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Section 8 Landlord Newsletter

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Message From the Director of Administration

Welcome to the Augusta Housing Authority's (AHA) new Landlord Newsletter! We would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to you, our landlords and owners, who have continued to partner with us to support the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. Because you have provided affordable housing, over 3,500 low-income families in Augusta-Richmond County have safe, decent, sanitary, and affordable housing. Your participation, communication, and service allow our clients to find affordable housing.

In an effort to increase communication, improve customer service and provide better services to our landlords, we have created this Landlord Newsletter, where we can share tools and best practices, policy updates, and even provide some resources to help you succeed.

For our first newsletter, we will highlight our "New NSPIRE Inspection Standards", "New SAFMRs for Augusta-Richmond County" and "The Basics and Benefits to the Housing Choice Voucher Program".

Thank you so much for taking the time to read the AHA newsletter! This newsletter will be updated quarterly. If you have any questions about this article, or have other questions about the HCV Program, please do not hesitate to reach out to our office directly at phaadm@augustapha.org.

Kind Regards,

Alicia Mortley

Alicia Mortley

DID YOU KNOW?

You must report address and telephone number changes even if you are receiving your Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) via direct deposit by calling **(706) 724-5466** or email phaadm@augustapha.org.

COMPLY WITH FAIR HOUSING LAWS.

Owners can visit the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) website at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD): www.hud.gov by calling **(800)-669-9777** or **(800) 877-8339**.

PROPERTY LISTING SERVICE

s available online at:



GoSection8 provides a FREE property listing service for property owners to advertise their vacancies to Section 8 HCV Participants. Monitor your listings and remove any outdated listings that are unavailable. Login regularly to update or list new vacancies.

NOTICE TO HOUSING CHOICE VOUCHER (HCV) and PROJECT-BASED VOUCHER (PBV) PROGRAM UNIT INSPECTION REQUIREMENTS FOR OWNERS AND LANDLORDS.



NSPIRE: New Standard for Affordable Housing and How it will Affect You

The Augusta Housing Authority (AHA) will be following the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE) protocols for all inspections (Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) and Project-Based Voucher (PBV) programs).

NSPIRE strengthens HUD's physical condition standards and improves HUD oversight by aligning and consolidating the inspection regulations used to evaluate "HUD housing" as defined in 24 CFR 5.701(c), across multiple programs. Implementation of the NSPIRE final rule ensures that residents of HUD housing live in safe, habitable dwellings. It also ensures that the items and components located both inside and outside, and within the units of HUD housing are functionally adequate, operable, and free of health and safety hazards. NSPIRE will require some notable changes in what items are inspected, and additional levels or requirements within some existing requirements.

In response to all reasonable concerns and our desire to implement new requirements effectively, the AHA will extend the compliance date for NSPIRE-V until October 1, 2025.

Values and Goals	
People Residents	✓ Ensure families are living in safe and tenable homes ✓ Year-long maintenance with a unit-focused approach ✓ Prioritize residents over properties ✓ Introducing resident surveys for better quality service
Properties Health & Safety	✓ Better identification of substandard housing through clear, defined inspection protocols ✓ Increased inspection consistency ✓ Modernization of health and safety standards ✓ Ensure homes are safe and suitable for residential use
Programs Modernize HUD's Inspection Process	✓ Modernization of HUD's Physical Inspection Process ✓ Improve service delivery for our residents and housing principles ✓ Alignment of multiple inspection standards into a clear, defined inspection protocol ✓ Safe and habitable homes

National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate

NSPIRE Inspectable Areas



NSPIRE establishes the three inspectable areas of a REAC inspection into three easily identified locations: Unit, Inside, and Outside. **This increases the usability of the standards and streamlines the inspection process.** To ensure that all residents live in safe, habitable dwellings, the items and components located inside the building, outside the building, and within the units of HUD housing must be functionally adequate, operable, and free of health and safety hazards. This streamlined approach allows inspectors to cite deficiencies based on where they are standing and eliminates potential subjectivity or ambiguity about a deficiency's location.

UNIT



Unit

A "Unit" of HUD housing refers to the interior components of an individual dwelling, where the resident lives.

Inside

"Inside" refers to the common areas and building systems within the building interior and are not inside a unit. This could include interior laundry facilities, workout rooms, and so on.

