

NAHHP Update

Attain National Recognition as a Community of Quality®

BY GWEN VOLK

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As a certified National Affordable Housing Professional (NAHP) you have the education, knowledge and experience to make your property a great place to live. And when your property is safe, attractive and well-maintained, you deserve to be recognized for this achievement.

Did you know that NAHMA has a nationally acclaimed program to recognize outstanding properties? Through the Communities of Quality® (COQ) National Recognition program, affordable multifamily properties can be certified as having achieved a high standard of excellence in the way they are managed, the services they provide residents, the experience and training of personnel and other criteria. **Your property probably already qualifies for this prestigious certification.**

The application process is not difficult or expensive and is well worth the effort. COQ properties are listed in an online directory of the country's top affordable properties, and you will be able to use the COQ designation in your marketing materials. In addition, COQ-recognized properties can qualify for regional and national awards.



See the checklist on the next page to see if your property already qualifies for COQ recognition.

DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE CREDENTIAL REQUIREMENT!

Properties under 50 units need a minimum of 10 credential points. For properties with 50

units or more, 20 points are required. As a NAHP or NAHP-e, you already have 10 credential points.

In addition, NAHPs have achieved the CPO or SHCM (each worth 5 points) and the FHC (5 points). So if you are a NAHP and have kept the CPO current, you have 20 points.



NATIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (NAHMA)—Protecting the Interests of Affordable Housing Property Managers and Owners

Picking up extra points is easy because you can also use the credentials of others affiliated with your property—even corporate staff who do work on behalf of your property. And there are numerous other industry credentials (RAM, CPM, etc.) that can be used to accumulate points.

For COQ recognition, you only need the minimum points—but you will want to include all possible credentials if you are interested in qualifying for a national COQ award.

TAKE PRIDE IN THOSE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

There are many ways to meet the programs and services requirement (see the list below). Properties under 50 units need at least six programs or services. Properties 50 units and over need at least nine. I recommend you include any activities held in the last 12 months.

Document the activities with copies of flyers posted or distributed to residents or submit a community calendar

that shows these activities. Again, if you are interested in achieving enough points to qualify for a national COQ award, be sure to include all your activities, as extra points are available in this category.

Endorsements are easy to obtain. Simply ask people to write them. Tell them you are applying to have your property certified as a Community of Quality® and will need to submit some recommendations. These letters do not need to be lengthy. You will

Does Your Property Qualify for COQ Recognition?

- My property had a score of at least 80 on its last REAC inspection.
- OR
- My property is not subject to REAC but had a rating of satisfactory or pass on its last inspection by another monitoring agency.
- My property had a rating of satisfactory or better on its last MOR.
- OR
- My property is not subject to MORs but had a rating of satisfactory or pass on its last operations or file review by another monitoring agency.
- My property is subject to certified audits and the last audit reported no findings.
- OR
- My property can demonstrate sound financial management practices with other reports and/or letters from monitoring agencies or entities who review the financial reports.
- One or more of the staff members who do some work on behalf of the property (on-site or off-site) have professional credentials such as the NAHP, CPO, SHCM, FHC, NAHMT or other multi-family housing industry credentials.
- I offer my residents programs and service (for example, after school programs, summer meals, kids to camp, NAHMA Drug-Free Kid poster contest, holiday party, school supplies, Thanksgiving food baskets, 12-step meetings, mental health support group, book club, Bible study, ESL class, senior citizen socials, Medicare informational program, jobs fair, job skills class, parenting class, crime watch meeting, exercise program, walking club, Neighborhood Network, Service Coordinator, computer training).
- My property can obtain written endorsements in any two of the following formats—resident letters, letters from staff members, letters and/or awards from the community, letters and/or awards from state agencies or legislators, resident survey results, other.
- I can provide copies of the reports and documents that show that my property has met the above requirements along with at least six photos of the property.



be amazed at the great things people have to say about you and your property. At a minimum, one letter from a resident and one from a property staff member will suffice. Of course, extra points are possible here, so the more types of endorsements you can obtain, the better if you want to qualify for a national award.

IT'S EASY TO APPLY

Now that you have determined your property qualifies for COQ National Recognition, go to the NAHMA website at www.nahma.org and obtain the application form. Click on the Communities of Quality® tab at the top of the home page. From there, click on Recognition. Here's the direct link to that page—http://nahma.org/content/coq_recognition.html. This page has links to the application form, the electronic submission guidelines and a video tutorial which walks you through completing the application form. It takes about 45 minutes to view and is very easy to follow.

On the application form, you will provide some basic information about your property, the management company and the owner. Then you will enter the points for each of the criteria listed above. The form tells you how many points to assign yourself. For example, if you had a score of 80-89 on your last REAC, the form instructs you to give yourself 50 points. If you are having trouble figuring out the points to assign or wonder if something you want to use will qualify, email



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Elizabeth.Tucker@nahma.org at NAHMA or call her at (703) 683-8630, ext. 12, and she will be happy to help.

