

# **Housing Quality Standards Inspections for CoC Projects**

Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust

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# HUD CoC HQS Requirement

- HUD requires that all units receiving CoC rental assistance or leasing dollars meet Housing Quality Standards (HQS).
- HQS inspection must be conducted prior to move-in and then annually. A client may ask for a complaint inspection at any time.
- In the case of Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA), clients must be instructed not to move into a unit unless and until the unit passes inspection and is approved by the program.
- CoC Projects are responsible for ensuring that units meet HQS.

# Who Can Conduct HQS Inspections

- CoC Projects may conduct their own inspections.
- Unlike Section 8, CoC inspectors do not need to be certified HQS inspectors. However, staff must be trained to conduct HQS inspections.
- For project-based housing with outside property management, project staff must inspect units.
- CoC Projects may contract with independent HQS inspectors.
- Inspectors should use HUD HQS Inspection Form HUD 52580-A.

# HUD Policy

- Units must be safe, decent and sanitary.
- The housing inspection must apply HQS acceptability criteria while taking into account tenant preference.
- Tenant preferences rule if not a safety issue.
  - For example, the tenant may determine acceptability of the cosmetic condition and quality of the bathroom or the amount and type of storage space, the cosmetic conditions of all kitchen equipment, and the size and location of the kitchen.

# HQS Standards Overview

- **Structure and materials.** The structures must be structurally sound so as not to pose any threat to the health and safety of the occupants and so as to protect the residents from the environment and other hazards.
- **Access.** The unit must be accessible without having to go through another dwelling unit. Structures must provide alternate means of exit in case of fire.
- **Space and security.** Each resident must be afforded adequate space and security for themselves and their belongings. An acceptable place to sleep must be provided for each resident.
- **Interior air quality.** Every room or space must be provided with natural or mechanical ventilation. Structures must be free of pollutants in the air at levels that threaten the health of residents.

## HQS Standards Overview - Continued

- **Water supply.** The water supply must be free from contamination at levels that threaten the health of individuals. Water pressure must be adequate.
- **Thermal environment.** The housing must have adequate heating and/or cooling facilities in proper operating condition.
- **Illumination and electricity.** The housing must have adequate natural or artificial illumination to permit normal indoor activities and to support the health and safety of residents. Sufficient electrical sources must be provided to permit use of essential electrical appliances while assuring safety from fire.
- **Food preparation and refuse disposal.** All food preparation areas must contain suitable space and equipment to store, prepare, and serve food in a sanitary manner.
- **Sanitary condition.** The dwelling unit and any equipment must be maintained in sanitary condition.

## HQS Standards Overview - Continued

- **Smoke and Carbon Dioxide detectors.** At least one battery-operated or hard-wired smoke detector and carbon dioxide detector in proper operating condition must be present on each level of the dwelling unit. If a hearing-impaired person is occupying the dwelling unit, the smoke detectors must have an alarm system designed for the hearing-impaired.
- **Lead paint.** The Lead-Pont Poisoning Act as amended (42 U.S.C. 4821-4846) and the Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992 and implementing regulations 24 CFR Part 35 Subparts A, B, H (for rehabilitation and project-based housing), J, K, M (for tenant-based), and R apply.
- **Compliance with zoning code.** The property must have proper zoning for use as residential, rental property. There must be no illegal dwelling units on the property. Property records should be reviewed to verify number of rental units on site and, in the case of single family homes, the number of bedrooms and baths.
- **Site & neighborhood.** The site and neighborhood must be reasonably free from disturbing noises and reverberations or other dangers to the health, safety, and general welfare of the occupants.

# Basic Unit Requirements

- Every unit must have a living room, bathroom, and kitchen.
- Living room can be used as a sleeping area by no more than two people.
- Must have at least one bedroom or living/sleeping room for each two persons.
- Cannot require older children of the opposite sex to share sleeping room.



# Illumination and Electricity

- Electricity must be in working order. There should be no:
  - Exposed, un-insulated, or frayed wires
  - Improper connections
  - Improper grounding
  - Overloading capacity
  - Wires located in an unsafe place
- Each room must have adequate natural or artificial illumination to permit normal indoor activities and to support the health and safety of occupants.

## Illumination and Electricity - continued

- **Living room:** Two separate outlets OR one outlet and one permanently installed ceiling or wall fixture.
- **Bedrooms (or rooms used for sleeping):** Two outlets OR one outlet and one permanently installed ceiling or wall fixture.
- **Kitchen:** One outlet and one permanently installed ceiling or wall fixture.
- **Bathroom:** No outlet required. Must have a permanent ceiling or wall-mounted light fixture in proper operating condition.

# Kitchen

- Must have a kitchen (an area for preparing food) – can be an extension of another room.
- Must have stove or range with oven.
- All burners and oven must work.
- Must have knobs.
- Refrigerator must be the appropriate size for the family & must maintain a temperature low enough to prevent spoilage (above 32° F, but generally below 40° F). Freezer must be at or lower than 0° F.

