

Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program OIG Audit Report Highlights



The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) recently conducted audits of the administration of Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) Housing Quality Standards (HQS) Inspections at various Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) in our jurisdiction.

The purpose of these audits was to determine if the PHAs were adequately administering their inspection programs in accordance with HUD requirements and to ensure units meet minimum housing quality standards.

The Philadelphia Regional HUD Office has reviewed 5 of the audit reports and analyzed patterns of the most common unit deficiencies and audit findings. This Bulletin will provide a summary of what was found as well as helpful information that can be used to assist with HQS inspections for all Housing Authorities in the future.

- Protruding nails and sharp objects- cutting hazard
- Cracked, chipped, or peeling paint
- Holes in ground and walkway - tripping hazard
- Roof leaks and misaligned chimneys



Pictured above: Excessive trash and debris in back yard

Summary of Violations Found by the OIG

The most common deficiencies observed by the OIG are listed below.

Unit Exterior

Common deficiencies on the outside of the units observed by the OIG included:

- Garbage and debris in yard
- Missing or damaged handrails (4 or more steps)

Unit Interior

Common deficiencies inside the units observed by the OIG included:

- Stairway handrails and guardrails- loose, damaged, rotten, missing, or incomplete
- Mice and roach infestation
- Peeling and chipping paint
- Tripping hazards- mainly cable cords improperly installed throughout unit
- Cracks and stains in ceilings- indicating possible roof leaks
- Buckling floor boards and loose carpet- tripping hazards
- Weather stripping- should not be able to see outside light when door is closed

- Loose/missing light fixtures
- Holes in walls and ceilings

Pictured below: Incomplete/ missing handrail- should extend full length of stairs



Bathroom/Kitchen Deficiencies

Common deficiencies throughout the kitchens and bathrooms observed by the OIG included:

- Presence of mold and mildew
- Inoperable stove burners and missing knobs (won't ignite)
- Infestation
- Inoperable Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs)
- Rusted sinks and tubs
- Missing soap dishes and towel racks
- Commodes that don't flush
- Loose faucets, commodes, tubs, and showers
- Stoves covered with grease (fire hazard)
- Damaged refrigerator seal or other damage that prevents a temperature low enough to prevent food spoilage



Pictured above: Misaligned refrigerator door

Electrical Hazards

Common deficiencies relative to electricity observed by the OIG included:

- Exposed electrical contacts (that could cause electrocution)
- Broken or missing outlet covers
- Open ground outlets
- Unsecured electrical panels, fuse boxes and junction boxes
- Inoperable Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs)
- Missing or damaged light fixtures or light covers exposing wires
- Reversed hot /neutral on electrical outlets
- Knockout plugs missing from junction boxes
- Outlet plugs painted over or disconnected from walls

Pictured below: Loose and unprotected live wires with exposed contacts



Smoke Detectors

Common deficiencies relative to smoke detectors observed by the OIG included:

- Non-functioning detectors,
- Damaged detectors,
- Missing detectors, or

- Detectors otherwise unable to be tested (i.e. no battery)

For the purposes of HQS inspections, a "working" smoke detector should be present on each level of a unit. This includes the basement level. When the PHA conducts annual inspections, it is important to note (and advise residents) that smoke detectors are considered inoperable if they have any of the above deficiencies.

Additionally, if there is a hearing or visually impaired member in the family, appropriate smoke detectors should be present in the household.

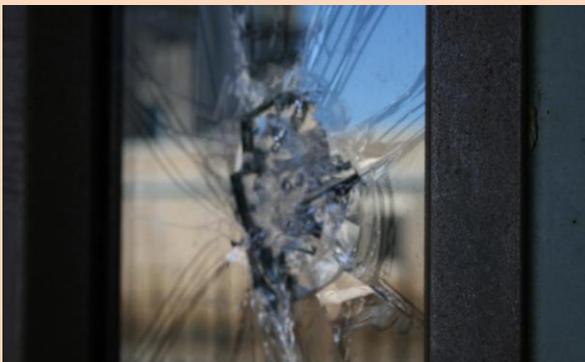
Windows

Common deficiencies relative to windows observed by the OIG included:

- Security Issues: won't shut or lock as intended
- Fire Hazards: won't open as intended or blocked
- Cutting Hazards: broken, cracked, or missing panes
- Paint Issues: cracked, chipped, or peeling paint

Also, please remember that HQS inspections require that all "rooms" (including sleeping rooms) have at least one (1) window.

Pictured below: Shattered window- cutting hazard



Heating and Plumbing

Common heating and plumbing deficiencies observed by the OIG included:

- Holes in furnace- this is a carbon monoxide hazard
- Heating flue disconnected from wall
- Water heater flue blocked- causing carbon monoxide to escape into unit
- Tape over holes in flue on furnace
- Missing cover for furnace switch
- Inoperable or inadequate heat- especially during winter months
- Rust colored water coming from faucets
- Cracked sewer lines
- Leaking or clogged drains
- Commodes don't flush, leaking, or are stopped up or no working commodes in unit



Pictured above: Tape over holes in flue that needs to be replaced

Summary of OIG Findings

Along with the most common unit deficiencies, the OIG audit reports were also reviewed for common findings. Some of the findings are as follows:

1. Ensure that housing inspections are conducted by the PHA on an ANNUAL basis.
2. Develop, implement, and maintain sufficient internal controls to ensure program funds are used ONLY for units that are decent, safe, and sanitary.
3. Ensure that contracted inspectors are thoroughly trained relative to the requirements of the Section 8 HQS inspection program.
4. Ensure that policies and procedures are clearly followed when making a decision concerning housing conditions and whether or not rent should be abated or housing assistance payments should be terminated.
5. Review recent HQS inspections and ensure that all applicable violations have been corrected.



PHA Reminders

- In accordance with HUD regulation 24 CFR 982.152(d), HUD is permitted to reduce or offset any program administrative fees paid to a PHA if it fails to perform its responsibilities correctly or adequately.
- In accordance with HUD regulation 24 CFR 982.401(j)(9)(ii), lead-based paint certifications must be obtained and kept on file by the PHA servicing the housing voucher for owners as applicable.
- Be aware of the definition of a "room". The # of bedrooms for the purposes of payment standards must be accurate to prevent over-payments for spaces that do not qualify as rooms.
- **Carbon monoxide is odorless, colorless, and potentially fatal!** It is imperative to convey the significance of this to staff, landlords, residents, and ALL inspectors to ensure that necessary repairs are completed immediately.
- Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) are present in units to protect people from electrical shock by "tripping" a circuit and cutting off electricity. They are typically installed around areas where moisture may be present such as the bathroom and kitchen. GFCIs that do not function as intended may prove to be fatal. For this reason, it is essential to make sure they are working properly by not only testing the outlets, but also making sure the "test" and "reset" buttons work properly. This was among the most common deficiencies found by the OIG and should be repaired within 24 hours.