INSIDE



OUTSIDE



Outside

"Outside" refers to the building site, building exterior components, and any building systems located outside of the building or unit. This includes things like playgrounds, sidewalks, and air-conditioning units.

Photos By: HUD Flickr

The front matter of each standard lists the areas or items within each inspectable location that the standard applies to. For example, the Handrail Standard lists stairs, hallways, and ramps as inspectable items in the Unit.

A deficiency may have different potential impacts on resident health and safety depending on where it is found. This will be clearly described in each standard's rationale. For example, an inoperable toilet in a unit may have a different rationale and health and safety classification than one in a common area.

View the inspectable areas to which each standard applies:

https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/reac/nspire/standards

Technical Assistance Center (TAC): 1-888-245-4860
NSPIRE Information Center (NIC): NSPIRE@hud.gov
https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/reac/nspire





How Often Do **You** Inspect Your Property?

Do you have a regular inspection schedule for your rental properties, or do you rely on AHA's biennial inspection for information? If you are relying on us to be your "eyes and ears" at your property, you may not be doing enough to protect your investment. Our HQS Inspection is HUD-required, but it is only to ensure that the property meets HUD's minimum standards for "decent, safe, and sanitary." It is not intended to help landlords with repairs, and it does not ensure that your property is being well taken care of by your tenant. We recommend that owners inspect their properties at least quarterly. We cannot require a regular inspection by landlords, but our experience has shown that landlords who do not do regular inspections have more issues related to property damage and rent collection.

Be a proactive landlord and keep in mind that your property is a valuable investment. The more you do to take care of it and to keep it up to date, the more it is worth in the market. Landlords who change air filters and smoke detector batteries on a regular schedule, rather than making that the tenant's responsibility, have additional opportunities to see the property on a regular basis and to take action to correct a maintenance issue or repair damage before it becomes a larger, more expensive issue. If the tenant damages the property, you may bill him/her for the cost of repairs completed by an experienced professional. Never rely on a tenant to make repairs. Legally, it isn't the tenant's responsibility. Also, you will have no idea if the person doing the work is qualified. Make regular inspections a part of your property management routine. Include the requirement as one of the clauses in your lease and follow through. Remember, it is always the landlord's responsibility to make repairs regardless of whether it is a matter of routine maintenance, such as replacing an old, leaky faucet, or tenant-caused damage. It could pay off in lower maintenance or turnover costs in the long run.

HUD requires AHA to inspect each unit under a Housing Assistance Payment Contract at least biennially, and no later than 24 months after the last full HQS Inspection to determine if the unit continues to meet the HQS requirements. The biennial inspections are usually conducted in conjunction with the family's annual reexamination. AHA requires the landlord to make sure that the unit is available for inspection on the date outlined in AHA's notice to the family and owner. Inspections are normally conducted between the hours of 9am– 3pm.

Do you have an inspections question? Please contact our HQS Inspectors at s8insp@augustapha.org.

How to Request a Rental Increase

The Housing Choice Voucher Program HAP Contract requires that the owner/landlord serve the family and AHA with a written notice listing the newly proposed rent at least sixty (60) days before the anniversary date of the HAP Contract known as the next annual reexamination date. Remember, a copy of the notice sent to the family must also be sent to AHA.

For your convenience, please submit your request(s) to:
rentincrease@augustapha.org or, rental increase requests can be submitted using the Landlord Portal.

Important Notice to Owner/Management Agent

- ❖ All increases are based on rent reasonableness (i.e. rents of comparable non-assisted units).
- ❖ There are no automatic annual rent increases.
- ❖ Untimely received request(s) will not be considered for a rental increase.
- ❖ Owners may not increase the rent on a unit that has not passed a HQS Inspection.

Are You Signed Up for the Landlord Portal?

AHA landlords can view all the information they need to manage their HCV properties through the Landlord Portal.

You can access:

- Detailed HAP records by resident
- Status and schedule of inspections and re-inspections
- The schedule of upcoming client recertifications

Information is updated at the end of each workday and is available for viewing 24 hours a day, 7 days a week!

You can create your account and access your data by visiting:
<https://web01.augustapha.org/PartnerPortal/View/Security/Login.aspx>.

If you have any questions, please call (706) 724-5466 or email us at **phaadm@augustapha.org**.