## Kitchen - Continued

- Permanent sink fixture
- Must have a gas trap to prevent sewer gas from entering the unit
- Must have cold and hot water
- Space for food storage, preparation, and serving of food
- Check for hazards: broken appliances, exposed or frayed wires, gas leaks, water leaks, broken cabinets, pests or droppings, holes to the outside or in the wall.
- Tenants can bring their own passing appliances.

# Bathroom

- Must be available for exclusive use of unit occupant
- Must be in a separate, enclosed room
- Working flush toilet that is securely attached
- Fixed sink with hot and cold water and has a gas-trap
- Tub or shower with hot and cold water
- Adequate water pressure

## Bathroom - continued

- Temperature determined by local law
- Ventilation (window or ventilation fan)
- Hazards to look for: clogging, water leaks or damage, electric wires close to water source, improper plumbing connections, mold, loose bathroom tile, ceiling or flooring appears water-logged or water damaged, peeling paint.

# Windows

- All windows that are designed to be opened must have a lock.
- No broken or missing window panes.
- Windows must be sealed properly to keep the elements out.
- Living rooms need at least one window, does not need to be openable (unless necessary for fire escape, ventilation, or will be a sleeping room).
- Sleeping rooms need at least one window and it **MUST** be openable.
- Bathrooms need one openable window OR other adequate ventilation.
- Kitchens do **NOT** need windows.
- Other rooms not mentioned do not need windows.

# Ceilings, Floors & Walls

- Check for basic soundness and condition
- Signs of Water Damage!!
- Cannot have:
  - Such serious structural issues that could collapse
  - Bulging/buckling ceilings, walls or floors
  - Loose floor boards or torn/loose carpeting
  - Large holes
  - Danger of loose/falling materials
- Note: Check the bathroom and kitchen ceilings for bulging/water-logged condition, dampness or peeling paint. Look for any sign of an ongoing leak from above even though the drywall and paint may look in good shape (owners may not repair plumbing and instead paint or repair the ceiling).



# Plumbing

- Water quality
- Check for severe corrosion at water source lines
- Plumbing must be in good working order – no leaks or corrosion
- Adequate water pressure
- Sewer connection must be connected to city or town system

# Cooling & Heating

- Adequate and safe heating/cooling equipment. If window unit, adequately sealed to block outside air and keep elements out.
  - While HQS requires heating, but not air conditioning, local CoC policy requires window unit(s) sufficient to cool the unit or central air conditioning.
  - Take note of age and functioning of air conditioners. Negotiate with owner to replace older room unit(s) so that clients are not burdened by high electricity bills.
- Water heater is not corroded or leaking and working properly and has a water pressure release valve.
- If gas-fueled, proper connections for fuel and exhaust, location of fuel tank, lack of fumes, fuel shut off valves.

# Common Areas and Exterior

- Exterior and interior stairs are free from hazard and have adequate lighting.
- Handrails required when 4 or more consecutive steps.
- Common halls and areas free of hazards (physical conditions and adequate lighting).
- Elevators must be working if present.
- Serious leaning or buckling foundation or exterior wall.

# General Safety

- Exterior doors must have working locks.
- Must be able to access unit without having to go through another dwelling unit.
- At least one battery-operated or hard-wired smoke and carbon dioxide detectors must be present and working outside each sleeping area and in the immediate vicinity of the bedroom. If the dwelling unit is occupied by any hearing-impaired person, detectors must have an alarm system designed for hearing-impaired.
- Must have an acceptable fire exit - the building must have an alternative means of exit that meets local or State regulations in case of fire; this could include: an openable window if the unit is on the first floor or second floor or easily accessible to the ground; a back door opening on to a porch with a stairway leading to the ground; fire escape, fire ladder, or fire stairs.

## General Safety - continued

- Evidence of infestation: check for droppings and gnaw marks
- Garbage and debris: look for large piles inside and outside of unit
- Refuse disposal must have “adequate covered facilities”
- Interior air quality: check for gas, mold, excessive dust, pollutants
- Site and neighborhood conditions: confirm general safety and habitability of area.

# Lead Paint

- If pre-1978 unit with family with children 6 and under, must conduct a visual assessment of ALL SURFACES (interior and exterior) for deteriorated paint surfaces.
- Owner is required to provide notice of any lead-based paint in the building.
- Owner must stabilize deteriorated surfaces before move in to pass inspection.
- Staff conducting HQS inspections must be trained in conducting lead inspection.
- If affected areas were more than 2 sq. ft. on the exterior or more than 2 sq. ft. on the interior, then a certified Lead inspector must clear the unit.

## Lead Paint - continued

The same requirements apply to leasing programs EXCEPT that the program is responsible for:

- Stabilizing and fixing paint defects.
- Ongoing maintenance of any lead-based paint issues.
- Providing disclosure of lead-based paint or lead-based paint hazards in housing built prior to 1978, to all prospective residents.
- The program and the landlord must determine how to divide the costs of these efforts.