Next, assemble the documentation listed in the application: reports, letters, flyers, photos and so forth. The application form and docu-

mentation must be submitted to your local AHMA on a CD, DVD or flash drive (e-mail attachments will not be accepted) along with the application processing fee — \$150 for AHMA or NAHMA members or \$325 for non-members. The electronic sub-

mission guidelines referenced above tell you how to organize the scanned documents and digital photos for submission. Again, contact Elizabeth Tucker at NAHMA if you are having any trouble with this.

Your local AHMA will review your submission and let you know if you missed anything and will transmit everything to NAHMA for final approval. You can also refer to NAHMA's COQ Frequently Asked Questions document at <http://www.nahma.org/content/COQ%20FAQ.pdf>.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR NATIONAL RECOGNITION

When you receive the COQ National Recognition, use the marketing materials NAHMA will provide to promote your property. And if you have achieved the 325 points necessary to make your property eligible for a national COQ Award, by all means “go for the gold.” See the NAHMA website for details.

If the checklist revealed that your property is coming up short in one or more categories, determine what you need to do to get the necessary points, talk to your team and estimate how long it will take to accomplish that. Plan to complete the application process as soon as possible.

As a Community of Quality®, your property (and you!) will be members of an elite group. This is an achievement you can be very proud of! **NU**

Gwen Volk, CPM, NAHP-e, SHCM, is Director of Affordable Housing Compliance for LBK Management Services.

Tell Residents *Now* About Scholarships!

Applications are now being accepted for the 2012 NAHMA Educational Scholarship Program. Although the deadline is months away—**completed applications must be submitted by 10:00 p.m. EST on May 18th, 2012**—now is the time to make sure people know about it and start pulling their applications together.

This program is easy to apply for—but residents need to know it exists, and it is usually up to a site's property manager to get the word out about the availability of these funds.

Any resident who lives at a

property owned and/or managed by a NAHMA-member company can qualify for a scholarship. The resident must be applying for or currently enrolled in a trade school, community college or four-year college or university. The scholarships typically range from \$1,000 to \$2,500 and are sent directly to the school to cover tuition and other direct educational expenses.

THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM AWARDED \$34,500 in 2011 and more than \$179,000 over the life of the program.

The application must be filed online and can be accessed by going to www.nahma.org and clicking on the NAHMA Educational Foundation icon, then following the directions provided on the page that comes up.

In order to be considered complete, an application must contain an application form,

an essay, two references, a Certification of Residency in Good Standing and a current official grade transcript.

The scholarship program awarded \$34,500 in 2011 and more than \$179,000 over the life of the program. It is a competitive program, with applications coming in from all across the country. Successful scholarship applicants must have a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 for high school seniors and a 2.3 GPA for matriculated college students. However, 27 of the 30 recipients for 2011 had grade point averages above a 3.0, and 13

had averages of 3.5 or higher.

Extra-curricular activities and community service also play a role in an applicant being selected for a scholarship, according to Wayne Fox, NAHMA Educational Foundation board chairman.

Among the major fields of study represented by this year's scholars are film, business administration, pharmacology, nursing, pre-medicine, biochemistry, international business, culinary arts, athletic training and finance.

Scholarship winners represent a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds, cultures, ages and interests. 2011 winners included a 49-year-old single mother who got her Associates degree

from a community college and is now majoring in education, a young man in his 20s who emigrated to the U.S. as a non-English-speaking child and has since earned a Bachelors degree and is now in graduate school, and a mother of four who is studying nursing. All interested residents should apply!

This year, the Educational Foundation hopes to have applicants from every state, so make sure your residents are part of the applicant pool. You can steer them to a comprehensive information section and the 2012 timeline that is available online with the application.

Anyone with questions or seeking more information can contact Dr. Bruce W. Johnson, NAHMA Scholarship Program Administrator at bwjec@comcast.net.

Help your residents help themselves by furthering their education. Announce the program at your apartment community today and, if possible, offer interested residents assistance in filling out the application.

It will be a proud moment for you and your entire community when one or more of your residents receive a scholarship. And, in some cases, the scholarship may make it possible for someone to achieve more in life than they ever thought possible. **NU**

NAHPUpdate®

spring 2012
volume 10 | number 1

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NAHP Update is published four times a year by the National Affordable Housing Management Association, 400 North Columbus St., Suite 203, Alexandria, VA 22314, Phone (703) 683-8630, Web site: www.nahma.org

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Complimentary to NAHMA credential holders.

QUERIES: Letters to the Editor and other queries should be sent to NAHMA Manager, Education & Special Programs Brenda Moser at brenda.moser@nahma.org or to the address above.

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Meeting the Needs of Non-English Speakers

Make Use of Translated Documents

If prospective residents come to you who don't speak English well, they are called persons with "limited English proficiency" (LEP). HUD's regulation, "Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development—effectuation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964," requires all recipients of federal financial assistance from HUD to provide "meaningful access" to LEP persons.

