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NOTICE TO HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER LANDLORDS

RE: Upcoming Changes to Housing Quality Inspections – Transition from HQS to NSPIRE

Dear Housing Choice Voucher Landlord:

The Marion County Housing Authority (MCHA) would like to make you aware of an upcoming change to the inspection standards used for Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) units.

Beginning February 2027, HCV inspections will transition from the current Housing Quality Standards (HQS) requirements to HUD's National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE). NSPIRE places greater emphasis on health, safety, functionality, and the overall condition of the unit.

Many of the expectations you are familiar with under HQS will remain. However, landlords should be aware that **some items may be evaluated differently or may receive additional attention under NSPIRE.**

Areas of Increased Attention

The following are examples of items that may receive greater attention during NSPIRE inspections:

- **Electrical Outlets:** Electrical outlets will be evaluated for proper condition and functionality, and certain deficiencies may result in a failed inspection.
- **GFCI/AFCI Protection:** GFCI and AFCI protection will be evaluated where required, including applicable locations inside and outside the unit.
- **Mold and Mildew:** Inspectors will consider the presence and extent of mold, mildew, and similar substances when evaluating deficiencies.
- **Infestations:** Evidence of insects, rodents, or other infestations may result in a deficiency. Evidence of infestations in multiple locations may require additional attention.
- **Smoke Alarms:** Smoke alarms must be properly installed and functioning in required locations and must meet applicable requirements, including hard-wired and/or 10-year tamper-resistant requirements where applicable.
- **Carbon Monoxide Alarms:** Carbon monoxide alarms will be required in applicable units, including certain units with fuel-burning appliances and applicable sleeping areas.
- **Fire Doors:** Required fire doors must function properly and remain unobstructed.
- **Dryer Vents:** Dryer vents must be made of appropriate materials and may not be blocked, restricted, or clogged. Exterior vent covers must also be in place.
- **Guardrails:** Guardrails must be properly sized and installed where required, including locations involving a sudden drop in elevation.
- **Handrails:** Required handrails must be properly installed and provide a secure, reasonable grasp.



These changes are intended to move inspections toward a more comprehensive, health- and safety-focused approach. NSPIRE also places greater emphasis on the **condition, function, and operability** of housing, rather than simply whether an item is present.

Preparing now can help prevent inspection deficiencies, delays, and additional trips to the property. We encourage you to review your units and address any known maintenance or safety concerns before the transition to NSPIRE.

Our goal is to help make this transition as smooth as possible and to minimize delays in the inspection process and payment of Housing Assistance Payments (HAP).

If you have questions regarding the upcoming inspection changes, please contact **Patty or Megan** at the Marion County Housing Authority.

Sincerely,

Kelly Tinsley
Executive Director



HQS → NSPIRE

What HCV Landlords Need to Know About Upcoming Inspections

Implementation begins February 2027

Beginning February 2027, housing authorities will transition from the current Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspection protocol to HUD's National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE) protocol.

NSPIRE is designed to focus on resident health and safety while placing greater emphasis on condition, function, operability, sustainability, and long-term property health.

What Is Changing?

CURRENT HQS	NSPIRE
Focuses on basic quality housing standards.	Focuses more directly on resident health, safety, condition, function and operability.
Inspections include living areas, kitchen, bathroom, heating/plumbing and general safety.	Uses inside and outside areas with greater emphasis on tenant-centered outcomes.
Deficiencies generally fall into life-threatening, non-life-threatening and standard categories.	Deficiencies are categorized as life-threatening, severe, moderate, or low/advisory, with specified correction timeframes.

What Landlords Should Expect

NSPIRE will place greater scrutiny on several items that may require additional attention before an inspection.

The following are highlighted in the NSPIRE transition guide:

- **Electrical outlets:** Inspections are more detailed, and many outlet deficiencies are significant.
- **GFCI/AFCI protection:** New locations are required, including exterior locations and interior locations within 6 feet of a water source.
- **Mold/Mildew:** The cumulative amount is considered and may include "like substances."
- **Infestations:** Evidence of past infestations may result in deficiencies; multiple simultaneous or multiple-location evidence can be more serious.

NSPIRE: Enhanced Standards to Review

Landlords should pay particular attention to the following items before an HCV inspection:

Smoke Detectors	Must be properly installed in required locations and meet applicable hard-wire and/or 10-year tamper-resistant requirements.
Carbon Monoxide (CO) Detectors	Must follow NFPA 72 guidelines. They are required when a unit uses gas appliances and in sleeping rooms when the room is served by a forced-air furnace.
Fire Doors	Door deficiencies continue to apply but are scored differently. Fire doors must function properly and remain unobstructed.
Dryer Vents	Must be made of proper material and may not be blocked, restricted, or clogged. Exterior covers must be in place.
Guardrails	Must be properly sized and installed where required for sudden drops in elevation, including retaining walls.
Handrails	Must be properly installed where required and provide a reasonable grasp.

Deficiency Correction Timeframes

NSPIRE DEFICIENCY TYPE	SOURCE GUIDE TIMEFRAME
Life Threatening	24-hour repair
Severe	24-hour repair
Moderate	30-day repair
Low / Advisory	30-day repair

Preparing Your Units for NSPIRE

- ☐ Review all electrical outlets and safety devices for proper condition and operation.
- ☐ Verify required GFCI/AFCI protection is in place.
- ☐ Check smoke and CO detectors and confirm they are properly installed.
- ☐ Look for mold, mildew, or signs of infestation and address concerns promptly.
- ☐ Ensure fire doors, handrails, and guardrails are properly installed, functional, and unobstructed.
- ☐ Inspect dryer vents for proper material, blockage, restriction, clogging, and exterior covers.