



HOUSTON
HOUSING AUTHORITY

Transforming Lives & Communities

Housing Quality Standards Inspection Checklist

To prevent delays, the R.T.A. must be complete and upon submission the unit must be in “move in” condition or an inspection will not be conducted.

Houston Housing Authority Housing Choice Voucher Program Owner's Guide

The Housing Quality Standards Inspection

The unit must pass a Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspection. The inspection will be conducted approximately 7-10 days after receipt by the Inspections Department. An HQS scheduler will contact the owner by phone to schedule the inspection. Please make all contact numbers available when you submit the Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA). Calls from the HQS scheduler must be returned within 24 hours to confirm inspection times or an inspection will not be conducted.

All utilities must be on and working before an inspection can be conducted.

If the unit fails a second inspection, a third inspection will not be conducted. Instead, the paperwork will be returned and a new RTA must be submitted to begin the process over again.

Rent Reasonableness

The requested rent amount must be reasonable as compared to other similar assisted units. A Market Analyst will determine if the requested rent is reasonable as compared to an unassisted unit when considering the location, quality, size, type, age, amenities, housing services, maintenance and utilities to be provided. The Houston Housing Authority must approve all rents requested.

Annual Housing Quality Standards Inspections and Complaint Inspections

The Houston Housing Authority is required to inspect the unit annually. The Housing Authority 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 will be 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 Houston 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. To ensure that the unit meets HQS, please review the following requirements and correct any HQS violations before the inspection. At the time of the inspection, the unit must be "move-in" ready. This will prevent delays in the housing assistance payments.

Required Repairs

If the unit fails the initial or annual inspection, an inspection report with failed items indicated will be provided. The first housing assistance payment cannot be made until the unit passes 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 will stop.

Most Common Failed Items

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

HQS Checklist

The following is a list 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 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 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 adequate covered 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

- „ The unit 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 a basement, first floor and fire escape windows must have a working lock (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 operate accordingly.
- „ Bedroom windows must be able to open and close freely.
- „ The unit's exterior doors (i.e. those that allow access to or from the unit) must be lockable and compliant with current Texas Property Code requirements regarding security devices for residential tenancies.

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.
- In the absence of a cooling system secure screens must be present on all outside windows.
- The unit must not contain any un-vented room heaters, which 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 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 that plug into a socket or 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. Carpets must be tacked down.
- 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, which 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.
- Bathroom must have a window in operable condition or a permanently installed exhaust fan.
- Any room used for sleeping must have at least one window in operable condition if it were designed to do so.

Water Supply

- The unit must be served by an approved public or private water supply, which 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 have 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 of the unit must be reasonably free of serious conditions which would endanger the health and safety of the residents.

Infestation

- The unit and its equipment must be free of serious vermin and rodent infestation.

Smoke Detectors

- The unit must have at least one battery operated or hard-wired smoke detector that is in proper operating condition on each level of the unit, including basements but excluding crawl spaces and unfinished attics.
- Detectors must be installed in accordance with and meet the requirements of the National Fire Protection Association Standard (NFPA) 74 or its successors (currently NFPA 720).
- If the unit is occupied by a hearing-impaired person, smoke detectors must have an alarm system designed for the hearing-impaired persons as specified by NFPA 74 (or its successors).
- In new construction, there must be a smoke detector in each room for sleeping, and those must be arranged so that the operation of any detector will cause all other detectors to alarm.

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 will be scheduled.

Occupancy

- The unit to be inspected must either be vacant or occupied by the Section 8 client applying for that unit.