Housing Quality Standards (HQS) – Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of Housing Quality Standards?
The goal of the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program is to provide "decent, safe and sanitary" housing at an affordable cost to low-income families. Housing Quality Standards help HUD and local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) accomplish that goal by defining "standard housing" and establishing the minimum quality criteria necessary for the health and safety of program participants. All HCV housing units must meet these housing quality standards in order to participate in the HCV program.

What are the 13 key aspects of housing quality covered by performance requirements and acceptability criteria in the HQS?
The 13 key aspects of housing quality covered by the HQS include:

- Sanitary facilities;
- Food preparation and refuse disposal;
- Space and security;
- Thermal environment;
- Illumination and electricity;
- Structure and materials;
- Interior air quality;
- Water supply;
- Lead-based paint;
- Access;
- Site and neighborhood;
- Sanitary condition; and
- Smoke Detectors.

How are Housing Quality Standards enforced?
HQS inspections are conducted by PHA staff and contractors to ensure that potential and current HCV housing units meet the minimum performance and acceptability criteria for each of the 13 key housing quality aspects.

When do HQS inspections occur?
HQS inspections come in three different varieties. *Initial Inspections* occur when a voucher holder indicates to their PHA that they desire to lease a specific housing unit. The unit must pass the initial inspection before the execution of the assisted lease and housing assistance payments (HAP) contract and the initiation of payments. *Annual Inspections* occur once a year on housing units that are currently under lease by an HCV participant family. Annual inspections ensure that HCV housing units continue to meet HQS throughout the tenancy of the HCV participant family. *Special Inspections* may be complaint inspections or quality control inspections. Complaint inspections occur when a tenant, owner, or member of the public complains about the condition of an HCV housing unit. Quality control inspections examine a sample of housing units within a give PHA's jurisdiction each year and occur throughout the year.

Where can I read more about Housing Quality Standards?
Please see **Chapter 10** of the **Housing Choice Voucher Program Guidebook** for more information on HQS.

What regulations cover Housing Quality Standards?
Regulations are found at **24 CFR 982**.