluttered as not to present a health issue or impede the inspector's ability to conduct the inspection. Must be free of trash and exposed food particle that may attract vermin or insects.

READY FOR OCCUPANCY: All utilities and appliances must be working at time of inspection, and the unit should be ready for tenant occupancy.

The following list describes **the most common areas of inspection which fail to meet HQS** and is provided to assist tenant and landlord awareness in relation to the unit complying.

SMOKE DETECTORS. All housing units must have at least one working smoke detector in each bedroom or one in each common sleeping area. A unit in which a hearing-impaired person resides shall have a smoke detector with an alarm system for the hearing impaired, if requested by the tenant.

CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS. A carbon monoxide detector must be installed and functioning in all dwellings which have a fossil fuel burning heater or appliance, or a fireplace, or an attached garage. The carbon monoxide detector should be located close to the sleeping areas of the dwelling and according to manufacturer's instructions. If there are distinctly separate sleeping areas in the unit, there should be a detector for each sleeping area. There must be at least one carbon monoxide detector on each level of the unit.

WATER HEATER. All water heaters must have a temperature-pressure relief valve which will operate when either the temperature or the pressure in the tank becomes too high. The discharge line shall be constructed of 3/4-inch galvanized steel or copper pipe and should be directed to the outside of the structure as per code. The discharge line may be directed to the floor. The termination of the line must be no more than six inches above the ground or floor. Water heaters must be secured for seismic stability. All water heaters must be braced, anchored, or strapped to prevent falling

or movement during an earthquake. Water heaters located in bedrooms or living areas must have a safety divider or shield installed enclosing the water heater.

ELECTRICAL HAZARDS. Examples of electrical hazards include: Broken or frayed electrical wires; bare metal wires not covered by rubber or plastic insulation; loose or improper wire connections to outlets; light fixtures hanging from electrical wire with no other firm support; missing or cracked cover plates on switches or outlets; exposed fuse box connections; overloaded circuits evidenced by frequently "blown" fuses, wire connections not made in an electrical box. Also, any rubber or plastic-coated electrical wiring (Romex) in a room or on the exterior that is accessible to possible physical abuse or wear. Such wiring should be enclosed in flexible conduit, EMT (encased metal tube), liquid-tight conduit, or other approved material. All light fixtures must have a diffuser (cover) on to pass the inspection. A light fixture with an exposed light bulb will not pass.

DAMAGED OR DETERIORATED WINDOWS. "Damaged or deteriorated" means that the window is no longer able to keep out the wind, snow, or rain, or that broken glass presents a hazard. Examples of deterioration include missing or broken panes; dangerously loose, cracked panes; windows that will not close; windows that, when closed, do not form a reasonably tight seal, and allow drafts to enter. The critical points between Pass and Fail are whether the window forms a reasonably tight seal against the weather; and if cracked, the broken glass may be a hazard.

SECURITY. All windows and doors that are accessible from the outside shall have proper locks or security devices to provide adequate safety. Any first-floor windows or second floor windows that are accessible by balcony or fire escapes must have a lock.

DEFECTIVE STOVE OR RANGE AND REFRIGERATOR. An oven and stove (or range) with top burners and a refrigerator must be present and working (regardless of whether the tenant or the owner is responsible for the appliance). An oven is not working if it will not heat up. A stove or range must have all burners working and all operating knobs with readable on/off marks present. A microwave oven that is in working order may be acceptable for a unit that does not have an oven and/or stove with top burners, if the tenant agrees. Refrigerator must be 7 cubic feet or larger for units larger than a studio. Dorm room style refrigerators are not allowed. A refrigerator must keep food at the proper temperature. Must have a 7 cubic foot or larger refrigerator for units larger than a studio.

PLUMBING PROBLEMS. All housing units shall have hot and cold running water and a properly working sewer system free from back-up. Any significant leaks at fixtures or within the plumbing system shall be repaired.

DAMAGED OR DETERIORATED FLOORING. All carpeting, sheet vinyl, tile and other floor coverings shall be free of holes, cracks, tears, or missing sections that represent a tripping hazard or unsafe condition.

IMPROPER WEATHER SEAL. All windows, doors, air conditioning and cooler vent openings, walls, floors, and ceilings, shall be weather tight. Any cracks, holes, gaps, or openings that permit air infiltration or moisture into a living space shall be eliminated.

UNSAFE HANDRAILS, STAIRS, AND PORCHES. All stairs, rails, porches, and balconies shall be sound and free from hazards. "Unsound or hazardous" means broken, rotting, or missing steps; absence of a handrail when there are extended lengths of steps (i.e., generally four or more consecutive steps); absence of or insecure railings around a porch or balcony which is approximately 30 inches or more above the ground.

BEDROOM. All rooms to be considered as a bedroom must have the following: At least two working electrical outlets or one working outlet and one working permanently installed light fixture, at least one window, an entry door with a functional door knob, closet with a closet rod and the area of the room shall not be less than 70 square feet with the width of each wall not less than 7 feet in any direction (if bedroom is to be occupied by more than 2 persons, increase area by 50 square feet for each additional person). All bedrooms will have a closet with a closet rod.

PEELING PAINT ON INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR SURFACES. All exterior surfaces and all interior surfaces shall be free from cracking, scaling, peeling, chipping, and loose paint, or adequately treated, or covered to prevent exposure to lead-based paint hazards. The specific surfaces that fail (i.e., have loose, peeling, or cracking paint) must be treated in the following manner: They must be thoroughly washed, sanded, scraped, or wire brushed to remove all loose paint and repainted with at least two coats of non-lead based paint or they must be covered with a suitable material such as sheetrock, wall board, wallpaper or other wall covering, plywood, plaster, or other paneling material.

INTERIOR AIR QUALITY. The interior air in the unit must be free from dangerous gases, dust, or other harmful pollutants.

INFESTATION. The unit must be free of severe infestations from rodents and vermin. A severe infestation of rodents or vermin's means more than one vermin or rodent. If noticeable rodent droppings, runs or gnaw marks exist the unit will fail the inspection. If any live cockroaches are present during the inspection the unit will fail the inspection. The unit can fail for infestations by other critters too, such as bed bugs and flies.

GARBAGE and DEBRIS. The unit must be free from accumulation of garbage, debris, and recyclables, both inside and outside. Garbage and recyclables must be encapsulated. Broken furniture outside must be discarded. Abandoned, wrecked, or inoperative vehicles may not be stored on property in public view.

DAMAGES BEYOND NORMAL WEAR AND TEAR. Damages beyond normal wear and tear will be damages which could be assessed against the security deposits. Damages include but are not limited to; 1) Broken windows 2) Door and wall damage 3) Damages caused by a pet 4) Excessive damage to carpet 5) Other damages to the unit that can be assessed against the security deposit.