

# Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCV) Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspection Checklist



## **THE HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS INSPECTION GUIDELINES**

### **OVERVIEW**

Before the Department of Family Services (DFS) Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCV) can make payments on behalf of an individual or family, the unit must meet and pass the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) minimum Housing Quality Standards (HQS) and Virginia Maintenance Codes requirements. These standards have been implemented by HUD and the state of Virginia to ensure that all assisted units meet minimum health and safety standards. DFS will inspect the unit for HQS initially and at least annually.

The initial inspection will be conducted within 15 days after receipt of the completed Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA). An HQS inspector will contact the owner/tenant by email or phone to schedule the inspections.

The annual inspections will be conducted 364 days or less after an initial inspection. An HQS inspector will contact the tenant by USPS mail informing them of the scheduled annual inspection. If the landlord wants to be present please check with the tenant to confirm this inspection.

In order to ensure the unit meets HQS, review the requirements and correct any HQS violations before the inspection. At the time of the inspection, the unit should be "move-in" ready.

### **REQUIRED REPAIRS**

If the unit fails the initial inspection the owner or representative will be informed of the required repairs at the time of the initial inspection verbally or a possible e-mail will be sent. If an annual inspection fails an inspection report with the failed items indicated will be mailed to the owner and to the tenant stating who is responsible for the repairs. When the repairs are complete, owners and/or tenants must contact DFS to request a re-inspection.

Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) cannot be made until the new unit passes an initial inspection. A potential owner will have two days to notify DFS and specify, if they wish to continue with the program and/or willing to make the necessary repairs. For annual inspections, repairs must be completed within 30 days or 24 hours for life threatening emergencies. If repairs are not completed by the stated deadline, HAP's may be abated.

### **COMPLAINT/MOVE-OUT INSPECTIONS**

The unit is required to be inspected annually, however; DFS may also perform a special request inspection or move-out inspection upon request if at any time it is determined that an owner or tenant is not maintaining the unit. All deficiencies will be noted and a notice mailed indicating a repair deadline. The owner/tenant or property manager is required to repair items within 30

days or 24 hours for life threatening deficiencies. The family is responsible for any tenant caused damages beyond normal wear and tear and may be subject to termination of voucher. Owners may be subject to abatement or termination from the HCV Program.

### **RENT REASONABLENESS**

The requested rent amount must be reasonable as compared to other similar unassisted units. DFS must approve all rent requests before scheduling inspections and/or occupancy.

## **Common HQS Failed Items:**

- Non-functional smoke detectors
- GFI outlets not installed in water areas
- GFI outlets missing or cracked exterior electrical outlet cover plates
- Missing light bulbs or broken light fixtures (all light fixtures must have light bulbs and function properly)
- Railings not present where required or loose (must be secured and intact)
- Peeling exterior and interior paint
- Trip hazards caused by improperly installed floor coverings (carpets/vinyl)
- Cracked or broken window panes (must be intact)
- Missing or torn window/door screens (all screens must be free of holes, rips, tears, or bends)
- Inoperable burners on stoves or inoperable range hoods (gas burners must have pilots lit)
- Dirty Appliances (stoves, refrigerators, washers, dryers, tubs, showers) (all appliances must be clean)
- Missing burner control knobs
- Inoperable bathroom fan/no ventilation
- Leaking faucets or plumbing (toilets must flush without holding down the handle)
- No temperature/pressure relief valve on water heaters and missing down pipes
- Missing and/or dirty HVAC filters (must have proper required filter for HVAC systems)
- No Anti-tip device installed on stove (tip device must be installed)

**Please ensure commonly failed items are working properly before contacting the inspector**

## The HQS CHECKLIST

All utilities must be connected before an inspection can be conducted.

The following is a listing of items inspected to meet Housing Quality Standards:

### BATHROOM

- The bathroom must be located in a separate room and have a working toilet.
- The unit must have a fixed basin with a sink trap and hot and cold running water.
- The unit must have a shower or bathtub with hot and cold running water.
- The toilet facilities must utilize an approvable public or private disposal system, including a locally approvable septic system.

