

## What are Housing Quality Standards (HQS)?

- HQS are the minimum health and safety standards that rental properties must meet if they are to be rented out to government-subsidized tenants (from the Housing Choice Voucher (formerly Section 8) and Indian Housing programs).
- The purpose of these standards is to make sure low income families on public assistance are offered rental housing that is both safe and sanitary. In other words, it prevents unscrupulous landlords from exploiting subsidized tenants and offering them substandard housing.
- These housing standards apply to all types of rental homes that are rented out to subsidized tenants, regardless of its location and size.

### General Criteria and Requirements of HQS

The housing standards cover 13 general aspects of rental property living conditions, including:

- Bathroom
- Kitchen
- Living Space & Home Security
- Heating & Cooling
- Lighting & Electrical Fixtures
- Structural Integrity
- Air Quality
- Plumbing Fixtures
- Lead-Based Paint
- Property Access
- Neighborhood Condition
- Pest Infestation
- Smoke Detectors

### How are Housing Quality Standards Enforced?

To make sure that landlords are able to meet these standards, HQS inspections will be carried out on rental housing for subsidized tenants. These inspections are conducted by Public Housing Agencies (PHA) employees (Inspectors) or private contractors hired by them. There are three scenarios where a HQS inspection will be conducted:

**Initial Inspection:** When a HCV tenant informs PHA that they would like to rent a particular rental property

**Annual Inspection:** HQS inspections are conducted yearly on rental properties that house government-subsidized tenants.

**Special Inspection:** Conducted if the tenant or a member of the public complains to PHA that the rental property fails to meet HUD's housing standards.

## **HQS Inspection Checklist - Major Pitfalls**

I have listed the most important inspection checks below. These are also the most common reasons for failing HQS inspections so do pay special attention to them:

### **Windows and Doors**

- The windows must not be damaged or missing
- All ground floor windows must have locks
- All doors leading outside must have locks and deadbolts

### **Flooring, Ceilings and Walls**

- The flooring, walls and ceilings must not have any serious defects such as serious bulging, sagging, large cracks, loose surface or other major damages
- The flooring must not have any serious damages and cracks that will cause someone to trip and fall
- The ceiling and roof must not leak. Stained ceilings are often a tell-tale sign of leakage
- The interior walls of the property must not have chipped or peeling paint

### **Plumbing and Sanitation**

- The property must have a fixed water basin, flushing toilet and shower/bath tub
- There must be no plumbing or water leaks
- There has to be hot and cold running water in both the kitchen and bathroom
- The bathroom must have either a window or exhaust fan

### **Lighting and Electrical Fixtures**

- There must be at least 1 working light each in the kitchen and bathroom
- All electrical outlets must be working and come with cover plates
- There must be a working heating system for the property

### **Structural and Fire Safety**

- There must be a working smoke detector for every rental unit and on every story of the property
- All stairs and railings must be secure
- If you own a rental building - The walkways, porches, lifts and other common areas have to be properly maintained to avoid tenant injury.