

Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program

Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspection Checklist



SECTION 8 PROGRAM RESIDENT AND OWNER'S HQS GUIDE

THE HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS INSPECTION

The unit must pass a housing quality standard inspection. The inspection will be conducted within 15 days after receipt of the completed Request for Tenancy Approval (RFTA) provided the unit is affordable for the family. A HQS inspector will contact the owner by phone to schedule the inspection.

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

RENT REASONABLENESS

The requested rent amount must be reasonable as compared to similar unassisted units. The Housing Authority must approve all rents requested.

ANNUAL HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS INSPECTIONS and COMPLAINT INSPECTIONS

The Housing Authority is required to inspect the unit annually. We may also perform a complaint inspection if it is determined that an owner is not maintaining the unit. Any deficiencies will be noted and a notice mailed indicating a repair deadline. The owner 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.

HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS INSPECTION

OVERVIEW

Before the Housing Authority can make payments on behalf of a tenant family, the unit must meet HUD's minimum Housing Quality Standards (HQS). These standards have been implemented by HUD nationwide to ensure that all assisted units meet minimum health and safety standards. **The Housing Authority will inspect the unit for HQS initially and at least annually.**

In order to ensure the unit meets Housing Quality Standards, 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 or annual inspection, an inspection report with the failed items indicated will be mailed to the owner. When the repairs are complete, owners must contact the Housing Authority to request a re-inspection.

Initial housing assistance payments cannot be made until the unit passes an inspection. **Repairs for the annual inspection must be made within 30 days or 24 hours for life threatening emergencies.** For annual inspections, if repairs are not made by the stated deadline, housing assistance payments may be abated.

Common HQS Failed Items

- Non functional smoke detectors
- Missing or cracked electrical outlet cover plates
- Railings not present where required
- Peeling exterior and interior paint
- Trip hazards caused by installed floor coverings (carpets/vinyl)
- Cracked or broken window panes
- Inoperable burners on stoves or inoperable range hoods
- Missing burner control knobs
- Inoperable bathroom fan/no ventilation
- Leaking faucets or plumbing
- No temperature/pressure relief valve on water heaters

HQS CHECKLIST

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 flush 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 stove or range for cooking (exceptions must be approved by PCHA) and refrigerator of appropriate size for the unit (i.e., family) 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.
- Pender County strongly encourages moisture barriers under homes to assist in the prevention of mold and mildew.
- 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.
- Pender County requires manufactured homes to be completely underpinned. Underpinning must be intact and in good condition to prevent access by animals and pests.

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.

Infestation

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 either vacant or occupied by the Section 8 client applying for that unit.

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.
 - 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 keyless lock. If there is limited or no visibility at the front entry way, peephole may be required for safety purposes. If glass panes are mounted into the door surface or along the side of the door that allow views to the outside or if there is a window within reasonable proximity to the front entry door that allows adequate views, then a peephole is not needed.

- 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.
- 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.
- Pender County requires screens on all windows designed to open. Screens must be appropriate to fit the window. They must be intact without holes, rips or tears.

Electrical Outlets, Switches, Fixtures, Stairs and Bathrooms

- Electrical outlets must be securely mounted, function properly, and have intact 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 operable window for ventilation.

The information on this checklist provides an idea of basic HQS requirements. Other elements may be considered depending upon the type and location the rental unit.