This means that if you receive any funds directly or indirectly from HUD, you are expected to be able to communicate effectively with people who speak little or no English. Sometimes this can be accomplished by having a bilingual staff member, especially if, for example, many of your applicants speak a single language, like Spanish.

If that is not cost effective, you can use the documents and forms that, after much urging by NAHMA and others, HUD translated and has available on its website. These documents include brochures & booklets, fact sheets, forms, I.D. cards, posters and public service announcements translated into numerous different languages.

To find them easily, go to

HUD's main website (hud.gov) and put "LEP" in the Search box. You will be linked to the page with all of the above, plus links to Frequently Asked Questions and the Final Guidance.

In September 2011, NAHMA asked its members via an online survey whether they were using any of the vital documents translated by HUD. Sixty-seven percent of respondents said they were, and 33 percent said they were not. Some of those not using the translations may just not have many LEP applicants.

If that is not the case, and property managers just are not using the translated forms, then they could be subject to a complaint of discrimination being filed against them. This could result in an investigation by HUD, and if voluntary compliance is found to be necessary and not achieved, the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity could recommend termination of federal assistance.

Here are the vital documents most used by NAHMA members who responded to the survey:

- Resident Rights and Responsibilities Brochure: 100%
- EIV and You Brochure: 86%
- One of the four Model Leases: 86%
- "How Your Rent Is Deter-

mined" Fact Sheets: 79%

■ The Document Package for Applicants/Tenants Consent to the Release of Information: 50%

Less commonly used are the Annual Recertification Notices, Notice of Termination, Model Form of Notification of Rent Increase Resulting from Recertification Processing, Interim Adjustment Initial Notice, Supplement to Application for Federally Assisted Housing, and Certification of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence or Stalking. No respondent reported using the Interim Adjustment Termination of Assistance.

The most common languages used included:

Spanish	100%
Russian	64%
Chinese	50%
Korean	50%

Other languages included Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Creole, Cambodian, Farsi, French, Tagalog and Vietnamese. Note that not all documents are available in all of these languages.

There are also a number of languages and documents NAHMA members wish were available, but at the top of their wish list is a 1-800 Oral Interpretation Hotline—which 100 percent of respondents feel is necessary. **NU**



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Earn one of NAHMA's prestigious professional credentials, which are dedicated solely to recognizing and promoting achievement of the highest possible professional standards in affordable housing management. Programs include:

- National Affordable Housing Professional (NAHP™)
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- National Affordable Housing Maintenance Technician (NAHMT™)
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For more information, go to www.nahma.org and click on Education/Credentials.

NAHMA

An Affordable Housing ‘Long Termer’

NAHP: Wendy Blaser, NAHP, SHCM, CPO

MANAGEMENT COMPANY: Cornerstone Corp.

POSITION: Property Manager

YEAR OF CERTIFICATION: 2003

Wendy Blaser’s start in affordable housing actually began in 1990 when she went in to pay the rent on her conventional apartment in Southbridge, Mass., and saw that there was a need for a part-time office helper. Her son was only six months old, so the part-time schedule was just what she needed. She stayed

there for two years.

“The thing about the conventional side, though, was that you were just renting the apartments,” she said. “You never saw the people again.”

Two years later she applied for an assistant manager position at an affordable housing management company, Marshall Properties. By then she also had a second child, a daughter.

“Then personal life got in the way,” as she put it, and she and her husband divorced. She moved back to Connecticut to be closer to her family and got a job with Rural Housing, Inc. She was doing the same kind of work, but for five sites that

had about 500 units.

In 1998, Blaser one day got a call from a former colleague at Marshall Properties, which had sold its sites to Cornerstone Corporation. They asked her to work for them again, and she became property manager at Lincoln Village, 1,213 units in Worcester that had multiple subsidies. In 2000 she was transferred to a property in Natick that has 235 units of elderly and Section 8 housing, and she is responsible for three other sites in Massachusetts as well.

Blaser keeps her skills sharp by going to all the trainings she can at NEAHMA. “Training is important in the

ever-changing world of property management,” she said. “It keeps you up to date. It’s also nice to talk to others in the industry and see what they’re doing.”

Wendy has been a single mom for nearly 20 years. Her son works in contracting and is the father of a 15-month-old. Her daughter is in college studying psychology and is engaged to be married. Wendy could go anywhere at this point, but she really likes her work and “is absolutely staying in the business.”

“In affordable housing, either you’re a long termer, or you don’t make it,” she said. “I don’t see myself going anywhere.” **NU**

PROTECTING THE INTERESTS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROPERTY MANAGERS AND OWNERS

National Affordable Housing Management Association
400 North Columbus Street, Suite 203
Alexandria, VA 22314
www.nahma.org

spring 2012
NAHPupdate

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