### KITCHEN

- The unit must have a cooking stove or range and refrigerator of appropriate size for the unit (i.e., family) all in proper operating condition. Stoves, ovens, and ranges must have all control knobs and handles. Gas stove burners must light by pilot jets without the use of incendiary devices (i.e., matches, lighter, etc.).
- The unit must have a kitchen sink in proper operating condition with a sink trap and hot and cold running water, which drains into an approvable public or private wastewater system.
- The unit must provide space for the storage, preparation, and serving of food.
- There must be facilities and services for the sanitary disposal of food waste and refuse, including temporary storage facilities where necessary (i.e., garbage containers).

### SPACE and SECURITY

- All units must have a minimum of a living room, kitchen area, and bathroom.
- The unit must contain at least one sleeping or living/sleeping room for each two persons.
- The unit's windows, which are accessible from the outside, such as basement, first-floor, and fire escape windows, must be lockable (e.g., window units with sash pins or sash locks, and combination windows with latches).
- Vertically opening windows must stay up and open without the use of props.
- Windows designed to open should be in working condition.
- The unit's exterior doors (i.e., those that allow access to or from the unit) must lock properly.

### THERMAL ENVIRONMENT (Heating and Cooling System)

- The unit must contain a safe heating system (and safe cooling system, where present), which is in proper operating condition and can provide adequate heat (and cooling, if applicable), either directly or indirectly, to each room used for living in order to assure a healthy living environment appropriate to the climate.
- The unit must **not** contain any unvented room heaters that burn gas, oil, or kerosene. A working radiator would be acceptable.

### **ILLUMINATION and ELECTRICITY**

- There must be at least one window in the living room and in each sleeping room.
- The kitchen area and the bathroom must have a permanent ceiling or wall-type light fixture in working condition. The kitchen area must also have at least one electrical outlet in operating condition.
- The living room and each bedroom must have at least two electrical outlets in operating condition. Permanently installed overhead or wall-mounted light fixtures may count as one of the required electrical outlets.
- All other rooms used for living require a means of natural or artificial illumination such as a light fixture, a wall outlet to serve a lamp, a window in the room, or adequate light from an adjacent room.
- Each electrical outlet must be permanently installed in the baseboard, wall or floor.
- Table or floor lamps, ceiling lamps plugged into a socket, or an extension cord plugged into another plug cannot be counted as an outlet for HQS purposes.
- Electrical hazards of any kind, either inside or outside the unit, would receive a fail rating.

### **STRUCTURE and MATERIALS**

- Interior ceilings, walls and floors must not have any serious defects such as severe bulging or leaning, large holes, loose surface materials, severe buckling, missing parts, or other serious damage.
- The floors must also not have any major movement under walking stress or tripping hazards presented by the permanent floor coverings. The roof must be structurally sound and weather tight.
- The exterior wall structure and surfaces must not have any serious defects such as serious leaning, buckling, sagging, large holes, unfastened and falling components, or defects that would result in air infiltration or vermin infestation.
- The condition and equipment of interior and exterior stairways, halls, porches, walkways, etc. must not present a danger of tripping and falling. Examples include, but are not limited to, broken or missing steps and loose boards.
- Elevators must be working, safe, and compliant with locally enforced codes.
- Manufactured homes must be securely anchored by tie down devices that distribute and transfer the loads imposed by the unit to appropriate ground anchors so as to resist wind overturning and sliding.

**INTERIOR AIR QUALITY**

- The unit must be free from dangerous levels of air pollution from carbon monoxide, sewer gas, fuel gas, dust and other harmful pollutants.
- The unit must have adequate air circulation.
- Bathrooms must have a window that opens properly or a permanently installed exhaust fan.
- Any room used for sleeping must have at least one window that opens properly, if the window was designed to open.

**WATER SUPPLY**

An approvable public or private water supply must serve the unit that is sanitary and free from contamination.

**LEAD-BASED PAINT**

A dwelling unit constructed before 1978 that is occupied by a family that includes a child under the age of six years must include a visual inspection for defective paint surfaces. Defective paint surface is defined as a surface on which the paint is cracking, scaling, chipping, peeling or loose. If defective paint surfaces are found, such surfaces must be treated.