Landlord Portal



Access the landlord portal to view payment details, upcoming inspections, completed inspections, update contact information, securely exchange documents and more

HUD Mandates the Use Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMRs) for Augusta-Richmond County



I. Owner Frequently Asked Questions: Small Area Fair Market Rents

Basic Information

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced that the Augusta Housing Authority (AHA) will be required to use Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMRs), a move that will expand housing opportunities for households using Housing Choice Vouchers.

What are SAFMRs?

By design, SAFMRs increase payment standards in higher-rent ZIP codes to increase opportunities for voucher holders to live in these neighborhoods. At the same time, SAFMRs can reduce payment standards in lower-rent ZIP codes, which is likely to increase rent burdens for voucher holders who choose to remain in those neighborhoods.

What's new about this approach?

Until now, the amount AHA paid toward rent for families with vouchers was based on rental rates (by bedroom size) across the entire Augusta-Richmond County area. Under the new approach the payment standard is based on the localized rent in each ZIP code (the SAFMRs) providing opportunities to voucher families to access all communities in the region including higher opportunity areas.

What else do I need to know?

On July 1, 2025, the Augusta Housing Authority (AHA) will begin using Small Area Fair Market Rents (SAFMRs) to determine the payment standards applicable to the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. The AHA will use different payment standards for different ZIP codes in its jurisdiction. The payment standard will be set as a percent of the SAFMRs for that ZIP code. Owners and tenants can use the SAFMR Payment Standard Tables to determine the payment standard in a particular location.

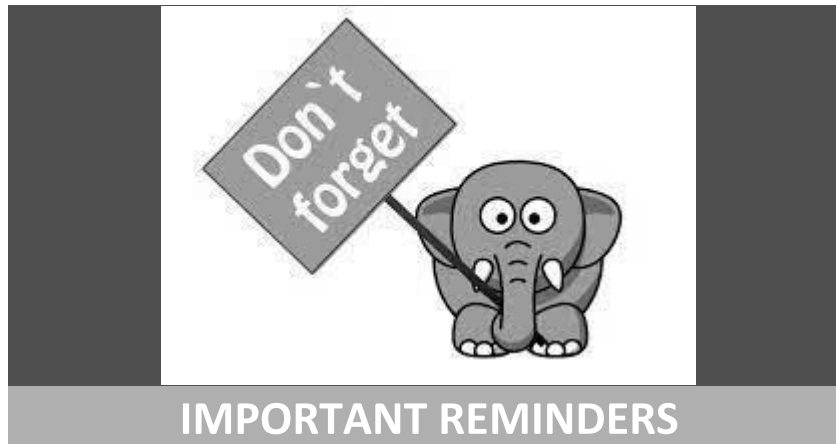
Please visit our website at www.augustapha.org or contact us at (706) 724-5466 for additional information.

INFORMATIONAL VIDEOS

For a brief video on the Basics, Benefits and Participation in the HCV Program, please visit:

<https://youtu.be/M6n9bwwMH30>

If you suspect anyone of committing fraud, you can call (706) 724-5466 or file a report online at:
www.augustapha.org/reporting-form/. Your name will remain anonymous.



- AHA encourages you to visit our website at **www.augustapha.org** to review updates for the agency and the Section 8 Program. You can also receive a revised copy of the Landlord Briefing Packet from the website. This packet provides a summary of your responsibilities. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) website at **www.hud.gov** can also provide you valuable information on the regulations governing the Section 8 Program.
- All owners **must** participate in the Direct Deposit Program to receive payment and **must** enroll in the Landlord Portal Program to receive their check stub and current information about the units. If you have not enrolled in the Direct Deposit Program, you can enroll by completing the AHA Authorization Agreement Automatic Deposit (ACH Credits) form and submitting it to AHA. To enroll in the Landlord Portal Program, please register at **www.augustapha.org**. If you are already enrolled in both programs, you do not have to do anything at this time.

Thank you again for your participation with our HCV Program (Section 8 Program). The AHA appreciates your willingness to assist us in providing units that are affordable, decent, safe, and sanitary to low- and moderate-income families. AHA believes that a good working relationship among staff, owners, and families has contributed to the success of the program. We value our landlords and look forward to continuing our relationship and providing quality affordable housing in Richmond County.