## B. Summary Decision on the Unit

(to be completed after the form has been filled in)

### Housing Quality Standard Pass or Fail

1. **Fail** If there are any checks under the column headed "Fail" the unit fails the minimum housing quality standards. Discuss with the owner the repairs noted that would be necessary to bring the unit up to the standard.

2. **Inconclusive** If there are no checks under the column headed "Fail" and there are checks under the column headed "Inconclusive," obtain additional information necessary for a decision (question owner or tenant as indicated in the item instructions given in this checklist). Once additional information is obtained, change the rating for the item and record the date of verification at the far right of the form.

3. **Pass** If neither (1) nor (2) above is checked, the unit passes the minimum housing quality standards. Any additional conditions described in the right hand column of the form should serve to (a) establish the precondition of the unit, (b) indicate possible additional areas to negotiate with the owner, (c) aid in assessing the reasonableness of the rent of the unit, and (d) aid the tenant in deciding among possible units to be rented. The tenant is responsible for deciding whether he or she finds these conditions acceptable.

**Unit Size:** Count the number of bedrooms for purposes of the FMR or Payment Standard. Record in the box provided.

**Year Constructed:** Enter from Line 5 of the Request for Tenancy Approval form. Record in the box provided.

**Number of Sleeping Rooms:** Count the number of rooms which could be used for sleeping, as identified on the checklist. Record in the box provided.

### C. How to Fill Out This Checklist

Complete the checklist on the unit to be occupied (or currently occupied) by the tenant. Proceed through the inspection as follows:

## 1. Living Room

### 1.1 Living Room Present

Note: If the unit is an efficiency apartment, consider the living room present.

### 1.2 Electricity

In order to qualify, the outlets must be present and properly installed in the baseboard, wall or floor of the room. Do not count a single duplex receptacle as two outlets, i.e., there must be **two** of these in the room, or **one** of these **plus a permanently installed ceiling or wall light fixture**.

Both the outlets and/or the light must be working. Usually, a room will have sufficient lights or electrical appliances plugged into outlets to determine workability. Be sure light fixture does not fail just because the bulb is burned out.

Do not count any of the following items or fixtures as outlets/fixtures: Table or floor lamps (these are **not** permanent light fixtures); ceiling lamps plugged into socket; extension cords.

If the electric service to the unit has been temporarily turned off check "Inconclusive." Contact owner or manager after inspection to verify that electricity functions properly when service is turned on. Record this information on the checklist.

### 1.3 Electrical Hazards

Examples of what this means: broken wiring; non-insulated wiring; frayed wiring; improper types of wiring, connections or insulation; wires lying in or located near standing water or other unsafe places; light fixture hanging from electric wiring without other firm support or fixture; missing cover plates on switches or outlets; badly cracked outlets; exposed fuse box connections; overloaded circuits evidenced by frequently "blown" fuses (ask the tenant).

Check "Inconclusive" if you are uncertain about severity of the problem and seek expert advice.

### 1.4 Security

"Accessible to outside" means: doors open to the outside or to a common public hall; windows accessible from the outside (e.g. basement and first floor); windows or doors leading onto a fire



# 1. Living Room

For each numbered item, check one box only.

Item No.	Description	Decision			If Fail, what repairs are necessary? If Inconclusive, give details. If Pass with comments, give details.	If Fail or Inconclusive, date (mm/dd/yyyy) of final approval
		Yes, Pass	No, Fail	Inconclusive		
<b>1.1 Living Room Present</b>	Is there a living room?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
<b>1.2 Electricity</b>	Are there at least two working outlets or one working outlet and one working light fixture?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>1.3 Electrical Hazards</b>	Is the room free from electrical hazards?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>1.4 Security</b>	Are all windows and doors that are accessible from the outside lockable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
<b>1.5 Window Condition</b>	Is there at least one window, and are all windows free of signs of severe deterioration or missing or broken out panes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
<b>1.6 Ceiling Condition</b>	Is the ceiling sound and free from hazardous defects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
<b>1.7 Wall Condition</b>	Are the walls sound and free from hazardous defects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
<b>1.8 Floor Condition</b>	Is the floor sound and free from hazardous defects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
<b>1.9 Lead-Based Paint</b>	Are all painted surfaces free of deteriorated paint?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			

# Inspection Tools Checklist

- Camera
- An extendable item to help you push buttons on detectors and check ceilings.
- Electrical tester
- Dampness tester
- Refrigerator and Freezer Thermometer
- Light bulbs to test fixed light fixtures
- Flashlight

# Record-Keeping Requirements

- Programs must maintain HQS inspections records for 5 years to demonstrate compliance.
- It is advisable to maintain lead-paint inspection records indefinitely to show due diligence if issue arises