**ACCESS**

- The unit must have direct access for the tenant to enter and exit, without the unauthorized use of other private properties.
- The building must provide an alternate means of exit in case of fire (such as fire stairs or exit through windows, with the use of a ladder if windows are above the second floor).
- Entry/exits must not be “blocked” by debris, stored items, non-working locks or doors that have been nailed shut or otherwise obstructed.

**SITE and NEIGHBORHOOD**

The site and neighborhood must be reasonably free of serious conditions that would endanger the health and safety of residents.

**INFESTION**

The unit and its equipment must be free of infestation from insects/bugs, vermin and rodents.

**SMOKE DETECTORS**

The unit must have at least one battery operated or hardwired smoke detector that is in proper operating condition on each level of the unit, including basements but excluding crawl spaces and unfinished attics.

## **UTILITIES**

All utilities (water, electricity, and gas where applicable) must be on before the inspection will be scheduled. All gas appliances must have pilots lit before an inspection is scheduled.

## **OCCUPANCY**

Unit to be inspected must be vacant for initial inspection or occupied by a current HCV Voucher holder for annual inspection.

## **DOORS**

- Interior:
  - Doors must be securely mounted. All required hardware and trim (locks, molding, etc.) must be present and in proper working order. Locking hardware must correctly engage strike plates.
  - Door surfaces must be in good repair, free of holes and not showing signs of delaminating.
  - The doors must operate smoothly without binding on frame or floor.
  
- Exterior:
  - Hinged doors must be securely mounted. All necessary hardware and trim (locks, molding, etc.) must be present and in proper working order. Locking hardware must properly engage strike plates.
  - Door surfaces must be in good repair. Door surface damages that allow thermal transfer (air leakage) are not allowed.
  - Peepholes, keyed, single-cylinder, dead bolt locks, and “keyless locks” are necessary for the front entry doors. All other doors entering the living quarters, including doors leading to an enclosed garage, must have a peephole and a keyless lock.
  - The doors must operate smoothly without binding on the doorframe or floor. Hinged doors must not allow thermal transfer because of faulty/missing seals or misalignment to the doorframe.
  - If glass panes allowing view to the outside, are mounted into the door surface then a peephole is not needed. Some glass panes are opaque or they are mounted too high in the door to allow view to the outside.
  - Two types of keyless locks are acceptable. One is the keyless deadbolt. The other is called a “C” bolt or anchor bolt.
  - Sliding glass doors must have two means of security. A combination of two of the following is sufficient; the main latch, a pin that secures the sliding panel to the fixed panel, and/or a “Charlie Bar” which must be permanently mounted. Both the pin and the bar should not be mounted more than 48” from the floor. The door must function properly. Excessive force must not be required to open and/or close the sliding panel.
  - Sliding doors must not allow thermal transfer because of faulty/missing seals or misalignment to the doorframe.



**WINDOWS**

- If windows are designed to open, they must open and remain open without props. Window locks must be present and function properly.
- Security bars are allowed. However, if they are installed on bedroom windows and/or exit doors they must be designed to allow emergency egress.
- Must have intact window screens

**ELECTRICAL OUTLETS, SWITCHES, FIXTURES, STAIRS and BATHROOMS**

- Electrical outlets must be securely mounted, function properly, and have cover plates.
- Electrical switches must be securely mounted, function properly, and have cover plates. This includes three-way switch systems designed for hallway and stairwell lighting.
- Both inside and outside light fixtures must be securely mounted and function properly. “Hanging” lights must be supported by the chain or other hardware and not by the electrical wiring.
- Circuit Breaker/Fuse Boxes, both interior and exterior, must have permanent covers preventing contact with bare wiring.
- Stairs: Handrails must be present at stair locations that have four (4) or more risers. Missing/damaged parts are not acceptable. Loose, broken, and/or missing treads are not allowed.
- All bathrooms must have a vent fan or window.

**The information on this checklist provides a basis overview of HQS requirements. Other elements may be considered depending upon the type and location of the rental unit.**