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Landlord HQS Letter of Information

To All Landlords,

The Sanford Housing Authority (SHA) is required to ensure that all housing units occupied by the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) participants meet certain health and safety standards. These “Housing Quality Standards” (HQS) are set by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD).

Before SHA enters into a contract and issues rental assistance payments, units must pass the HQS inspection, and continue to do so on an annual basis. Units sometimes fail housing inspections because landlords and tenants are not familiar with the HQS requirements and/or have not assessed the condition of the unit prior to the scheduled inspection.

For these reasons, SHA has provided a brief summary of HQS and Administrative Policy requirements to assist owners in preparing their units for an HQS inspection. This checklist does not cover all possible situations during an inspection, but if the most commonly failed items are corrected before the inspection, the unit will have a much better chance of passing the inspection the first time. The items on this checklist must be working or completed prior to the HQS inspection.

Each unit must have a minimum of a living room, kitchen area, and bathroom, unless it is designated as SRO Housing.

Bathroom

- The bathroom must be located in a separate room and have an operable flush toilet.
- The bathroom must have sink, flushing toilet, and shower/bathtub free of leaks or caulking issues with both hot and cold running water.
- All sinks must have functioning stoppers.
- All worn or cracked toilet seats and tank lids must be replaced and toilet tank lid must fit properly.
- Must have some form of ventilation, such as an openable window or exhaust fan. Ventilation must be adequate enough to maintain healthy interior air quality free of mold or other hazardous breathable elements. (Landlords cannot charge tenants for opening bathroom windows in the winter if it is the only form of ventilation.)
- Floors must be free of large cracks, holes, missing pieces, or potentially hazardous defects
- Flooring cannot be lifting or peeling back, must be sealed to keep out water and moisture.

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 be in working condition with all control knobs and handles. Pilots must light when burners and oven are turned on.
- The refrigerator gasket must be intact, fit snugly, and have no cracks.
- The unit must have a kitchen sink with proper gas trap (p-trap or j-bend) and hot and cold running water, with faucets that turn off completely. Needs to drain 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.

Ceilings/Walls/Floors

- Interior ceilings, walls, and floors must not have any serious defects such as bulging or leaning, large holes, loose surface materials (cracking, chipping, peeling paint), 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.
- All wood floors must be sanded to a smooth surface and sealed. Any loose or warped boards must be secured and made level. If they cannot be leveled, they must be replaced.
- All floors must be in a finished state. Raw wood or unsealed concrete is not permitted.
- All floors should have some type of base shoe, trim, or sealing for a “finished look”. Vinyl base shoe is permitted.



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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. No extension cords may be used for outlets. Each outlet must have an outlet cover that is not cracked, broken, or missing
- 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.

Windows

- The unit's windows, which are accessible from the outside (less than 6 feet off the ground), 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).
- Windows that are meant to open, must open
- Vertically opening windows must stay up and open without the use of props.
- Window sashes must be in good condition, solid and intact, and properly fitted to the window frame. Damaged or deteriorated sashes must be replaced.
- Windows must be weather-stripped as needed to ensure a weather tight seal.
- Window screens must be in good condition (applies only if screens are present). Screens are not required.
- Windows serving as egress (one per sleeping room) must not be blocked by items, furniture, or storage items

Doors

- The unit's exterior doors (i.e., those that allow access to or from the unit) must lock properly. The door should shut with little effort, not get stuck or require force to open or close
- Striker plate must align with lock and all hardware must be securely attached.
- All exterior doors must be weather-tight to avoid any air or water infiltration, have no holes, have all trim intact, and have a threshold.
- All interior doors must have no holes, have all trim intact, and be openable without a key.

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.
- Hot water heaters must have a pressure relief valve and discharge line that extends to within 6 inches of the floor or to the outside. There should be no exposed wires. Flammable materials should not be stored near the hot water heater. Gas water heaters must be properly vented.
- The unit must not contain any unvented room heaters, which burn gas, oil, or kerosene. A working radiator would be acceptable.

Exterior

- 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 of dangerous conditions include, but are not limited to, broken or missing steps and loose boards.)
- Stairways with four or more steps must have a handrail that is securely supported and runs the length of the stairway.
- Railings are required for decks, porches or steps that are more than 30 inches from the ground.
- 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.



- Any room used for sleeping must have at least one window that opens properly.

Water Supply: An approvable public or private water supply must serve the unit, 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 in accordance with state and EPA requirements.

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, which would endanger the health and safety of residents. Excess trash, hazardous materials, standing water on or near the building will result in a unit failure

Infestation: The unit and its equipment must be free of serious vermin and rodent infestation. Ex: mice, rats, fleas, bedbugs, fruit flies, etc. Evidence of infestation will result in unit failure

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. If more than one smoke detector is on one level, all must be operable
- Detectors must be installed in accordance with and meet the requirements of the National Fire Protection Association Standard (NFPA).
- The unit must have at least one Carbon Monoxide Detector.

The Most common violations noted during HQS housing inspections are:

- Chipped or flaking paint
- Doors and windows that lead outside not having locks.
- Improper pressure relief valves on hot water heaters
- No access to the heating unit for inspection.
- No handrails on stairs, both interior and exterior.
- Non-working smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors.
- No smoke detector in the basement (cannot be located on the staircase), must be 1 on all accessible levels.
- No fan or other ventilation in the bathroom.
- Poor caulking around tub, sinks, etc. in the bathroom and kitchen.
- Windows and doors are not weathertight.

Inspection Results and Reinspection's

If any HQS violations are identified, the owner or family will be notified of the deficiencies and be given 30 days to correct them. If requested by the owner, the time frame for correcting the deficiencies may be extended by SHA for good cause. Extensions will be granted in cases where SHA has determined that:

- A repair cannot be completed because required parts or services are not available.
- A repair cannot be completed because of weather conditions.
- A reasonable accommodation is needed because the family includes a person with disabilities.

The length of the extension will be determined on a case-by-case basis, but will not exceed 60 days from the original inspection date. (Example of Extension Request enclosed)

HAP Abatement

If an owner fails to correct HQS deficiencies by the time specified by SHA, HUD **requires** SHA to abate housing assistance payments no later than the first of the month following the specified time period, including any approved extensions. No retroactive payments will be made to the owner for the period of time the rent was abated. Owner rents are not abated as a result of HQS failures that are the family's responsibility. ***During any abatement period the family continues to be responsible for their share of the rent.

The maximum length of time that HAP may be abated is 90 days. However, if the owner completed corrections and notifies SHA before the termination date of the HAP contract, SHA may rescind the termination notice.

If the family fails to correct a violation within the period allowed by SHA and any extensions, SHA will terminate the family's assistance according to policy.

If you should have any questions, please contact us at 324-6747.

